

CORNCRAKE



JUNE 2026
ISSUE 28

Ivey R. Herndon
Sean Murphy
Luke Gilfedder
Robert Louis Stevenson
AB 'Banjo' Patterson
Edgar Allan Poe
Charles Dickens

Painter of Scottish Animals
Rosa Bonheur

NESTING IN THE OAK OF
ENGLISH LITERATURE

Bonheur
23

The Eolian Harp

By Samuel Taylor Coleridge

Composed at Clevedon, Somersetshire

My pensive Sara! thy soft cheek reclined
Thus on mine arm, most soothing sweet it is
To sit beside our Cot, our Cot o'ergrown
With white-flowered Jasmin, and the broad-leaved Myrtle,
(Meet emblems they of Innocence and Love!)
And watch the clouds, that late were rich with light,
Slow saddening round, and mark the star of eve
Serenely brilliant (such would Wisdom be)
Shine opposite! How exquisite the scents
Snatched from yon bean-field! and the world so hushed!
The stilly murmur of the distant Sea
Tells us of silence.

And that simplest Lute,
Placed length-ways in the claspings casement, hark!
How by the desultory breeze caressed,
Like some coy maid half yielding to her lover,
It pours such sweet upbraiding, as must needs
Tempt to repeat the wrong! And now, its strings
Boldlier swept, the long sequacious notes
Over delicious surges sink and rise,
Such a soft floating witchery of sound
As twilight Elfin's make, when they at eve
Voyage on gentle gales from Fairy-Land,
Where Melodies round honey-dropping flowers,
Footless and wild, like birds of Paradise,
Nor pause, nor perch, hovering on untamed wing!
O! the one Life within us and abroad,
Which meets all motion and becomes its soul,
A light in sound, a sound-like power in light,
Rhythm in all thought, and joyance everywhere—
Methinks, it should have been impossible
Not to love all things in a world so filled;
Where the breeze warbles, and the mute still air
Is Music slumbering on her instrument.

And thus, my Love! as on the midway slope
Of yonder hill I stretch my limbs at noon,
Whilst through my half-closed eyelids I behold
The sunbeams dance, like diamonds, on the main,
And tranquil muse upon tranquility:
Full many a thought uncalled and undetained,
And many idle flitting phantasies,
Traverse my indolent and passive brain,
As wild and various as the random gales
That swell and flutter on this subject Lute!

And what if all of animated nature
Be but organic Harps diversely framed,
That tremble into thought, as o'er them sweeps
Plastic and vast, one intellectual breeze,
At once the Soul of each, and God of all?

But thy more serious eye a mild reproof
Darts, O beloved Woman! nor such thoughts
Dim and unhallowed dost thou not reject,
And biddest me walk humbly with my God.
Meek Daughter in the family of Christ!
Well hast thou said and holily dispraised
These shapings of the unregenerate mind;
Bubbles that glitter as they rise and break
On vain Philosophy's aye-babbling spring.
For never guiltless may I speak of him,
The Incomprehensible! save when with awe
I praise him, and with Faith that inly feels;
Who with his saving mercies healèd me,
A sinful and most miserable man,
Wildered and dark, and gave me to possess
Peace, and this Cot, and thee, heart-honored Maid!



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The Corncrake magazine promotes the best works in English literature, from the beginning of civilisation to the present and beyond.

Celebrating great stories, poems and essays by classic authors.

Featuring beautiful and arresting artwork by renowned painters.

Providing a platform for up-and-coming writers and artists.

From great names like Charles Dickens, Arthur Conan Doyle, and Anthony Trollope, to writers of the future like Nathan CJ Hood, Luke Gilfedder, and ND Wallace Swan, the Corncrake sets before you the imaginative, vital, and beautiful soul of the English literary and aesthetic tradition.

By reading this magazine, you are contributing to the preservation of our rich literary and artistic heritage, acquainting yourself with the beauties of the English language and the stories passed onto us by our forebears.

You are also supporting contemporary and independent artists and authors who are engaging with the stories and artworks of the past to create new tales and paintings for our time.

Happy Reading!

shieldmaiden

Editor-in-Chief

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

Seed Pearl

By Ivey R. Herndon, IV



Driving through the northern Delta of Mississippi, the Magnolia State, a state of corruption, with nothing but the headlights of his vehicle, that roaring, thundering '89 F-150, and the starlight above to light his path, he recalls his former life, that few decades misspent in addiction mixed with bouts of homelessness, working part-time for a grocery delivery service, loading and unloading sacks of celery and sausage for those miserable elites, whose only solace was their snobbery and schadenfreude, and how there amid the decay of a dying coast, he met her, the diamond in the rough, the transplant Midwesterner, epitome of opposites attract, with whom he'd make his break from that Anarcho-Tyranny of sidewalk shitting and gated communities.

Glancing down at the dashboard, the needle of the fuel gauge creeping ever more obliquely toward the capital E, he returns to the road, squinting, scanning the silhouetted horizon for a gas station or any sign of life in this endless country of cotton fields and bayous, a glimmer of hope in red and green neon disrupts the purple velvet sky, two, maybe three miles more, setting his mind at rest, comfortable enough to dream of candy bars and other truck stop delicacies, a chance to add to the collection of wrappers now littering the floorboards, the white lines of the highway tick by, lulling him into a fever of forgetfulness for those two, maybe three miles till he's close enough to make out the big green brontosaurus that adorns the Sinclair sign, the click-clack of the right turn blinker brings him back to consciousness just for a moment, when the memory of a long forgotten Sinclair shoves him three decades or more into his past, on a lonely stretch of highway two hundred odd miles north of here, in Northeast Arkansas, that stretch not dotted with cottonballs as this one, at least not this season, but lined in a labyrinth of cornrows, where his father, that lion, had sought a brief respite from the road, and he, a chance to unburden his bladder and possibly con the old man into buying an Ice-E, an Ice-E he'd never finish.

The brakes make a muffled squeal, reminiscent of an infant's first attempt at controlling his vocal cords, he thinks of the little one, now the size of a seed pearl as he pulls into pump six, easing to a stop, hoping the dome light won't disturb the still sleeping figure on the bench seat to his right, legs folded into cream colored sevens, exiting, shutting the door ever so conscientiously, giving it a gentle final push, the girl, the woman he doesn't deserve gives not a stir as he walks through the automatic doors. Passing aisles of bric-à-brac and Tic-Tacs on his way to the bathrooms, he returns again to that day so many years ago, the bronze colored key attached to the small metal pipe, the key to the bathroom out back, with its sheen of standing water glazing the tile floor and inducing the ever present mildew, the two dollars in change he'd finagled from his father's ashtray, and now a full grown man himself, thumbing through boxes of candy bars, searching for her favorite, he spots a box of 100 Grands, what he could do with a hundred grand, give her everything she deserves, he approaches the counter, to his left the clockwise tumbling of red and blue slush catches his eye and again, somewhere back on that road to Jonesboro, taking a slurp as he opens the door of that very same '89 Ford, to find the lifeless lion slumped over the steering wheel, paws dangling, door ajar and mouth agape, dead of an aneurysm, the Ice-E tumbling to the scalding asphalt, the remaining pennies and dimes he'd meant to return to the ashtray clinking as they bounced and scattered, rolling away.

Behind the counter, the clerk craning his neck, glued always to his phone in this boredom of late-night limbo where not much ever happens and when it does, it's invariably some traveler with truck troubles, coming in wide-eyed and weary, hoping, wishing that he'll have an answer for them, as if this were the Delphi of the Delta and he a mechanic to boot, the best he could do was offer them the number to Key's 24-Hour Wrecker Service, which teetered on the edge of false advertisement, a more accurate name might be Key's Sometimes 24-Hour Wrecker Service, for it very much depended on Keyandre's level of inebriation as to whether the wrecker service was operational or not, which to be fair, the distance between drinks were growing ever farther apart, what with a child, a boy, on the way, Key had no desire to follow in his father's footsteps of petty crime and increasingly harsher prison sentences till he faded like a phantom, possibly still roaming the earth, possibly on some ethereal plane, he admires Cousin Key, a businessman, sure, he could fuck up with the best of them, be he wasn't like the rest of these no counts around here, coming in every night to spend money they didn't have on scratch-offs and cigarettes, he recalls stories of his grandparents, his grandparents who owned this very same gas station, well, not this very building, that building, due to declining health and increasing age, had dilapidated and been torn down long ago, but

this little plot of land on which he now stood, had once been the pride and joy of Ethel Mae and Robert, "Big Bob", when they purchased it from one of the few remaining white families, the Jacksons, before they fled with the rest to some suburb of Memphis sometime in the Seventies, but with Ethel Mae's death and the onset of Big Bob's glaucoma, the station had been sold to some people whose names he couldn't pronounce, and continued to change hands every few years till those names were now completely obscured behind a corporate veil, here he is in his family's former business, not as an owner, a "team member", which entitled him to a couple bucks more than minimum wage and unlimited fountain drinks while on shift.

Dropping the thick red straw with its patented little scoop on the end, an Ice-e specialty, through the oculus of the clear plastic dome, he sneaks an initial slurp as he turns back to the counter, noticing two fellow nighthawks making a beeline for the beer cooler, he begins fishing his fingers through his jean pockets for the cash to reckon with, grasping assorted dimes and quarters which he shakes into his hand as he withdraws them to take an account, glancing at the '89 Ford, he sees what appears to be an empty cab, his bride still sleeping soundly, he reaches the register.

The assorted dimes and quarters clink and roll across the freshly mopped floor. From an elevated, almost elysian position, he watches two figures racing for the exit, another two at the counter, the clerk, having been knocked back initially into the rows of Marlboros and Newports, and the recoil which returned him to the register where he lay now sprawled across the plexiglass protecting the rolls of scratch-offs beneath, and he, lying face down, still holding the now crushed Ice-E cup in his left hand, the blood beginning to pool from his mouth and head, the bright red, life clutching blood melts the spilt ice with the remaining warmth of an expiring life, separating it into a sheen of water that glazes the floor, the blood continuing to swirl with the syrup, a stream as it drains down the grout between tiles, it finds its equilibrium at the floorboards of the counter where it's greeted ever so gently by the clerk's, his life spilling onto the floor, first ebbing, then flowing in a danse macabre, finally congealing in a patent red puddle, reflecting the fluorescent lighting back to itself.

For a moment, in what appears as faced mirrors, containing all at once every detail of his life till now, the old lion pushing him on the swing, going higher and higher, hoping, praying to wrap the chains completely around the crossbar, the ambulance leaving, leaving him all alone with only a Smoky Bear, mirrors where his eyes should be, all those first nights of fear in foster homes with many more to follow, the first puff of a cigarette, the sound of butane on the underside of a bent spoon, the needle spiking the vein. A realization, a panic sets in, the scattered coins leaving him penniless, nothing for to pay Charon's toll on his catabasis, this journey across the Mississippi, the fear swells all those wasted years and a future that is now itself a faded memory, but as the world begins to dim, closing in on itself, like the aperture of a camera, he gleams a speck of light off yonder, ever so small, ever so distant, setting his mind at rest, a light the size of a seed pearl.



The Poetry of Sean Murphy

For the Eve Before

A hush in the hedgerows,
An indigo, star-punctured sky,
The kind of night that keeps its breath,
As if waiting for a word,
Or the turning of a page.

And somewhere between today and dawn
A quiet ember glows,
And breathes an amber light,
Just warm enough
To say something good is coming.

So let tomorrow find us
With open hands,
Light hearts,
And a line or two of poetry
Ready to rise with the sun.

Blue

Somewhere in the ether,
A wisp of joy
Twists above a dusty road.
Spirit, free
From the grimy
Toil of life,
Plays a graceful,
Tumbling game -
Diving, soaring,
Coming close,
So close.

Stand and look,
But let it go –
You can't hold it anyway,
Why would you want to?
Let it go,
And hear it flit
Out in the blue,
It will always
Be a part
Of you.



Light breaking into the hall

There is a solid clarity to the light today,
A stillness in the house that feels like grace.
The blue above is not a void, but reassurance,
Stretching out to meet Benmore beyond.

Listen. The Thrush is back in the garden,
Practicing his notes with casual magnificence,
Indifferent to the urgent tick of the clock,
He sings because the air is sweet.

The days are lengthening now, pulling us
Slowly out of the shadows of winter.
And we are standing in the sun's path,
Surprised by the sudden warmth on our skin.

Peace is settling in the quiet corners of the soul,
Not as a guest, but as one who is welcome home.
And the love we share, the hands we hold,
They are the only currency that matters.

The corner is turned, the morning open.
Trust the rhythm of the breathing world.
The sun is rising on a brighter day,
And truly, we are bound for something better.

Roses of Shadow

Chapter VI: Pia Fraus

Luke Gilfedder

Luke Gilfedder is a British author. His first book, *Wyndham Lewis: Modernism and the New Radical Right*, was published by Logos Verlag Berlin in 2025. He writes essays and fiction for publications including *Islander Magazine*, *The Jackdaw*, *The Brazen Head*, *The Decadent Serpent*, *The Miskatonian*, and *The Journal of Wyndham Lewis Studies*. His debut novel, *Die When I Say When*, is forthcoming in 2026.
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Quintus gave a shy, Alec-Guinness-like smile.

"You already know."

"Who?"

"He is Prince Alexei."

Time seemed to divide as neatly as a deck of cards cut in two. Miro's gasp strangled in his throat, and the silent, hallowed library rushed in on him, the towering bookshelves becoming the walls of a tomb. Alexei. The name flashed like flickering lightning through the night of his memories, coming and going, hissing and beckoning. He heard Pray's voice say, as if from a radio on the other side of the Carpathians:

"Oh, I think I'm going insane."

Quintus croakingly chuckled. "I know, maddening, isn't it?"

Miro steadied himself, his hands gripping the gallery railing. He peered down on the ancient library below, as helpless as if watching a tribunal of the Inquisitors five centuries back. Father Gregor Pray paced up and down amid the long shafts of dust-moted moonlight, biting his lip from end to end and back again as though testing it for durability.

"Leave the jesting to the heavens, Brother Quintus — they, they do it better! The whole world knows Alexei is rotting in the Tower of London. So whatever game you are playing—"

"I am not jesting, Gregor, nor, in this matter, am I playing games. I tell you, as true as Saint Eloy was an excellent goldsmith, that that boy is Prince Alexei Vecher, the Tsarevitch himself."

Miro's knuckles turned whiter. Vecher... The contours of the name hardened in his mind, and of a sudden the boy's features clicked into place. He remembered, in Eisensteinian montage, a remote valley, death lurking up the road like a feral dog abroad in the swirling snow, black cars, soldiers, bald bullet-heads, Cossack boots stomping across muddy fields, the careful aim, the perfunctory pfft pfft of the gunshots — blood on the samovar, his father's cracked steel-rimmed spectacles...

"You are telling me that boy is the Tsarevitch?" Pray sneered with a tiny snort and a toss of the head. "The ice-cold playboy of barbarism himself? Father, the boy I met just now was about as threatening as a Vatican Palace Guard."

Quintus put his elbow on the arm of the chair and gave Pray a long look from dark eyes. "He has been suffering from amnesia since he arrived. But it is almost time. His memory is starting to return."

"Time for what? Father, you had better start explaining yourself. Alexei was kidnapped by the Western alliance nearly two years ago. The press office confirmed it. They flew him from Budapest to London and—"

Quintus's smile grew even less scrutable. "Even Jehovah would not be omniscient if he listened to the press office, Gregor. No, Prince Alexei never made it out of Hungary. The plane was shot down. I watched it from my study—it crash landed in the Bakony hills. I ordered my monks out to the wreckage. Only three survived. One was suffering from concussion, another had lost a leg. The third, the Prince, was badly scarred by shrapnel."

"And the other two — his captors, the Western pilots?"

"I am keeping them in private quarters, in the old chapel under the East Tower. They could not be allowed to leave the abbey, you understand."

Miro shuddered in the chill, his knees creaking in the uncomfortable crouch. The rain fell harder now beyond the pale latticed window, pelting down on the moonlit alley that seeped into the garden beneath the swirling black of the sky. Thirsting roses swayed in the wind, and green strafing fire blazed over the abbey's cupolas.

"And how," asked Pray, his voice thickening as though blood were being stirred into it, "have you kept this a secret?"

Quintus shrugged at that. "No one suspected there would be any survivors. The plane exploded as soon as it hit the mountain. Herrut's thugs came to inspect the wreckage, of course."

"As soon as it hit the — but you just said—"

The abbot laid a finger to his nose, straight out of Gogol, and smiled. "For the purposes of Herrut's inspectors, it exploded as soon as it hit the mountain."

Pray glared through the flickering candle at the old-faced ancient; the flames winking and reflecting off the abbot's seacold eyes and off the broad, bright-gold crucifix around his neck.

"I see... And how are you so sure it was Alexei?"

Quintus proffered a hand like a dead bird and opened it.

"Because I found this in his tunic: his Imperial ring. Yes, the boy is most assuredly Prince Alexei."

Pray studied the ring in the ancient hand; his dubiety toying with this hypothesis. "And your monks? Do they know about this? And what about that urchin I saw earlier, what was his name—"

Miro? Father, if the gypsies knew the butcher of Bucharest was in their midst, they would storm this abbey and lynch him — and you too, while they were at it!"

"Then you know why I have told no one but you, Gregor. A secret between two is God's secret; but a secret between three is all men's."

Miro's head throbbed as if the trumpets of Joshua were about to bring down the walls of Jericho. He squinted hard across the murk of the medieval room, staring down at the abbot. The familiar white mane, pale blue eyes, and magnificent, epicene face seemed strangely disembodied over the kelp-brown of his cowl. For an instant, in the motionless candlelight, Quintus resembled that old bust of himself—a polished hawk-god in obsidian. Miro could scarcely believe hearing these words from such a man: the great Archiabbas, the only one who had never asked anything of his personality, whom he had thought such a selfless expanse of indifference, free of the selfish pressures exerted by all the monks and gypsies who were so unrelievedly functional. For him to have lied, and schemed, and plotted, just like the rest?

"What would you have done, Gregor?" the abbot resumed, leaning his gnarly hands on his cane and his chin on his hands.

"Had fate placed the Prince in your hands?"

Pray turned his back on the abbot, paced to the nearest bookshelf and ran his fingers along the spines of calf. "I... I should have handed him back to the men who came looking for him. The Emperor's inspectors."

"To Herrut? Why?"

"Because the man of God and politics are deadly enemies, Father. And I know better than to meddle in God's matters otherwise than Christ teaches. Besides, what difference does it make who wins this war? East or West — it's all the State. Don't go mixing religion up with the politics of madmen."

"Oh, tosh, Gregor. You know the type who usually say that? People who have no religion to mix with their politics. Vodkatipping diplomats and tricksters. No, I would not mix a drop of politics with my religion for all the world, but I want all the religion I have to go into my politics." He lifted one finger like a shepherd's crook and pointed it at Pray. "To throw my body into the struggle, Gregor, before I die. That's the thing. Not a book, but an act."

"The Church is Christ's body, Father. Do you plan to throw that into the struggle, too?"

If Quintus replied, Miro didn't hear it. He unclenched his hands and crept along the hushed carpet of the gallery, indignation struggling with surprise in his chest. At the top of the stairway, he stopped and risked one last glance down at the library floor. Pray still stood with his back to the abbot—hands clasped behind him in the Bonaparte manner—only now he had transferred his stare from the bookcases to the cracked, vaulted ceiling. Most of the plaster had fallen away, but patches of faded colour showed that a fresco had once covered the entire surface of the dome. It was, Miro knew, a replica of that gem of the Vatican collection—Raphael's painting of Pope Leo turning back the hordes of Attila. Quintus had first shown it to him: "See there, my boy, the calm, unwavering gaze of the saint, before which even the great Attila quails and abandons his avowed design of sacking the City of the Seven Hills, burial place of the Holy Martyrs..."

"And what about this prince?" Pray asked as he turned, with a lightness that hardly hid his dread of the answer. "What do you intend to do with him?"

"You believe it is Alexei now?"

Pray shrugged evasively. "Do you intend to keep him here as a prisoner?"

"He has not been a prisoner, exactly." The abbot cleared his throat carefully. "I have been teaching him. He has become a kind of apprentice."

"I thought you already had one. The gypsy boy — Miro."

Miro's pulse clanged in his chest; for the briefest second, the abbot seemed to flick a glance in his direction. But his gaze was without animation, as from a glass eye in the head of a corpse, or the sham optic of a stuffed eagle. Then he turned back to Pray and said slowly, as if God himself had dictated it to him in Latin — "I cannot rest all my hopes on Alexei alone, Gregor. Yet I have placed a certain faith in him. Once his memory returns and he assumes his rightful place upon the throne in Moscow, I am convinced his first act will be to end this godless, graceless slaughter and restore peace to our continent. I have made sure of it—"

"You've indoctrinated him?"

"Influenced him. Don't you see, Gregor? We can use the boy, as God used St Leo."

"But he is no St Leo. He is an evil, spoiled child—"

Quintus did not reply as Pray expected, but leaned back and smiled. "Quite, Gregor. But I always found it impossible not to respect an aristocrat, even if I know — or perhaps because I know — that beneath the perfection of good manners is a childish heart seething with fear and distrust, and weighing the advantage of treachery against the convention that forbids it. And Alexei proved very much a child. But that is just why I have been able to train him, Gregor. God presented me with a chance to teach the mind of this young prince as if he were but a peasant boy, fresh from the baptismal font. And I believe I have succeeded."

Through the skylight, the abbey's clock tower loomed, its candle-snuffer shadow cast by the moonlight across the library floor. So rapt had Miro been by the priests' words that he scarcely noticed the bombardment over the Bakony Hills had ceased. After the unending thunder of explosions, the silence seemed to hang over the abbey like a threat. The quiet made the dark darker and deepened the menace of those whispering mountains on either side. Pray seemed to sense it too, for he resumed pacing up and down the room, fretting a hand through his well-greased hair.

"This is treason, Father. If the Emperor learns what has transpired here—" He stopped suddenly, reached a hand behind the bookcase and rifled through the tomes. "There might be microphones somewhere in these. Herrut knows none of your monks read them—"

Quintus rose, shakily on his cane, and stretched to pinch out the flame of a candle that had gone berserk.

"Now, now, Gregor — there are no buggers here. Except silly ones."

Pray rounded on him with a savage frown.

"This was your plan in inviting me here, wasn't it—to make me and my order a prisoner of your secret?"

"No, no, you are quite free, Gregor. Go right now to the comms room, if you like, contact the war office and say: 'We have the Prince here; would the Emperor like to come and collect him?'"

Pray snorted defiance. "You know very well I cannot. Herrut would kill Alexei — and you too — and everyone else in the abbey for good measure. He couldn't have his nephew rising from the dead to inconvenience him now, could he?"

"Precisely, Gregor. That is why I plan to burst the news upon Europe at once, before it has a chance to reach the war office. As soon as Alexei is ready." Quintus laid a mummy-wizened hand on the younger priest's shoulder. "And that is why I need your help, Gregor. To make sure the news reaches the newspapers before it reaches the war office. And by accompanying the boy when he leaves here on the day before we make the announcement." He thump-thumped his cane on the stone floor. "I, alas, cannot go—"

"And what happens, Father, after Alexei retakes power? I suppose you see yourself installed as some sort of Archbishop supreme?"

Quintus pressed his wrinkles close to Pray. "It does not matter about me, Father. I don't have long left. But don't you see? We have in our hands the power to restore Christianity to an eminence it has not enjoyed since the Middle Ages."

"Whose Christianity? Christ's? Or Brother Quintus's?"

There was a double knock on the door behind Pray, and Father Anzelm appeared with a tray.

"Fathers, I—"

"Just a minute, Anzelm!"

Anzelm glanced between the two priests, with their resentments heaped between them like a pile of naked swords, bowed fatly, and retreated. As soon as the door snapped shut, Pray said:

"I shudder to think, Brother Quintus, of what you should do if you achieved this power you dreamed of."

"Oh, come, Gregor. We have no more time for these vain and human wranglings. We are the heads of the only two surviving orders in Europe." He gestured at the books with a sweep of his hand. "We are all that stands between all this, and what exists out there: a moronic inferno of destruction and decay. Whatever our differences, if a bomb struck this library tonight, the little that is left of our Church would be—"

"Our Church, Father, is like the moon. It may wane at times, but never be destroyed; it may be darkened, but it can never dissap—"

A sudden thunderclap shook the library, and the sound echoed away like coal sliding down a chute. The chandelier shook, sending cusps of light scampering over the tottering bookcases,

and plaster fell from the ceiling. Quintus drew his hood forward and sighed, the sigh of an old wind which knows so much but can say so little.

"The painting..." Pray began weakly.

Quintus raised his eyes to the ruined fresco of Leo and Attila, shot through with yet another, fatal, fissure.

"There will be none to replace it, Gregor. In old times, men used their powers of painting to show the objects of faith; today, they use the objects of faith to show the powers of painting." He shifted his gaze back to Pray. "I am no senile idealist, Father. I know that man is beyond praying for. But the faith of the revolutionary — if he is revolutionary enough to have faith — is that the repressed blood of mankind is still, at the last, good and noble blood. And as long as there remains steel in my veins, my young friend, I will do whatever I can to—"

"For heaven's sake, stop bringing up my age!"

The door burst open again, and Anzelm waded in:

"Father, I must insist. Leila sent me — its urgent. Something with her patient? The boy? She said you'd understand."

"Yes, yes, I'm coming. Listen, Brother Anzelm — have you seen Miro? I must see him tomorrow morning. He wanted to show me his painting..."

But Miro never heard these words. He was already running — running with clumsy feet down stairs fit for Tolstoy beauties, swan-necked, gliding like swans — back to where he belonged, back to the camp, with its dingy tents and vardos, back to the girls with dark-stained faces and hands, back to semitic violins and creaking wains, back to Terek, and back to the knife he kept under his pillow...





'The Gentler Saints' & Other Visions

Rob Floyd at St James The Great, Congleton. CW12 4QB

An exhibition of oil paintings and drawings comprising of work from Rob's exhibition at Manchester cathedral, 'The Gentler Saints', last year, and new work to be featured as part of a forthcoming exhibition at the cathedral this October.

24th May - 30th June 2026

Preview: Saturday 23rd May. 7pm - 9pm

All welcome



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‘The Gentler Saints & Other Visions’ is the title of Rob’s latest exhibition at his local church, St James the Great, Congleton. CW12 4QB.

The exhibition features oil paintings and drawings consisting of work from Rob’s exhibition at Manchester cathedral, ‘The Gentler Saints’, last year, and new work to be featured as part of a forthcoming exhibition at the cathedral this coming October.

Here pictured are some images of his latest work with a real focus on mystical experience: Depicting and describing mystical experience, is, of course, something that has proved a considerable challenge to some of the very greatest minds and artists throughout history: as Evelyn Underhill, in her second novel ‘The Lost Word’ puts it, ‘It is of the essence of real love that it should not be able to explain itself’, and as Simon Critchley in his recent book ‘On Mysticism’ writes of language: ‘...it fails, has to fail, should fail, and should go on failing, loquaciously failing. Failing is the aim, an apparently aimless aim, which shoots at a target it cannot see, cannot know, and cannot even conceive.’ but Rob hopes that his new work, while inevitably also failing at its task, will perhaps inspire viewers to thought and engagement with its theme and hopefully some resonance with the paintings and drawings on display.

The exhibition runs from 24th May to 30th June, and admittance is free.

Opening times:

Sundays: 11.15 am - 1 pm,

Wednesdays: 11.15am - 1pm,

Thursdays: 9.30am - 12 noon,

Fridays: 7pm - 9pm.







For information on future exhibitions including the show at Manchester cathedral in October, as well as images of new work fresh from the studio;

Please follow on Instagram: [@rob_floyd13](https://www.instagram.com/rob_floyd13)

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Markheim

By Robert Louis Stevenson



Lomonosov in Germany. The scientific Debate.
Eugene Lanceray

"Yes," said the dealer, "our windfalls are of various kinds. Some customers are ignorant, and then I touch a dividend on my superior knowledge. Some are dishonest," and here he held up the candle, so that the light fell strongly on his visitor, "and in that case," he continued, "I profit by my virtue."

Markheim had but just entered from the daylight streets, and his eyes had not yet grown familiar with the mingled shine and darkness in the shop. At these pointed words, and before the near presence of the flame, he blinked painfully and looked aside.

The dealer chuckled. "You come to me on Christmas Day," he resumed, "when you know that I am alone in my house, put up my shutters, and make a point of refusing business. Well, you will have to pay for that; you will have to pay for my loss of time, when I should be balancing my books; you will have to pay, besides, for a kind of manner that I remark in you to-day very strongly. I am the essence of discretion, and ask no awkward questions; but when a customer cannot look me in the eye, he has to pay for it." The dealer once more chuckled; and then, changing to his usual business voice, though still with a note of irony, "You can give, as usual, a clear account of how you came into the possession of the object?" he continued. "Still your uncle's cabinet? A remarkable collector, sir!"

And the little pale, round-shouldered dealer stood almost on tip-toe, looking over the top of his gold spectacles, and nodding his head with every mark of disbelief. Markheim returned his gaze with one of infinite pity, and a touch of horror.

"This time," said he, "you are in error. I have not come to sell, but to buy. I have no curios to dispose of; my uncle's cabinet is bare to the wainscot; even were it still intact, I have done well on the Stock Exchange, and should more likely add to it than otherwise, and my errand to-day is simplicity itself. I seek a Christmas present for a lady," he continued, waxing more fluent as he struck into the speech he had prepared; "and certainly I owe you every excuse for thus disturbing you upon so small a matter. But the thing was neglected yesterday; I must produce my little compliment at dinner; and, as you very well know, a rich marriage is not a thing to be neglected."

There followed a pause, during which the dealer seemed to weigh this statement incredulously. The ticking of many clocks among the curious lumber of the shop, and the faint rushing of the cabs in a near thoroughfare, filled up the interval of silence. "Well, sir," said the dealer, "be it so. You are an old customer after all; and if, as you say, you have the chance of a good marriage, far be it from me to be an obstacle. Here is a nice thing for a lady now," he went on, "this hand-glass—fifteenth century, warranted; comes from a good collection, too; but I reserve the name, in the interests of my customer, who was just like yourself, my dear sir, the nephew and sole heir of a remarkable collector."

The dealer, while he thus ran on in his dry and biting voice, had stooped to take the object from its place; and, as he had done so, a shock had passed through Markheim, a start both of hand and foot, a sudden leap of many tumultuous passions to the face. It passed as swiftly as it came, and left no trace beyond a certain trembling of the hand that now received the glass.

"A glass," he said hoarsely, and then paused, and repeated it more clearly. "A glass? For Christmas? Surely not?"

"And why not?" cried the dealer. "Why not a glass?" Markheim was looking upon him with an indefinable expression. "You ask me why not?" he said. "Why, look here—look in it—look at yourself! Do you like to see it? No! nor I—nor any man."

The little man had jumped back when Markheim had so suddenly confronted him with the mirror; but now, perceiving there was nothing worse on hand, he chuckled. "Your future lady, sir, must be pretty hard favoured," said he.

"I ask you," said Markheim, "for a Christmas present, and you give me this—this damned reminder of years, and sins and follies—this hand-conscience! Did you mean it? Had you a thought in your mind? Tell me. It will be better for you if you do. Come, tell me about yourself. I hazard a guess now, that you are in secret a very charitable man."

The dealer looked closely at his companion. It was very odd, Markheim did not appear to be laughing; there was something in his face like an eager sparkle of hope, but nothing of mirth.

"What are you driving at?" the dealer asked.

"Not charitable?" returned the other, gloomily. "Not charitable; not pious; not scrupulous; unloving, unbeloved; a hand to get money, a safe to keep it. Is that all? Dear God, man, is that all?"

"I will tell you what it is," began the dealer, with some sharpness, and then broke off again into a chuckle. "But I see this is a love match of yours, and you have been drinking the lady's health."

"Ah!" cried Markheim, with a strange curiosity. "Ah, have you been in love? Tell me about that."

"I," cried the dealer. "I in love! I never had the time, nor have I the time to-day for all this nonsense. Will you take the glass?"

"Where is the hurry?" returned Markheim. "It is very pleasant to stand here talking; and life is so short and insecure that I would not hurry away from any pleasure—no, not even from so mild a one as this. We should rather cling, cling to what little we can get, like a man at a cliff's edge. Every second is a cliff, if you think upon it—a cliff a mile high—high enough, if we fall, to dash us out of every feature of humanity. Hence it is best to talk pleasantly. Let us talk of each other; why should we wear this mask? Let us be confidential. Who knows? we might become friends."

"I have just one word to say to you," said the dealer. "Either make your purchase, or walk out of my shop."

"True, true," said Markheim. "Enough fooling. To business. Show me something else."

The dealer stooped once more, this time to replace the glass upon the shelf, his thin blond hair falling over his eyes as he did so. Markheim moved a little nearer, with one hand in the pocket of his greatcoat; he drew himself up and filled his lungs; at the same time many different emotions were depicted together on his face—terror, horror, and resolve, fascination and a physical repulsion; and through a haggard lift of his upper lip, his teeth looked out.

"This, perhaps, may suit," observed the dealer. And then, as he began to rearise, Markheim bounded from behind upon his victim. The long, skewer-like dagger flashed and fell. The dealer struggled like a hen, striking his temple on the shelf, and then tumbled on the floor in a heap.

Time had some score of small voices in that shop—some stately and slow as was becoming to their great age; others garrulous and hurried. All these told out the seconds in an intricate chorus of tickings. Then the passage of a lad's feet, heavily running on the pavement, broke in upon these smaller voices and startled Markheim into the consciousness of his surroundings. He looked about him awfully. The candle stood on the counter, its flame solemnly wagging in a draught; and by that inconsiderable movement the whole room was filled with noiseless bustle and kept heaving like a sea: the tall shadows nodding, the gross blots of darkness swelling and dwindling as with respiration, the faces of the portraits and the china gods changing and wavering like images in water. The inner door stood ajar, and peered into that leaguer of shadows with a long slit of daylight like a pointing finger.

From these fear-stricken roivings, Markheim's eyes returned to the body of his victim, where it lay, both humped and sprawling, incredibly small and strangely meaner than in life. In these poor, miserly clothes, in that ungainly attitude, the dealer lay like so much sawdust. Markheim had feared to see it, and, lo! it was nothing. And yet, as he gazed, this bundle of old clothes and pool of blood began to find eloquent voices. There it must lie; there was none to work the cunning hinges or direct the miracle of locomotion; there it must lie till it was found. Found! ay, and then? Then would this dead flesh lift up a cry that would ring over England, and fill the world with the echoes of pursuit. Ay, dead or not, this was still the enemy. "Time was that when the brains were out," he thought; and the first word struck into his mind. Time, now that the deed was accomplished—time, which had closed for the victim, had become instant and momentous for the slayer.

The thought was yet in his mind, when, first one and then another, with every variety of pace and voice—one deep as the bell from a cathedral turret, another ringing on its treble notes the prelude of a waltz,—the clocks began to strike the hour of three in the afternoon.

The sudden outbreak of so many tongues in that dumb chamber staggered him. He began to bestir himself, going to and fro with the candle, beleaguered by moving shadows, and startled to the soul by chance reflections. In many rich mirrors, some of home design, some from Venice or Amsterdam, he saw his face repeated and repeated, as it were an army of spies; his own eyes met and detected him; and the sound of his own steps, lightly as they fell, vexed the surrounding quiet. And still, as he continued to fill his pockets, his mind accused him with a sickening iteration, of the thousand faults of his design. He should have chosen a more quiet hour; he should have prepared an alibi; he should not have used a knife; he should have been more cautious, and only bound and gagged the dealer, and not killed him; he should have been more bold, and killed the

servant also; he should have done all things otherwise. Poignant regrets, weary, incessant toiling of the mind to change what was unchangeable, to plan what was now useless, to be the architect of the irrevocable past. Meanwhile, and behind all this activity, brute terrors, like the scurrying of rats in a deserted attic, filled the more remote chambers of his brain with riot; the hand of the constable would fall heavy on his shoulder, and his nerves would jerk like a hooked fish; or he beheld, in galloping defile, the dock, the prison, the gallows, and the black coffin.

Terror of the people in the street sat down before his mind like a besieging army. It was impossible, he thought, but that some rumour of the struggle must have reached their ears and set on edge their curiosity; and now, in all the neighbouring houses, he divined them sitting motionless and with uplifted ear—solitary people, condemned to spend Christmas dwelling alone on memories of the past, and now startingly recalled from that tender exercise; happy family parties struck into silence round the table, the mother still with raised finger—every degree and age and humour, but all, by their own hearths, prying and hearkening and weaving the rope that was to hang him. Sometimes it seemed to him he could not move too softly; the clink of the tall Bohemian goblets rang out loudly like a bell; and alarmed by the bigness of the ticking, he was tempted to stop the clocks. And then, again, with a swift transition of his terrors, the very silence of the place appeared a source of peril, and a thing to strike and freeze the passer-by; and he would step more boldly, and bustle aloud among the contents of the shop, and imitate, with elaborate bravado, the movements of a busy man at ease in his own house.

But he was now so pulled about by different alarms that, while one portion of his mind was still alert and cunning, another trembled on the brink of lunacy. One hallucination in particular took a strong hold on his credulity. The neighbour hearkening with white face beside his window, the passer-by arrested by a horrible surmise on the pavement—these could at worst suspect, they could not know; through the brick walls and shuttered windows only sounds could penetrate. But here, within the house, was he alone? He knew he was; he had watched the servant set forth sweet-hearting, in her poor best, “out for the day” written in every ribbon and smile. Yes, he was alone, of course; and yet, in the bulk of empty house above him, he could surely hear a stir of delicate footing; he was surely conscious, inexplicably conscious of some presence. Ay, surely; to every room and corner of the house his imagination followed it; and now it was a faceless thing, and yet had eyes to see with; and again it was a shadow of himself; and yet again behold the image of the dead dealer, reinspired with cunning and hatred.

At times, with a strong effort, he would glance at the open door which still seemed to repel his eyes. The house was tall, the skylight small and dirty, the day blind with fog; and the light that filtered down to the ground story was exceedingly faint, and showed dimly on the threshold of the shop. And yet, in that strip of doubtful brightness, did there not hang wavering a shadow? Suddenly, from the street outside, a very jovial gentleman began to beat with a staff on the shop door, accompanying his blows with shouts and raileries in which the dealer was continually called upon by name. Markheim, smitten into ice, glanced at the dead man. But no! he lay quite still; he was fled away far beyond earshot of these blows and shoutings; he was sunk beneath seas of silence; and his name, which would once have caught his notice above the howling of a storm, had become an empty sound. And presently the jovial gentleman desisted from his knocking and departed.

Here was a broad hint to hurry what remained to be done, to get forth from this accusing neighbourhood, to plunge into a bath of London multitudes, and to reach, on the other side of day, that haven of safety and apparent innocence—his bed. One visitor had come; at any moment another might follow and be more obstinate. To have done the deed, and yet not to reap the profit, would be too abhorrent a failure. The money—that was now Markheim’s concern; and as a means to that, the keys.

He glanced over his shoulder at the open door, where the shadow was still lingering and shivering; and with no conscious repugnance of the mind, yet with a tremor of the belly, he drew near the body of his victim. The human character had quite departed. Like a suit half-stuffed with bran, the limbs lay scattered, the trunk doubled, on the floor; and yet the thing repelled him. Although so dingy and inconsiderable to the eye, he feared it might have more significance to the touch. He took the body by the shoulders, and turned it on its back. It was strangely light and supple, and the limbs, as if they had been

broken, fell into the oddest postures. The face was robbed of all expression; but it was as pale as wax, and shockingly smeared with blood about one temple. That was, for Markheim, the one displeasing circumstance. It carried him back, upon the instant, to a certain fair-day in a fishers’ village: a gray day, a piping wind, a crowd upon the street, the blare of brasses, the booming of drums, the nasal voice of a ballad singer; and a boy going to and fro, buried overhead in the crowd and divided between interest and fear, until, coming out upon the chief place of concourse, he beheld a booth and a great screen with pictures, dismally designed, garishly coloured—Brownrigg with her apprentice, the Mannings with their murdered guest, Weare in the death-grip of Thurtell, and a score besides of famous crimes. The thing was as clear as an illusion. He was once again that little boy; he was looking once again, and with the same sense of physical revolt, at these vile pictures; he was still stunned by the thumping of the drums. A bar of that day’s music returned upon his memory; and at that, for the first time, a qualm came over him, a breath of nausea, a sudden weakness of the joints, which he must instantly resist and conquer.

He judged it more prudent to confront than to flee from these considerations, looking the more hardily in the dead face, bending his mind to realise the nature and greatness of his crime. So little a while ago that face had moved with every change of sentiment, that pale mouth had spoken, that body had been all on fire with governable energies; and now, and by his act, that piece of life had been arrested, as the horologist, with interjected finger, arrests the beating of the clock. So he reasoned in vain; he could rise to no more remorseful consciousness; the same heart which had shuddered before the painted effigies of crime, looked on its reality unmoved. At best, he felt a gleam of pity for one who had been endowed in vain with all those faculties that can make the world a garden of enchantment, one who had never lived and who was now dead. But of penitence, no, not a tremor. With that, shaking himself clear of these considerations, he found the keys and advanced toward the open door of the shop. Outside, it had begun to rain smartly, and the sound of the shower upon the roof had banished silence. Like some dripping cavern, the chambers of the house were haunted by an incessant echoing, which filled the ear and mingled with the ticking of the clocks. And, as Markheim approached the door, he seemed to hear, in answer to his own cautious tread, the steps of another foot withdrawing up the stair. The shadow still palpitated loosely on the threshold. He threw a ton’s weight of resolve upon his muscles, and drew back the door.

The faint, foggy daylight glimmered dimly on the bare floor and stairs; on the bright suit of armour posted, halbert in hand, upon the landing; and on the dark wood-carvings, and framed pictures that hung against the yellow panels of the wainscot. So loud was the beating of the rain through all the house that, in Markheim’s ears, it began to be distinguished into many different sounds. Footsteps and sighs, the tread of regiments marching in the distance, the chink of money in the counting, and the creaking of doors held stealthily ajar, appeared to mingle with the patter of the drops upon the cupola and the gushing of the water in the pipes. The sense that he was not alone grew upon him to the verge of madness. On every side he was haunted and begirt by presences. He heard them moving in the upper chambers; from the shop, he heard the dead man getting to his legs; and as he began with a great effort to mount the stairs, feet fled quietly before him and followed stealthily behind. If he were but deaf, he thought, how tranquilly he would possess his soul! And then again, and hearkening with ever fresh attention, he blessed himself for that unresting sense which held the outposts and stood a trusty sentinel upon his life. His head turned continually on his neck; his eyes, which seemed starting from their orbits, scouted on every side, and on every side were half rewarded as with the tail of something nameless vanishing. The four and twenty steps to the first floor were four and twenty agonies. On that first story, the doors stood ajar—three of them, like three ambushes, shaking his nerves like the throats of cannon. He could never again, he felt, be sufficiently immersed and fortified from men’s observing eyes; he longed to be home, girt in by walls, buried among bedclothes, and invisible to all but God. And at that thought he wondered a little, recollecting tales of other murderers and the fear they were said to entertain of heavenly avengers. It was not so, at least, with him. He feared the laws of nature, lest, in their callous and immutable procedure, they should preserve some damning evidence of his crime. He feared tenfold more, with a slavish, superstitious terror, some scission in the continuity of man’s experience, some wilful illegality of

nature. He played a game of skill, depending on the rules, calculating consequence from cause; and what if nature, as the defeated tyrant overthrew the chess-board, should break the mould of their succession? The like had befallen Napoleon (so writers said) when the winter changed the time of its appearance. The like might befall Markheim: the solid walls might become transparent and reveal his doings like those of bees in a glass hive; the stout planks might yield under his foot like quicksands and detain him in their clutch. Ay, and there were soberer accidents that might destroy him; if, for instance, the house should fall and imprison him beside the body of his victim, or the house next door should fly on fire, and the firemen invade him from all sides. These things he feared; and, in a sense, these things might be called the hands of God reached forth against sin. But about God himself he was at ease; his act was doubtless exceptional, but so were his excuses, which God knew; it was there, and not among men, that he felt sure of justice.

When he had got safe into the drawing-room, and shut the door behind him, he was aware of a respite from alarms. The room was quite dismantled, uncarpeted besides, and strewn with packing-cases and incongruous furniture; several great pier-glasses, in which he beheld himself at various angles, like an actor on a stage; many pictures, framed and unframed, standing, with their faces to the wall; a fine Sheraton sideboard, a cabinet of marquetry, and a great old bed, with tapestry hangings. The windows opened to the floor; but by great good fortune the lower part of the shutters had been closed, and this concealed him from the neighbours. Here, then, Markheim drew in a packing-case before the cabinet, and began to search among the keys. It was a long business, for there were many; and it was irksome, besides; for, after all, there might be nothing in the cabinet, and time was on the wing. But the closeness of the occupation sobered him. With the tail of his eye he saw the door—even glanced at it from time to time directly, like a besieged commander pleased to verify the good estate of his defences. But in truth he was at peace. The rain falling in the street sounded natural and pleasant. Presently, on the other side, the notes of a piano were awakened to the music of a hymn, and the voices of many children took up the air and words. How stately, how comfortable was the melody! How fresh the youthful voices! Markheim gave ear to it smilingly, as he sorted out the keys; and his mind was thronged with answerable ideas and images: church-going children, and the pealing of the high organ; children afield, bathers by the brookside, ramblers on the brambly common, kite-flyers in the windy and cloud-navigated sky; and then, at another cadence of the hymn, back again to church, and the somnolence of summer Sundays, and the high genteel voice of the parson (which he smiled a little to recall) and the painted Jacobean tombs, and the dim lettering of the Ten Commandments in the chancel. And as he sat thus, at once busy and absent, he was startled to his feet. A flash of ice, a flash of fire, a bursting gush of blood, went over him, and then he stood transfixed and thrilling. A step mounted the stair slowly and steadily, and presently a hand was laid upon the knob, and the lock clicked, and the door opened.

Fear held Markheim in a vice. What to expect he knew not—whether the dead man walking, or the official ministers of human justice, or some chance witness blindly stumbling in to consign him to the gallows. But when a face was thrust into the aperture, glanced round the room, looked at him, nodded and smiled as if in friendly recognition, and then withdrew again, and the door closed behind it, his fear broke loose from his control in a hoarse cry. At the sound of this the visitant returned.

“Did you call me?” he asked, pleasantly, and with that he entered the room and closed the door behind him. Markheim stood and gazed at him with all his eyes. Perhaps there was a film upon his sight, but the outlines of the new comer seemed to change and waver like those of the idols in the wavering candle-light of the shop; and at times he thought he knew him; and at times he thought he bore a likeness to himself; and always, like a lump of living terror, there lay in his bosom the conviction that this thing was not of the earth and not of God. And yet the creature had a strange air of the commonplace, as he stood looking on Markheim with a smile; and when he added, “You are looking for the money, I believe?” it was in the tones of everyday politeness.

Markheim made no answer.

“I should warn you,” resumed the other, “that the maid has left her sweetheart earlier than usual and will soon be here. If Mr. Markheim be found in this house, I need not describe to him the consequences.”

“You know me?” cried the murderer.

The visitor smiled. “You have long been a favourite of mine,” he said; “and I have long observed and often sought to help you.”

“What are you?” cried Markheim; “the devil?”

“What I may be,” returned the other, “cannot affect the service I propose to render you.”

“It can,” cried Markheim; “it does! Be helped by you? No, never; not by you! You do not know me yet; thank God, you do not know me!”

“I know you,” replied the visitant, with a sort of kind severity or rather firmness. “I know you to the soul.”

“Know me!” cried Markheim. “Who can do so? My life is but a travesty and slander on myself. I have lived to belie my nature. All men do; all men are better than this disguise that grows about and stifles them. You see each dragged away by life, like one whom bravos have seized and muffled in a cloak. If they had their own control—if you could see their faces, they would be altogether different, they would shine out for heroes and saints! I am worse than most; myself is more overlaid; my excuse is known to me and God. But, had I the time, I could disclose myself.”

“To me?” inquired the visitant.

“To you before all,” returned the murderer. “I supposed you were intelligent. I thought—since you exist—you would prove a reader of the heart. And yet you would propose to judge me by my acts! Think of it—my acts! I was born and I have lived in a land of giants; giants have dragged me by the wrists since I was born out of my mother—the giants of circumstance. And you would judge me by my acts! But can you not look within? Can you not understand that evil is hateful to me? Can you not see within me the clear writing of conscience, never blurred by any wilful sophistry, although too often disregarded? Can you not read me for a thing that surely must be common as humanity—the unwilling sinner?”

“All this is very feelingly expressed,” was the reply, “but it regards me not. These points of consistency are beyond my province, and I care not in the least by what compulsion you may have been dragged away, so as you are but carried in the right direction. But time flies; the servant delays, looking in the faces of the crowd and at the pictures on the hoardings, but still she keeps moving nearer; and remember, it is as if the gallows itself was striding towards you through the Christmas streets! Shall I help you—I, who know all? Shall I tell you where to find the money?”

“For what price?” asked Markheim.

“I offer you the service for a Christmas gift,” returned the other.

Markheim could not refrain from smiling with a kind of bitter triumph. “No,” said he, “I will take nothing at your hands; if I were dying of thirst, and it was your hand that put the pitcher to my lips, I should find the courage to refuse. It may be credulous, but I will do nothing to commit myself to evil.”

“I have no objection to a death-bed repentance,” observed the visitant.

“Because you disbelieve their efficacy!” Markheim cried.

“I do not say so,” returned the other; “but I look on these things from a different side, and when the life is done my interest falls. The man has lived to serve me, to spread black looks under colour of religion, or to sow tares in the wheat-field, as you do, in a course of weak compliance with desire. Now that he draws so near to his deliverance, he can add but one act of service: to repent, to die smiling, and thus to build up in confidence and hope the more timorous of my surviving followers. I am not so hard a master. Try me; accept my help. Please yourself in life as you have done hitherto; please yourself more amply, spread your elbows at the board; and when the night begins to fall and the curtains to be drawn, I tell you, for your greater comfort, that you will find it even easy to compound your quarrel with your conscience, and to make a truckling peace with God. I came but now from such a death-bed, and the room was full of sincere mourners, listening to the man’s last words; and when I looked into that face, which had been set as a flint against mercy, I found it smiling with hope.”

“And do you, then, suppose me such a creature?” asked Markheim. “Do you think I have no more generous aspirations than to sin and sin and sin and at last sneak into heaven? My heart rises at the thought. Is this, then, your experience of mankind? or is it because you find me with red hands that you presume such baseness? And is this crime of murder indeed so impious as to dry up the very springs of good?”

“Murder is to me no special category,” replied the other. “All sins are murder, even as all life is war. I behold your race, like

starving mariners on a raft, plucking crusts out of the hands of famine and feeding on each other's lives. I follow sins beyond the moment of their acting; I find in all that the last consequence is death, and to my eyes, the pretty maid who thwarts her mother with such taking graces on a question of a ball, drips no less visibly with human gore than such a murderer as yourself. Do I say that I follow sins? I follow virtues also. They differ not by the thickness of a nail; they are both scythes for the reaping angel of Death. Evil, for which I live, consists not in action but in character. The bad man is dear to me, not the bad act, whose fruits, if we could follow them far enough down the hurtling cataract of the ages, might yet be found more blessed than those of the rarest virtues. And it is not because you have killed a dealer, but because you are Markheim, that I offer to forward your escape."

"I will lay my heart open to you," answered Markheim. "This crime on which you find me is my last. On my way to it I have learned many lessons; itself is a lesson—a momentous lesson. Hitherto I have been driven with revolt to what I would not; I was a bond-slave to poverty, driven and scourged. There are robust virtues that can stand in these temptations; mine was not so; I had a thirst of pleasure. But to-day, and out of this deed, I pluck both warning and riches—both the power and a fresh resolve to be myself. I become in all things a free actor in the world; I begin to see myself all changed, these hands the agents of good, this heart at peace. Something comes over me out of the past—something of what I have dreamed on Sabbath evenings to the sound of the church organ, of what I forecast when I shed tears over noble books, or talked, an innocent child, with my mother. There lies my life; I have wandered a few years, but now I see once more my city of destination."

"You are to use this money on the Stock Exchange, I think?" remarked the visitor; "and there, if I mistake not, you have already lost some thousands?"

"Ah," said Markheim, "but this time I have a sure thing."

"This time, again, you will lose," replied the visitor quietly.

"Ah, but I keep back the half!" cried Markheim.

"That also you will lose," said the other.

The sweat started upon Markheim's brow. "Well then, what matter?" he exclaimed. "Say it be lost, say I am plunged again in poverty, shall one part of me, and that the worse, continue until the end to override the better? Evil and good run strong in me, hailing me both ways. I do not love the one thing; I love all. I can conceive great deeds, renunciations, martyrdoms; and though I be fallen to such a crime as murder, pity is no stranger to my thoughts. I pity the poor; who knows their trials better than myself? I pity and help them. I prize love; I love honest laughter; there is no good thing nor true thing on earth but I love it from my heart. And are my vices only to direct my life, and my virtues to lie without effect, like some passive lumber of the mind? Not so; good, also, is a spring of acts."

But the visitant raised his finger. "For six and thirty years that you have been in this world," said he, "through many changes of fortune and varieties of humour, I have watched you steadily fall. Fifteen years ago you would have started at a theft. Three years back you would have blanched at the name of murder. Is there any crime, is there any cruelty or meanness, from which you still recoil? Five years from now I shall detect you in the fact! Downward, downward, lies your way; nor can anything but death avail to stop you."

"It is true," Markheim said huskily, "I have in some degree complied with evil. But it is so with all; the very saints, in the mere exercise of living, grow less dainty, and take on the tone of their surroundings."

"I will propound to you one simple question," said the other; "and as you answer I shall read to you your moral horoscope. You have grown in many things more lax; possibly you do right to be so; and at any account, it is the same with all men. But granting that, are you in any one particular, however trifling, more difficult to please with your own conduct, or do you go in all things with a looser rein?"

"In any one?" repeated Markheim, with an anguish of consideration. "No," he added, with despair; "in none! I have gone down in all."

"Then," said the visitor, "content yourself with what you are, for you will never change; and the words of your part on this stage are irrevocably written down."

Markheim stood for a long while silent, and, indeed, it was the visitor who first broke the silence. "That being so," he said, "shall I show you the money?"

"And grace?" cried Markheim.

"Have you not tried it?" returned the other. "Two or three years ago did I not see you on the platform of revival meetings, and was not your voice the loudest in the hymn?"

"It is true," said Markheim; "and I see clearly what remains for me by way of duty. I thank you for these lessons from my soul; my eyes are opened, and I behold myself at last for what I am."

At this moment, the sharp note of the door-bell rang through the house; and the visitant, as though this were some concerted signal for which he had been waiting, changed at once in his demeanour.

"The maid!" he cried. "She has returned, as I forewarned you, and there is now before you one more difficult passage. Her master, you must say, is ill; you must let her in, with an assured but rather serious countenance; no smiles, no overacting, and I promise you success! Once the girl within, and the door closed, the same dexterity that has already rid you of the dealer will relieve you of this last danger in your path. Thenceforward you have the whole evening—the whole night, if needful—to ransack the treasures of the house and to make good your safety. This is help that comes to you with the mask of danger. Up!" he cried; "up, friend. Your life hangs trembling in the scales; up, and act!" Markheim steadily regarded his counsellor. "If I be condemned to evil acts," he said, "there is still one door of freedom open: I can cease from action. If my life be an ill thing, I can lay it down. Though I be, as you say truly, at the beck of every small temptation, I can yet, by one decisive gesture, place myself beyond the reach of all. My love of good is damned to barrenness; it may, and let it be! But I have still my hatred of evil; and from that, to your galling disappointment, you shall see that I can draw both energy and courage."

The features of the visitor began to undergo a wonderful and lovely change: they brightened and softened with a tender triumph, and, even as they brightened, faded and dislimned. But Markheim did not pause to watch or understand the transformation. He opened the door and went downstairs very slowly, thinking to himself. His past went soberly before him; he beheld it as it was, ugly and strenuous like a dream, random as chance medley—a scene of defeat. Life, as he thus reviewed it, tempted him no longer; but on the further side he perceived a quiet haven for his bark. He paused in the passage, and looked into the shop, where the candle still burned by the dead body. It was strangely silent. Thoughts of the dealer swarmed into his mind, as he stood gazing. And then the bell once more broke out into impatient clamour.

He confronted the maid upon the threshold with something like a smile.

"You had better go for the police," said he; "I have killed your master."



The Old Bush Songs

Composed and sung in the Bushranging,
Digging, and Overlanding Days

Edited by A. B. 'Banjo' Paterson

THE OLD BULLOCK DRAY

Oh! the shearing is all over,
And the wool is coming down,
And I mean to get a wife, boys,
When I go up to town.
Everything that has two legs
Represents itself in view,
From the little paddy-melon
To the bucking kangaroo.

CHORUS

So it's roll up your blankets,
And let's make a push,
I'll take you up the country,
And show you the bush.
I'll be bound you won't get
Such a chance another day,
So come and take possession
Of my old bullock dray.

Now, I've saved up a good cheque,
I mean to buy a team,
And when I get a wife, boys,
I'll be all-serene
For calling at the depôt.
They say there's no delay
To get an off-sider
For the old bullock dray.

Oh! we'll live like fighting cocks,
For good living, I'm your man.
We'll have leather jacks, johnny cakes,
And fritters in the pan;
Or if you'd like some fish
I'll catch you some soon,
For we'll bob for barramundies
Round the banks of a lagoon.

Oh! yes, of beef and damper
I take care we have enough,
And we'll boil in the bucket
Such a whopper of a duff,
And our friends will dance
To the honour of the day,
To the music of the bells,
Around the old bullock dray.

Oh! we'll have plenty girls,
We must mind that.
There'll be flash little Maggie,
And buckjumping Pat.
There'll be Stringy bark Joe,
And Green-hide Mike.
Yes, my Colonials, just
As many as you like.

Now we'll stop all immigration,
We won't need it any more;
We'll be having young natives,
Twins by the score.
And I wonder what the devil
Jack Robertson would say
If he saw us promenading
Round the old bullock dray.

Oh! it's time I had an answer,
If there's one to be had,
I wouldn't treat that steer
In the body half as bad;
But he takes as much notice
Of me, upon my soul,
As that old blue stag
Off-side in the pole.

Oh! to tell a lot of lies,
You know, it is a sin,
But I'll go up country
And marry a black gin.
Oh! "Baal gammon white feller,"
This is what she'll say,
"Budgery you
And your old bullock dray."

This song may require a few notes for the benefit of non-Australian readers. A paddy-melon is a small and speedy marsupial, a sort of poor relation of the great kangaroo family.

"Calling at the depôt to get an off-sider."—Female immigrants were housed at the depôt on arrival, and many found husbands within a few hours of their landing. The minstrel, therefore, proposes to call at the depôt to get himself a wife from among the immigrants. An off-sider is a bullock-drivers assistant—one who walks on the off-side of the team and flogs the bullocks on that side when occasion arises. The word afterwards came to mean an assistant of any kind.

"Jack Robertson."—Sir John Robertson, as he afterwards became, was a well-known politician, who believed in Australians doing their best to populate their own country.

"Budgery you"—good fellow you.

Australian Landscapes
Eugene von Guerard 1865



SOURCE OF THE WANNON.

THE LOAFERS' CLUB

A club there is established here, whose name they say is
Legion
From Melbourne to the Billabong, they're known in every
region.
They do not like the cockatoos, but mostly stick to stations,
Where they keep themselves from starving by cadging
shepherds' rations.

The rules and regulations, they're not difficult of learning,
They are to live upon the cash which others have been
earning.
To never let a chance go by of being in a shout, sir,
And if they see a slant to turn your pockets inside out, sir.

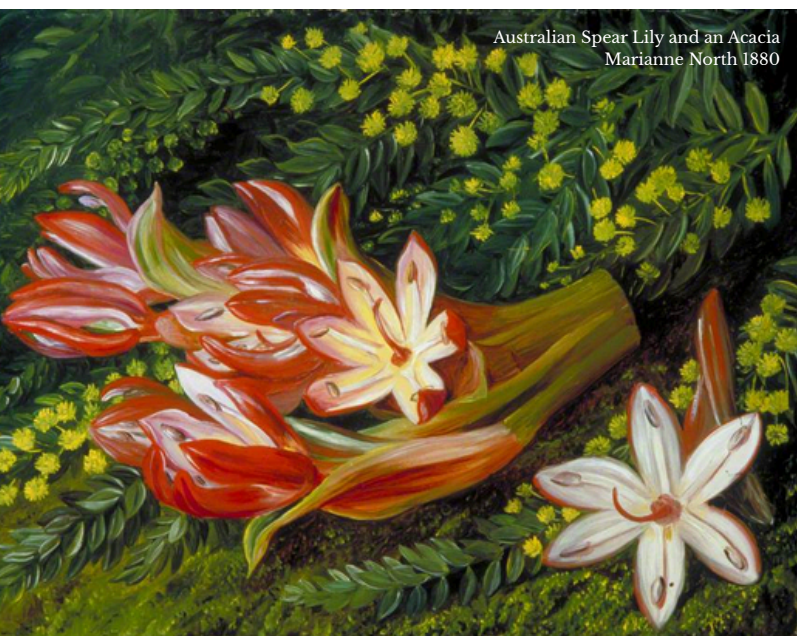
They'll cadge your baccy, knife, and pipe, and tell a tale of
sorrow
Of how they cannot get a job, but mean to start to-morrow.
But that to-morrow never comes, until they see quite plainly
That it's completely up the spout with Messrs. Scrase and
Ainley.

If, feeling thirsty, you should go to take a little suction,
I'll swear they'll not be long before they'll force an
introduction.
One knew you here, one knew you there, all love you like a
brother,
And if one plan will not succeed, they'll quickly try another.

I knew one poor, unhappy wight, having a little ready,
Entered a Smeaton public-house, determined to keep steady.
A celebrated loafer there determined upon showing him
That he once had the pleasure and the privilege of knowing
him.

Through hills and dales, by lakes and streams, he close
pursued his victim,
Until the miserable man confessed that be quite licked him.
In vain the quarry tried to turn, pursuit was far too strong,
sir,
The loafer followed up the scent and earthed him in Geelong,
sir.

The noble art of lambing down they know in all its beauty,
And if they do not squeeze you dry, they'll think they've
failed in duty.
But, truth to say, they seldom fail to do that duty neatly,
And very few escape their hands who're not cleared out
completely.



Australian Spear Lily and an Acacia
Marianne North 1880

THE SQUATTER OF THE OLDEN TIME

(Air: "A fine old English gentleman.")

I'll sing to you a fine new song, made by my blessed mate,
Of a fine Australian squatter who had a fine estate,
Who swore by right pre-emptive at a sanguinary rate
That by his rams, his ewes, his lambs, Australia was made
great—
Like a fine Australian squatter, one of the olden time.
His hut around was hung with guns, whips, spurs, and boots
and shoes,
And kettles and tin pannikins to hold the tea he brews;
And here his worship lolls at ease and takes his smoke and
snooze,
And quaffs his cup of hysouskin, the beverage old chums
choose—
Like a fine Australian squatter, one of the olden time.
And when shearing time approaches he opens hut to all,
And though ten thousand are his flocks, he featly shears
them all,
Even to the scabby wanderer you'd think no good at all;
For while he fattens all the great, he boils down all the
small—
Like a fine old Murray squatter, one of the olden time.
And when his worship comes to town his agents for to see,
His wool to ship, his beasts to sell, he lives right merrily;
The club his place of residence, as becomes a bush J.P.,
He darkly hints that Thompson's run from scab is scarcely
free—
This fine old Murray settler, one of the olden time.
And now his fortune he has made to England straight goes he,
But finds with grief he's not received as he had hoped to be.
His friends declare his habits queer, his language much too
free,
And are somewhat apt to cross the street when him they
chance to see—
This fine Australian squatter, the boy of the olden time.



The Australian Parrot Flower
Marianne North 1880

The Bells

By Edgar Allan Poe



I.

HEAR the sledges with the bells --
 Silver bells !
 What a world of merriment their melody foretells !
 How they tinkle, tinkle, tinkle,
 In the icy air of night !
 While the stars that oversprinkle
 All the heavens, seem to twinkle
 With a crystalline delight ;
 Keeping time, time, time,
 In a sort of Runic rhyme,
 To the tintinnabulation that so musically wells
 From the bells, bells, bells, bells,
 Bells, bells, bells --
 From the jingling and the tinkling of the bells.

II.

Hear the mellow wedding bells
 Golden bells!
 What a world of happiness their harmony foretells !
 Through the balmy air of night
 How they ring out their delight !
 From the molten-golden notes,
 And all in tune,
 What a liquid ditty floats
 To the turtle-dove that listens, while she gloats
 On the moon !
 Oh, from out the sounding cells,
 What a gush of euphony voluminously wells !
 How it swells !
 How it dwells
 On the Future ! how it tells
 Of the rapture that impels
 To the swinging and the ringing
 Of the bells, bells, bells,
 Of the bells, bells, bells, bells,
 Bells, bells, bells --
 To the rhyming and the chiming of the bells !

III.

Hear the loud alarum bells --
 Brazen bells !
 What tale of terror, now, their turbulency tells !
 In the startled ear of night
 How they scream out their affright !
 Too much horrified to speak,
 They can only shriek, shriek,
 Out of tune,
 In a clamorous appealing to the mercy of the fire,
 In a mad exostulation with the deaf and frantic fire,
 Leaping higher, higher, higher,
 With a desperate desire,
 And a resolute endeavor
 Now -- now to sit or never,
 By the side of the pale-faced moon.
 Oh, the bells, bells, bells !
 What a tale their terror tells
 Of Despair !
 How they clang, and clash, and roar !
 What a horror they outpour
 On the bosom of the palpitating air !
 Yet the ear, it fully knows,
 By the twanging,
 And the clanging,
 How the danger ebbs and flows ;
 Yet, the ear distinctly tells,
 In the jangling,
 And the wrangling,
 How the danger sinks and swells,
 By the sinking or the swelling in the anger of the bells --
 Of the bells --
 Of the bells, bells, bells, bells,
 Bells, bells, bells --
 In the clamour and the clangour of the bells !

IV.

Hear the tolling of the bells --
 Iron bells !
 What a world of solemn thought their monody compels !
 In the silence of the night,
 How we shiver with affright
 At the melancholy meaning of their tone !
 For every sound that floats
 From the rust within their throats
 Is a groan.
 And the people -- ah, the people --
 They that dwell up in the steeple,
 All alone,
 And who, tolling, tolling, tolling,
 In that muffled monotone,
 Feel a glory in so rolling
 On the human heart a stone --
 They are neither man nor woman --
 They are neither brute nor human --
 They are Ghouls: --
 And their king it is who tolls ;
 And he rolls, rolls, rolls, rolls,
 Rolls
 A pæan from the bells !
 And his merry bosom swells
 With the pæan of the bells !
 And he dances, and he yells ;
 Keeping time, time, time,
 In a sort of Runic rhyme,
 To the pæan of the bells --
 Of the bells :
 Keeping time, time, time,
 In a sort of Runic rhyme,
 To the throbbing of the bells --
 Of the bells, bells, bells --
 To the sobbing of the bells ;
 Keeping time, time, time,
 As he knells, knells, knells,
 In a happy Runic rhyme,
 To the rolling of the bells --
 Of the bells, bells, bells --
 To the tolling of the bells,
 Of the bells, bells, bells, bells --
 Bells, bells, bells --
 To the moaning and the groaning of the bells.



Featured Art

Rosa Bonheur

Rosa Bonheur was a renowned French animal painter and sculptor, celebrated for her highly detailed and empathetic portrayals of animals. Born in 1822 in Bordeaux, she became one of the most successful female artists of the 19th century, known for monumental works like *The Horse Fair* (1855), which brought her international fame. Her connection to Scotland began during her 1856 visit, following a tour of the UK. She traveled to the Scottish Highlands, inspired by the romanticized landscapes popularized by Sir Walter Scott, whose novels deeply influenced her. During this trip, she studied Scottish cattle breeds and sketched scenes of Highland life, which inspired major works such as *Highland Shepherd* (1859) and *The Highland Raid* (1860). The visit significantly expanded her artistic repertoire and client base, particularly among Scotland's wealthy industrialists. She formed lasting friendships with collectors like William Wilson and James Duncan, and her work became widely popular in Britain, with prints of her Scottish-themed paintings circulating widely. The Scottish landscape and its pastoral traditions left a lasting imprint on her art.



Edouard Louis Dubufe, *Portrait of Rosa Bonheur* 1857. Symbolic of her work as an Animalière, the bull was painted by Bonheur herself.

The Highland Shepherd





A Ghillie and Two Shetland Ponies in a Misty Landscape

Sheep by the sea



8661. R. Bonheur



Highland Raid

Sheep at Rest





Highland Raid

Recumbent Ewe

The Call of the Stag



A Sheep at Rest

A Mind of Metal and Wheels

By Nathan CJ Hood



On 8th March 1939, J.R.R. Tolkien gave a talk entitled 'On Fairy Stories'. It was delivered as that year's Andrew Lang Lecture held annually at the University of St Andrews. They were named after a preeminent nineteenth century collector of folk tales and commentator on mythology. His compilations of fairy stories, such as the *Blue Fairy Book* (1889), were popular with the British reading public. Tolkien's similar success with *The Hobbit*, published in 1937, may have led to his invitation to speak on the topic of fairy stories. To this end, he attempted to delineate the origin, nature and purpose of fantasy tales. Tolkien thereby hoped to defend the importance of such stories for children and adults.

Fairy stories have value because they change their readers. These narratives generate in a sympathetic and open-minded reader ideas, imaginings and feelings that transform how we see the world and how we interact with it. Fantasy does this in three ways. Fairy stories restore in us a sense of wonder. They help us to escape modernity and the travails of human life. Most importantly, they console us in the face of death and despair. In Tolkien's view, these are the three main functions of fantasy writing: Recovery, Escape and Consolation. In this volume, two of these will be given due attention. The theme of consolation will be handled in relation to Tolkien's treatment of the Northern Heroic Spirit. In the present essay, our focus is on recovery. Tolkien's comments on the restorative powers of fairy stories can point us towards some of the values upon which his narratives are built. They show us more clearly that the conflict at the heart of Middle-earth is a clash of attitudes.

The purpose of the fairy story is to recover our sense of awe. We should be able to look at the colour green and "be startled anew by blue and yellow and red." When encountering the "centaur and the dragon" in a tale, we should be able to behold "the ancient shepherds, sheep, and dogs, and horses". It turns that which is ordinary and mundane into the extraordinary and magical by the power of imagination. The author of a fantasy work develops a 'Secondary World', an imagined reality with a set of consistent laws. For their material, they use the simple things of the primary world. They draw upon "stone, and wood, and iron; tree and grass; house and fire; bread and wine." They then exaggerate and combine aspects of the normal to "make something new". For example, the Pegasus is a horse with wings. The author's imaginative reworking of ordinary subject matter reawakens the reader to the magnificence of the things around them. They can "see things as we are (or were) meant to see them" as the fantasy reader is newly attentive to the qualities, similar and distinct, of the objects we encounter. The imaginary presentation of those things that we consider 'ordinary' recovers the "childish" ability to feel wonder.

Though wonder is associated with the childlike, it is perhaps for this reason important that adults read fairy stories. As we go through life, the things around us become familiar and trite. Following our daily routines, the regular features of our experience recede into the background. We struggle to see their uniqueness. They become boring and are forgotten. Many seek wonder in novelty. However, such an attitude does not incentivise good, true or beautiful art. Instead, authors and artists produce twisted, dark and overly complicated works to satisfy the demand for new experiences. These perverted forms of art do not address the core issue (the familiarity of our surroundings). Instead, they attempt to alleviate the symptom (the desire for the novel), albeit in a manner that corrupts the soul. By contrast, the fairy story attempts to cultivate in us a right perception of and attitude towards the things around us. They unfamiliarise the familiar. All things become worthy of wonder and, as such, are enough. Novelty is no longer needed because everything is met with fresh attention.

Behind the apparent triteness of things is a deep lying issue in how we see the world. We perceive our surroundings as drab because we have "appropriated" the objects we encounter, "legally or mentally". Tolkien did not clearly define this phrase, but there are recurring motifs within his stories that develop, in a narrative form, plausible interpretations of what this could mean. One may be indicated by his suggestion that when we legally or mentally appropriate something we first 'lay hands on them' before locking 'them up in our hoard'. Within the legendarium, perhaps the most infamous hoard is that of Smaug's in the Lonely Mountain. He sits and sleeps atop a vast mound of treasure. He did not forge them – he acquired them when he expelled the dwarves from their home – and he does not use them. The dragon does not seem to delight or marvel in them either; if he did, he would not slumber in their presence.

He only wants this gold for the sake of having it as his own. And his anger is aroused only when one of his cups is stolen by Bilbo.^[1]

Like Smaug, the person who legally or mentally appropriates treats an object as if it is their possession. This reading concurs with the fact that legal appropriation is the act of making something one's own. The context of his comments suggests that Tolkien is not so much attacking the institution of private property (albeit later in the essay his reservations surrounding capitalism will be more fully explored). Rather, he is addressing the disposition that treats the possession of an object as an ultimate end. It is a kind of lust which only places value in the having of the item, not in the thing itself. This attitude is displayed by several characters. Feanor and the Simarils; Thorin and the Arkenstone; Gollum and the Ring of Power. Each wants the artefact for his own and fears its possession by others.^[2] They primarily relate to the treasure as something that is theirs – Gollum's infamous "My Precious" comes to mind – and to this end they would hoard their trinkets to ensure their ownership over them. They speak little, if at all, on the beauty or splendour of their desired possessions. To get their hands on the objects they covet, they betray and murder friends and kin.

When we see a thing primarily through the lens of property, we ignore its uniqueness. It becomes a possession to be had, a number on a spreadsheet. We do not appreciate it for its own sake and, as such, we do not feel wonder when we encounter it. Instead, we focus on making it and keeping it ours. To this end, we may harm others to acquire and keep it. At the very least, we take it for granted. We assume that we know what it is and what makes it valuable. We reduce the thing's significance to our conception of it – 'it's mine' – and then we store it away in our physical and/or mental hoards. It thereby becomes drab and boring.

The fairy tale disrupts this attitude by recovering a clear view of the qualities of the things we engage with. In so doing, we are "warned that all you had (or knew) was dangerous and potent, not really effectively chained, free and wild; no more yours than they were you." Through its imaginative presentation of the ordinary, the fantasy story reminds its readers that an object has an integrity of its own independent of who owns it. The fantasy story is like Tom Bombadil. He breaks open the Barrow Wight's tomb and releases its treasures to "all finders, birds, beasts, Elves or Men, and all kindly creatures", choosing a pretty brooch for his wife Goldberry (145). Just as he restores these treasures to the land of the loving and living, so the fairy tale releases from our grasp the objects we treat as our property. Or, perhaps more accurately, it reminds us that all things are gifts rather than possessions.

^[1] *In the Old English Poem Beowulf, an important influence upon Tolkien's worldview and stories, a thief steals a cup from a dragon's hoard. In retaliation, the great serpent lays waste to the surrounding countryside, forcing the titular hero to come forth and fight the beast. Though he slays the fiend, he himself is mortally wounded. The author comments that the Geats laid Beowulf in a barrow filled with gleaming gold where it lies "useless to men as it was before" (154). Tolkien's comments on legal and mental appropriation share a similar sentiment – hoarding, even to honour the dead, is a wrongful use of beautiful and marvellous things.*

^[2] *Feanor has perhaps the greater reason for his possessiveness given that he made the Silmarils, the great deed within which he had found contentment (92).*

Another way of interpreting 'legal and mental appropriation' may be indicated by Tolkien's cryptic comment that recovery enables us to see things as "apart from ourselves." He seems to reiterate the point later, that the things we took for granted are neither "yours than they were you." This is strange phrasing. It seems to suggest that when we perceive objects as familiar and trite we are, in some sense, viewing them as part of or an extension of ourselves. Though only an implicit idea in the lecture, it is an important strand within Tolkien's fantasy writings. While not immediately obvious, it is fundamental to the moral framework within which Good and Evil clash in Middle-earth. The issue at stake is whether the 'Other' should exist. Because of its central role within the legendarium, this essay will focus on this interpretation of legal and mental appropriation as it works itself out in Tolkien's stories.

Using Others

In the legendarium, the theme of 'recovery' is most explicit in an episode near the beginning of LotR. Frodo, with his companions Sam, Merry and Pippin, are travelling to the village of Bree to meet Gandalf. They are being pursued by the ominous Black Riders. To lose their trackers, the hobbits leave the familiarity of the Shire for the unfamiliar Old Forest. Despite their best efforts,

they are led towards the heart of the wood. Exhausted, they lay against the trunk of Old Man Willow, a great tree sitting next to the Witherwindle, the river that runs through the forest. They quickly learn that he is 'free and wild' when Merry and Pippin are devoured by his roots. Fortunately for the hapless hobbits, the enigmatic Tom Bombadil was passing by on his way home. He rescues Merry and Pippin before inviting the travellers to his home.

After much rest, the hobbits listen to Tom as he tells and sings tales "of bees and flowers, the ways of trees, and the strange creatures of the Forest, about the evil things and good things, things friendly and unfriendly, cruel things and kind things, and secrets hidden under brambles." Tom's stories give his listeners a new perspective. The hobbits "began to understand the lives of the Forest, apart from themselves", feeling themselves "strangers where all other things were at home." He unveils for them the history and character of Old Man Willow. He was ancient tree, filled with pride from the days when forests ruled the earth. He hates those creatures that move, for they have usurped the dominion of the tree. His anger is turned against them for their "gnawing, biting, breaking, hacking, burning". His heart is "rotten", but with cunning and strength he has taken control of the Old Forest. (LotR 129-130).

The lives of trees are also touched on in *The Silmarillion*. Following the creation of the Dwarves by Aule, she fears that the dwarves will not care for the things she has formed; flowers, trees and birds. She laments that many "a tree shall feel the bite of their iron without pity." Aule confirms her suspicions, adding that Elves and Men will do likewise, for they will "eat and they will build", using what they find in Middle-earth with gratitude. However, this is the will of Eru Iluvatar, that Elves, Men and Dwarves would have "dominion" over the plants and birds of the world. Yavanna confronts Manwe with her distress. She cares for them and recognises that "All have their worth... and each contributes to the worth of the others". Under the dominion of others, the trees will be "swift... in the felling, and unless they pay toll with fruit upon bough little mourned in the passing". She wishes that the trees, unable to defend themselves or flee danger, would be able to speak for all plants and visit punishment upon those who harm them. In time, Manwe reveals to Yavanna that Eru had already planned for this to be. Spirits would dwell among the trees and birds, becoming one with them. They are the Eagles and the Shepherds of the Trees, the Ents. They will administer justice and their anger will be feared.[1]

The wizard Saruman would encounter the anger of the forest to his detriment. For many years he had walked and talked with Treebeard, the leader of the Ents who protected Fangorn Forest. By the time of LotR, he has "a mind of metal and wheels". He only cares for trees insofar "as they serve him for the moment". His orcs are engaged in a campaign of mass felling. Though some are left to rot, most are "carried off to feed the fires of Orthanc". Treebeard is sad and angry at what Saruman has done. Many of the trees that have been cut down were his "friends". He had seen them grow and they had "voices of their own that are lost for ever now" (LotR 473-474). Filled with wrath, he leads the Ents to march on Saruman's stronghold of Isengard. They "roared and boomed and trumpeted, until stones began to crack and fall at the mere noise of them" (LotR 568). The ancient shepherds destroyed Saruman's machines and washed away his underground workshops by breaking the dam holding back the River Isen. What Saruman thought he had under his control was 'dangerous and potent... free and wild'. The vengeance of the Ents made it abundantly clear that the forest did not exist solely to serve him.

In these examples, Tolkien personified trees. He gave each unique personalities. In the case of the Ents, speech, mobility and agency. He did so to help his reader see that they are living creatures. Though they do not move or cry out in pain, they have an independent existence from our own. They do not exist only to serve our needs.[2] We are tempted to view the tree as a piece of wood that can be fashioned into a chair, a table or some other piece of furniture. We thereby tacitly deny that it is a distinctive living creature, with its own history, relationships and, in some sense, goals.[3] By treating it as something to be used, we are guilty of legally or mentally appropriating the tree. The same is also true of birds and animals. The individual who exploits and kills creatures for resources (without gratitude) perceives their victim only through the lens of utility. They value things according to how they can serve themselves, ignoring and violating their integrity as autonomous beings. In other words, we see trees, birds and animals as existing 'for me' or 'for my use'.

We cannot see that they have lives apart from how we would use them.

[1] *Sil 51-53.*

[2] *I believe that it was this conviction that lay at the heart of Tolkien's concern for nature. He was aware that industrialisation was using and killing living beings who had been granted existence by God. This is also why attempts to connect Tolkien with modern day climate change activism are shallow. Those who are sincerely concerned with global warming are motivated by a desire to save humanity from annihilation. They advocate for policies upon this basis. If the destruction of trees helped in this endeavour, they would do it. This has been seen in several British cities where councils have cut down orchards so that they can build roads that will be used by buses, thereby reducing carbon emissions (examples). Tolkien would have abhorred such treatment of nature because it has a dignity independent of how it benefits or serves us, whether that utility is related to commerce or climate change. See Example*

[3] *Wagner's opera Parsifal similarly expresses the life of a creature to highlight the immorality of abusing nature. The young boy Parsifal shoots with his bow and arrow a Swan flying in the sky because he can. When the old knight Gurnemanz discovers this, he rebukes Parsifal. He describes how the Swan was a living being with a history, relationships and goals. It was flying to meet its mate with whom it would have a family. Parsifal's reckless behaviour has wrongfully taken away the Swan's chances of fulfilling its desires. Parsifal is moved to remorse when he comes to understand that the Swan was a living creature. Wagner and Tolkien, then, described and personified the lives trees and animals to move their audiences to compassion for plants and beasts. They hoped to do so by making us aware that these creatures have lives apart from us and their utility for us, thereby making us conscious of the fact that we are robbing them of their dignity when we exploit them for our own ends. See Parsifal*

This attitude is taken to its extreme by Sauron, the antagonist of LotR. He treats sentient beings as things that exist to enact his will. In the South of Mordor, on the borders of Lake Nurnen, Sauron had amassed many slaves to work the fields (923, 968). Their coerced labour supplied his armies. The orcs, trolls and other beasts who fought for him were also his thralls. Though they hate him, nonetheless they serve him out of fear. They are independent beings, capable of cruelty of their own accord, forced to implement the wishes of the Dark Lord. This means that when his attention was elsewhere and his trusted servants absent, orcs sometimes followed their own desires over his. This is seen in the orc Grishnakh who, mistakenly believing that Merry and Pippin have the Ring of Power, searches them so as to take the Ring for himself (455-456). Likewise, Gorbag defies Sauron's orders and attempts to steal Frodo's mithril shirt, an act that results in violence between the orcs of Minas Morgul and Cirith Ungol (907). Nonetheless, Sauron had managed to unite the orcs of Middle-earth in hatred against Elves and Men, a necessary step if they were not to slay each other out of hatred (420).

Most orcs, including those outside of Mordor, were under Sauron's orders. Through fear, they were made into tools for his use, albeit sometimes they resisted his commands. A minority, those of his armies and garrisons, were under his direct attention. They were made completely subservient to his will. These orcs were like herds who would instantly follow his orders. Thus, "they would sacrifice themselves without hesitation at his command." Though autonomous beings capable of their own free action, Sauron had reduced these orcs to an "ant-like life", enthralled to a "central will" (Morgoth Ring 419-422). Through his domination of their minds and wills, Sauron has erased, in a functional sense, the independence and agency of the orcs under his attention. They exist as puppet-like beings who are solely a means by which Sauron can exert himself upon the world. Thus, when the entirety of Sauron's thought was turned towards Frodo at Mount Doom, the Dark Lord's "slaves quailed, and his armies halted, and his captains suddenly steerless, bereft of will, wavered and despaired" (LotR 946). Conditioned to serve Sauron's wishes, they became rudderless when the responsibility for their own thoughts and actions were restored. When Sauron was defeated, many ran "hither and thither mindless", with some slaying themselves, while others fled (LotR 949).

The Ringwraiths are also Sauron's slaves. They were once great kings, sorcerers and warriors. In their hubris, they accepted rings from Sauron in their pursuits of wealth and glory. In time, they fell "under the thralldom" of the ring they had received and the "domination of the One, which was Sauron's" (Sil 348). They became his servants, utterly enslaved to his will and dependent upon the power of the One Ring. When Sauron fell with the

destruction of the Ring, so they were ended too. More than the orcs, they show the diminishment of being that takes place when one is used as a slave by another. When the fell under the Dark Lord's sway, the Ringwraiths passed into the realm of shadows, invisible to the naked eye. They were fading into non-being. Though they would most probably do evil on their own account, orcs, trolls and Ringwraiths are all victims of Sauron's violation of their dignity as unique individuals. They suffer as expressions of his will.[1]

Tolkien suggested that such an existence was one of "robotic servitude" (Morgoth 411). In a draft of a letter to the author Naomi Mitchison, he made comments on the nature of magic that point to the significance of characterising slavery as robot-like. He explained that there are two types of magic in his legendarium: *magia* and *goeteia*. *Magia* involves the manipulate the physical world, while

[1] Tolkien was representing in an exaggerated form the damage done by annihilating the Other in the characters of the Nazgul. When we deny the independence and agency of the Other, we treat them as if they do not exist apart from ourselves. The Ringwraiths show us this insofar as Saruon's domination of their minds and wills has led to their decline into the world of shadows. By nature they are autonomous and free beings, so their reduction to expressions of Sauron's will eventually leads to their hollowed out existence.

goeteia produces fictions and deceptions. Neither is inherently good or evil. The primary motivation for using *magia*, whether for beneficent or ill purposes, is "immediacy: speed, reduction of labour, and reduction also to a minimum (or vanishing point) of the gap between the idea or desire and the result or effect" (Letter 155). For the same reason, we use machines. Through their operation, we can bring about our wishes more quickly and with less effort than otherwise.

The same is true of slavery. Tolkien equates slave-labour and machinery, arguing that they are "often only the same thing concealed". He was echoing a sentiment expressed by John Ruskin, the influential nineteenth century art critic and social commentator. Ruskin had contended that industrial capitalism had reduced labourers to mere machines. Workers had become "animated tools", forced to implement the designs of others with mechanical precision. By denying the working men and women the opportunity to implement their own designs, factory owners, merchants and consumers, who drove the demand for standardised mass-produced products, had reduced them to "cogs & compasses". Erasing the mind and soul of the worker, Victorian capitalism and industry wrought a degrading "slavery" upon the English people (17-19).

Sauron's enslavement of others treated them like machines or tools. He views his minions as existing solely to serve and enact his wishes. He does not, therefore, perceive the thrall's independence and agency. This means that Sauron fails to see things as apart from himself. Just as the hammer becomes an extension of the man insofar as he uses it to achieve his purposes, so too a master like Sauron views his slaves as like a limb. Functionally, his serfs become an extension of his controlling will. He tacitly denies their Otherness from himself by cajoling them into his service and, in the most extreme cases, turning them into his puppets. He only perceived their value insofar as they implemented his designs. That is, they only mattered to him in relation to himself. He determined the purpose of all things insofar as they could help him enact his plans (Morgoth 396-397). In effect, Sauron wanted to make the whole of reality an extension of himself. He could not tolerate any "freedom" or "any rivalry", seeking to be "master of all things in Middle-earth". (Sil 348). To this end, he sought to "dominate" the "minds and wills" of the creatures of the world (Morgoth's Ring 395-396). If he had succeeded, all things would have served his purposes. They would have been forced to carry out his desires, thereby diminishing their independence, agency and being. By robbing creatures of their Otherness, Sauron would have placed himself at the centre of all things, insofar as their value would have been reduced to instantiating his will.

Though we may not seek to dominate the world, we too are guilty of failing to see things as apart from ourselves. When we legally or mentally appropriate a thing, we define its value only in relation to ourselves. We determine how we can use it to implement our will more efficiently. By reducing another creature to a slave or machine, we deny its independent existence from ourselves, ignoring its unique qualities. We treat it as if it is an extension of ourselves to do our bidding as we please. At a functional level, we attempt to annihilate the autonomy and

agency of the Other. We do not recognise the Otherness of the Other, and thereby harm the Other for our own gratification.

This may explain in part Tolkien's well-documented hatred of industrialisation and the 'robotic age'. Machinery helps men and women to dominate nature and others. They use it to impose their wills upon the world and deny the right of the Other to exist. This is not an accidental feature of using technology. Rather, it is its logical endpoint. Machines enable their user to more immediately achieve their aims than they would otherwise be able to do. They are independent beings transformed into dead and subservient devices that help someone to change the world in accordance with their designs. They thereby cultivate an attitude that sees the value in other things in how they can be used. People who use them are more likely to see the world as a resource that exists for themselves, a collection of instruments to be used for their gain. Machines makes us act as if we are the centre of reality and all else is a means to do what we want. They thereby make us incapable of seeing things as apart from ourselves. They inculcate an attitude that perceives the Other as existing 'for me' and 'for my use'.

The Solipsism of Domination

Writing on W.H. Auden's review of *The Return of the King*, Tolkien argued that the central conflict in *LotR* was not about "freedom", though he concedes that it was a part of the story. The core issue was "about God, and His sole right to divine honour". Sauron wanted to be the "God-King" of Middle-earth. If he had managed to conquer the world, he would have "demanded divine honour from all rational creatures and absolute temporal power over the whole world" (183). While Sauron's desire for divinity is not immediately clear from *LotR*, it finds more explicit expression in earlier tales. In the Second Age, Sauron had already called himself "Lord of the Earth" and had wanted to make himself "master of all things" (348). He had also taken the title of "King of Men", an act that would lead him into conflict with Ar-Pharazon, King of Numenor, who desired that name for his own (325).

Sauron's desire and willingness to enslave other beings was an outworking of his lust for godhood. By treating everything as a tool by which to work his will, the Dark Lord assumed a position of divinity. As we will see, the God of Middle-earth had created all things and had determined their purpose or *telos* within the course of history that He had set out. Every creature has an end to fulfil according to the Divine's will. Sauron wants to usurp this position. When he uses a tree for fuel or an orc to do his bidding, he redefines their value and purpose in relation to his wishes. He wants to become the director of history. Freedom is, thus, inherently related to the issue of idolatrous behaviour. Those who deny the independence and agency of the Other, those who see the Other as existing 'for me', set themselves, implicitly or explicitly, in the position of God.

In this matter, Sauron took after his master. Melkor, later Morgoth, was one of the Ainur, angelic beings who were created by the One, Eru Iluvatar. Each inherited a portion of the thought or mind of the One. Together they were to make a "Great Music", each adorning the theme with "his own thoughts and devices". The song would become the template for the creation of the universe. While most of the Ainur delighted to contribute their part in the harmonious whole, but Melkor was discontent. He wished to "interweave matters of his own imagining that were not in accord with theme of Iluvatar". He wanted to increase his "power and glory" and he had a desire to "bring into Being things of his own". He thereby introduced discord into the Music of the Ainur, with many joining his song. Eventually, there arose a "war of sound". It seemed as if there were "two musics progressing at one time... and they were utterly at variance." Melkor's was "loud, and vain, and endlessly repeated; and it had little harmony, but rather a clamorous unison as of many trumpets braying upon a few notes." He sought to drown out all other music "by the violence of its voice". (Sil 16-17). Melkor took this domineering attitude with him when Eru created the world for the Ainur to form in accordance with the music they had made. He interfered in all things, "turning it if he might to his own desires and purposes". He told the other Ainur that "This shall be my own kingdom; and I name it unto myself!" (Sil 22).

It seems as if Melkor wanted to be the creator and ruler of the world. In practice, he wanted the world to be himself. Tolkien suggested in a short essay that Morgoth was "enraged by the mere fact of their [other wills and intelligences] existence". His only aim was to annihilate them; "negation" was his "one ultimate object". Though he could not destroy the indestructible souls, he

could part them from their physical life. He even attempted to “absorb” the wills of those he captured so as to reduce them to his own. In the end, he would have “destroyed even his own ‘creatures’, such as the Orcs.” His “nihilistic madness” could only end in despair, for even if he had succeeded and turned all to chaos the world, independent from his own mind, would exist as Other than himself. And, though Tolkien does not mention it, Morgoth is himself the creation of an Other, Eru Iluvatar. He could never be the sole source of reality (Morgoth’s Ring, 395-398).

Nonetheless, Melkor attempted to make all things in Middle-earth an expression of his will. In the beginning of the world Melkor permanently ‘incarnated’ himself. This was so that he could control physical matter, attempting to “identify himself with it” (Morgoth 399). He built his fortress Utumno and from it “the blight of his hatred flowed out thence, and the Spring of Arda was marred”. Growing things decayed, rivers became slimy, forests became dangers and beasts became monsters (Sil 41). The world declined because Melkor had infused his power into all material things. Just as Sauron “concentrated” his power into the One Ring, so Melkor had “disseminated” himself into matter. This meant that the “whole of ‘Middle-earth’ was Morgoth’s Ring”. In so doing, Morgoth had ‘marred’ Arda, with all incarnate and material beings containing within themselves a “Morgoth element”, a corruption that could draw the ‘incarnates’ towards evil (Morgoth’s Ring 399-400).

In a comment on the dialogue between Finrod and Andreth, Tolkien speculated that Melkor fused his power with matter because “spirits could only be dominated completely by fear; and fear was most easily exerted through matter”. He could bend an incarnate being to his will by threatening to destroy the material things that they love or to hurt their bodies (Morgoth’s Ring 344). The role of fear in Morgoth’s tyranny is highlighted by a Numenorian folktale describing the Fall of Men, The ‘Tale of Adanel’. Though ‘the Voice’ had given Men life, a place to dwell and a promise that they will one day inherit the whole Earth, they had abjured the Voice in favour of another, ‘the Giver of Gifts’, the master of the Dark. Having given Men knowledge and gifts, he threatened to leave unless they chose him as their Lord over the Voice. They built him a temple and they worshipped him, many out of fear. In time, the Giver of Gifts brought few gifts. He demanded deeds and tokens, declaring to Men that “ye are Mine and must do My will”, threatening to kill all who disobeyed. Though Men came to hate him, they continued to do evil things out of fear that if they did not, he, Morgoth, would kill them. Those who rose in rebellion were killed by those who were afraid that their master would hear these words and punish them all (Morgoth’s Ring, 345-349).

Morgoth’s investment of his power into all matter may also be seen as a form of legal and mental appropriation of the physical world. Tolkien tells us that Melkor wanted to ‘identify himself with it’. He did not see matter as a thing apart from himself in functional terms, given that he held the attitude that it was there ‘for my use’. Melkor sought to make this a metaphysical reality, the world becoming akin to his body. If he had been victorious, every material thing would have been his limbs. His will would have found total expression in the physical domain. And, if he had managed to dominate and absorb the minds and intelligences of others, Morgoth would have been the only will directing the material world.

This is the logical endpoint of the ‘for me’ attitude. Sauron was content to let other things exist providing that they carried out his will. As seen above, such enslavement results in the functional annihilation of the victim, their independence and agency denied by the coercion, whether by fear or violence, of their master. Tolkien represented this reality in the faded being of the Ringwraiths. Their servitude, a state of being that was against their natures, has left them an ethereal remnant of what they once were. The denial of the Other’s otherness leads to a diminishment of their being. Melkor takes this to its extreme conclusion. When the purpose of another is defined in reference to the Self and we have the power to enforce our will, it leads to the annihilation of the Other by either destruction or absorption. When we see all things from this perspective, we imagine that only we exist – nothing is apart from ourselves. He who would be master of all is a solipsist.[1]

It was impossible for Melkor to create a genuine Other. This can be seen in the story of the creation of the Dwarves. Aule wanted to teach his crafts to others, but as the Children of Iluvatar (Elves and Men) had not yet come into being, he made the Seven Fathers of the Dwarves. Eru rebuked Aule, for he had

attempted a thing beyond “thy power and thy authority”. Only Eru is capable of giving being to a creature (what Tolkien calls elsewhere “love and independence” (Morgoth 411) and, as a result, the Dwarves are puppets. They are vessels of Aule’s will, only “moving when thou thinkest to move them, and if thy thought be elsewhere, standing idle”. Aule repents. Though he only wished to love and teach “things other than I am”, he offered the Dwarves to Eru to do with as He wished. The One recognised Aule’s humility and spared Aule’s creatures. He gave them “a life of their own” so that they could act independently of Aule’s will (Sil 49-50).

Only Eru can create the Other. He alone gives a being its autonomy and freedom. All others, including Melkor and Aule, can only make things that express their will. It follows that although Melkor had a desire to create things of his own, these would have been puppets that were directed by his wishes. His desire to absorb or annihilate the Other suggests that this is what he desired to make. He wanted to extend his will new forms. He wished to have his own puppets showing him “loving obedience” and “robotic servitude” (Morgoth 411). In various places Tolkien expressed the idea that evil cannot create anything new and that it can only pervert and mock what already exists. It seems to me that a character like Morgoth does not want to bring into being anything new. Or, more precisely, Morgoth wants everything to be a movement of himself. The only novel things he wishes for are additional forms of himself. He does not want to create the Other. Instead, he hates the existence of the Other. All must serve and be his will.

The Free Peoples of Middle-earth

Morgoth’s solipsism brings him into conflict with Eru Iluvatar, the God of Tolkien’s legendarium. Eru (the One) brings into being the Other. In the beginning, he “made first the Ainur”, who were the “offspring of his thought”. Following the singing of the Ainur, he sent the “Flame Imperishable” into the void so that the “World shall Be”, thereby making the world. He also created Elves and Men, while he gave life to the Dwarves of Aule. The creatures Eru created were not puppets of his will. He allowed the Ainur to adorn the Great Music, and in turn the world, with their own ideas. He gave Men the gift of freedom, the “virtue to shape their life, amid the powers and chances of the world, beyond the Music of the Ainur, which is as fate to all things else”. Iluvatar did this even though he knew that Men, “being set amid the turmoils of the powers of the world, would stray often, and would not use their gifts in harmony”. He allowed beings, such as Melkor and Sauron, the freedom to rebel against his explicit wishes, albeit those who do evil unintentionally fulfil Iluvatar’s design for history. In a later essay, we will look more closely at the themes of providence and free will in Tolkien’s stories. What matters here is that Eru wants the Other to exist. He gives beings life, independence and autonomy. He does not treat his creatures like puppets and is thus willing to face the potential consequences of allowing the Other freedom: the possibility, perhaps probability, of revolt, suffering and evil (Sil 13, 25?, 47-48).

Aule shares Iluvatar’s desire to see other beings flourish. He was overwhelmed by a longing to “love and to teach” others language, crafts, and knowledge. He wanted others to “perceive the beauty of Ea [the world]”. As such, he attempted to bring the Other into being, something only Iluvatar could do, resulting in the beginning of the Dwarves (Sil 49-50). Most of the Valar shared Aule’s love for the Other. When they first beheld the Children of Iluvatar (Elves and Men), in whom they had no part in making, “the more did they love them, being things other than themselves, strange and free”. Several entered into Arda out of love for these beings and to prepare the world for their coming (Sil 19, 23). Aule taught the

[1] Morgoth’s solipsism could be seen as that which has been called ‘primary narcissism’ by psychoanalysts. Though different scholars use the term differently, there is a broad idea, articulated by Sigmund Freud and Otto Kernberg, that in the earliest stages infants cannot distinguish between subject and object. They see themselves as the entirety of existence. They desire something and, if their needs are met, there is an implicit notion that they are the sum total of reality. This narcissism is shattered when the infant encounters suffering. At some point a caregiver, no matter how attentive, will fail to immediately address the infant’s needs. This will cause the baby to suffer. It learns that its needs are not met instantaneously in accordance with its desires. It depends upon the actions of another: ‘mother’, ‘father’ and so on. They thereby become aware of the fact that there is an Other than themselves in the world: the cause of their suffering. Morgoth’s desire to be the whole of reality could be seen as a form of regression to an infantile state. See etc.

Noldor knowledge and craftsmanship; Manwe gave the Vanyar songs and poetry; while Ulmo and Yavanna strengthened and healed the creatures of Middle-earth against the corruption of Morgoth (Sil 44-46). Even though they retreated from Middle-earth following the overthrow of Morgoth by Earendil, they sent the Istari, five Wizards (including Saruman the White, Gandalf the Grey and Radagast the Brown) to “contest the power of Sauron... and to move Elves and Men and all living things of good will to valiant deeds” (Sil 361). The Valar rejoiced in the knowledge that there were things in the world apart from themselves. They dedicated their minds, wills and powers to help other creatures flourish. And, like Eru, they made space for the Other to exist independently of their wills.

The character who most fully manifests this kind of attitude in LotR is Tom Bombadil. As we have already seen, it is his storytelling which helps the hobbits to see the lives of the forest as ‘apart from themselves’. This is a natural outworking of his attitude towards the world. In letters to Naomi Mitchison and Peter Hastings (144, 155), Tolkien suggests that Bombadil is an exemplar of “pure (real) natural science”. He desires the “knowledge of other things, their history and nature, because they are ‘other’ and wholly independent of the enquiring mind”. He is not interested in “doing” anything with the knowledge”. Thus, he spends his time “watching, observing” and taking “delight in things for themselves without reference to” himself. Tolkien astutely compares Old Tom with a Zoologist or Botanist. As some scholars have noted, Bombadil is not like a modern scientist who is interested in discovering the laws of the universe. He is more like an amateur botanist from the nineteenth century who catalogues the beings in his locality.[1]

Alternatively, we may see Bombadil as an embodiment of the Kantian and Schopenhauerian aesthetic attitude. Normally, we relate to things in terms of how they can satisfy our desires. For example, if I see a plate of food, I eat it so that it will sate my hunger. When we approach a work of art from an aesthetic point of view, we do not approach it in the same way. There is an impersonal or disinterested relationship between the subject and the object. We are not concerned with how we can use the artwork for our practical benefit. We value it as an end in itself, appreciating or ‘delighting’ in the thing. We are aware of its unique Otherness, similarities and differences. In essence, we appreciate the thing as apart from ourselves (Kant, Schopenhauer, Magee, Stanford – Aesthetic Attitude). Bombadil wants to understand things because they are Other than himself. He wants to enjoy them as ends in themselves. As such, he does not want to control or use them. He is more like the botanist than the cattle-breeder or agriculturalist (144, 153). Tom’s desire to learn about things other than himself is reflected in his storytelling. He tells them about the histories and characters of good things and bad things (129-131). His story deals with the realities in their fulness, excluding neither the light nor the dark aspects of their being. His love for knowledge is suggested in several of Tolkien’s poems. In ‘Bombadil Goes Boating’, Old Tom and Farmer Maggot spend the evening: ...swapping all the tidings from Barrow-downs to Tower Hills, of walkings and of ridings; of wheat ear and barley-corn, of sowing and of reaping; queer tales from Bree, and talk at smithy, mill, and cheaping; rumours in the whispering trees, south-wind in the larches, tall Watchers by the Ford, Shadows on the marches. (188)

Tom’s wants a comprehensive knowledge of the world. He discusses with Farmer Maggot the tidings of what has been happening, whether significant or seemingly unimportant. He is concerned about the ordinary things, like the cycle of farming, the gossip about what has happened at the mill; but he also wants to know about the strange and unusual, the signs of new threats in the land, the travels of hobbits and men. Bombadil is interested in everything. He appreciates the mundane and extraordinary because both are produced by independent and autonomous beings. He is interested in learning about all lives that are other than his own. This insatiable drive to understand is put under stress in one of Tolkien’s later poems entitled ‘Once upon a Time’, written in 1969. As the moon shone at night across the forests, meets the ‘lintips’ walking through the grass.

He knelt down to them and said:
‘Ha! little lads! So it was you I smelt?
What a mousy smell! Well, this dew is sweet,
So drink it up, but mind my feet!’

[1] Article on Tom as a scientist

In reply, the lintips laughed and fled. Tom was distressed, for they were the only things that “won’t talk to me” and “say what they do or what they be”. He just “don’t know” what kind of creature they are. It upsets him that there is an Other which eludes his understanding. He cannot, therefore, fully appreciate them. The possibility of a relationship has been scuppered, as the lintips refuse Bombadil’s invitation to a conversation between equals, one being to another.

Bombadil’s scientific or aesthetic attitude is reflected in how he relates to the creatures of the Old Forest. He is a very powerful being whose songs are able to direct the behaviour of other beings. For example, when Old Man Willow swallows Merry and Pippin, Tom secures their release by singing a song that sends the malevolent tree to sleep. Later, he rescues the hobbits from the barrow-wights by singing a song that banishes the ghosts from the land forever (LotR references). He is a being that could use others to express his will. But he does not take this course. Though he is the “Master of wood, water, and hill”, the land does not ‘belong’ to him. In his ‘country’, the “trees and the grasses and all things growing or living in the land belong each to themselves” (124). Bombadil respects the independence and freedom of the beings who live in the Old Forest. He recognises that they are Other and treats them as such. This means that he does not intervene to turn their hearts to good. He does not eradicate evil. Thus, he lets the inhabitants of his country take their own course, even if that means they choose a path of hatred like Old Man Willow. He only pushes back against their activities when they become a threat to his autonomy (though many have tried, “No one has ever caught Tom walking in the forest”) or to the independence of others (such as the hobbits) (124).[1] Bombadil’s desire for knowledge does not result in a cold, unfeeling attitude to his subject matter. Nor does he use it to exploit those less powerful than himself. Instead, Bombadil’s knowledge becomes the basis for joy. Bombadil plays with and delights in the creatures of the forest. On one occasion: Old Tom in summertime walked about the meadows gathering the buttercups, running after shadows, tickling the bumblebees that buzzed among the flowers, sitting by the waterside for hours upon hours... Under the forest-eaves he sat a while a-listening: on the boughs piping birds were chirruping and whistling. Butterflies about his head went quivering and winking, until grey clouds came up, as the sun was sinking. (Adventures 175, 177).

The only person Tom ever ‘catches’ for his own is Goldberry, the River-woman’s daughter. But this was not to make her his property or an instrument of his will. He wanted to be her “lover”. [2] He took her to be his wife (Adventures 180-181). He sings her praises, rejoicing in his “pretty lady” (LotR 119). Perhaps he felt like Frodo does when meeting Goldberry for the first time, a deep experience of delight and joy that was “marvellous and yet not strange” (LotR 123). Goldberry’s heart was similarly “fluttering” and “beating” when Tom first caught her (Adventures 180, LotR 126). He also spends his time bringing her gifts. He is first encountered carrying water-lilies for Goldberry. After the Barrow-wights are defeated, he takes the treasure from their tombs and leaves it for “all kindly creatures” to take of as they please. Only one thing did he take: a brooch like a butterfly decorated with blue stones. He intended to give this “pretty toy” to Goldberry (145).

Tom did not appropriate Goldberry. He loves her as an end in herself. His words, actions and gifts express his deep admiration and affection for another being. The two share an intimate connection.

[1] Bombadil’s attitude towards the Other may explain why the Ring “has no power over him” (LotR 265). When Frodo gives him the Ring, he puts it on and does not go invisible. Moreover, he makes it disappear before handing it back to Frodo. No other character could have given the Ring to another person willingly, even a strong person like Frodo. Most of those tempted by it want control, whether for good or for evil (Letter 144?). For example, Boromir is tempted to take the Ring because he wants the power to protect his people, a noble ambition. Gandalf is tempted by the prospect of using the Ring to defeat Sauron and implement order across the world. By contrast, the Ring does not influence Tom because he has no desire to use it. He does not want this independent being to become an instrument of his will. Instead, he recognises it as an independent object and treats it as such. He studies it, putting it up to his eye (LotR 132-133). Able to see things as apart from himself and with no desire to have his will implemented upon the world, the Ring is powerless over him.

[2] At the beginning of the Ring Cycle, a dark elf (or dwarf) named

Alberich attempts to catch one of the Rhinemaidens, three beautiful creatures guarding the Rhinegold. He claims to do so out of love, but in reality he wants to sate his lust. He is unable to catch them, and so when he learns that the Rhinegold can be forged into a Ring of Power by the person who renounces love, he does so. It seems plausible that this episode was an influence on the characters of Tom and Goldberry. But even if it was not, there is a parallel between the two. Whereas Alberich wants to use and thus fails to catch the Rhinemaidens, Tom loves, and therefore catches, Goldberry. See Wagner Ring etc.

As Tom and Goldberry set the table for dinner, it seemed to Frodo and his companions that they were weaving “a single dance, neither hindering the other, in and out of the room, and round the table” (132). This deep entanglement prevents him from leaving his country. When the hobbits ask him to journey with them, he refuses to pass the borders of his country, explaining that he has “things to do”, “his house to mind”, and “Goldberry is waiting” (145, 148). It is reasonable to conclude that Bombadil limits himself to remain with the one that he loves.[1] Far from taking Goldberry to be a slave, Old Tom employs his intelligence and will for her. He gives himself for the good of another, his lover.[2]

Living in the World with the Other

While Bombadil's way of life may be the ideal, Tolkien was aware of its practical shortcomings. At the Council of Elrond, those gathered discuss the possibility of Bombadil taking the Ring and keeping it, given that he seems to be unaffected by its power. Glorfindel and Galador arrive at the conclusion that in the end, Bombadil would also “fall” against Sauron. There is not the power “to defy the Enemy” in him (LotR 265-266). As Tolkien explained to Naomi Mitchison, those gathered agreed that Bombadil “is an excellent thing to have represented”, but ultimately “only the victory of the West will allow Bombadil to continue, or even to survive” (144). In the face of great evil, a character like Old Tom is vulnerable. He too would become a mere conduit for the Dark Lord's will.

Part of Bombadil's weakness lies in his attitude. Tolkien explained that the story of LotR consists in a conflict between a good and bad side, of beauty against ugliness, tyranny versus kingship, and “moderated freedom with consent against compulsion that has long lost any object save mere power”. As such, the fight is not one in which the heroes reject power wholesale.[3] Aragorn, for example, ascends to the throne of Gondor as its rightful king, ruling with justice and mercy. He is not so much interested in the abolition of authority and hierarchy as the overthrow of those who would abuse their power. In other words, both sides “want a measure of control”. The good side want and use power to preserve the independence and autonomy of creatures from Sauron's dominating will. By contrast, Bombadil has “renounced control”, he has abdicated the path of power. The “question of the rights and wrongs of power and control” have become “utterly meaningless” to him (144). This is why Gandalf warns that Bombadil would be “a most unsafe guardian” of the Ring. His lack of interest in controlling the Other would mean that he would forget the Ring or throw it away (LotR 265). It is why it has no influence upon him (see chapter 2 Bombadil and Wagner).

The absolute renunciation of power out of respect for the Other allows for the victory of evil. A character like Sauron would be unimpeded in their domination of minds and wills if the heroes all shared Bombadil's attitude in its most extreme form. For to stop him they must negate his independence and autonomy. They are forced to use coercion against him to prevent his success.

[1] *This may explain why Bombadil has set “bounds” that he “will not step beyond”. This idea will be explored more fully in the essay on being “Torn in Two”.*

[2] *In ‘On Fairy Stories’, Tolkien makes the suggestion that the good storyteller or fantasy writer, they who are alive to the otherness of the Other, must love their material – nature. Given that Goldberry is a creature descended from the River-woman, originating in the waters of the Withywindle, and is connected with the rain and the seasons, she could be seen as a personification of nature. In which case, Tom, as the embodiment of the aesthetic or ‘the real’ scientific attitude, could be seen as the ideal author of a fairytale. OFS?*

[3] *This is an important contrast with Wagner's Ring Cycle. In his operas, the conflict is between Love and Power, with power being condemned absolutely as the source of evil in the world. This relates the anarchistic influences upon the Ring Cycle. Though Tolkien described himself as an anarchist, he accepted that some forms of power are legitimate. See Wagner/Magee*

This is achieved by fighting against his armies. Such actions frustrate his ability to impose his will and by ending the lives of his slaves, those who had become an instrument of his desires. Following the destruction of the Ring, he is reduced a spirit blown away on the wind. His diminishment shows that the free peoples are only triumphant when they violate the existence and agency of their foes. They must use power against those who wish to enslave them, but that comes at the cost of annihilating the otherness, and thus being, of the Other. Even Tom accepts this reality when he intervenes to save the hobbits. He overrides Old Man Willow's desires and imposes his will upon the tree, sending the ancient being to sleep and forcing it to release Merry and Pippin. The same is true of his interaction with the Barrow-wights. Bombadil compromises on his respect for the Other and embraces the exertion of control to protect himself and the hobbits.

It seems that it is impossible to embrace the purely aesthetic or scientific attitude within this life. Though absolute respect for the independence and autonomy of the Other is a noble attitude, it cannot be maintained in a world within which beings seek to dominate each other. This would allow those who would make themselves the centre of reality to reduce all things to instruments of their will. Power cannot be abandoned. It must be used to restrain evil. In Tolkien's view, the will to dominate must be met with force. Without it, all the world would become the instrument of those who do not see things as apart from themselves. By implication, those who would honour God must use force to overturn those who would set themselves up as the divine power over all creatures.

But this does not mean that the independence and agency of the Other must be completely reneged. Nor does it follow that those who use power must themselves treat beings as slaves to their will. Gandalf expresses this sentiment. He tells Aragorn, Legolas and Gimli that Sauron fears that a mighty warrior may appear “wielding the Ring, and assailing him with war, seeking to cast him down and take his place”. Sauron does not suspect that “we should wish to cast him down and have no one in his place”, which is to their advantage (LotR 497). The goal of the ‘good side’ is to overthrow those who would tyrannise the peoples of Middle-earth with subjugation and destruction. They want to protect the right of each people to govern itself, respecting the independence and freedom of each community regardless of their political structure. They fight so that groups will have the freedom to live their lives as they wish, whether that be under the reign of a King, such as in Gondor and Rohan, or in a part feudal part anarchistic society, such as is found in the Shire.

Those who pose an existential threat to these communities, such as Sauron, forfeit their independence and autonomy. But the use of force is only to safeguard the self-determination of the free peoples. When foes no longer pose a danger to one's independence and autonomy, their integrity must also be respected. This attitude is displayed several times throughout the story by the heroes, a phenomenon that will be explored more fully in a later essay on ‘mercy’. Here it will suffice to mention that after the defeat of Sauron, Aragorn negotiates with those peoples who had served the Dark Lord. He pardons the Easterlings that had surrendered and released them. He made peace with the Haradrim (LotR 968). While a character like Denethor would have imposed “cruel and vengeful” terms on those he had defeated (letter 183), Aragorn does not do this because he is motivated by something other than the pursuit of power. He is not inclined to impose his will upon and through the Other. Instead, he respects their independence and agency. Given that they are no longer a threat to his or his people's freedom, he has no quarrel with them. The legitimate use of political power is, thus, something inherently reactive and defensive. It only curtails another when they threaten to dominate and enslave.

However, LotR is an extended meditation on the temptations faced by those who use power. The Ring lures and deceives many characters into thinking that they could use it to achieve their ends. More than that, it tempts them with prospect of using it to impose their will on the Other. For example, at the pass of Cirith Ungol the Ring lures Sam with “wild fantasies”. He feels that if he took the Ring as his own, he could become “Samwise the Strong”, a mighty hero who could overturn Sauron and transform the desert of Mordor into “a garden of flowers and trees and brought forth fruit” (LotR 901). Beyond love for his Master, Sam is able to resist this illusion because he knows that “he was not large enough to bear such a burden... one small garden of a free gardener was all his need and due, not a garden swollen to a

realm; his own hands to use, not the hands of others to command" (901). Sam exemplifies those who are tempted to use the power they possess to make the world according to their wishes, especially if such ambitions seem to be good.

While Sam is able to resist here, the story contains a dire warning. Though Frodo succeeds in bringing the Ring to Mount Doom, his will is overpowered by temptation just as he is set to destroy it. He claims the Ring as his own (945). In this moment it is revealed that none who use power can resist the lure of using it to dominate can resist forever. Eventually, we would all annihilate the independence and autonomy of other beings to see our wishes fulfilled. No one is perfect and can continually see things as apart from themselves. We all must, from time to time, reawaken to the otherness of the Other. This is especially case for those who see their cause as righteous. Tolkien warns that if Gandalf had taken the Ring and conquered Sauron, he would have "continued to rule and order things for 'good', and the benefit of his subjects according to his wisdom", albeit he would have diminished the being of his subjects through their de facto enslavement (Letter 246). It might be tempting to curtail the freedom of another for their own good, but in doing so we would functionally reduce them to expressions of our own will. By becoming their 'saviour', we would diminish their independence, freedom and, thus, being.

Beyond the political, there is another sphere within which we cannot follow Bombadil's aesthetic vision in its entirety. In response to Yavana's celebration of the fact that Iluvatar has created the Ents to protect the trees from abuse, Aule reminds her that Dwarves "will have need of wood" (Sil 53). The same is true of Elves and Men in Middle-earth, who need to eat and build using the resources that are in Arda. Tolkien seems cognisant of that there is a tension between recognising that trees are living beings with their own intrinsic dignity and the necessities of life. To survive, we have to use trees, whether it be for their wood or fruit. The same goes for animals. If we were magical beings like Tom Bombadil, we might be able to exist without treating others as if they exist 'for me', but we are not. Thus, sometimes we must approach these beings as if they exist to be used for our benefit. However, Aule also says something which is suggestive of how we should think through this conflict. He says that when Elves and Men use the trees and beasts of Arda, they shall do so with "respect" and "gratitude". In reply, Yavana laments that this might not be so if Melkor has corrupted their characters. Nevertheless, there is some helpful direction here. It is not ideal to take the life of a tree or animal. It may not be right at all, given that it is an autonomous and free being. Either way, we should only use these creatures with thankfulness. This means being aware of the fact that we have taken something precious, a life, for our own ends. We should not take this sacrifice for granted. We must recognise that the wood we use came from an Other and treat it with reverence and care. To this end, what we make with them should be of the highest imagination, beauty and quality.

It also means that we only take and use what we need from the plants and animals. If we have to harm and/or kill other beings, let it be the fewest possible. The hobbits of the Shire exemplified this attitude. They did not hunt for sport, and they spent most of their time growing the food they would eat. They were "generous and not greedy... contented and moderate" (LotR 6, 9). By contrast, those who want to exploit take more than they need and more than the land can sustain. Mordor is a desert, while Saruman ravages Isengard and the borders of Fangorn Forest. Lotho Pimple began sending the produce of the Shire abroad, leaving the hobbits hungry. In time, the ruffians took what the hobbits made for "fair distribution", hoarding it for themselves while they cut down trees across the Shire (LotR 1012-1013). When these characters take for granted and treat the Other like it exists 'for me', they over utilise the Other and exhaust the supply. They annihilate beings in service of their will. By contrast, the person who recognises that things are apart from themselves only uses what they need out of respect, thereby allowing for some plants and animals to survive and flourish. Put another way, acknowledgment of the Other is vital for maintaining a sustainable relationship with nature.



The Poetry of Cole Roulain

Helsinki

to be up early, before the city,
is a dream. in the taxi, holding hands
across the cavernous back seat, on the
way to the airport. it's quiet. i am
listening as the driver goes through his
gears. it's cold and i hear the slush against
the tires. listening to you say nothing,
but feeling your heart beating in your thumb.
six bells and helsinki is a stout,
coal-bellied stove. i put my feet against
her to push our raft into the middle.
clear of land now, clear of everything.
the harbor lights are living room, nineteen
eighty one. we all turn, static and low.

Flora

we so desire this world to reflect our
face in its flora that we ascribe it
a motive where there is none, except to
eat. desperate, intertwined, and hungry.
some days, though, a plum blossom falls into
a stream and floats away because that is
simply what happens in some instances.
no liberation, no roaming, no thought.
the temptation to keep, interrogate,
is a human one, and today it went
unanswered. the plum trees are still bending.
dusk, and you are feeling gravity's pull.
as is the errant bloom. you notice that,
and only that, as the blossom recedes.

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Spoon

after the three in the morning peanut
butter spoon comes that good lightbulb fade. it
will be two hours before i need to move,
a predawn countdown for a tied off swamp.
rinkside, later, seated beside all this
soft boned royalty. grateful, beginning
to understand the pleasure of cold/dark
at such a young age, in such a deep sleep.
luck i can frequently come up with just
by going through the pockets of old coats.
ruin i tend to find where i left it.
joy differs, though. it arrives, momentous,
on occasion. sometimes at three in the
morning, sometimes on the tip of a spoon.

Reaper

“a fearsome reaper of shrines”—
that was his epitaph. he often counseled us that
tradition is a tool, not a chain. that
said, he much preferred the writing brush to
the fountain pen, the latter considered
inelegant by comparison. as
adept at calligraphy as he was
plunder, he practiced both with righteousness.
unbound, but desperately in need of
binding, he stumbled into the palace,
tangled in silks, discomfited and dulled.
eventually, he committed the
same grave error as every other
revolutionary—he grew content.

The Dragon Tamers

From The Book of Dragons by E Nesbit



There was once an old, old castle—it was so old that its walls and towers and turrets and gateways and arches had crumbled to ruins, and of all its old splendor there were only two little rooms left; and it was here that John the blacksmith had set up his forge. He was too poor to live in a proper house, and no one asked any rent for the rooms in the ruin, because all the lords of the castle were dead and gone this many a year. So there John blew his bellows and hammered his iron and did all the work which came his way. This was not much, because most of the trade went to the mayor of the town, who was also a blacksmith in quite a large way of business, and had his huge forge facing the square of the town, and had twelve apprentices, all hammering like a nest of woodpeckers, and twelve journeymen to order the apprentices about, and a patent forge and a self-acting hammer and electric bellows, and all things handsome about him. So of course the townspeople, whenever they wanted a horse shod or a shaft mended, went to the mayor. John the blacksmith struggled on as best he could, with a few odd jobs from travelers and strangers who did not know what a superior forge the mayor's was. The two rooms were warm and weather-tight, but not very large; so the blacksmith got into the way of keeping his old iron, his odds and ends, his fagots, and his twopence worth of coal in the great dungeon down under the castle. It was a very fine dungeon indeed, with a handsome vaulted roof and big iron rings whose staples were built into the wall, very strong and convenient for tying captives to, and at one end was a broken flight of wide steps leading down no one knew where. Even the lords of the castle in the good old times had never known where those steps led to, but every now and then they would kick a prisoner down the steps in their lighthearted, hopeful way, and sure enough, the prisoners never came back. The blacksmith had never dared to go beyond the seventh step, and no more have I—so I know no more than he did what was at the bottom of those stairs.

John the blacksmith had a wife and a little baby. When his wife was not doing the housework she used to nurse the baby and cry, remembering the happy days when she lived with her father, who kept seventeen cows and lived quite in the country, and when John used to come courting her in the summer evenings, as smart as smart, with a posy in his buttonhole. And now John's hair was getting gray, and there was hardly ever enough to eat. As for the baby, it cried a good deal at odd times; but at night, when its mother had settled down to sleep, it would always begin to cry, quite as a matter of course, so that she hardly got any rest at all. This made her very tired.

The baby could make up for its bad nights during the day if it liked, but the poor mother couldn't. So whenever she had nothing to do she used to sit and cry, because she was tired out with work and worry.

One evening the blacksmith was busy with his forge. He was making a goat-shoe for the goat of a very rich lady, who wished to see how the goat liked being shod, and also whether the shoe would come to fivepence or sevenpence before she ordered the whole set. This was the only order John had had that week. And as he worked his wife sat and nursed the baby, who, for a wonder, was not crying.

Presently, over the noise of the bellows and over the clank of the iron, there came another sound. The blacksmith and his wife looked at each other.

"I heard nothing," said he.

"Neither did I," said she.

But the noise grew louder—and the two were so anxious not to hear it that he hammered away at the goat-shoe harder than he had ever hammered in his life, and she began to sing to the baby—a thing she had not had the heart to do for weeks.

But through the blowing and hammering and singing the noise came louder and louder, and the more they tried not to hear it, the more they had to. It was like the noise of some great creature purring, purring, purring—and the reason they did not want to believe they really heard it was that it came from the great dungeon down below, where the old iron was, and the firewood and the twopence worth of coal, and the broken steps that went down into the dark and ended no one knew where.

"It can't be anything in the dungeon," said the blacksmith, wiping his face. "Why, I shall have to go down there after more coals in a minute."

"There isn't anything there, of course. How could there be?" said his wife. And they tried so hard to believe that there could be nothing there that presently they very nearly did believe it. Then the blacksmith took his shovel in one hand and his riveting hammer in the other, and hung the old stable lantern on his little finger, and went down to get the coals.

"I am not taking the hammer because I think there is something there," said he, "but it is handy for breaking the large lumps of coal."

"I quite understand," said his wife, who had brought the coal home in her apron that very afternoon, and knew that it was all coal dust.

So he went down the winding stairs to the dungeon and stood at the bottom of the steps, holding the lantern above his head just to see that the dungeon really was empty, as usual. Half of it was empty as usual, except for the old iron and odds and ends, and the firewood and the coals. But the other side was not empty. It was quite full, and what it was full of was Dragon.

"It must have come up those nasty broken steps from goodness knows where," said the blacksmith to himself, trembling all over, as he tried to creep back up the winding stairs.

But the dragon was too quick for him—it put out a great claw and caught him by the leg, and as it moved it rattled like a great bunch of keys, or like the sheet iron they make thunder out of in pantomimes.

"No you don't," said the dragon in a spluttering voice, like a damp squib.

"Deary, deary me," said poor John, trembling more than ever in the claw of the dragon. "Here's a nice end for a respectable blacksmith!"

The dragon seemed very much struck by this remark.

"Do you mind saying that again?" said he, quite politely.

So John said again, very distinctly: "Here—is—a—nice—end—for—a—respectable—blacksmith."

"I didn't know," said the dragon. "Fancy now! You're the very man I wanted."

"So I understood you to say before," said John, his teeth chattering.

"Oh, I don't mean what you mean," said the dragon, "but I should like you to do a job for me. One of my wings has got some of the rivets out of it just above the joint. Could you put that to rights?"

"I might, sir," said John, politely, for you must always be polite to a possible customer, even if he be a dragon.

"A master craftsman—you are a master, of course?—can see in a minute what's wrong," the dragon went on. "Just come around here and feel my plates, will you?"

John timidly went around when the dragon took his claw away; and sure enough, the dragon's wing was hanging loose, and several of the plates near the joint certainly wanted riveting.

The dragon seemed to be made almost entirely of iron armor—a sort of tawny, red-rust color it was; from damp, no doubt—and under it he seemed to be covered with something furry

All the blacksmith welled up in John's heart, and he felt more at ease.

"You could certainly do with a rivet or two, sir," said he. "In fact, you want a good many."

"Well, get to work, then," said the dragon. "You mend my wing, and then I'll go out and eat up all the town, and if you make a really smart job of it I'll eat you last. There!"

"I don't want to be eaten last, sir," said John.

"Well then, I'll eat you first," said the dragon.

"I don't want that, sir, either," said John.

"Go on with you, you silly man," said the dragon, "you don't know your own silly mind. Come, set to work."

"I don't like the job, sir," said John, "and that's the truth. I know how easily accidents happen. It's all fair and smooth, and 'Please rivet me, and I'll eat you last'—and then you get to work and you give a gentleman a bit of a nip or a dig under his rivets—and then it's fire and smoke, and no apologies will meet the case."

"Upon my word of honor as a dragon," said the other.

"I know you wouldn't do it on purpose, sir," said John, "but any gentleman will give a jump and a sniff if he's nipped, and one of your sniffs would be enough for me. Now, if you'd just let me fasten you up?"

"It would be so undignified," objected the dragon.

"We always fasten a horse up," said John, "and he's the 'noble animal.'"

"It's all very well," said the dragon, "but how do I know you'd untie me again when you'd riveted me? Give me something in pledge. What do you value most?"

"My hammer," said John. "A blacksmith is nothing without a hammer."

"But you'd want that for riveting me. You must think of something else, and at once, or I'll eat you first."

At this moment the baby in the room above began to scream. Its mother had been so quiet that it thought she had settled down

fr the night, and that it was time to begin.

"Whatever's that?" said the dragon, starting so that every plate on his body rattled.

"It's only the baby," said John.

"What's that?" asked the dragon. "Something you value?"

"Well, yes, sir, rather," said the blacksmith.

"Then bring it here," said the dragon, "and I'll take care of it till you've done riveting me, and you shall tie me up."

"All right, sir," said John, "but I ought to warn you. Babies are poison to dragons, so I don't deceive you. It's all right to touch—but don't you go putting it into your mouth. I shouldn't like to see any harm come to a nice-looking gentleman like you."

The dragon purred at this compliment and said: "All right, I'll be careful. Now go and fetch the thing, whatever it is."

So John ran up the steps as quickly as he could, for he knew that if the dragon got impatient before it was fastened, it could heave up the roof of the dungeon with one heave of its back, and kill them all in the ruins. His wife was asleep, in spite of the baby's cries; and John picked up the baby and took it down and put it between the dragon's front paws.

"You just purr to it, sir," he said, "and it'll be as good as gold." So the dragon purred, and his purring pleased the baby so much that it stopped crying.

Then John rummaged among the heap of old iron and found there some heavy chains and a great collar that had been made in the days when men sang over their work and put their hearts into it, so that the things they made were strong enough to bear the weight of a thousand years, let alone a dragon.

John fastened the dragon up with the collar and the chains, and when he had padlocked them all on safely he set to work to find out how many rivets would be needed.

"Six, eight, ten—twenty, forty," said he. "I haven't half enough rivets in the shop. If you'll excuse me, sir, I'll step around to another forge and get a few dozen. I won't be a minute." And off he went, leaving the baby between the dragon's fore-paws, laughing and crowing with pleasure at the very large purr of it.

John ran as hard as he could into the town, and found the mayor and corporation.

"There's a dragon in my dungeon," he said; "I've chained him up. Now come and help to get my baby away."

And he told them all about it.

But they all happened to have engagements for that evening; so they praised John's cleverness, and said they were quite content to leave the matter in his hands.

"But what about my baby?" said John.

"Oh, well," said the mayor, "if anything should happen, you will always be able to remember that your baby perished in a good cause."

So John went home again, and told his wife some of the tale. "You've given the baby to the dragon!" she cried. "Oh, you unnatural parent!"

"Hush," said John, and he told her some more. "Now," he said, "I'm going down. After I've been down you can go, and if you keep your head the boy will be all right."

So down went the blacksmith, and there was the dragon purring away with all his might to keep the baby quiet.

"Hurry up, can't you?" he said. "I can't keep up this noise all night."

"I'm very sorry, sir," said the blacksmith, "but all the shops are shut. The job must wait till the morning. And don't forget you've promised to take care of that baby. You'll find it a little wearing, I'm afraid. Good night, sir."

The dragon had purred till he was quite out of breath—so now he stopped, and as soon as everything was quiet the baby thought everyone must have settled for the night, and that it was time to begin to scream. So it began.

"Oh, dear," said the dragon, "this is awful." He patted the baby with his claw, but it screamed more than ever.

"And I am so tired too," said the dragon. "I did so hope I should have a good night."

The baby went on screaming.

"There'll be no peace for me after this," said the dragon. "It's enough to ruin one's nerves. Hush, then—did 'ums, then." And he tried to quiet the baby as if it had been a young dragon. But when he began to sing "Hush-a-by, Dragon," the baby screamed more and more and more. "I can't keep it quiet," said the dragon; and then suddenly he saw a woman sitting on the steps. "Here, I say," said he, "do you know anything about babies?"

"I do, a little," said the mother.

"Then I wish you'd take this one, and let me get some sleep,"

said the dragon, yawning. "You can bring it back in the morning before the blacksmith comes."

So the mother picked up the baby and took it upstairs and told her husband, and they went to bed happy, for they had caught the dragon and saved the baby.

And next day John went down and explained carefully to the dragon exactly how matters stood, and he got an iron gate with a grating to it and set it up at the foot of the steps, and the dragon mewed furiously for days and days, but when he found it was no good he was quiet.

So now John went to the mayor, and said: "I've got the dragon and I've saved the town."

"Noble preserver," cried the mayor, "we will get up a subscription for you, and crown you in public with a laurel wreath."

So the mayor put his name down for five pounds, and the corporation each gave three, and other people gave their guineas and half guineas and half crowns and crowns, and while the subscription was being made the mayor ordered three poems at his own expense from the town poet to celebrate the occasion. The poems were very much more admired, especially by the mayor and corporation.

The first poem dealt with the noble conduct of the mayor in arranging to have the dragon tied up. The second described the splendid assistance rendered by the corporation. And the third expressed the pride and joy of the poet in being permitted to sing such deeds, beside which the actions of St. George must appear quite commonplace to all with a feeling heart or a well-balanced brain.

When the subscription was finished there was a thousand pounds, and a committee was formed to settle what should be done with it. A third of it went to pay for a banquet to the mayor and corporation; another third was spent in buying a gold collar with a dragon on it for the mayor and gold medals with dragons on them for the corporation; and what was left went in committee expenses.

So there was nothing for the blacksmith except the laurel wreath and the knowledge that it really was he who had saved the town. But after this things went a little better with the blacksmith. To begin with, the baby did not cry so much as it had before. Then the rich lady who owned the goat was so touched by John's noble action that she ordered a complete set of shoes at 2 shillings, 4 pence, and even made it up to 2 shillings, 6 pence, in grateful recognition of his public-spirited conduct. Then tourists used to come in breaks from quite a long way off, and pay twopence each to go down the steps and peep through the iron grating at the rusty dragon in the dungeon—and it was threepence extra for each party if the blacksmith let off colored fire to see it by, which, as the fire was extremely short, was twopence-halfpenny clear profit every time. And the blacksmith's wife used to provide teas at ninepence a head, and altogether things grew brighter week by week.

The baby—named John, after his father, and called Johnnie for short—began presently to grow up. He was great friends with Tina, the daughter of the whitesmith, who lived nearly opposite. She was a dear little girl with yellow pigtails and blue eyes, and she was tired of hearing the story of how Johnnie, when he was a baby, had been minded by a real dragon.

The two children used to go together to peep through the iron grating at the dragon, and sometimes they would hear him mew piteously. And they would light a halfpenny's worth of colored fire to look at him by. And they grew older and wiser.

At last one day the mayor and corporation, hunting the hare in their gold gowns, came screaming back to the town gates with the news that a lame, humpy giant, as big as a tin church, was coming over the marshes toward the town.

"We're lost," said the mayor. "I'd give a thousand pounds to anyone who could keep that giant out of the town. I know what he eats—by his teeth."

No one seemed to know what to do. But Johnnie and Tina were listening, and they looked at each other, and ran off as fast as their boots would carry them.

They ran through the forge, and down the dungeon steps, and knocked at the iron door. "Who's there?" said the dragon. "It's only us," said the children.

And the dragon was so dull from having been alone for ten years that he said: "Come in, dears."

"You won't hurt us, or breathe fire at us or anything?" asked Tina.

And the dragon said, "Not for worlds."

So they went in and talked to him, and told him what the

weather was like outside, and what there was in the papers, and at last Johnnie said: "There's a lame giant in the town. He wants you."

"Does he?" said the dragon, showing his teeth. "If only I were out of this!"

"If we let you loose you might manage to run away before he could catch you."

"Yes, I might," answered the dragon, "but then again I mightn't."

"Why—you'd never fight him?" said Tina.

"No," said the dragon; "I'm all for peace, I am. You let me out, and you'll see."

So the children loosed the dragon from the chains and the collar, and he broke down one end of the dungeon and went out—only pausing at the forge door to get the blacksmith to rivet his wing.

He met the lame giant at the gate of the town, and the giant banged on the dragon with his club as if he were banging an iron foundry, and the dragon behaved like a smelting works—all fire and smoke. It was a fearful sight, and people watched it from a distance, falling off their legs with the shock of every bang, but always getting up to look again.

At last the dragon won, and the giant sneaked away across the marshes, and the dragon, who was very tired, went home to sleep, announcing his intention of eating the town in the morning. He went back into his old dungeon because he was a stranger in the town, and he did not know of any other respectable lodging. Then Tina and Johnnie went to the mayor and corporation and said, "The giant is settled. Please give us the thousand pounds reward."

But the mayor said: "No, no, my boy. It is not you who have settled the giant, it is the dragon. I suppose you have chained him up again? When he comes to claim the reward he shall have it."

"He isn't chained up yet," said Johnnie. "Shall I send him to claim the reward?"

But the mayor said he need not trouble; and now he offered a thousand pounds to anyone who would get the dragon chained up again.

"I don't trust you," said Johnnie. "Look how you treated my father when he chained up the dragon."

But the people who were listening at the door interrupted, and said that if Johnnie could fasten up the dragon again they would turn out the mayor and let Johnnie be mayor in his place. For they had been dissatisfied with the mayor for some time, and thought they would like a change.

So Johnnie said, "Done," and off he went, hand in hand with Tina, and they called on all their little friends and said: "Will you help us to save the town?"

And all the children said: "Yes, of course we will. What fun!"

"Well, then," said Tina, "you must all bring your basins of bread and milk to the forge tomorrow at breakfast time."

"And if ever I am mayor," said Johnnie, "I will give a banquet, and you shall be invited. And we'll have nothing but sweet things from beginning to end."

All the children promised, and next morning Tina and Johnnie rolled their big washing tub down the winding stair.

"What's that noise?" asked the dragon.

"It's only a big giant breathing," said Tina, "He's gone by now."

Then, when all the town children brought their bread and milk, Tina emptied it into the wash tub, and when the tub was full Tina knocked at the iron door with the grating in it and said: "May we come in?"

"Oh, yes," said the dragon, "it's very dull here."

So they went in, and with the help of nine other children they lifted the washing tub in and set it down by the dragon. Then all the other children went away, and Tina and Johnnie sat down and cried.

"What's this?" asked the dragon. "And what's the matter?"

"This is bread and milk," said Johnnie; "it's our breakfast—all of it."

"Well," said the dragon, "I don't see what you want with breakfast. I'm going to eat everyone in the town as soon as I've rested a little."

"Dear Mr. Dragon," said Tina, "I wish you wouldn't eat us. How would you like to be eaten yourself?"

"Not at all," the dragon confessed, "but nobody will eat me."

"I don't know," said Johnnie, "there's a giant—"

"I know. I fought with him, and licked him."

"Yes, but there's another come now—the one you fought was only this one's little boy. This one is half as big again."

"He's seven times as big," said Tina.

"No, nine times," said Johnnie. "He's bigger than the steeple."

"Oh, dear," said the dragon. "I never expected this."

"And the mayor has told him where you are," Tina went on, "and he is coming to eat you as soon as he has sharpened his big knife. The mayor told him you were a wild dragon—but he didn't mind. He said he only ate wild dragons—with bread sauce."

"That's tiresome," said the dragon. "And I suppose this sloppy stuff in the tub is the bread sauce?"

The children said it was. "Of course," they added, "bread sauce is only served with wild dragons. Tame ones are served with apple sauce and onion stuffing. What a pity you're not a tame one: He'd never look at you then," they said. "Good-bye, poor dragon, we shall never see you again, and now you'll know what it's like to be eaten." And they began to cry again.

"Well, but look here," said the dragon, "couldn't you pretend I was a tame dragon? Tell the giant that I'm just a poor little timid tame dragon that you kept for a pet."

"He'd never believe it," said Johnnie. "If you were our tame dragon we should keep you tied up, you know. We shouldn't like to risk losing such a dear, pretty pet."

Then the dragon begged them to fasten him up at once, and they did so: with the collar and chains that were made years ago—in the days when men sang over their work and made it strong enough to bear any strain.

And then they went away and told the people what they had done, and Johnnie was made mayor, and had a glorious feast exactly as he had said he would—with nothing in it but sweet things. It began with Turkish delight and halfpenny buns, and went on with oranges, toffee, coconut ice, peppermints, jam puffs, raspberry-noyau, ice creams, and meringues, and ended with bull's-eyes and gingerbread and acid drops.

This was all very well for Johnnie and Tina; but if you are kind children with feeling hearts you will perhaps feel sorry for the poor deceived, deluded dragon—chained up in the dull dungeon, with nothing to do but to think over the shocking untruths that Johnnie had told him.

When he thought how he had been tricked, the poor captive dragon began to weep—and the large tears fell down over his rusty plates. And presently he began to feel faint, as people sometimes do when they have been crying, especially if they have not had anything to eat for ten years or so.

And then the poor creature dried his eyes and looked about him, and there he saw the tub of bread and milk. So he thought, "If giants like this damp, white stuff, perhaps I should like it too," and he tasted a little, and liked it so much that he ate it all up. And the next time the tourists came, and Johnnie let off the colored fire, the dragon said shyly: "Excuse my troubling you, but could you bring me a little more bread and milk?"

So Johnnie arranged that people should go around with carts every day to collect the children's bread and milk for the dragon. The children were fed at the town's expense—on whatever they liked; and they ate nothing but cake and buns and sweet things, and they said the poor dragon was very welcome to their bread and milk.

Now, when Johnnie had been mayor ten years or so he married Tina, and on their wedding morning they went to see the dragon. He had grown quite tame, and his rusty plates had fallen off in places, and underneath he was soft and furry to stroke. So now they stroked him.

And he said, "I don't know how I could ever have liked eating anything but bread and milk. I am a tame dragon now, aren't I?" And when they said that yes, he was, the dragon said: "I am so tame, won't you undo me?" And some people would have been afraid to trust him, but Johnnie and Tina were so happy on their wedding day that they could not believe any harm of anyone in the world. So they loosened the chains, and the dragon said: "Excuse me a moment, there are one or two little things I should like to fetch," and he moved off to those mysterious steps and went down them, out of sight into the darkness. And as he moved, more and more of his rusty plates fell off. In a few minutes they heard him clanking up the steps. He brought something in his mouth—it was a bag of gold.

"It's no good to me," he said. "Perhaps you might find it useful." So they thanked him very kindly.

"More where that came from," said he, and fetched more and more and more, till they told him to stop. So now they were rich, and so were their fathers and mothers. Indeed, everyone was rich, and there were no more poor people in the town. And they all got rich without working, which is very wrong; but the dragon had never been to school, as you have, so he knew no better.

And as the dragon came out of the dungeon, following Johnnie and Tina into the bright gold and blue of their wedding day, he blinked his eyes as a cat does in the sunshine, and he shook

himself, and the last of his plates dropped off, and his wings with them, and he was just like a very, very extra-sized cat. And from that day he grew furrer and furrer, and he was the beginning of all cats. Nothing of the dragon remained except the claws, which all cats have still, as you can easily ascertain.

And I hope you see now how important it is to feed your cat with bread and milk. If you were to let it have nothing to eat but mice and birds it might grow larger and fiercer, and scaliier and tailier, and get wings and turn into the beginning of dragons. And then there would be all the bother over again.



A Flash In The Pan

By Anonymous



Editor's Note: It is many thanks to Thomas Sphratzes for this story. He typed the whole thing out so it could be formatted into the mag. He has seen "The Minor Canon" published in the April 2026 issue of Corncrake and went on a hunting expedition. It turns out that one Julian Hawthorne, son of the famed author, wrote a six-volume series "Library of the World's Best Mystery and Detective Stories" (1907) and in it he reduced the story to a third, pulling out important sections. Here is what T Sphratzes had to say: 'But "A Flash in the Pan" was too spiritual for Hawthorne. It explained what a minor canon was and did and centered the pride and repentance of its narrator, rather than the unraveling of the mystery of who the stranger was—this latter apparently being the only thing about it that interested the detective-minded Hawthorne. So he took a butcher axe to it and excised whole paragraphs (e.g. the original opening of the story, as well as portions of its denouement) and large portions within some paragraphs (e.g. the long paragraph originally detailing the growth of the narrator's vainglory).' While "A Flash in the Pan" was published anonymously William James Foxell, hymnodist and Minor Canon at Canterbury Cathedral, may be the author.

It is not everybody who knows what a Minor Canon is, or what his duties are; so, for the sake of the uninformed, let me say at once that his chief duty is to take his turn in reading, that is, in monotonous and singing the daily services in a Cathedral. Such is my duty. I am a Minor Canon of the Cathedral Church of Marchbury. I occupy a house within the Cathedral Close, and thus enjoy the privilege of passing my days 'far from the madding crowd.' The life is uneventful enough: little happens from year's end to year's end to vary the humdrum of existence; in fact, nothing more exciting than a garden party at the Bishop's or a dinner at the Deanery, or tea at the Archdeacon's. Even these superior 'functions' cause but a slight and transient ruffle upon the calm flow of life's stream.

For many years, as a Minor Canon, I have breathed this serene and placid atmosphere of the Close.

Often have I wondered if I should live all my life thus; or whether, some day or other, something would startle me, like a bolt from the blue, and I should find myself plunged, on a sudden, into the midst of the most exciting events. For many years, year after year and month after month, I have regularly taken my 'turn' in singing the services, and nothing particularly remarkable has ever happened to me—until yesterday: and yesterday something did happen.

It was Monday, and in the afternoon, as I was walking along the High Street of Marchbury, I was met by a distinguished-looking person, whom I had observed at the services in the Cathedral on the previous day. Now it chanced, on that Sunday, that I was singing the service. Properly speaking, it was not my turn; but, as my brother Minor Canons were either away from Marchbury, or ill in bed, I was the only one left to perform the necessary duty. The distinguished-looking person was a tall, big man, with a round fat face and small features. His eyes, his hair and moustache (his face was bare but for a small moustache) were quite black, and he had a very pleasant and genial expression. He wore a tall hat, set rather jauntily on his head, and he was dressed in black with a long frock coat, buttoned across the chest and fitting him close to the body. As he came, with a half saunter, half swagger, along the street, I knew him again at once by his appearance; and, as he came nearer, I saw from his manner that he was intending to stop and speak to me. For he slightly raised his hat, and, in a soft, melodious voice, with a colonial 'twang,' which was far from being disagreeable, and which, indeed, to my ear gave a certain additional interest to his remarks, he saluted me with 'Good day, sir!'

'Good day,' I answered, with just a little reserve in my tone.

'I hope, sir,' he began, 'you will excuse my stopping you in the street, but I wish to tell you how very much I enjoyed the music at your Cathedral yesterday. I am an Australasian, sir, and we have no such music in my country.'

'I suppose not,' I said.

'No, sir,' he went on, 'nothing nearly so fine. I am very fond of music, and as my business brought me in this direction, I thought I would stop at your city and take the opportunity of paying a visit to your grand Cathedral. And I am delighted I came: so pleased, indeed, that I should like to leave some memorial of my visit behind me. I should like, sir, to do something for your choir.'

'I am sure it is very kind of you,' I replied.

'Yes, I should certainly be glad if you could suggest to me something I might do in this way. As regards money, I may say

that I have plenty of it. I am the owner of a most valuable property. My business relations extend throughout the world, and if I am as fortunate in the projects of the future as I have been in the past, I shall probably one day achieve the proud position of being the richest man in the world.'

I did not like to undertake, myself, the responsibility of advising or suggesting, so I simply said:

'I cannot venture to say, offhand, what would be the most acceptable way of showing your great kindness and generosity: but I should certainly recommend you to put yourself in communication with the Dean.'

'Thank you, sir,' said my Australian friend, 'I will do so. And now, sir,' he continued, 'let me say how much I admire your voice. It is, without exception, the very finest and clearest voice I have ever heard.'

'Really,' I answered, quite overcome with such unqualified praise, 'really it is very good of you to say so.'

'Ah! but I feel it, my dear sir. I have been round the world; from Sydney to Frisco, across the continent of America (he called it Amercker) to New York city; then on to England, and to-morrow I shall leave your city to continue my travels. But in all my experience I have never heard so grand a voice as your own.'

This and a great deal more he said in the same strain, which modesty forbids me to reproduce.

Now I am not without some knowledge of the world outside the Close of Marchbury Cathedral, and I could not listen to such a 'flattering tale' without having my suspicions aroused. Who and what is this man? thought I. I looked at him narrowly. At first the thought flashed across me that he might be a 'swell mobsman.' But no; his face was too good for that: besides, no man with that huge frame, that personality so marked and so easily recognizable, could be a swindler: he could not escape detection a single hour. I dismissed the ungenerous thought. Perhaps he is rich, as he says. We do hear of munificent donations by benevolent millionaires now and then. What if this Australian, attracted by the glories of the old Cathedral, should now appear, as a *deus ex machina*, to re-endow the choir, or to found a Musical Professoriate in connection with the choir, appointing me the first occupant of the professorial chair?

These thoughts flashed across my mind in the momentary pause of his fluent tongue.

'As for yourself, sir,' he began again, 'I have something to propose, which I trust may not prove unwelcome. But the public street is hardly a suitable place to discuss my proposal. May I call upon you this evening at your house in the Close? I know which it is, for I happened to see you go into it yesterday after the morning service.'

'I shall be very pleased to see you,' I replied. 'We are going out to dinner this evening; but I shall be at home and disengaged till about seven.'

'Thank you very much. Then I shall do myself the pleasure of calling upon you about six o'clock. Till then, farewell!' A graceful wave of the hand, and my unknown friend had disappeared round the corner of the street.

Now at last, I thought, something is going to happen in my uneventful life—something to break the monotony of existence. Coming events cast their shadows before. The shadow had been cast, and a very solid and substantial shadow, too—over six feet high, and proportionately broad and thick. I had succeeded, it was evident, in attracting the notice of some great Australian millionaire. Of course, he must have inquired my name; he could get that from any of the Cathedral vergers; and, as he said, he had observed whereabouts in the Close I lived. But I was not to see him again till six o'clock, and there were three good hours to wait. I recalled all that happened on the Sunday. It seemed as if some special providence was acting in my favour. It was due to the illness and absence of my colleagues that I had had the good fortune to officiate. Surely this was providential, and I am ashamed to say that I was, in one way, realising the truth of the famous maxim of La Rochefoucauld, in deriving a secret satisfaction from the misfortunes of my friends. Still, it was remarkable that it should happen thus. And it was undoubtedly true that on that particular Sunday I was in excellent voice; and then the vanity, which is natural to all men, asserted itself in me, and I found myself only too ready to believe that my voice was the 'finest and clearest' ever heard. Somebody's must be the finest, and why not mine? My mysterious friend, whatever else he might be, was most certainly a man of good taste and judgment; that could not be denied. And then, as he had said, he was rich. 'Plenty of money' he said he had. What is he coming to see me for? I wondered. I spent the rest of the afternoon in

making the wildest surmises. I was castle-building in Spain at a furious rate. At one time I imagined that this faithful son of the Church—as he appeared to me—was, going to build and endow a grand Cathedral in Australia, on condition that I should be appointed Dean at a yearly stipend of—say ten thousand pounds. At another time, I imagined him asking me to become his private chaplain at about the same remuneration. Again I thought he might offer to educate my three boys at his own expense, provided that special attention should be given to the development of their natural musical genius. Or perhaps, I said to myself, he will beg me to accept a sum of money—I never thought of it as less than a thousand pounds—as a slight recognition of, and tribute to, my remarkable vocal ability. I confess I always came back to this last conjecture, as the most probable; the others seemed rather wild in their fancifulness. I felt there were many practical objections in the way of realising these, but it seemed so easy and natural that he should make me a present from his boundless wealth, that my imagination dwelt upon it with increasing satisfaction.

I took a long lonely walk into the country to correct these ridiculous fancies and to steady my mind; and when I reached home, and had refreshed myself with a quiet cup of afternoon tea, I felt I was morally and physically prepared for my interview with the opulent stranger.

Punctually as the Cathedral clock struck six, there was a ring at the visitors' bell; in a moment or two my unknown friend was shown into the drawing-room, which he entered with the easy air of a man of the world. I noticed he was carrying a small black bag.

'How do you do again, Mr. Dale?' he said as though we were old acquaintances; 'you see I have come sharp to my time.'

'Yes,' I answered, 'and I am pleased to see you; do sit down.' He sank into my best arm-chair, and placed his bag on the floor beside him.

'Since we met in the afternoon,' he said, 'I have written a letter to your Dean, expressing the great pleasure I felt in listening to your choir; and at the same time I enclosed a five-pound note, which I begged him to divide among the choir-boys and men, from Alexander Poulter, Esq., of Poulter's Pills. You have of course heard of the world-renowned Poulter's Pills. I am Poulter's Pills! My heart sank within me! A five-pound note! My airy castles were tottering!

'I also sent him a couple of hundred of my pamphlets which I said I trusted he would be so kind as to distribute in the Close.'

I was aghast!

'And now, with regard to the special object of my call, Mr. Dale. If you will allow me to say so, you are not making the most of that grand voice of yours; you are hidden under an ecclesiastical bushel here—lost to the world. You are wasting your vocal strength and sweetness on the desert air, so to speak.

'Why—if I may hazard a guess—I don't suppose you make five hundred a year here, at the outside?'

I could say nothing.

'Well, now, I can put you into the way of making at least three or four times as much as that.

Listen! I am Alexander Poulter of Poulter's Pills. I have a proposal to make to you; the scheme is bound to succeed, but I want your help. Accept my proposal and your fortune's made. Did you ever hear Moody and Sankey?' he asked abruptly.

It seemed an eccentric query, and in its jerky disjointedness reminded me of Alice in Wonderland. I murmured that I had had that advantage.

'So much the better,' he said, with evident satisfaction; and he lifted his bag on to his knees.

I was beginning to get rather nervous. What if this man before me were an escaped lunatic! What if he carried some deadly weapon in that bag! At any rate I would be careful not to contradict him, but agree with him in everything. I had always understood that this was the safest thing for anyone to do who might find himself vis-à-vis with a roving idiot.

'So much the better,' he repeated; 'it will save me some risk of not making myself understood. You are now in a position to grasp my scheme. Moody and Sankey were, I believe, eminently successful in their line, and it seems to me not unreasonable to expect that a similar success will result from applying the same method in my business. We must advertise. Famous as Poulter's Pills are, their fame depends upon keeping up a system of enterprising advertisement. We have tried for a time, as an experiment, the effect of not advertising, relying upon a well-established reputation; but we found out the mistake. Advertise we must.'

The man is an idiot, thought I; he is now fairly carried away

with his particular mania. Will it last long? Shall I ring?

'Novelty, my dear sir,' he went on, 'is the rule of the day; and there must be novelty in advertising, as in everything else, to catch the public interest. So I intend to go on a tour, lecturing on the merits of Poulter's Pills, in all the principal halls of all the principal towns all over the world. But I have been delayed in carrying out my idea till I could associate myself with a gentleman, such as yourself. Will you join me? I should be the Moody of the tour; you would be its Sankey. I would speak my patter, and you would intersperse my orations with melodious ballads bearing upon the virtues of Poulter's Pills. The ballads are all ready!'

So saying, he opened that bag and drew forth from its recesses nothing more alarming than a thick roll of manuscript music.

'The verses are my own,' he said, with a little touch of pride; 'and as for the music, I thought it better to make use of popular melodies, so as to enable an audience to join in the chorus. See, here is one of the ballads: "Darling, I am better now;" it describes the woes of a fond lover, or rather his physical ailments, until he went through a course of Poulter. Here's another: "I'm ninety-five! I'm ninety-five!" You catch the drift of that, of course—a healthy old age secured by taking Poulter's Pills. Ah! what's this? "Little sister's last request." I fancy the idea of that is to beg the family never to be without Poulter's Pills. Here again: "Then you'll remember me!" I'm afraid that title is not original; never mind, the song is. And here is—but there are many more, and I won't detain you with them now.' He saw, perhaps, I was getting impatient. Thank Heaven, however, he was no escaped lunatic! I was safe! 'Well, now, my dear Mr. Dale, you see what my plan is. What do you say? Don't reject it because it appears ridiculous or extravagant: it is just what is ridiculous and extravagant which succeeds in advertising. And, my word for it, there's money in it, sir! I don't ask you to invest in the concern, I don't ask you to give security for any sum of money, if you join me; what I want you to do is, simply, to help me with your melodious voice, in the way I have explained. I can offer you thirty pounds a week to begin with, and then, if my project succeeds, as I am sure it will, you shall have forty pounds. We shall travel all over the country with a four-in-hand, with a brass band playing on the top, whilst you and I will be in front on the box. Imagine what a stir we shall make everywhere! Picture the huge crowds who will flock to our lectures! Come, what do you say?'

I could say nothing. Disappointment and disgust, rage and resentment, distracted my mind. This was the end of all my brilliant hopes! I saw myself in imagination being driven about the streets of provincial towns in the day, and sitting behind a harmonium singing abominable ballads to its lugubrious accompaniment at night. The thought was too much for me. By a great effort I managed to stammer a few words.

'Mr. Poulter,' said I, 'I took you this afternoon for a disinterested and philanthropic millionaire; you take me for—something different from what I am. We have both made mistakes. In a word, it is impossible for me to accept your offer!'

'Is that final?' asked Poulter.

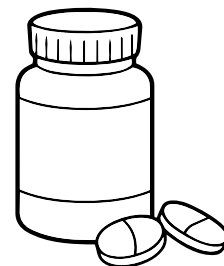
'Certainly,' said I.

Poulter gathered his manuscripts together and replaced them in the bag, and got up to leave the room.

'Good evening, Mr. Dale,' he said mournfully, as I opened the door of the room. 'Good evening'—he kept on talking till he was fairly out of the house; 'mark my words, you'll be sorry—very sorry—one day that you did not fall in with my scheme. Offers like mine don't come every day, and you will one day regret having refused it.'

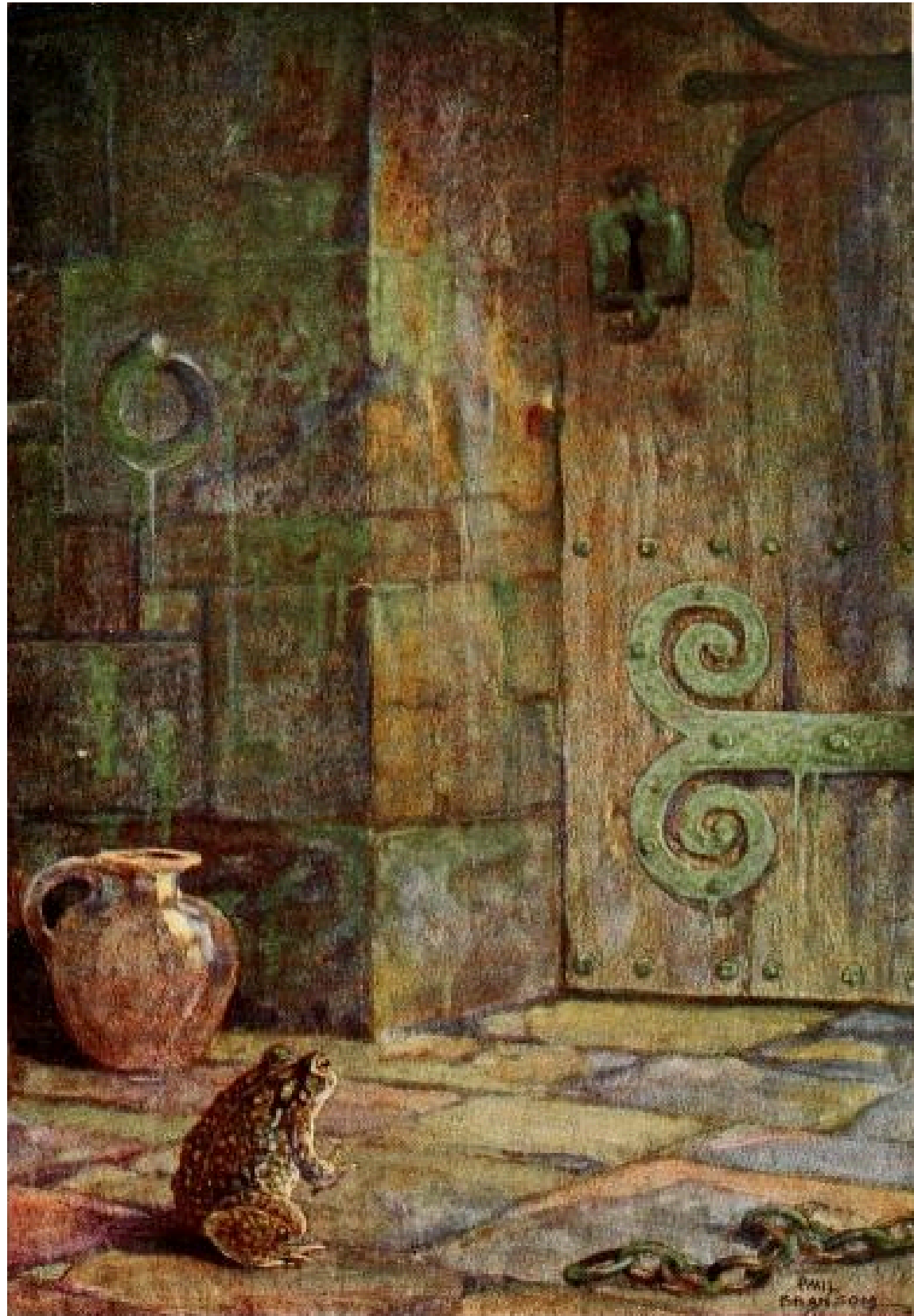
With these words he left the house.

I had little appetite for my dinner that evening.



The Wind in the Willows

By Kenneth Grahame



Toad was a helpless prisoner
in the remotest dungeon

VI MR. TOAD

It was a bright morning in the early part of summer; the river had resumed its wonted banks and its accustomed pace, and a hot sun seemed to be pulling everything green and bushy and spiky up out of the earth towards him, as if by strings. The Mole and the Water Rat had been up since dawn, very busy on matters connected with boats and the opening of the boating season; painting and varnishing, mending paddles, repairing cushions, hunting for missing boat-hooks, and so on; and were finishing breakfast in their little parlour and eagerly discussing their plans for the day, when a heavy knock sounded at the door. "Bother!" said the Rat, all over egg. "See who it is, Mole, like a good chap, since you've finished."

The Mole went to attend the summons, and the Rat heard him utter a cry of surprise. Then he flung the parlour door open, and announced with much importance, "Mr. Badger!"

This was a wonderful thing, indeed, that the Badger should pay a formal call on them, or indeed on anybody. He generally had to be caught, if you wanted him badly, as he slipped quietly along a hedgerow of an early morning or a late evening, or else hunted up in his own house in the middle of the Wood, which was a serious undertaking.

The Badger strode heavily into the room, and stood looking at the two animals with an expression full of seriousness. The Rat let his egg-spoon fall on the table-cloth, and sat open-mouthed.

"The hour has come!" said the Badger at last with great solemnity.

"What hour?" asked the Rat uneasily, glancing at the clock on the mantelpiece.

"Whose hour, you should rather say," replied the Badger. "Why, Toad's hour! The hour of Toad! I said I would take him in hand as soon as the winter was well over, and I'm going to take him in hand to-day!"

"Toad's hour, of course!" cried the Mole delightedly. "Hooray! I remember now! We'll teach him to be a sensible Toad!"

"This very morning," continued the Badger, taking an arm-chair, "as I learnt last night from a trustworthy source, another new and exceptionally powerful motor-car will arrive at Toad Hall on approval or return. At this very moment, perhaps, Toad is busy arraying himself in those singularly hideous habiliments so dear to him, which transform him from a (comparatively) good-looking Toad into an Object which throws any decent-minded animal that comes across it into a violent fit. We must be up and doing, ere it is too late. You two animals will accompany me instantly to Toad Hall, and the work of rescue shall be accomplished."

"Right you are!" cried the Rat, starting up. "We'll rescue the poor unhappy animal! We'll convert him! He'll be the most converted Toad that ever was before we've done with him!"

They set off up the road on their mission of mercy, Badger leading the way. Animals when in company walk in a proper and sensible manner, in single file, instead of sprawling all across the road and being of no use or support to each other in case of sudden trouble or danger.

They reached the carriage-drive of Toad Hall to find, as the Badger had anticipated, a shiny new motor-car, of great size, painted a bright red (Toad's favourite colour), standing in front of the house. As they neared the door it was flung open, and Mr. Toad, arrayed in goggles, cap, gaiters, and enormous overcoat, came swaggering down the steps, drawing on his gauntleted gloves.

"Hullo! come on, you fellows!" he cried cheerfully on catching sight of them. "You're just in time to come with me for a jolly—to come for a jolly—for a—er—jolly—"

His hearty accents faltered and fell away as he noticed the stern unbending look on the countenances of his silent friends, and his invitation remained unfinished.

The Badger strode up the steps. "Take him inside," he said sternly to his companions. Then, as Toad was hustled through the door, struggling and protesting, he turned to the chauffeur in charge of the new motor-car.

"I'm afraid you won't be wanted to-day," he said. "Mr. Toad has changed his mind. He will not require the car. Please understand that this is final. You needn't wait." Then he followed the others inside and shut the door.

"Now then!" he said to the Toad, when the four of them stood together in the Hall, "first of all, take those ridiculous things off!" "Shan't!" replied Toad, with great spirit. "What is the meaning of this gross outrage? I demand an instant explanation."

"Take them off him, then, you two," ordered the Badger briefly. They had to lay Toad out on the floor, kicking and calling all

sorts of names, before they could get to work properly. Then the Rat sat on him, and the Mole got his motor-clothes off him bit by bit, and they stood him up on his legs again. A good deal of his blustering spirit seemed to have evaporated with the removal of his fine panoply. Now that he was merely Toad, and no longer the Terror of the Highway, he giggled feebly and looked from one to the other appealingly, seeming quite to understand the situation.

"You knew it must come to this, sooner or later, Toad," the Badger explained severely. "You've disregarded all the warnings we've given you, you've gone on squandering the money your father left you, and you're getting us animals a bad name in the district by your furious driving and your smashes and your rows with the police. Independence is all very well, but we animals never allow our friends to make fools of themselves beyond a certain limit; and that limit you've reached. Now, you're a good fellow in many respects, and I don't want to be too hard on you. I'll make one more effort to bring you to reason. You will come with me into the smoking-room, and there you will hear some facts about yourself; and we'll see whether you come out of that room the same Toad that you went in."

He took Toad firmly by the arm, led him into the smoking-room, and closed the door behind them.

"That's no good!" said the Rat contemptuously. "Talking to Toad'll never cure him. He'll say anything."

They made themselves comfortable in armchairs and waited patiently. Through the closed door they could just hear the long continuous drone of the Badger's voice, rising and falling in waves of oratory; and presently they noticed that the sermon began to be punctuated at intervals by long-drawn sobs, evidently proceeding from the bosom of Toad, who was a soft-hearted and affectionate fellow, very easily converted—for the time being—to any point of view.

After some three-quarters of an hour the door opened, and the Badger reappeared, solemnly leading by the paw a very limp and dejected Toad. His skin hung baggily about him, his legs wobbled, and his cheeks were furrowed by the tears so plentifully called forth by the Badger's moving discourse.

"Sit down there, Toad," said the Badger kindly, pointing to a chair. "My friends," he went on, "I am pleased to inform you that Toad has at last seen the error of his ways. He is truly sorry for his misguided conduct in the past, and he has undertaken to give up motor-cars entirely and for ever. I have his solemn promise to that effect."

"That is very good news," said the Mole gravely.

"Very good news indeed," observed the Rat dubiously, "if only—if only—"

He was looking very hard at Toad as he said this, and could not help thinking he perceived something vaguely resembling a twinkle in that animal's still sorrowful eye.

"There's only one thing more to be done," continued the gratified Badger. "Toad, I want you solemnly to repeat, before your friends here, what you fully admitted to me in the smoking-room just now. First, you are sorry for what you've done, and you see the folly of it all?"

There was a long, long pause. Toad looked desperately this way and that, while the other animals waited in grave silence. At last he spoke.

"No!" he said, a little sullenly, but stoutly; "I'm not sorry. And it wasn't folly at all! It was simply glorious!"

"What?" cried the Badger, greatly scandalised. "You backsliding animal, didn't you tell me just now, in there—"

"Oh, yes, yes, in there," said Toad impatiently. "I'd have said anything in there. You're so eloquent, dear Badger, and so moving, and so convincing, and put all your points so frightfully well—you can do what you like with me in there, and you know it. But I've been searching my mind since, and going over things in it, and I find that I'm not a bit sorry or repentant really, so it's no earthly good saying I am; now, is it?"

"Then you don't promise," said the Badger, "never to touch a motor-car again?"

"Certainly not!" replied Toad emphatically. "On the contrary, I faithfully promise that the very first motor-car I see, poop-poop! off I go in it!"

"Told you so, didn't I?" observed the Rat to the Mole.

"Very well, then," said the Badger firmly, rising to his feet. "Since you won't yield to persuasion, we'll try what force can do. I feared it would come to this all along. You've often asked us three to come and stay with you, Toad, in this handsome house of yours; well, now we're going to. When we've converted you to a proper point of view we may quit, but not before. Take him upstairs, you two, and lock him up in his bedroom, while we

arrange matters between ourselves."

"It's for your own good, Toady, you know," said the Rat kindly, as Toad, kicking and struggling, was hauled up the stairs by his two faithful friends. "Think what fun we shall all have together, just as we used to, when you've quite got over this—this painful attack of yours!"

"We'll take great care of everything for you till you're well, Toad," said the Mole; "and we'll see your money isn't wasted, as it has been."

"No more of those regrettable incidents with the police, Toad," said the Rat, as they thrust him into his bedroom.

"And no more weeks in hospital, being ordered about by female nurses, Toad," added the Mole, turning the key on him.

They descended the stair, Toad shouting abuse at them through the keyhole; and the three friends then met in conference on the situation.

"It's going to be a tedious business," said the Badger, sighing.

"I've never seen Toad so determined. However, we will see it out. He must never be left an instant unguarded. We shall have to take it in turns to be with him, till the poison has worked itself out of his system."

They arranged watches accordingly. Each animal took it in turns to sleep in Toad's room at night, and they divided the day up between them. At first Toad was undoubtedly very trying to his careful guardians. When his violent paroxysms possessed him he would arrange bedroom chairs in rude resemblance of a motorcar and would crouch on the foremost of them, bent forward and staring fixedly ahead, making uncouth and ghastly noises, till the climax was reached, when, turning a complete somersault, he would lie prostrate amidst the ruins of the chairs, apparently completely satisfied for the moment. As time passed, however, these painful seizures grew gradually less frequent, and his friends strove to divert his mind into fresh channels. But his interest in other matters did not seem to revive, and he grew apparently languid and depressed.

One fine morning the Rat, whose turn it was to go on duty, went upstairs to relieve Badger, whom he found fidgeting to be off and stretch his legs in a long ramble round his wood and down his earths and burrows. "Toad's still in bed," he told the Rat, outside the door. "Can't get much out of him, except, 'O leave him alone, he wants nothing, perhaps he'll be better presently, it may pass off in time, don't be unduly anxious,' and so on. Now, you look out, Rat! When Toad's quiet and submissive and playing at being the hero of a Sundayschool prize, then he's at his artfullest. There's sure to be something up. I know him. Well, now, I must be off."

"How are you to-day, old chap?" inquired the Rat cheerfully, as he approached Toad's bedside.

He had to wait some minutes for an answer. At last a feeble voice replied, "Thank you so much, dear Ratty! So good of you to inquire! But first tell me how you are yourself, and the excellent Mole?"

"O, we're all right," replied the Rat. "Mole," he added incautiously, "is going out for a run round with Badger. They'll be out till luncheon time, so you and I will spend a pleasant morning together, and I'll do my best to amuse you. Now jump up, there's a good fellow, and don't lie moping there on a fine morning like this!"

"Dear, kind Rat," murmured Toad, "how little you realise my condition, and how very far I am from 'jumping up' now—if ever! But do not trouble about me. I hate being a burden to my friends, and I do not expect to be one much longer. Indeed, I almost hope not."

"Well, I hope not, too," said the Rat heartily. "You've been a fine bother to us all this time, and I'm glad to hear it's going to stop. And in weather like this, and the boating season just beginning! It's too bad of you, Toad! It isn't the trouble we mind, but you're making us miss such an awful lot."

"I'm afraid it is the trouble you mind, though," replied the Toad languidly. "I can quite understand it. It's natural enough. You're tired of bothering about me. I mustn't ask you to do anything further. I'm a nuisance, I know."

"You are, indeed," said the Rat. "But I tell you, I'd take any trouble on earth for you, if only you'd be a sensible animal."

"If I thought that, Ratty," murmured Toad, more feebly than ever, "then I would beg you—for the last time, probably—to step round to the village as quickly as possible—even now it may be too late—and fetch the doctor. But don't you bother. It's only a trouble, and perhaps we may as well let things take their course."

"Why, what do you want a doctor for?" inquired the Rat, coming closer and examining him. He certainly lay very still and flat, and

his voice was weaker and his manner much changed.

"Surely you have noticed of late—" murmured Toad. "But, no—why should you? Noticing things is only a trouble. To-morrow, indeed, you may be saying to yourself, 'O, if only I had noticed sooner! If only I had done something!' But no; it's a trouble. Never mind—forget that I asked."

"Look here, old man," said the Rat, beginning to get rather alarmed, "of course I'll fetch a doctor to you, if you really think you want him. But you can hardly be bad enough for that yet. Let's talk about something else."

"I fear, dear friend," said Toad, with a sad smile, "that 'talk' can do little in a case like this—or doctors either, for that matter; still, one must grasp at the slightest straw. And, by the way—while you are about it—I hate to give you additional trouble, but I happen to remember that you will pass the door—would you mind at the same time asking the lawyer to step up? It would be a convenience to me, and there are moments—perhaps I should say there is a moment—when one must face disagreeable tasks, at whatever cost to exhausted nature!"

"A lawyer! O, he must be really bad!" the affrighted Rat said to himself, as he hurried from the room, not forgetting, however, to lock the door carefully behind him.

Outside, he stopped to consider. The other two were far away, and he had no one to consult.

"It's best to be on the safe side," he said, on reflection. "I've known Toad fancy himself frightfully bad before, without the slightest reason; but I've never heard him ask for a lawyer! If there's nothing really the matter, the doctor will tell him he's an old ass, and cheer him up; and that will be something gained. I'd better humour him and go; it won't take very long." So he ran off to the village on his errand of mercy.

The Toad, who had hopped lightly out of bed as soon as he heard the key turned in the lock, watched him eagerly from the window till he disappeared down the carriage-drive. Then, laughing heartily, he dressed as quickly as possible in the smartest suit he could lay hands on at the moment, filled his pockets with cash which he took from a small drawer in the dressing-table, and next, knotting the sheets from his bed together and tying one end of the improvised rope round the central mullion of the handsome Tudor window which formed such a feature of his bedroom, he scrambled out, slid lightly to the ground, and, taking the opposite direction to the Rat, marched off lightheartedly, whistling a merry tune.

It was a gloomy luncheon for Rat when the Badger and the Mole at length returned, and he had to face them at table with his pitiful and unconvincing story. The Badger's caustic, not to say brutal, remarks may be imagined, and therefore passed over; but it was painful to the Rat that even the Mole, though he took his friend's side as far as possible, could not help saying, "You've been a bit of a duffer this time, Ratty! Toad, too, of all animals!"

"He did it awfully well," said the crestfallen Rat.

"He did you awfully well!" rejoined the Badger hotly. "However, talking won't mend matters. He's got clear away for the time, that's certain; and the worst of it is, he'll be so conceited with what he'll think is his cleverness that he may commit any folly. One comfort is, we're free now, and needn't waste any more of our precious time doing sentry-go. But we'd better continue to sleep at Toad Hall for a while longer. Toad may be brought back at any moment—on a stretcher, or between two policemen."

So spoke the Badger, not knowing what the future held in store, or how much water, and of how turbid a character, was to run under bridges before Toad should sit at ease again in his ancestral Hall.

Meanwhile, Toad, gay and irresponsible, was walking briskly along the high road, some miles from home. At first he had taken by-paths, and crossed many fields, and changed his course several times, in case of pursuit; but now, feeling by this time safe from recapture, and the sun smiling brightly on him, and all Nature joining in a chorus of approval to the song of self-praise that his own heart was singing to him, he almost danced along the road in his satisfaction and conceit.

"Smart piece of work that!" he remarked to himself chuckling. "Brain against brute force—and brain came out on the top—as it's bound to do. Poor old Ratty! My! won't he catch it when the Badger gets back! A worthy fellow, Ratty, with many good qualities, but very little intelligence and absolutely no education. I must take him in hand some day, and see if I can make something of him."

Filled full of conceited thoughts such as these he strode along, his head in the air, till he reached a little town, where the sign of 'The Red Lion,' swinging across the road halfway down the main

street, reminded him that he had not breakfasted that day, and that he was exceedingly hungry after his long walk. He marched into the Inn, ordered the best luncheon that could be provided at so short a notice, and sat down to eat it in the coffee-room. He was about half-way through his meal when an only too familiar sound, approaching down the street, made him start and fall a-trembling all over. The poop-poop! drew nearer and nearer, the car could be heard to turn into the inn-yard and come to a stop, and Toad had to hold on to the leg of the table to conceal his over-mastering emotion. Presently the party entered the coffee-room, hungry, talkative, and gay, voluble on their experiences of the morning and the merits of the chariot that had brought them along so well. Toad listened eagerly, all ears, for a time; at last he could stand it no longer. He slipped out of the room quietly, paid his bill at the bar, and as soon as he got outside sauntered round quietly to the inn-yard. "There cannot be any harm," he said to himself, "in my only just looking at it!"

The car stood in the middle of the yard, quite unattended, the stable-helpers and other hangers-on being all at their dinner. Toad walked slowly round it, inspecting, criticising, musing deeply.

"I wonder," he said to himself presently, "I wonder if this sort of car starts easily?"

Next moment, hardly knowing how it came about, he found he had hold of the handle and was turning it. As the familiar sound broke forth, the old passion seized on Toad and completely mastered him, body and soul. As if in a dream he found himself, somehow, seated in the driver's seat; as if in a dream, he pulled the lever and swung the car round the yard and out through the archway; and, as if in a dream, all sense of right and wrong, all fear of obvious consequences, seemed temporarily suspended. He increased his pace, and as the car devoured the street and leapt forth on the high road through the open country, he was only conscious that he was Toad once more, Toad at his best and highest, Toad the terror, the traffic-queller, the Lord of the lone trail, before whom all must give way or be smitten into nothingness and everlasting night. He chanted as he flew, and the car responded with sonorous drone; the miles were eaten up under him as he sped he knew not whither, fulfilling his instincts, living his hour, reckless of what might come to him.

"To my mind," observed the Chairman of the Bench of Magistrates cheerfully, "the only difficulty that presents itself in this otherwise very clear case is, how we can possibly make it sufficiently hot for the incorrigible rogue and hardened ruffian whom we see cowering in the dock before us. Let me see: he has been found guilty, on the clearest evidence, first, of stealing a valuable motor-car; secondly, of driving to the public danger; and, thirdly, of gross impertinence to the rural police. Mr. Clerk, will you tell us, please, what is the very stiffest penalty we can impose for each of these offences? Without, of course, giving the prisoner the benefit of any doubt, because there isn't any."

The Clerk scratched his nose with his pen. "Some people would consider," he observed, "that stealing the motor-car was the worst offence; and so it is. But cheeking the police undoubtedly carries the severest penalty; and so it ought. Supposing you were to say twelve months for the theft, which is mild; and three years for the furious driving, which is lenient; and fifteen years for the cheek, which was pretty bad sort of cheek, judging by what we've heard from the witness-box, even if you only believe one-tenth part of what you heard, and I never believe more myself—those figures, if added together correctly, tot up to nineteen years—"

"First-rate!" said the Chairman.

"—So you had better make it a round twenty years and be on the safe side," concluded the Clerk.

"An excellent suggestion!" said the Chairman approvingly. "Prisoner! Pull yourself together and try and stand up straight. It's going to be twenty years for you this time. And mind, if you appear before us again, upon any charge whatever, we shall have to deal with you very seriously!"

Then the brutal minions of the law fell upon the hapless Toad, loaded him with chains, and dragged him from the Court House, shrieking, praying, protesting; across the marketplace, where the playful populace, always as severe upon detected crime as they are sympathetic and helpful when one is merely "wanted," assailed him with jeers, carrots, and popular catch-words; past hooting school children, their innocent faces lit up with the pleasure they ever derive from the sight of a gentleman in difficulties; across the hollow-sounding drawbridge, below the spiky portcullis, under the frowning archway of the grim old castle, whose ancient towers soared high overhead; past guardrooms full of grinning soldiery off duty, past sentries who

coughed in a horrid, sarcastic way, because that is as much as a sentry on his post dare do to show his contempt and abhorrence of crime; up time-worn winding stairs, past men-at-arms in casquet and corselet of steel, darting threatening looks through their vizards; across courtyards, where mastiffs strained at their leash and pawed the air to get at him; past ancient warders, their halberds leant against the wall, dozing over a pasty and a flagon of brown ale; on and on, past the rack-chamber and the thumbscrew-room, past the turning that led to the private scaffold, till they reached the door of the grimmest dungeon that lay in the heart of the innermost keep. There at last they paused, where an ancient gaoler sat fingering a bunch of mighty keys.

"Oddsbodikins!" said the sergeant of police, taking off his helmet and wiping his forehead. "Rouse thee, old loon, and take over from us this vile Toad, a criminal of deepest guilt and matchless artfulness and resource. Watch and ward him with all thy skill; and mark thee well, greybeard, should aught untoward befall, thy old head shall answer for his—and a murrain on both of them!"

The gaoler nodded grimly, laying his withered hand on the shoulder of the miserable Toad. The rusty key creaked in the lock, the great door clanged behind them; and Toad was a helpless prisoner in the remotest dungeon of the best-guarded keep of the stoutest castle in all the length and breadth of Merry England.

The Ivy Green

By Charles Dickens

Oh, a dainty plant is the Ivy green,
That creepeth o'er ruins old!
Of right choice food are his meals, I ween,
In his cell so lone and cold.
The wall must be crumbled, the stone decayed,
To pleasure his dainty whim:
And the mouldering dust that years have made
Is a merry meal for him.
Creeping where no life is seen,
A rare old plant is the Ivy green.

Fast he stealeth on, though he wears no wings,
And a staunch old heart has he.
How closely he twineth, how tight he clings,
To his friend the huge Oak Tree!
And slily he traileth along the ground,
And his leaves he gently waves,
As he joyously hugs and crawleth round
The rich mould of dead men's graves.
Creeping where grim death has been,
A rare old plant is the Ivy green.

Whole ages have fled and their works decayed,
And nations have scattered been;
But the stout old Ivy shall never fade,
From its hale and hearty green.
The brave old plant, in its lonely days,
Shall fatten upon the past:
For the stateliest building man can raise,
Is the Ivy's food at last.
Creeping on, where time has been,
A rare old plant is the Ivy green.



The Last Cattle Raid in Tìree

Collected from Oral Sources by Rev. John Gregorson Campbell

It seems to have been a kind of raid or robbery to which the island of Tìree was particularly liable. Plunderers and pirates, having chosen a suitable day when the seas about the island were at rest, and the cattle could be easily got on board the galley, or birlinn, carried on depredations far and wide on the island. Once the cattle were got by them on board the galley, they looked upon themselves as safe from pursuit.

There are two traditions in existence of the island having been so visited, and their fate will illustrate the manner in which, in unsettled times, such expeditions were conducted. The last foray of the kind was not successful, but the cattle and sheep were collected for taking away. The people got warning in time, and the cattle-lifters had to make their escape, leaving their booty behind them.

The last successful foray was in the days of the Tanister of Torloisk, and seems to have been only sometime previous to or about the '45. The account which tradition gives of it is that the Tanister, or second heir (proximus haeres), of Torloisk in Mull was called Malise MacLean. His first name is somewhat peculiar, and not common among the MacLeans or any other West Highland clan, and was given to him in this manner. The heir of Torloisk was a promising healthy boy, but the succeeding children of the then chief were dying young. The Chief was then advised by the sages of his race to give to his child the name of the first person whom he met on the way to have the child baptized. The first person encountered was a poor beggar man who had the name of Malise. A name given in this way was known as ainm rathaid, or road name, and was deemed as proof against evil. The father gave this name to the child who survived and became Tanister. Being without the prospect of an estate the Tanister thought he would come to Tìree, and piece by piece get an estate for himself. He came to have the half, third, or other share of the township of Baile-meadhonach, now called Middleton, in Tìree, and married, and his descendants are still known.

One day, a galley, with sixteen men on board (Bìrlinn's sea fir dheug), came to Soraba beach. The men landed and collected every live animal that was about the place. At the time, the Tanister happened to be fishing at the rocks in Kenavara Hill, and on coming home soon after and hearing what had been done, he called to his neighbours asking them what they meant to do, were they going with him to turn the raid (creach). They all refused for fear of being killed, as the freebooters were a strong party. He said, "I will not do that; I prefer to fall in the attempt (tuiteam's an oidhirp), rather than let my cattle be taken." He took with him his sword and followed the spoilers. When he came to the end of

the pathway and within sight of the galley, he stood before the creach. The freebooters told him to leave the road or he would feel the consequences (Gu 'm biodh a' bhuil dha). He answered, "I will not leave, and the consequences will be to you, until I get my own." He got this as he seemed determined, and when he had got it, he asked also the cow of a poor woman from the same township as himself, and having got this also, he said they might do with the rest what they liked. The plan of the robbers was to drive the cattle to the beach, where the galley was, and throwing them down and tying their forelegs together (ceangal nan ceithir chaoil), place them on bearers, or planks, and put them in the boat. When they had done so, they made off, and no one knew whence they had come or whither they went. This was the last successful raid of the kind raised in Tìree.

Subsequent to this creach, and in the time of Mr. Charles Campbell being Minister of Tìree, several galleys, or birlinnean, each with its complement of men, and in addition each with a pretending minister and his man, made their appearance on the coast of Tìree. In those days every minister took his man along with him, and in this case each minister but one took his man from the boat. Wandering open-air preachers were in those times called hillock ministers (ministearan nan cnoc), and the one to whom the story refers was to officiate at Ceathramh Mhurdat, or Fourth Part, called Murdat, now embraced in the farm of Hough, and which was then thickly populated. Having sent due intimation round of his service, most of the people were drawn to hear him. His man was left behind to give him warning of any disturbance of the expedition which might occur. After he had been speaking for some time his man came in. The islanders had become aware of the nature of the invasion. The sheep and the horses were gathered at the back of the hill of Hough, and a band of the cattle-lifters had surrounded them for to drive them to the shore. A number who had not got to the preaching had observed this, and following them, took the sheep and horses from them. Immediately, the minister's man ran with all possible speed to warn the preacher at Murdat. When he came to where the sermon was, the preacher concluded, and handing the book to his man, venturing to think that the people would not understand him, said, as if reading a line, "MacLellan, beloved friend, where did you leave the Shockum sho?"—i.e., the booty. (Mhac-'ill-fhaolain, a dhuine ghaolaich, c' àite an d' fhàg thu an 'seogam seoth?). The incomer taking the book, and as if intoning the psalm, said, "Matters are worse than we thought; they have taken from us the plaintive bleaters" ('s miosa tha na mar a shaoil: thug iad uainn an 'cirri-mèh'): cirri-mèh is but an imitation of the bleating of sheep, and is found used in different localities as a pet or ludicrous name for sheep.

The people sang along with the precentor. They did not know

but that the words may have been part of the psalm, when one who was smarter and more ready-witted than the rest got up and said, "We have been long enough here, these men are robbers, and not ministers." The service was concluded, the people going to look after their cattle, and the minister and his man making their way with all speed to where the galleys lay. Before the people could overtake them, they got on board and made off, leaving their booty behind, and glad to escape with their lives.

The Killing of Big Angus of Ardnamurchan

(Aonghas Mor Mac' Ill'-Eoin), Big Angus, Son of John, At Cor-ospuinn in Morven.

In Ardnamurchan, where the district of Kintra commences, there is a streamlet that falls into Loch-Moidart, which lies along the north of Ardnamurchan, called Faoghail Dhòmhuill Chonalaich. This streamlet derives its name from Donald MacDonald, or MacConnell, having been slain there under the following circumstances. Tradition is uniform as to the incident which gave its name to the place, and as to the circumstances under which the murder was committed. Donald was the heir to the chieftainship of Ardnamurchan, but his uncle, Big Angus, wishing to secure the estate for himself, waylaid his nephew at the ford mentioned, which is very difficult to jump across when the tide is in, as he was on his way to be married to a daughter of the then Chief of Lochiel. While Donald was jumping across the ford, one of Big Angus's men shot an arrow in his face, so that when he touched the ground on the other side, he staggered and reeled. Before he fell prostrate Big Angus said that he would wonder if his nephew would dance as merrily at his marriage with the daughter of the One-eyed Chief of meat-broth (saoil an dannelsadh tu co cridheil sin air banais nighean Cham-na-eanaich). The meaning of this nick-name given to the Chief of Lochiel is a covert allusion to the cattle-lifting of Lochiel. Before the introduction of tea, extract of meat was largely made use of, and even meal was mixed with it for those in strong health, but weak, and even chicken broth, was given to those who were in delicate health. Some say that the Chief referred to was Ailein nan Creach (Allan the Cattle-lifter), who derived his name from the number of cattle-spoils that he lifted. Lochaber being a wild and remote district was not unnaturally a place to which cattle forays were taken when people sought "the beeves that made the broth" in other localities.

In Gregory's History of the Western Islands Dòmhnall Conalach is called John, probably from the Chiefs of Ardnamurchan being known as Mac-'ic-Iain, the son of the son of John, and mention is made of his murder. Several families who have in recent times come to Coll from Ardnamurchan call themselves Johnstones.

Big Angus himself had a house near Strontian strongly fortified according to the ideas of those days. It was surrounded by a deep ditch (Tigh daingean dige) and what is now called a moated Grange. On hearing that Lochiel with a strong band of followers was on his way to avenge the death of the young Chief of Ardnamurchan, Big Angus fled, but he was closely pursued by the avengers. Having come to Cor-ospuinn in Morven he looked behind him, when the sun was rising, to see if his pursuers were coming. Lifting his helmet and shading his eyes with his hand when looking intently sunwards, one of the pursuers, a little man, remarked, "Would not this be a good opportunity for killing him?" Another answered, "It is not your trifling hand that would slay the powerful man." (Cha 'n i do làmh leibideach a leagadh an duine foghainteach). The little man replied, "Would not an arrow do it" (Nach deanadh saighead e), saying this, he launched an arrow which struck Big Angus in the forehead and killed him.

A Tradition of Islay

The western isles according to tradition were thinly inhabited for a long period of years, after the defeat and expulsion of the Norsemen. These invaders had left few of the natives alive and the land remained desolate. The first man then who took possession of the country was powerful John MacConnal who was called, the shepherd of the isles, and the first of the lords of the isles (Iain mòr Maconuil ris an abairteadh buachaille nan [Pg 68] eileanan, b'e ceud tighearna nan eileanan). He had seven sons, among whom, when they came of age, he began to divide his possessions, but the Highlands and isles being too limited in his opinion for division among so many, he went away to Ireland

with one of his sons, to overthrow one or more of the five kings by whom that country was then governed, and put his son in possession of any territory he might acquire in the contest, leaving his eldest son in Islay, which was the first of the isles possessed by him. In this enterprise he succeeded in seizing that part of Ireland then under the authority of the Earl of Antrim, and gave it to his son, whose nephew came from Islay, when some years had passed, to see him in Antrim. This nephew during one of those visits fell in love with a noblewoman of the country whom he asked in marriage. His proposal being agreed to, he was requested, as was then the custom, to name the dowry he wanted with her. His request was 700 men who had nicknames (far-ainmeannan) to take with him to Islay. In those days, it is said, that great men and nobles only had pseudonyms and he took this method of getting these and their followers to repeople the isles, and their descendants are yet to be found in many parts of the country as well as in the islands.





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

From Love is Enough by William Morris