TALES BEFORE NARNIA

THE ROOTS OF MODERN FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION

CLASSIC STORIES THAT INSPIRED

C. S. LEWIS

Edited and with commentary by Douglas A. Anderson

Editor of *Tales Before Tolkien*

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Edited by DOUGLAS A. ANDERSON

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To the friends I've made in the Mythopoeic Society (www.mythsoc.org), and in memory of those no longer with us: Taum Santoski, William A. S. Sarjeant ("Antony Swithin"), Grace E. Funk, Norman Talbot, and Mary M. Stolzenbach

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by Douglas A. Anderson

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INTRODUCTION

My previous anthology, *Tales Before Tolkien* (2003), is a selection of early fantasy literature that influenced Tolkien, that he admired, or that presented similar themes to those that would later be found in his writings. The present volume is in many ways a companion to the earlier one, with the focus this time being on the writings of C. S. Lewis (1898–1963), Tolkien's friend and colleague. Though this volume is titled *Tales Before Narnia,* it is not restricted solely to precursors of Lewis's seven volumes of *The Chronicles of Narnia;* rather, it encompasses the much wider breadth of his fictional output.

The critic William Empson is said to have described Lewis as "the best-read man of his generation, one who read everything and remembered everything he read." Lewis's published writings range from book-length narrative poems to science fiction, children's books to works of scholarship—particularly on medieval and renaissance literature, but also including volumes on the poet Milton and on the study of words and language. Lewis is renowned for his Christian apologetics, and additionally he was a prolific poet, essayist, letter writer, and book reviewer.

In terms of fiction, Lewis published during his lifetime fourteen novels and a few short stories. The novels include the seven *Chronicles of Narnia* (1950–56), the three volumes of his so-called Space Trilogy—comprising *Out of the Silent Planet* (1938), *Perelandra* (1942), and *That Hideous Strength* (1945)—his allegorical first novel *The Pilgrim's Regress* (1933), his mythologically re-inventive final novel, *Till We Have Faces* (1957), and two short theological fantasies: the immensely popular *Screwtape Letters* (1942) and the afterlife fantasy *The Great Divorce* (1946). Some additional stories and fragments have appeared posthumously, including the collection *The Dark Tower and Other Stories* (1977) and the juvenilia *Boxen* (1985).

Much of Lewis's best fantasy is of the type that can be described as

Mooreeffoc or Chestertonian fantasy, so named in recognition of the writer G. K. Chesterton, who once called notice to a passage in Dickens where the word *Coffeeroom* is seen backward through a glass door, giving it (in Chesterton's words) "an elvish kind of realism." Tolkien expanded on Chesterton's remarks, using *Mooreeffoc* as a label to denote a particular type of fantasy, noting: "it was used by Chesterton to denote the queerness of things that have become trite, when they are seen suddenly from a new angle." Lewis's best fantasy does this superbly, whether viewing sin and the process of temptation from the Devil's point of view (as in *The Screwtape Letters*); in revealing a new underlying theological framework for our solar system (in *Out of the Silent Planet* and its sequels); or in reinterpreting from a new vantage an old Greek legend (*Till We Have Faces*).

Many of Lewis's inspirations can be traced in his wide reading. In *Surprised by Joy* (1956), an autobiography of his early life, Lewis noted that one of the experiences forming his pleasure in literature occurred when as a youth he read the poem "Tegnér's Drapa" by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. (The poem was first published as "Tegnér's Death"—Esaias Tegnér, 1782–1846, was a Swedish poet, and the word *drapa* signifies a death song or dirge.) It gave him a glimpse of what he would later call "Northernness"—"instantly," Lewis wrote, "I was uplifted into huge regions of northern sky, I desired with almost sickening intensity something never to be described (except that it is cold, spacious, severe, pale, and remote)." This Northernness was, for Lewis, a quality in literature he much valued—akin in some ways to the Romantic longing (*Sehnsucht*) that he also called "Joy."

Lewis's own fiction is predominantly fantasy of one type or another, and various labels could be applied to any one of his works: children's fantasy, fairy story, science fiction, theological fantasy, adult fantasy—these labels overlap and may in any case be subsumed under a more encompassing heading such as mythopoeic fantasy. This anthology is designed to center on the tradition of mythopoeic fantasy to which Lewis contributed. This is of course only one particular type of the many kinds of literature that he read, enjoyed, and studied, but it is self-evidently a particularly significant type with regard to his own writing of fiction.

As with *Tales Before Tolkien*, I have kept my headnotes to the stories in this volume brief, intending them to serve more as guiding directions than as critical analyses. Background information on the various authors can be found at the end of the book, together with notes for further reading. And I have arranged my selections in a roughly chronological order as to when in

Lewis's life he might have encountered any particular item, though sometimes this involved educated guesswork.

Finally, it is worth stating that the study of Lewis's precursors, or of any particular sources that Lewis knew and used, in no way diminishes Lewis's achievements in his own writings, wherein elements from the sources that inspired him may at times remain visible, transformed to a greater or lesser extent. The game of source-hunting is sometimes frowned upon by literary critics (though rarely by readers), yet the study of a writer's sources and influences is often quite rewarding. Lewis himself knew this, commenting once: "I am a don, and 'source-hunting' (*Quellenforschung*) is perhaps in my marrow." But elsewhere he saw a potential for danger, wondering "how much *Quellenforschung* in our studies of older literature seems solid only because those who knew the facts are dead and cannot contradict it?"

Douglas A. Anderson
July 2007

TALES BEFORE NARNIA

THE ROOTS OF MODERN FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION

Proem: Tegnér's Drapa

I heard a voice, that cried,
"Balder the Beautiful
Is dead, is dead!"
And through the misty air
Passed like the mournful cry
Of sunward sailing cranes.

I saw the pallid corpse
Of the dead sun
Borne through the Northern sky.
Blasts from Niffelheim
Lifted the sheeted mists
Around him as he passed.

And the voice forever cried,
"Balder the Beautiful
Is dead, is dead!"
And died away
Through the dreary night,
In accents of despair.

Balder the Beautiful,
God of the summer sun,
Fairest of all the Gods!
Light from his forehead beamed,
Runes were upon his tongue,
As on the warrior's sword.

All things in earth and air
Bound were by magic spell

Never to do him harm;
Even the plants and stones;
All save the mistletoe,
The sacred mistletoe!

Hœder, the blind old God,
Whose feet are shod with silence,
Pierced through that gentle breast
With his sharp spear, by fraud
Made of the mistletoe,
The accursed mistletoe!

They laid him in his ship,
With horse and harness,
As on a funeral pyre.
Odin placed
A ring upon his finger,
And whispered in his ear.

They launched the burning ship!
It floated far away
Over the misty sea,
Till like the sun it seemed,
Sinking beneath the waves.
Balder returned no more!

So perish the old Gods!
But out of the sea of Time
Rises a new land of song,
Fairer than the old.
Over its meadows green
Walk the young bards and sing.

Build it again,
O ye bards,
Fairer than before!
Ye fathers of the new race,

Feed upon morning dew,
Sing the new Song of Love!

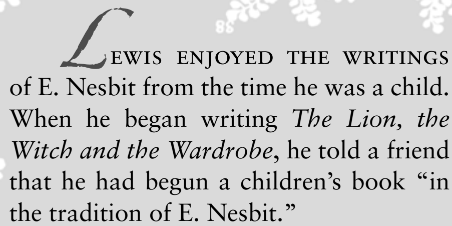
The law of force is dead!
The law of love prevails!
Thor, the thunderer,
Shall rule the earth no more,
No more, with threats,
Challenge the meek Christ.

Sing no more,
O ye bards of the North,
Of Vikings and of Jarls!
Of the days of Eld
Preserve the freedom only,
Not the deeds of blood!

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807–82),
from *The Seaside and the Fireside* (1849)

The Aunt and Amabel

by E. Nesbit



Lewis enjoyed the writings of E. Nesbit from the time he was a child. When he began writing *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, he told a friend that he had begun a children's book "in the tradition of E. Nesbit."

"The Aunt and Amabel" prefigures Lewis's first Narnia adventure in that the young girl Amabel enters another world by means of a wardrobe, finding therein a magical train station called "Bigwardrobeinspareroom." In chapter 2 of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, the faun Mr. Tumnus similarly speaks of "the far land of Spare Oom" and of "the bright city of War Drobe."

"The Aunt and Amabel" was first published in *Blackie's Children's Annual* (1909), and collected in *The Magic World* (1912).

It is not pleasant to be a fish out of water. To be a cat in water is not what any one would desire. To be in a temper is uncomfortable. And no one can fully taste the joys of life if he is in a Little Lord Fauntleroy suit. But by far the most uncomfortable thing to be in is disgrace, sometimes amusingly called Coventry by the people who are not in it.

We have all been there. It is a place where the heart sinks and aches, where familiar faces are clouded and changed, where any remark that one may tremblingly make is received with stony silence or with the assurance that nobody wants to talk to such a naughty child. If you are only in disgrace, and not in solitary confinement, you will creep about a house that is like the one you have had such jolly times in, and yet as unlike it as a bad dream is to a June morning. You will long to speak to people, and be afraid to speak. You will wonder whether there is anything you can do that will change things at all. You have said you are sorry, and that has changed nothing. You will wonder whether you are to stay for ever in this desolate place, outside all hope and love and fun and happiness. And though it has happened before, and has always, in the end, come to an end, you can never be quite sure that this time it is not going to last for ever.

"It *is* going to last for ever," said Amabel, who was eight. "What shall I do? Oh whatever shall I do?"

What she *had* done ought to have formed the subject of her meditations. And she had done what had seemed to her all the time, and in fact still seemed, a self-sacrificing and noble act. She was staying with an aunt—measles or a new baby, or the painters in the house, I forget which, the cause of her banishment. And the aunt, who was really a great-aunt and quite old enough to know better, had been grumbling about her head gardener to a lady who called in blue spectacles and a beady bonnet with violet flowers in it.

"He hardly lets me have a plant for the table," said the aunt, "and that border in front of the breakfast-room window—it's just bare earth—and I ex-

pressly ordered chrysanthemums to be planted there. He thinks of nothing but his greenhouse."

The beady-violet-blue-glassed lady snorted, and said she didn't know what we were coming to, and she would have just half a cup, please, with not quite so much milk, thank you very much.

Now what would you have done? Minded your own business most likely, and not got into trouble at all. Not so Amabel. Enthusiastically anxious to do something which should make the great-aunt see what a thoughtful, unselfish, little girl she really was (the aunt's opinion of her being at present quite otherwise), she got up very early in the morning and took the cutting-out scissors from the work-room table drawer and stole, "like an errand of mercy," she told herself, to the greenhouse where she busily snipped off every single flower she could find. MacFarlane was at his breakfast. Then with the points of the cutting-out scissors she made nice deep little holes in the flower-bed where the chrysanthemums ought to have been, and struck the flowers in—chrysanthemums, geraniums, primulas, orchids, and carnations. It would be a lovely surprise for Auntie.

Then the aunt came down to breakfast and saw the lovely surprise. Amabel's world turned upside down and inside out suddenly and surprisingly, and there she was, in Coventry, and not even the housemaid would speak to her. Her great-uncle, whom she passed in the hall on her way to her own room, did indeed, as he smoothed his hat, murmur, "Sent to Coventry, eh? Never mind, it'll soon be over," and went off to the City banging the front door behind him.

He meant well, but he did not understand.

Amabel understood, or she thought she did, and knew in her miserable heart that she was sent to Coventry for the last time, and that this time she would stay there.

"I don't care," she said quite untruly. "I'll never try to be kind to any one again." And that wasn't true either. She was to spend the whole day alone in the best bedroom, the one with the four-post bed and the red curtains and the large wardrobe with a looking-glass in it that you could see yourself in to the very ends of your strap-shoes.

The first thing Amabel did was to look at herself in the glass. She was still sniffing and sobbing, and her eyes were swimming in tears, another one rolled down her nose as she looked—that was very interesting. Another rolled down, and that was the last, because as soon as you get interested in watching your tears they stop.

Next she looked out of the window, and saw the decorated flower-bed, just as she had left it, very bright and beautiful.

"Well, it *does* look nice," she said. "I don't care what they say."

"Then she looked round the room for something to read; there was nothing. The old-fashioned best bedrooms never did have anything. Only on the large dressing-table, on the left-hand side of the oval swing-glass, was one book covered in red velvet, and on it, very twistily embroidered in yellow silk and mixed up with misleading leaves and squiggles were the letters, A. B. C.

"Perhaps it's a picture alphabet," said Mabel, and was quite pleased, though of course she was much too old to care for alphabets. Only when one is very unhappy and very dull, anything is better than nothing. She opened the book.

"Why, it's only a time-table!" she said. "I suppose it's for people when they want to go away, and Auntie puts it here in case they suddenly make up their minds to go, and feel that they can't wait another minute. I feel like that, only it's no good, and I expect other people do too."

She had learned how to use the dictionary, and this seemed to go the same way. She looked up the names of all the places she knew—Brighton where she had once spent a month, Rugby where her brother was at school, and Home, which was Amberley—and she saw the times when the trains left for these places, and wished she could go by those trains.

And once more she looked round the best bedroom which was her prison, and thought of the Bastille, and wished she had a toad to tame, like the poor Viscount, or a flower to watch growing, like Picciola, and she was very sorry for herself, and very angry with her aunt, and very grieved at the conduct of her parents—she had expected better things from them—and now they had left her in this dreadful place where no one loved her, and no one understood her.

There seemed to be no place for toads or flowers in the best room, it was carpeted all over even in its least noticeable corners. It had everything a best room ought to have—and everything was of dark shining mahogany. The toilet-table had a set of red and gold glass things—a tray, candlesticks, a ring-stand, many little pots with lids, and two bottles with stoppers. When the stoppers were taken out they smelt very strange, something like very old scent, and something like cold cream also very old, and something like going to the dentist's.

I do not know whether the scent of those bottles had anything to do with what happened. It certainly was a very extraordinary scent. Quite different

from any perfume that I smell nowadays, but I remember that when I was a little girl I smelt it quite often. But then there are no best rooms now such as there used to be. The best rooms now are gay with chintz and mirrors, and there are always flowers and books, and little tables to put your teacup on, and sofas, and armchairs. And they smell of varnish and new furniture.

When Amabel had sniffed at both bottles and looked in all the pots, which were quite clean and empty except for a pearl button and two pins in one of them, she took up the A.B.C. again to look for Whitby, where her godmother lived. And it was then that she saw the extraordinary name *"Whereyouwantogoto."* This was odd—but the name of the station from which it started was still more extraordinary, for it was not Euston or Cannon Street or Marylebone.

The name of the station was *"Bigwardrobeinspareroom."* And below this name, really quite unusual for a station, Amabel read in small letters:

"Single fares strictly forbidden. Return tickets No Class Nuppence. Trains leave *Bigwardrobeinspareroom* all the time."

And under that in still smaller letters—

"You had better go now."

What would you have done? Rubbed your eyes and thought you were dreaming? Well, if you had, nothing more would have happened. Nothing ever does when you behave like that. Amabel was wiser. She went straight to the Big Wardrobe and turned its glass handle.

"I expect it's only shelves and people's best hats," she said. But she only said it. People often say what they don't mean, so that if things turn out as they don't expect, they can say "I told you so," but this is most dishonest to one's self, and being dishonest to one's self is almost worse than being dishonest to other people. Amabel would never have done it if she had been herself. But she was out of herself with anger and unhappiness.

Of course it wasn't hats. It was, most amazingly, a crystal cave, very oddly shaped like a railway station. It seemed to be lighted by stars, which is, of course, unusual in a booking office, and over the station clock was a full moon. The clock had no figures, only *Now* in shining letters all round it, twelve times, and the *Nows* touched, so the clock was bound to be always right. How different from the clock you go to school by!

A porter in white satin hurried forward to take Amabel's luggage. Her luggage was the A.B.C. which she still held in her hand.

"Lots of time, Miss," he said, grinning in a most friendly way, "I *am* glad you're going. You *will* enjoy yourself! What a nice little girl you are!"

This was cheering. Amabel smiled.

At the pigeon-hole that tickets come out of, another person, also in white satin, was ready with a mother-of-pearl ticket, round, like a card counter.

"Here you are, Miss," he said with the kindest smile, "price nothing, and refreshments free all the way. It's a pleasure," he added, "to issue a ticket to a nice little lady like you." The train was entirely of crystal, too, and the cushions were of white satin. There were little buttons such as you have for electric bells, and on them *"Whatyouwantoeat," "Whatyouwantodrink," "Whatyouwantoread,"* in silver letters.

Amabel pressed all the buttons at once, and instantly felt obliged to blink. The blink over, she saw on the cushion by her side a silver tray with vanilla ice, boiled chicken and white sauce, almonds (blanched), peppermint creams, and mashed potatoes, and a long glass of lemonade—beside the tray was a book. It was Mrs. Ewing's *Bad-tempered Family*, and it was bound in white vellum.

There is nothing more luxurious than eating while you read—unless it be reading while you eat. Amabel did both: they are not the same thing, as you will see if you think the matter over.

And just as the last thrill of the last spoonful of ice died away, and the last full stop of the *Bad-tempered Family* met Amabel's eye, the train stopped, and hundreds of railway officials in white velvet shouted, *"Whereyouwantogoto!* Get out!"

A velvety porter, who was somehow like a silkworm as well as like a wedding handkerchief sachet, opened the door.

"Now!" he said, "come on out, Miss Amabel, unless you want to go to *Whereyoudon'twantogoto."*

She hurried out, on to an ivory platform.

"Not on the ivory, if you please," said the porter, "the white Axminster carpet—it's laid down expressly for you."

Amabel walked along it and saw ahead of her a crowd, all in white.

"What's all that?" she asked the friendly porter.

"It's the Mayor, dear Miss Amabel," he said, "with your address."

"My address is The Old Cottage, Amberley," she said, "at least it used to be"—and found herself face to face with the Mayor. He was very like Uncle George, but he bowed low to her, which was not Uncle George's habit, and said:

"Welcome, dear little Amabel. Please accept this admiring address from the Mayor and burgesses and apprentices and all the rest of it, of Whereyouwantogoto."

The address was in silver letters, on white silk, and it said:

"Welcome, dear Amabel. We know you meant to please your aunt. It was very clever of you to think of putting the greenhouse flowers in the bare flower-bed. You couldn't be expected to know that you ought to ask leave before you touch other people's things."

"Oh, but," said Amabel quite confused. "I did. . . ."

But the band struck up, and drowned her words. The instruments of the band were all of silver, and the bandsmen's clothes of white leather. The tune they played was "Cheero!"

Then Amabel found that she was taking part in a procession, hand in hand with the Mayor, and the band playing like mad all the time. The Mayor was dressed entirely in cloth of silver, and as they went along he kept saying, close to her ear,

"You have our sympathy, you have our sympathy," till she felt quite giddy.

There was a flower show—all the flowers were white. There was a concert—all the tunes were old ones. There was a play called *Put yourself in her place*. And there was a banquet, with Amabel in the place of honour.

They drank her health in white wine whey, and then through the Crystal Hall of a thousand gleaming pillars, where thousands of guests, all in white, were met to do honour to Amabel, the shout went up—"Speech, speech!"

I cannot explain to you what had been going on in Amabel's mind. Perhaps you know. Whatever it was it began like a very tiny butterfly in a box, that could not keep quiet, but fluttered, and fluttered, and fluttered. And when the Mayor rose and said:

"Dear Amabel, you whom we all love and understand; dear Amabel, you who were so unjustly punished for trying to give pleasure to an unresponsive aunt; poor, ill-used, ill-treated, innocent Amabel; blameless, suffering Amabel, we await your words," that fluttering, tiresome butterfly-thing inside her seemed suddenly to swell to the size and strength of a fluttering albatross, and Amabel got up from her seat of honour on the throne of ivory and silver and pearl, and said, choking a little, and extremely red about the ears—

"Ladies and gentlemen, I don't want to make a speech, I just want to say, 'Thank you,' and to say—to say—to say. . . ."

She stopped, and all the white crowd cheered.

"To say," she went on as the cheers died down, "that I wasn't blameless, and innocent, and all those nice things. I ought to have thought. And they *were* Auntie's flowers. But I did want to please her. It's all so mixed. Oh, I wish Auntie was here!"

And instantly Auntie *was* there, very tall and quite nice-looking, in a white velvet dress and an ermine cloak.

"Speech," cried the crowd. "Speech from Auntie!"

Auntie stood on the step of the throne beside Amabel, and said:

"I think, perhaps, I was hasty. And I think Amabel meant to please me. But all the flowers that were meant for the winter . . . well—I was annoyed. I'm sorry."

"Oh, Auntie, so am I—so am I," cried Amabel, and the two began to hug each other on the ivory step, while the crowd cheered like mad, and the band struck up that well-known air, "If you only understood!"

"Oh, Auntie," said Amabel among hugs, "This is such a lovely place, come and see everything, we may, mayn't we?" she asked the Mayor.

"The place is yours," he said, "and now you can see many things that you couldn't see before. We are The People who Understand. And now you are one of Us. And your aunt is another."

I must not tell you all that they saw because these things are secrets only known to The People who Understand, and perhaps you do not yet belong to that happy nation. And if you do, you will know without my telling you.

And when it grew late, and the stars were drawn down, somehow, to hang among the trees, Amabel fell asleep in her aunt's arms beside a white foaming fountain on a marble terrace, where white peacocks came to drink.

She awoke on the big bed in the spare room, but her aunt's arms were still round her.

"Amabel," she was saying, "Amabel!"

"Oh, Auntie," said Amabel sleepily, "I am so sorry. It *was* stupid of me. And I did mean to please you."

"It *was* stupid of you," said the aunt, "but I am sure you meant to please me. Come down to supper." And Amabel has a confused recollection of her aunt's saying that she was sorry, adding, "Poor little Amabel."

If the aunt really did say it, it was fine of her. And Amabel is quite sure that she did say it.

Amabel and her great-aunt are now the best of friends. But neither of them has ever spoken to the other of the beautiful city called "*Whereyouwantogoto.*"

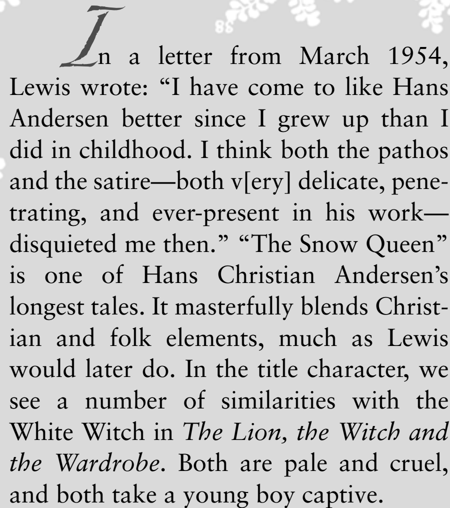
Amabel is too shy to be the first to mention it, and no doubt the aunt has her own reasons for not broaching the subject.

But of course they both know that they have been there together, and it is easy to get on with people when you and they alike belong to the *People-whounderstand*.

If you look in the A.B.C. that your people have you will not find "*Whereyouwantogoto.*" It is only in the red velvet bound copy that Amabel found in her aunt's best bedroom.

The Snow Queen: A Tale in Seven Stories

by Hans Christian Andersen



In a letter from March 1954, Lewis wrote: “I have come to like Hans Andersen better since I grew up than I did in childhood. I think both the pathos and the satire—both v[ery] delicate, penetrating, and ever-present in his work—disquieted me then.” “The Snow Queen” is one of Hans Christian Andersen’s longest tales. It masterfully blends Christian and folk elements, much as Lewis would later do. In the title character, we see a number of similarities with the White Witch in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. Both are pale and cruel, and both take a young boy captive.

Hans Christian Andersen was a Danish writer. “The Snow Queen” (“Sneedronningen”) first appeared in his second collection of fairy tales, *Nye Evyntyr, Anden Samling* (*New Tales, Second Collection*, 1845). This English version appeared in *Fairy Tales from Hans Christian Andersen* (1906), part of the Everyman’s Library, edited by Ernest Rhys.

FIRST STORY

Deals with a mirror and its fragments.

Now we are about to begin, and you must attend; and when we get to the end of the story, you will know more than you do now about a very wicked hobgoblin. He was one of the worst kind; in fact he was a real demon. One day he was in a high state of delight because he had invented a mirror with this peculiarity, that every good and pretty thing reflected in it shrank away to almost nothing. On the other hand, every bad and good-for-nothing thing stood out and looked its worst. The most beautiful landscapes reflected in it looked like boiled spinach, and the best people became hideous, or else they were upside down and had no bodies. Their faces were distorted beyond recognition, and if they had even one freckle it appeared to spread all over the nose and mouth. The demon thought this immensely amusing. If a good thought passed through anyone's mind, it turned to a grin in the mirror, and this caused real delight to the demon. All the scholars in the demon's school, for he kept a school, reported that a miracle had taken place: now for the first time it had become possible to see what the world and mankind were really like. They ran about all over with the mirror, till at last there was not a country or a person which had not been seen in this distorting mirror. They even wanted to fly up to heaven with it to mock the angels; but the higher they flew, the more it grinned, so much so that they could hardly hold it, and at last it slipped out of their hands and fell to the earth, shivered into hundreds of millions and billions of bits. Even then it did more harm than ever. Some of these bits were not as big as a grain of sand, and these flew about all over the world, getting into people's eyes, and, once in, they stuck there, and distorted everything they looked at, or made them see everything that was amiss. Each tiniest grain of glass kept the same power as that possessed by the whole mir-

ror. Some people even got a bit of the glass into their hearts, and that was terrible, for the heart became like a lump of ice. Some of the fragments were so big that they were used for window panes, but it was not advisable to look at one's friends through these panes. Other bits were made into spectacles, and it was a bad business when people put on these spectacles meaning to be just. The bad demon laughed till he split his sides; it tickled him to see the mischief he had done. But some of these fragments were still left floating about the world, and you shall hear what happened to them.

SECOND STORY

About a Little Boy and a Little Girl

In a big town crowded with houses and people, where there is no room for gardens, people have to be content with flowers in pots instead. In one of these towns lived two children who managed to have something bigger than a flower pot for a garden. They were not brother and sister, but they were just as fond of each other as if they had been. Their parents lived opposite each other in two attic rooms. The roof of one house just touched the roof of the next one, with only a rain water gutter between them. They each had a little dormer window, and one only had to step over the gutter to get from one house to the other. Each of the parents had a large window-box, in which they grew pot herbs and a little rose tree. There was one in each box, and they both grew splendidly. Then it occured to the parents to put the boxes across the gutter, from house to house, and they looked just like two banks of flowers. The pea vines hung down over the edges of the boxes, and the roses threw out long creepers which twined round the windows. It was almost like a green triumphal arch. The boxes were high, and the children knew they must not climb up on to them, but they were often allowed to have their little stools out under the rose trees, and there they had delightful games. Of course in the winter there was an end to these amusements. The windows were often covered with hoar frost; then they would warm coppers on the stove and stick them on the frozen panes, where they made lovely peep-holes as round as possible. Then a bright eye would peep through these holes, one from each window. The little boy's name was Kay, and the little girl's Gerda.

In the summer they could reach each other with one bound, but in the winter they had to go down all the stairs in one house and up all the stairs in the other, and outside there were snowdrifts.

"Look! the white bees are swarming," said the old grandmother.

"Have they a queen bee, too?" asked the little boy, for he knew that there was a queen among the real bees.

"Yes indeed they have," said the grandmother. "She flies where the swarm is thickest. She is the biggest of them all, and she never remains on the ground. She always flies up again to the sky. Many a winter's night she flies through the streets and peeps in at the windows, and then the ice freezes on the panes into wonderful patterns like flowers."

"Oh yes, we have seen that," said both children, and then they knew it was true.

"Can the Snow Queen come in here?" asked the little girl.

"Just let her come," said the boy, "and I will put her on the stove, where she will melt."

But the grandmother smoothed his hair and told him more stories.

In the evening when little Kay was at home and half undressed, he crept up on to the chair by the window, and peeped out of the little hole. A few snow-flakes were falling, and one of these, the biggest, remained on the edge of the window-box. It grew bigger and bigger, till it became the figure of a woman, dressed in the finest white gauze, which appeared to be made of millions of starry flakes. She was delicately lovely, but all ice, glittering, dazzling ice. Still she was alive, her eyes shone like two bright stars, but there was no rest or peace in them. She nodded to the window and waved her hand. The little boy was frightened and jumped down off the chair, and then he fancied that a big bird flew past the window.

The next day was bright and frosty, and then came the thaw—and after that the spring. The sun shone, green buds began to appear, the swallows built their nests, and people began to open their windows. The little children began to play in their garden on the roof again. The roses were in splendid bloom that summer; the little girl had learnt a hymn, and there was something in it about roses, and that made her think of her own. She sang it to the little boy, and then he sang it with her—

"Where roses deck the flowery vale,
There, Infant Jesus, we thee hail!"

The children took each other by the hands, kissed the roses, and rejoiced in God's bright sunshine, and spoke to it as if the Child Jesus were there. What lovely summer days they were, and how delightful it was to sit out under the fresh rose trees, which seemed never tired of blooming.

Kay and Gerda were looking at a picture book of birds and animals one day—it had just struck five by the church clock—when Kay said, "Oh, something struck my heart, and I have got something in my eye!"

The little girl put her arms round his neck, he blinked his eye, there was nothing to be seen.

"I believe it is gone," he said, but it was not gone. It was one of those very grains of glass from the mirror, the magic mirror. You remember that horrid mirror, in which all good and great things reflected in it became small and mean, while the bad things were magnified, and every flaw became very apparent.

Poor Kay! a grain of it had gone straight to his heart, and would soon turn it to a lump of ice. He did not feel it any more, but it was still there.

"Why do you cry?" he asked; "it makes you look ugly; there's nothing the matter with me. How horrid!" he suddenly cried; "there's a worm in that rose, and that one is quite crooked; after all, they are nasty roses, and so are the boxes they are growing in!" He kicked the box and broke off two of the roses.

"What are you doing, Kay?" cried the little girl. When he saw her alarm, he broke off another rose, and then ran in, by his own window, and left dear little Gerda alone.

When she next got out the picture book he said it was only fit for babies in long clothes. When his grandmother told them stories he always had a but—, and if he could manage it, he liked to get behind her chair, put on her spectacles and imitate her. He did it very well and people laughed at him. He was soon able to imitate everyone in the street; he could make fun of all their peculiarities and failings. "He will turn out a clever fellow," said people. But it was all that bit of glass in his heart, that bit of glass in his eye, and it made him tease little Gerda who was so devoted to him. He played quite different games now; he seemed to have grown older. One winter's day, when the snow was falling fast, he brought in a big magnifying glass; he held out the tail of his blue coat, and let the snow flakes fall upon it.

"Now look through the glass, Gerda!" he said; every snow-flake was magnified, and looked like a lovely flower, or a sharply pointed star.

"Do you see how cleverly they are made," said Kay. "Much more interesting than looking at real flowers, and there is not a single flaw in them, they are perfect, if only they would not melt."

Shortly after, he appeared in his thick gloves, with his sledge on his back. He shouted right into Gerda's ear, "I have got leave to drive in the big square where the other boys play!" and away he went.

In the big square the bolder boys used to tie their little sledges to the farm carts and go a long way in this fashion. They had no end of fun over it. Just in the middle of their games, a big sledge came along; it was painted white and the occupant wore a white fur coat and cap. The sledge drove twice round the square, and Kay quickly tied his sledge on behind. Then off they went, faster, and faster, into the next street. The driver turned round and nodded to Kay in the most friendly way, just as if they knew each other. Every time Kay wanted to loose his sledge, the person nodded again, and Kay stayed where he was, and they drove right out through the town gates. Then the snow began to fall so heavily, that the little boy could not see a hand before him as they rushed along. He undid the cords and tried to get away from the big sledge, but it was no use, his little sledge stuck fast, and on they rushed, faster than the wind. He shouted aloud but nobody heard him and the sledge tore on through the snow-drifts. Every now and then it gave a bound, as if they were jumping over hedges and ditches. He was very frightened, and he wanted to say his prayers, but he could only remember the multiplication tables.

The snow-flakes grew bigger and bigger till at last they looked like big white chickens. All at once they sprang on one side, the big sledge stopped and the person who drove got up, coat and cap smothered in snow. It was a tall and upright lady all shining white, the Snow Queen herself.

"We have come along at a good pace," she said; "but it's cold enough to kill one; creep inside my bearskin coat."

She took him into the sledge by her, wrapped him in her furs, and he felt as if he were sinking into a snowdrift.

"Are you still cold?" she asked, and she kissed him on the forehead. Ugh! it was colder than ice, it went to his very heart, which was already more than half ice; he felt as if he were dying, but only for a moment, and then it seemed to have done him good, he no longer felt the cold.

"My sledge! don't forget my sledge!" He only remembered it now, it was tied to one of the white chickens which flew along behind them. The Snow Queen kissed Kay again, and then he forgot all about little Gerda, Grandmother, and all the others at home.

"Now I mustn't kiss you any more," she said, "or I should kiss you to death!"

Kay looked at her, she was so pretty; a cleverer, more beautiful face could hardly be imagined. She did not seem to be made of ice now, as she was outside the window when she waved her hand to him. In his eyes she was quite perfect, and he was not a bit afraid of her; he told her that he could do mental arithmetic, as far as fractions, and that he knew the number of square miles and the number of inhabitants of the country. She always smiled at him, and he then thought that he surely did not know enough and he looked up into the wide expanse of heaven, into which they rose higher and higher as she flew with him on a dark cloud, while the storm surged around them, the wind ringing in their ears like well-known old songs.

They flew over woods and lakes, over oceans and islands, the cold wind whistled down below them, the wolves howled, the black crows flew screaming over the sparkling snow, but up above, the moon shone bright and clear-and Kay looked at it all the long, long winter nights; in the day he slept at the Snow Queen's feet.

STORY THREE

The Garden of the Woman Learned in Magic

But how was little Gerda getting on all this long time since Kay left her? Where could he be? Nobody knew, nobody could say anything about him. All that the other boys knew was, that they had seen him tie his little sledge to a splendid big one which drove away down the street and out of the town gates. Nobody knew where he was, and many tears were shed; little Gerda cried long and bitterly. At last, people said he was dead; he must have fallen into the river which ran close by the town. Oh, what long, dark, winter days those were!

At last the spring came and the sunshine. "Kay is dead and gone," said little Gerda.

"I don't believe it," said the sunshine.

"He is dead and gone," she said to the swallows.

"We don't believe it," said the swallows, and at last little Gerda did not believe it either.

"I will put on my new red shoes," she said one morning; "those Kay never saw; and then I will go down to the river and ask it about him!"

It was very early in the morning; she kissed the old grandmother, who was still asleep, put on the red shoes, and went quite alone, out by the gate to the river.

"Is it true that you have taken my little playfellow? I will give you my red shoes if you will bring him back to me again."

She thought the little ripples nodded in such a curious way, so she took off her red shoes, her most cherished possessions, and threw them both into the river. They fell close by the shore, and were carried straight back to her by the little wavelets; it seemed as if the river would not accept her offering, as it had not taken little Kay.

She only thought she had not thrown them far enough, so she climbed into a boat which lay among the rushes, then she went right out to the further end of it, and threw the shoes into the water again. But the boat was loose, and her movements started it off, and it floated away from the shore: she felt it moving and tried to get out, but before she reached the other end the boat was more than a yard from the shore, and was floating away quite quickly.

Little Gerda was terribly frightened, and began to cry, but nobody heard her except the sparrows, and they could not carry her ashore, but they flew alongside twittering as if to cheer her, "we are here, we are here." The boat floated rapidly away with the current; little Gerda sat quite still with only her stockings on; her little red shoes floated behind, but they could not catch up the boat which drifted away faster and faster.

The banks on both sides were very pretty with beautiful flowers, fine old trees, and slopes dotted with sheep and cattle but not a single person.

"Perhaps the river is taking me to little Kay," thought Gerda, and that cheered her; she sat up and looked at the beautiful green banks for hours.

Then they came to a big cherry garden; there was a little house in it, with curious blue and red windows, it had a thatched roof, and two wooden soldiers stood outside, who presented arms as she sailed past. Gerda called out to them; she thought they were alive, but of course they did not answer; she was quite close to them, for the current drove the boat close to the bank. Gerda called out again, louder than before, and then an old, old woman came out of the house; she was leaning upon a big, hooked stick, and she wore a big sun hat, which was covered with beautiful painted flowers.

"You poor little child," said the old woman, "however were you driven out on this big, strong river into the wide, wide world alone?" Then she

walked right into the water, and caught hold of the boat with her hooked stick; she drew it ashore, and lifted little Gerda out.

Gerda was delighted to be on dry land again, but she was a little bit frightened of the strange old woman.

"Come, tell me who you are, and how you got here," said she.

When Gerda had told her the whole story and asked her if she had seen Kay, the woman said she had not seen him, but that she expected him. Gerda must not be sad, she was to come and taste her cherries and see her flowers, which were more beautiful than any picture-book; each one had a story to tell. Then she took Gerda by the hand, they went into the little house, and the old woman locked the door.

The windows were very high up, and they were red, blue, and yellow; they threw a very curious light into the room. On the table were quantities of the most delicious cherries, of which Gerda had leave to eat as many as ever she liked. While she was eating, the old woman combed her hair with a golden comb, so that the hair curled, and shone like gold round the pretty little face, which was as sweet as a rose.

I have long wanted a little girl like you!" said the old woman. "You will see how well we shall get on together." While she combed her hair Gerda had forgotten all about Kay, for the old woman was learned in the magic art, but she was not a bad witch, she only cast spells over people for a little amusement, and she wanted to keep Gerda. She therefore went into the garden and waved her hooked stick over all the rose-bushes, and however beautifully they were flowering, all sank down into the rich black earth without leaving a trace behind them. The old woman was afraid that if Gerda saw the roses she would be reminded of Kay, and would want to run away. Then she took Gerda into the flower garden. What a delicious scent there was! and every imaginable flower for every season was in that lovely garden; no picture book could be brighter or more beautiful. Gerda jumped for joy and played till the sun went down behind the tall cherry trees. Then she was put into a lovely bed with rose coloured silken coverings stuffed with violets; she slept and dreamt as lovely dreams as any queen on her wedding day.

The next day she played with the flowers in the garden again—and many days passed in the same way. Gerda knew every flower, but however many there were, she always thought there was one missing, but which it was she did not know.

One day she was sitting looking at the old woman's sun hat with its painted flowers, and the very prettiest one of them all was a rose. The old

woman had forgotten her hat when she charmed the others away. This is the consequence of being absent-minded.

"What!" said Gerda, "are there no roses here?" and she sprang in among the flower beds and sought, but in vain! Her hot tears fell on the very places where the roses used to be; when the warm drops moistened the earth, the rose trees shot up again just as full of bloom as when they sank. Gerda embraced the roses and kissed them, and then she thought of the lovely roses at home, and this brought the thought of little Kay.

"Oh, how I have been delayed," said the little girl, I ought to have been looking for Kay! Don't you know where he is?" she asked the roses. "Do you think he is dead and gone?"

"He is not dead," said the roses. "For we have been down underground, you know, and all the dead people are there, but Kay is not among them."

"Oh, thank you!" said little Gerda, and then she went to the other flowers and looked into their cups and said, "Do you know where Kay is?"

But each flower stood in the sun and dreamt its own dreams. Little Gerda heard many of these, but never anything about Kay.

And what said the Tiger lilies?

"Do you hear the drum? rub-a-dub, it has only two notes, rub-a-dub; always the same. The wailing of women and the cry of the preacher. The Hindu woman in her long red garment stands on the pile, while the flames surround her and her dead husband. But the woman is only thinking of the living man in the circle round, whose eyes burn with a fiercer fire than that of the flames which consume the body. Do the flames of the heart die in the fire?"

"I understand nothing about that," said little Gerda.

"That is my story," said the Tiger lily.

"What does the convolvulus say?"

"An old castle is perched high over a narrow mountain path, it is closely covered with ivy, almost hiding the old red walls, and creeping up leaf upon leaf right round the balcony where stands a beautiful maiden. She bends over the balustrade and looks eagerly up the road. No rose on its stem is fresher than she; no apple blossom wafted by the wind moves more lightly. Her silken robes rustle softly as she bends over and says, "Will he never come?"

"Is it Kay you mean?" asked Gerda.

"I am only talking about my own story, my dream," answered the convolvulus.

What said the little snowdrop?

"Between two trees a rope with a board is hanging; it is a swing. Two

pretty little girls in snowy frocks and green ribbons fluttering on their hats are seated on it. Their brother, who is bigger than they are, stands up behind them; he has his arms round the ropes for supports, and holds in one hand a little bowl and in the other a clay pipe. He is blowing soap-bubbles. As the swing moves the bubbles fly upwards in all their changing colours, the last one still hangs from the pipe swayed by the wind, and the swing goes on. A little black dog runs up, he is almost as light as the bubbles, he stands up on his hind legs and wants to be taken into the swing, but it does not stop. The little dog falls with an angry bark, they jeer at it; the bubble bursts. A swinging plank, a fluttering foam picture—that is my story!"

"I daresay what you tell me is very pretty, but you speak so sadly and you never mention little Kay."

What says the hyacinth?

"They were three beautiful sisters, all most delicate, and quite transparent. One wore a crimson robe, the other a blue, and the third was pure white. These three danced hand-in-hand, by the edge of the lake in the moonlight. They were human beings, not fairies of the wood. The fragrant air attracted them, and they vanished into the wood; here the fragrance was stronger still. Three coffins glide out of the wood towards the lake, and in them lie the maidens. The fire flies flutter lightly round them with their little flickering torches. Do these dancing maidens sleep, or are they dead? The scent of the flower says that they are corpses. The evening bell tolls their knell."

"You make me quite sad," said little Gerda; "your perfume is so strong it makes me think of those dead maidens. Oh, is little Kay really dead? The roses have been down underground, and they say no."

"Ding, dong," tolled the hyacinth bells; "we are not tolling for little Kay; we know nothing about him. We sing our song, the only one we know."

And Gerda went on to the buttercups shining among their dark green leaves.

"You are a bright little sun," said Gerda. "Tell me if you know where I shall find my playfellow."

The buttercup shone brightly and returned Gerda's glance. What song could the buttercup sing? It would not be about Kay.

"God's bright sun shone into a little court on the first day of spring. The sunbeams stole down the neighbouring white wall, close to which bloomed the first yellow flower of the season; it shone like burnished gold in the sun. An old woman had brought her arm-chair out into the sun; her granddaughter, a poor and pretty little maid-servant, had come to pay her a short visit,

and she kissed her. There was gold, heart's gold, in the kiss. Gold on the lips, gold on the ground, and gold above, in the early morning beams! Now that is my little story," said the buttercup.

"Oh, my poor old grandmother!" sighed Gerda. "She will be longing to see me, and grieving about me, as she did about Kay. But I shall soon go home again and take Kay with me. It is useless for me to ask the flowers about him. They only know their own stories, and have no information to give me."

Then she tucked up her little dress, so that she might run the faster, but the narcissus blossoms struck her on the legs as she jumped over them, so she stopped and said, "Perhaps you can tell me something."

She stooped down close to the flower and listened. What did it say?

"I can see myself, I can see myself," said the narcissus. "Oh, how sweet is my scent. Up there in an attic window stands a little dancing girl half dressed; first she stands on one leg, then on the other, and looks as if she would tread the whole world under her feet. She is only a delusion. She pours some water out of a teapot on to a bit of stuff that she is holding; it is her bodice. 'Cleanliness is a good thing,' she says. Her white dress hangs on a peg; it has been washed in the teapot, too, and dried on the roof. She puts it on, and wraps a saffron coloured scarf round her neck, which makes the dress look whiter. See how high she carries her head, and all upon one stem. I see myself, I see myself!"

"I don't care a bit about all that," said Gerda; "it's no use telling me such stuff."

And then she ran to the end of the garden. The door was fastened, but she pressed the rusty latch, and it gave way. The door sprang open, and little Gerda ran out with bare feet into the wide world. She looked back three times, but nobody came after her. At last she could run no further, and she sat down on a big stone. When she looked round she saw that the summer was over, it was quite late autumn. She would never have known it inside the beautiful garden, where the sun always shone, and the flowers of every season were always in bloom.

"Oh, how I have wasted my time," said little Gerda. "It is autumn. I must not rest any longer," and she got up to go on.

Oh, how weary and sore were her little feet, and everything round looked so cold and dreary. The long willow leaves were quite yellow. The damp mist fell off the trees like rain, one leaf dropped after another from the trees, and only the sloe-thorn still bore its fruit, but the sloes were sour and set one's teeth on edge. Oh, how grey and sad it looked, out in the wide world.

FOURTH STORY

Prince and Princess

Gerda was soon obliged to rest again. A big crow hopped on to the snow, just in front of her. It had been sitting looking at her for a long time and wagging its head. Now it said "Caw, caw; good-day, good-day," as well as it could; it meant to be kind to the little girl, and asked her where she was going, alone in the wide world.

Gerda understood the word "alone" and knew how much there was in it, and she told the crow the whole story of her life and adventures, and asked if it had seen Kay.

The crow nodded his head gravely and said, "May be I have, may be I have."

"What, do you really think you have?" cried the little girl, nearly smothering him with her kisses.

"Gently, gently!" said the crow. "I believe it may have been Kay, but he has forgotten you by this time, I expect, for the Princess."

"Does he live with a Princess?" asked Gerda.

"Yes, listen," said the crow; "but it is so difficult to speak your language. If you understand 'crow's language,'* I can tell you about it much better."

"No, I have never learnt it," said Gerda; "but grandmother knew it, and used to speak it. If only I had learnt it!"

"It doesn't matter," said the crow. "I will tell you as well as I can, although I may do it rather badly."

Then he told her what he had heard.

"In this kingdom where we are now," said he, "there lives a Princess who is very clever. She has read all the newspapers in the world, and forgotten them again, so clever is she. One day she was sitting on her throne, which is not such an amusing thing to do either, they say; and she began humming a tune, which happened to be

'Why should I not be married, oh why?'

* Children have a kind of language, or gibberish, formed by adding letters or syllables to every word, which is called "crow's language."

"'Why not indeed?' said she. And she made up her mind to marry, if she could find a husband who had an answer ready when a question was put to him. She called all the court ladies together, and when they heard what she wanted, they were delighted.

"'I like that now,' they said. 'I was thinking the same thing myself the other day.'

"Every word I say is true," said the crow, "for I have a tame sweetheart who goes about the palace whenever she likes. She told me the whole story."

Of course his sweetheart was a crow, for "birds of a feather flock together," and one crow always chooses another. The newspapers all came out immediately with borders of hearts and the Princess's initials. They gave notice that any young man who was handsome enough might go up to the Palace to speak to the Princess. The one who spoke as if he were quite at home, and spoke well, would be chosen by the Princess as her husband. Yes, yes, you may believe me, it's as true as I sit here," said the crow. "The people came crowding in; there was such running, and crushing, but no one was fortunate enough to be chosen, either on the first day, or on the second. They could all of them talk well enough in the street, but when they entered the castle gates, and saw the guard in silver uniforms, and when they went up the stairs through rows of lackeys in gold embroidered liveries, their courage forsook them. When they reached the brilliantly lighted reception rooms, and stood in front of the throne where the Princess was seated, they could think of nothing to say, they only echoed her last words, and of course that was not what she wanted.

"It was just as if they had all taken some kind of sleeping powder, which made them lethargic; they did not recover themselves until they got out into the street again, and then they had plenty to say. There was quite a long line of them, reaching from the town gates up to the Palace.

"I went to see them myself," said the crow. "They were hungry and thirsty, but they got nothing at the Palace, not even as much as a glass of tepid water. Some of the wise ones had taken sandwiches with them, but they did not share them with their neighbours; they thought if the others went in to the Princess looking hungry, that there would be more chance for themselves."

"But Kay, little Kay!" asked Gerda; "when did he come? was he amongst the crowd?"

"Give me time, give me time! we are just coming to him. It was on the third day that a little personage came marching cheerfully along, without either carriage or horse. His eyes sparkled like yours, and he had beautiful long hair, but his clothes were very shabby."

"Oh, that was Kay!" said Gerda gleefully; "then I have found him!" and she clapped her hands.

"He had a little knapsack on his back!" said the crow.

"No, it must have been his sledge; he had it with him when he went away!" said Gerda.

"It may be so," said the crow; "I did not look very particularly! but I know from my sweetheart, that when he entered the Palace gates, and saw the life guards in their silver uniforms, and the lackeys on the stairs in their gold laced liveries, he was not the least bit abashed. He just nodded to them and said, 'It must be very tiresome to stand upon the stairs. I am going inside!' The rooms were blazing with lights. Privy councillors and excellencies without number were walking about barefoot carrying golden vessels; it was enough to make you solemn! His boots creaked fearfully too, but he wasn't a bit upset."

"Oh, I am sure that was Kay!" said Gerda; "I know he had a pair of new boots, I heard them creaking in grandmother's room."

"Yes, indeed they did creak!" said the crow. "But nothing daunted, he went straight up to the Princess, who was sitting on a pearl, as big as a spinning wheel. Poor, simple boy! all the court ladies and their attendants; the courtiers, and their gentlemen, each attended by a page, were standing round. The nearer the door they stood, so much the greater was their haughtiness; till the footman's boy who always wore slippers and stood in the doorway, was almost too proud even to be looked at."

"It must be awful!" said little Gerda, "and yet Kay has won the Princess!"

"If I had not been a crow, I should have taken her myself, notwithstanding that I am engaged. They say he spoke as well as I could have done myself, when I speak crow-language; at least so my sweetheart says. He was a picture of good looks and gallantry, and then, he had not come with any idea of wooing the Princess, but simply to hear her wisdom. He admired her just as much as she admired him!"

"Indeed it was Kay then," said Gerda; "he was so clever he could do mental arithmetic up to fractions. Oh won't you take me to the Palace?"

"It's easy enough to talk," said the crow; "but how are we to manage it? I will talk to my tame sweetheart about it; she will have some advice to give us I daresay, but I am bound to tell you that a little girl like you will never be admitted!"

"Oh, indeed I shall," said Gerda; "when Kay hears that I am here, he will come out at once to fetch me."

"Wait here for me by the stile," said the crow, then he wagged his head and flew off.

The evening had darkened in before he came back. "Caw, caw," he said, "she sends you greeting, and here is a little roll for you, she got it out of the kitchen where there is bread enough, and I daresay you are hungry! It is not possible for you to get into the Palace, you have bare feet, the guards in silver and the lackeys in gold would never allow you to pass. But don't cry, we shall get you in somehow; my sweetheart knows a little back staircase which leads up to the bedroom, and she knows where the key is kept."

Then they went into the garden, into the great avenue where the leaves were, softly one by one; and when the Palace lights went out, one after the other, the crow led little Gerda to the back door, which was ajar.

Oh, how Gerda's heart beat with fear and longing! It was just as if she was about to do something wrong, and yet she only wanted to know if this really was little Kay. Oh, it must be him, she thought picturing to herself his clever eyes and his long hair. She could see his very smile when they used to sit under the rose trees at home. She thought he would be very glad to see her, and to hear what a long way she had come to find him, and to hear how sad they had all been at home when he did not come back. Oh, it was joy mingled with fear.

They had now reached the stairs, where a little lamp was burning on a shelf. There stood the tame sweetheart, twisting and turning her head to look at Gerda, who made a curtsey, as grandmother had taught her.

"My betrothed has spoken so charmingly to me about you, my little miss!" she said; "your life, '*Vita*,' as it is called, is most touching! If you will take the lamp, I will go on in front. We shall take the straight road here, and we shall meet no one."

"It seems to me that someone is coming up behind us," said Gerda, as she fancied something rushed past her throwing a shadow on the walls; horses with flowing manes and slender legs; huntsmen, ladies and gentlemen on horseback.

"Oh, those are only the dreams!" said the crow; "they come to take the thoughts of the noble ladies and gentlemen out hunting. That's a good thing, for you will be able to see them all the better in bed. But don't forget, when you are taken into favour, that you show a grateful spirit."

"Now, there's no need to talk about that," said the crow from the woods.

They now came into the first apartment; it was hung with rose-coloured satin embroidered with flowers. Here again the dreams overtook them, but they flitted by so quickly that Gerda could not distinguish them. The apartments became one more beautiful than the other; they were enough to bewil-

der anybody. They now reached the bedroom. The ceiling was like a great palm with crystal leaves, and in the middle of the room two beds, each like a lily hung from a golden stem. One was white, and in it lay the Princess; the other was red, and there lay he whom Gerda had come to seek—little Kay! She bent aside one of the crimson leaves, and she saw a little brown neck. It was Kay! She called his name aloud, and held the lamp close to him. Again the dreams rushed through the room on horseback—he awoke, turned his head—and it was not little Kay.

It was only the Prince's neck which was like his; but he was young and handsome. The Princess peeped out of her lily-white bed, and asked what was the matter. Then little Gerda cried and told them all her story, and what the crows had done to help her.

"You poor little thing!" said the Prince and Princess. And they praised the crows, and said that they were not at all angry with them, but they must not do it again. Then they gave them a reward.

"Would you like your liberty?" said the Princess, "or would you prefer permanent posts about the court as court crows with perquisites from the kitchen?"

Both crows curtsied and begged for the permanent posts, for they thought of their old age, and said "it was so good to have something for the old man," as they called it.

The Prince got up and allowed Gerda to sleep in his bed, and he could not have done more. She folded her little hands, and thought "how good the people and the animals are"; then she shut her eyes and fell fast asleep. All the dreams came flying back again; this time they looked like angels, and they were dragging a little sledge with Kay sitting on it, and he nodded. But it was only a dream; so it all vanished when she woke.

Next day she was dressed in silk and velvet from head to foot; they asked her to stay at the Palace and have a good time, but she only begged them to give her a little carriage and horse, and a little pair of boots, so that she might drive out into the wide world to look for Kay.

They gave her a pair of boots and a muff. She was beautifully dressed, and when she was ready to start, there before the door stood a new chariot of pure gold. The Prince's and Princess's coat of arms were emblazoned on it, and shone like a star. Coachman, footman, and outrider, for there was even an outrider, all wore golden crowns. The Prince and Princess themselves helped her into the carriage and wished her joy. The wood crow, who was now married, accompanied her for the first three miles, he sat beside Gerda for he

could not ride with his back to the horses; the other crow stood at the door and flapped her wings, she did not go with them, for she suffered from headache since she had been a kitchen pensioner—the consequence of eating too much. The chariot was stored with sugar biscuits and there were fruit and ginger nuts under the seat. "Good-bye, good-bye," cried the Prince and Princess; little Gerda wept and the crow wept too. At the end of the first few miles the crow said good-bye, and this was the hardest parting of all. It flew up into a tree and flapped its big black wings as long as it could see the chariot which shone like the brightest sunshine.

FIFTH STORY

The Little Robber Girl

They drove on through a dark wood, where the chariot lighted up the way and blinded the robbers by its glare; it was more than they could bear.

"It is gold, it is gold!" they cried, and darting forward, seized the horses, and killed the postilions, the coachman and footman. They then dragged little Gerda out of the carriage.

"She is fat, and she is pretty, she has been fattened on nuts!" said the old robber woman, who had a long beard, and eyebrows that hung down over her eyes. "She is as good as a fat lamb, and how nice she will taste!" She drew out her sharp knife as she said this; it glittered horribly. "Oh!" screamed the old woman at the same moment, for her little daughter had come up behind her, and she was biting her ear. She hung on her back, as wild and as savage a little animal as you could wish to find. "You bad, wicked child!" said the mother, but she was prevented from killing Gerda on this occasion.

"She shall play with me," said the little robber girl; "she shall give me her muff, and her pretty dress, and she shall sleep in my bed." Then she bit her mother again and made her dance. All the robbers laughed and said, "Look at her dancing with her cub!"

"I want to get into the carriage," said the little robber girl, and she always had her own way because she was so spoilt and stubborn. She and Gerda got into the carriage and then they drove over stubble and stones further and further into the wood. The little robber girl was as big as Gerda, but much stronger; she had broader shoulders, and darker skin, her eyes were quite

black, with almost a melancholy expression. She put her arm round Gerda's waist and said—

"They shan't kill you as long as I don't get angry with you; you must surely be a Princess!"

"No," said little Gerda, and then she told her all her adventures, and how fond she was of Kay.

The robber girl looked earnestly at her, gave a little nod, and said, "They shan't kill you even if I am angry with you, I will do it myself." Then she dried Gerda's eyes, and stuck her own hands into the pretty muff, which was so soft and warm.

At last the chariot stopped; they were in the courtyard of a robber's castle, the walls of which were cracked from top to bottom. Ravens and crows flew in and out of every hole, and big bull dogs, which each looked ready to devour somebody, jumped about as high as they could, but they did not bark, for it was not allowed. A big fire was burning in the middle of the stone floor of the smoky old hall. The smoke all went up to the ceiling where it had to find a way out for itself. Soup was boiling in a big cauldron over the fire, and hares and rabbits were roasting on the spits.

"You shall sleep with me and all my little pets to-night," said the robber girl.

When they had had something to eat and drink they went along to one corner which was spread with straw and rugs. There were nearly a hundred pigeons roosting overhead on the rafters and beams. They seemed to be asleep, but they fluttered about a little when the children came in.

"They are all mine," said the little robber girl, seizing one of the nearest. She held it by the legs and shook it till it flapped its wings. "Kiss it," she cried, dashing it at Gerda's face. "Those are the wood pigeons," she added, pointing to some laths fixed across a big hole high up on the walls; "they are a regular rabble; they would fly away directly if they were not locked in. And here is my old sweetheart Be," dragging forward a reindeer by the horn; it was tied up, and it had a bright copper ring round its neck. "We have to keep him close too, or he would run off. Every single night I tickle his neck with my bright knife, he is so frightened of it." The little girl produced a long knife out of a hole in the wall and drew it across the reindeer's neck. The poor animal laughed and kicked, and the robber girl laughed and pulled Gerda down into the bed with her.

"Do you have that knife by you while you are asleep?" asked Gerda, looking rather frightened.

"I always sleep with a knife," said the little robber girl. "You never know what will happen. But now tell me again what you told me before about little Kay, and why you went out into the world." So Gerda told her all about it again, and the wood pigeons cooed up in their cage above them, the other pigeons were asleep. The little robber girl put her arm round Gerda's neck and went to sleep with the knife in her other hand, and she was soon snoring. But Gerda would not close her eyes; she did not know whether she was to live or to die. The robbers sat round the fire, eating and drinking, and the old woman was turning somersaults. This sight terrified the poor little girl. Then the wood pigeons said, "Coo, coo, we have seen little Kay, his sledge was drawn by a white chicken and he was sitting in the Snow Queen's sledge; it was floating low down over the trees, while we were in our nests. She blew upon us young ones, and they all died except we two; coo, coo."

"What are you saying up there?" asked Gerda. "Where was the Snow Queen going? Do you know anything about it?"

"She was most likely going to Lapland, because there is always snow and ice there! Ask the reindeer who is tied up there."

"There is ice and snow, and it's a splendid place," said the reindeer. "You can run and jump about where you like on those big glittering plains. The Snow Queen has her summer tent there, but her permanent castle is up at the North Pole, on the island which is called Spitzbergen!"

"Oh Kay, little Kay!" sighed Gerda.

"Lie still, or I shall stick the knife into you!" said the robber girl.

In the morning Gerda told her all that the wood pigeons had said, and the little robber girl looked quite solemn, but she nodded her head and said, "No matter, no matter! Do you know where Lapland is?" she asked the reindeer.

"Who should know better than I," said the animal, its eyes dancing. "I was born and brought up there, and I used to leap about on the snow-fields."

"Listen," said the robber girl. "You see that all our men folks are away, but mother is still here, and she will stay; but later on in the morning she will take a drink out of the big bottle there, and after that she will have a nap—then I will do something for you." Then she jumped out of bed, ran along to her mother and pulled her beard, and said, "Good morning, my own dear nanny-goat!" And her mother filliped her nose till it was red and blue; but it was all affection.

As soon as her mother had had her draught from the bottle and had dropped asleep, the little robber girl went along to the reindeer, and said, "I

should have the greatest pleasure in the world in keeping you here, to tickle you with my knife, because you are such fun then; however, it does not matter. I will untie your halter and help you outside so that you may run away to Lapland, but you must put your best foot foremost, and take this little girl for me to the Snow Queen's palace, where her playfellow is. I have no doubt you heard what she was telling me, for she spoke loud enough, and you are generally eavesdropping!"

The reindeer jumped into the air for joy. The robber girl lifted little Gerda up, and had the forethought to tie her on, nay, even to give her a little cushion to sit upon. "Here, after all, I will give you your fur boots back, for it will be very cold, but I will keep your muff, it is too pretty to part with. Still you shan't be cold. Here are my mother's big mittens for you, they will reach up to your elbows; here, stick your hands in! Now your hands look just like my nasty mother's!"

Gerda shed tears of joy.

"I don't like you to whimper!" said the little robber girl. "You ought to be looking delighted; and here are two loaves and a ham for you, so that you shan't starve."

These things were tied on to the back of the reindeer; the little robber girl opened the door, called in all the big dogs, and then she cut the halter with her knife, and said to the reindeer, "Now run, but take care of my little girl!"

Gerda stretched out her hands in the big mittens to the robber girl and said good-bye; and then the reindeer darted off over briars and bushes, through the big wood, over swamps and plains, as fast as it could go. The wolves howled and the ravens screamed, while the red lights quivered up in the sky.

"There are my old northern lights," said the reindeer; "see how they flash!" and on it rushed faster than ever, day and night. The loaves were eaten. and the ham too, and then they were in Lapland.

SIXTH STORY

The Lapp Woman and the Finn Woman

They stopped by a little hut, a very poverty-stricken one; the roof sloped right down to the ground, and the door was so low that the people had to creep on

hands and knees when they wanted to go in or out. There was nobody at home here but an old Lapp woman, who was frying fish over a train-oil lamp. The reindeer told her all Gerda's story, but it told its own first; for it thought it was much the most important. Gerda was so overcome by the cold that she could not speak at all.

"Oh, you poor creatures!" said the Lapp woman; "you've got a long way to go yet; you will have to go hundreds of miles into Finmark, for the Snow Queen is paying a country visit there, and she burns blue lights every night. I will write a few words on a dried stock-fish, for I have no paper. I will give it to you to take to the Finn woman up there. She will be better able to direct you than I can."

So when Gerda was warmed, and had eaten and drunk something, the Lapp woman wrote a few words on a dried stock-fish and gave it to her, bidding her take good care of it. Then she tied her on to the reindeer again, and off they flew. Flicker, flicker, went the beautiful blue northern lights up in the sky all night long;—at last they came to Finmark, and knocked on the Finn woman's chimney, for she had no door at all.

There was such a heat inside that the Finn woman went about almost naked; she was little and very grubby. She at once loosened Gerda's things, and took off the mittens and the boots, or she would have been too hot. Then she put a piece of ice on the reindeer's head, and after that she read what was written on the stock-fish. She read it three times, and then she knew it by heart, and put the fish into the pot for dinner; there was no reason why it should not be eaten, and she never wasted anything.

Again the reindeer told his own story first, and then little Gerda's. The Finn woman blinked with her wise eyes, but she said nothing.

"You are so clever," said the reindeer, "I know you can bind all the winds of the world with a bit of sewing cotton. When a skipper unties one knot he gets a good wind, when he unties two it blows hard, and if he undoes the third and the fourth he brings a storm about his head wild enough to blow down the forest trees. Won't you give the little girl a drink, so that she may have the strength of twelve men to overcome the Snow Queen?"

"The strength of twelve men," said the Finn woman.

"Yes, that will be about enough."

She went along to a shelf and took down a big folded skin, which she unrolled. There were curious characters written on it, and the Finn woman read till the perspiration poured down her forehead.

But the reindeer again implored her to give Gerda something, and Gerda

looked at her with such beseeching eyes, full of tears, that the Finn woman began blinking again, and drew the reindeer along into a corner, where she whispered to it, at the same time putting fresh ice on its head.

"Little Kay is certainly with the Snow Queen, and he is delighted with everything there. He thinks it is the best place in the world, but that is because he has got a splinter of glass in his heart and a grain of glass in his eye. They will have to come out first, or he will never be human again, and the Snow Queen will keep him in her power!"

"But can't you give little Gerda something to take which will give her power to conquer it all?"

"I can't give her greater power than she already has. Don't you see how great it is? Don't you see how both man and beast have to serve her? How she has got on as well as she has on her bare feet? We must not tell her what power she has; it is in her heart, because she is such a sweet innocent child. If she can't reach the Snow Queen herself, then we can't help her. The Snow Queen's gardens begin just two miles from here; you can carry the little girl as far as that. Put her down by the big bush standing there in the snow covered with red berries. Don't stand gossiping, but hurry back to me!" Then the Finn woman lifted Gerda on to the reindeer's back, and it rushed off as hard as it could.

"Oh, I have not got my boots, and I have not got my mittens!" cried little Gerda.

She soon felt the want of them in that cutting wind, but the reindeer did not dare to stop. It ran on till it came to the bush with the red berries. There it put Gerda down, and kissed her on the mouth, while big shining tears trickled down its face. Then it ran back again as fast as ever it could. There stood poor little Gerda, without shoes or gloves, in the middle of freezing icebound Finmark.

She ran forward as quickly as she could. A whole regiment of snow-flakes came towards her; they did not fall from the sky, for it was quite clear, with the northern lights shining brightly. No; these snow-flakes ran along the ground, and the nearer they came the bigger they grew. Gerda remembered well how big and ingenious they looked under the magnifying glass. But the size of these was monstrous, they were alive, they were the Snow Queen's advanced guard, and they took the most curious shapes. Some looked like big, horrid porcupines, some like bundles of knotted snakes with their heads sticking out. Others, again, were like fat little bears with bristling hair, but all were dazzling white and living snow-flakes.

Then little Gerda said the Lord's Prayer, and the cold was so great that her breath froze as it came out of her mouth, and she could see it like a cloud of smoke in front of her. It grew thicker and thicker, till it formed itself into bright little angels who grew bigger and bigger when they touched the ground. They all wore helmets and carried shields and spears in their hands. More and more of them appeared, and when Gerda had finished her prayer she was surrounded by a whole legion. They pierced the snowflakes with their spears and shivered them into a hundred pieces, and little Gerda walked fearlessly and undauntedly through them. The angels touched her hands and her feet, and then she hardly felt how cold it was, but walked quickly on towards the Palace of the Snow Queen.

Now we must see what Kay was about. He was not thinking about Gerda at all, least of all that she was just outside the Palace.

SEVENTH STORY

What Happened in the Snow Queen's Palace and Afterwards

The Palace walls were made of drifted snow, and the windows and doors of the biting winds. There were over a hundred rooms in it, shaped just as the snow had drifted. The biggest one stretched for many miles. They were all lighted by the strongest northern lights. All the rooms were immensely big and empty, and glittering in their iciness. There was never any gaiety in them; not even so much as a ball for the little bears, when the storms might have turned up as the orchestra, and the polar bears might have walked about on their hind legs and shown off their grand manners. There was never even a little game-playing party, for such games as "touch last" or "the biter bit"—no, not even a little gossip over the coffee cups for the white fox misses. Immense, vast, and cold were the Snow Queen's halls. The northern lights came and went with such regularity that you could count the seconds between their coming and going. In the midst of these never-ending snow-halls was a frozen lake. It was broken up on the surface into a thousand bits, but each piece was so exactly like the others that the whole formed a perfect work of art. The Snow Queen sat in the very middle of it when she sat at home. She then said that she was sitting on "The Mirror of Reason," and that it was the best and only one in the world.

Little Kay was blue with cold, nay, almost black; but he did not know it, for the Snow Queen had kissed away the icy shiverings, and his heart was little better than a lump of ice. He went about dragging some sharp, flat pieces of ice, which he placed in all sorts of patterns, trying to make something out of them; just as when we at home have little tablets of wood, with which we make patterns, and call them a "Chinese puzzle."

Kay's patterns were most ingenious, because they were the "Ice puzzles of Reason." In his eyes they were first-rate and of the greatest importance: this was because of the grain of glass still in his eye. He made many patterns forming words, but he never could find out the right way to place them for one particular word, a word he was most anxious to make. It was "Eternity." The Snow Queen had said to him that if he could find out this word he should be his own master, and she would give him the whole world and a new pair of skates. But he could not discover it.

"Now I am going to fly away to the warm countries," said the Snow Queen. "I want to go and peep into the black cauldrons!" She meant the volcanoes Etna and Vesuvius by this. "I must whiten them a little; it does them good, and the lemons and the grapes too!" And away she flew.

Kay sat quite alone in all those many miles of empty ice halls. He looked at his bits of ice, and thought and thought, till something gave way within him. He sat so stiff and immovable that one might have thought he was frozen to death.

Then it was that little Gerda walked into the Palace, through the great gates in a biting wind. She said her evening prayer, and the wind dropped as if lulled to sleep, and she walked on into the big empty hall. She saw Kay, and knew him at once; she flung her arms round his neck, held him fast, and cried, "Kay, little Kay, have I found you at last?"

But he sat still, rigid and cold.

Then little Gerda shed hot tears; they fell upon his breast and penetrated to his heart. Here they thawed the lump of ice, and melted the little bit of the mirror which was in it. He looked at her, and she sang:

"Where roses deck the flowery vale,
There, Infant Jesus, we thee hail!"

Then Kay burst into tears; he cried so much that the grain of glass was washed out of his eye. He knew her, and shouted with joy, "Gerda, dear little Gerda! where have you been for such a long time? And where have I been?" He

looked round and said, "How cold it is here; how empty and vast!" He kept tight hold of Gerda, who laughed and cried for joy. Their happiness was so heavenly that even the bits of ice danced for joy around them; and when they settled down, there they lay! just in the very position the Snow Queen had told Kay he must find out, if he was to become his own master and have the whole world and a new pair of skates.

Gerda kissed his cheeks and they grew rosy, she kissed his eyes and they shone like hers, she kissed his hands and his feet, and he became well and strong. The Snow Queen might come home whenever she liked, his order of release was written there in shining letters of ice.

They took hold of each other's hands and wandered out of the big Palace. They talked about grandmother, and about the roses upon the roof. Wherever they went the winds lay still and the sun broke through the clouds. When they reached the bush with the red berries they found the reindeer waiting for them, and he had brought another young reindeer with him, whose udders were full. The children drank her warm milk and kissed her on the mouth. Then they carried Kay and Gerda, first to the Finn woman, in whose heated hut they warmed themselves and received directions about the homeward journey. Then they went on to the Lapp woman; she had made new clothes for them and prepared her sledge. Both the reindeer ran by their side, to the boundaries of the country; here the first green buds appeared, and they said "Good-bye" to the reindeer and the Lapp woman. They heard the first little birds twittering and saw the buds in the forest. Out of it came riding a young girl on a beautiful horse, which Gerda knew, for it had drawn the golden chariot. She had a scarlet cap on her head and pistols in her belt; it was the little robber girl, who was tired of being at home. She was riding northwards to see how she liked it before she tried some other part of the world. She knew them again, and Gerda recognised her with delight.

"You are a nice fellow to go tramping off!" she said to little Kay. "I should like to know if you deserve to have somebody running to the end of the world for your sake!"

But Gerda patted her cheek, and asked about the Prince and Princess.

"They are travelling in foreign countries," said the robber girl.

"But the crow?" asked Gerda.

"Oh, the crow is dead!" she answered. "The tame sweetheart is a widow, and goes about with a bit of black wool tied round her leg. She pities herself bitterly, but it's all nonsense! But tell me how you got on yourself, and where you found him."

Gerda and Kay both told her all about it.

"Snip, snap, snurre, it's all right at last then!" she said, and she took hold of their hands and promised that if she ever passed through their town she would pay them a visit. Then she rode off into the wide world. But Kay and Gerda walked on, hand in hand, and wherever they went, they found the most delightful spring and blooming flowers. Soon they recognised the big town where they lived, with its tall towers, in which the bells still rang their merry peals. They went straight on to grandmother's door, up the stairs and into her room. Everything was just as they had left it, and the old clock ticked in the corner, and the hands pointed to the time. As they went through the door into the room they perceived that they were grown up. The roses clustered round the open window, and there stood their two little chairs. Kay and Gerda sat down upon them still holding each other by the hand. All the cold empty grandeur of the Snow Queen's palace had passed from their memory like a bad dream. Grandmother sat in God's warm sunshine reading from her Bible.

"Without ye become as little children ye cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven."

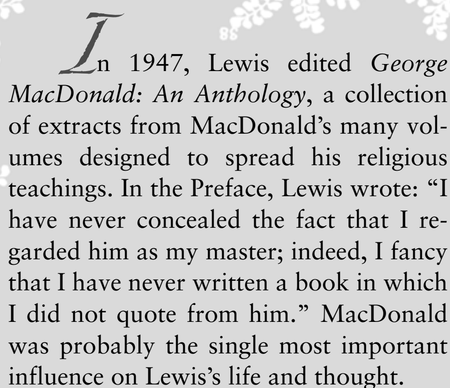
Kay and Gerda looked into each other's eyes and then all at once the meaning of the old hymn came to them.

"Where roses deck the flowery vale,
There, Infant Jesus, we thee hail!"

And there they both sat, grown up and yet children, children at heart; and it was summer—warm, beautiful summer.

The Magic Mirror

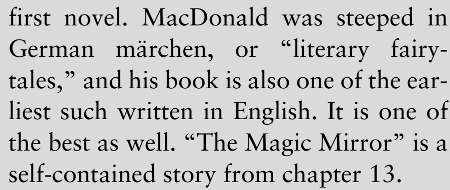
by George MacDonald



In 1947, Lewis edited *George MacDonald: An Anthology*, a collection of extracts from MacDonald's many volumes designed to spread his religious teachings. In the Preface, Lewis wrote: "I have never concealed the fact that I regarded him as my master; indeed, I fancy that I have never written a book in which I did not quote from him." MacDonald was probably the single most important influence on Lewis's life and thought.

It was in 1916 that, at a railway bookstall, Lewis picked up MacDonald's *Phantastes: A Faerie Romance,* of which he would write: "that night my imagination was, in a certain sense, baptized; the rest of me, not unnaturally, took longer. I had not the faintest notion of what I had let myself in for by buying *Phantastes*." In 1962, *The Christian Century* magazine asked Lewis to list the books that did the most to shape his vocational attitude and his philosophy of life. *Phantastes* was number one.

Phantastes (1858) was MacDonald's



first novel. MacDonald was steeped in German märchen, or "literary fairy-tales," and his book is also one of the earliest such written in English. It is one of the best as well. "The Magic Mirror" is a self-contained story from chapter 13.

Cosmo von Wehrstahl was a student at the University of Prague. Though of a noble family, he was poor, and prided himself upon the independence that poverty gives; for what will not a man pride himself upon, when he cannot get rid of it? A favourite with his fellow students, he yet had no companions; and none of them had ever crossed the threshold of his lodging in the top of one of the highest houses in the old town. Indeed, the secret of much of that complaisance which recommended him to his fellows, was the thought of his unknown retreat, whither in the evening he could betake himself and indulge undisturbed in his own studies and reveries. These studies, besides those subjects necessary to his course at the University, embraced some less commonly known and approved; for in a secret drawer lay the works of Albertus Magnus and Cornelius Agrippa, along with others less read and more abstruse. As yet, however, he had followed these researches only from curiosity, and had turned them to no practical purpose.

His lodging consisted of one large low-ceiled room, singularly bare of furniture; for besides a couple of wooden chairs, a couch which served for dreaming on both by day and night, and a great press of black oak, there was very little in the room that could be called furniture. But curious instruments were heaped in the corners; and in one stood a skeleton, half-leaning against the wall, half-supported by a string about its neck. One of its hands, all of fingers, rested on the heavy pommel of a great sword that stood beside it. Various weapons were scattered about over the floor. The walls were utterly bare of adornment; for the few strange things, such as a large dried bat with wings dispread, the skin of a porcupine, and a stuffed sea-mouse, could hardly be reckoned as such. But although his fancy delighted in vagaries like these, he

indulged his imagination with far different fare. His mind had never yet been filled with an absorbing passion; but it lay like a still twilight open to any wind, whether the low breath that wafts but odours, or the storm that bows the great trees till they strain and creak. He saw everything as through a rose-coloured glass. When he looked from his window on the street below, not a maiden passed but she moved as in a story, and drew his thoughts after her till she disappeared in the vista. When he walked in the streets, he always felt as if reading a tale, into which he sought to weave every face of interest that went by; and every sweet voice swept his soul as with the wing of a passing angel. He was in fact a poet without words; the more absorbed and endangered, that the springing-waters were dammed back into his soul, where, finding no utterance, they grew, and swelled, and undermined. He used to lie on his hard couch, and read a tale or a poem, till the book dropped from his hand; but he dreamed on, he knew not whether awake or asleep, until the opposite roof grew upon his sense, and turned golden in the sunrise. Then he arose too; and the impulses of vigorous youth kept him ever active, either in study or in sport, until again the close of the day left him free; and the world of night, which had lain drowned in the cataract of the day, rose up in his soul, with all its stars, and dim-seen phantom shapes. But this could hardly last long. Some one form must sooner or later step within the charmed circle, enter the house of life, and compel the bewildered magician to kneel and worship.

One afternoon, towards dusk, he was wandering dreamily in one of the principal streets, when a fellow student roused him by a slap on the shoulder, and asked him to accompany him into a little back alley to look at some old armour which he had taken a fancy to possess. Cosmo was considered an authority in every matter pertaining to arms, ancient or modern. In the use of weapons, none of the students could come near him; and his practical acquaintance with some had principally contributed to establish his authority in reference to all. He accompanied him willingly. They entered a narrow alley, and thence a dirty little court, where a low arched door admitted them into a heterogeneous assemblage of everything musty, and dusty, and old, that could well be imagined. His verdict on the armour was satisfactory, and his companion at once concluded the purchase. As they were leaving the place, Cosmo's eye was attracted by an old mirror of an elliptical shape, which leaned against the wall, covered with dust. Around it was some curious carving, which he could see but very indistinctly by the glimmering light which the owner of the shop carried in his hand. It was this carving that attracted his attention; at least so it appeared to him. He left the place, however, with his friend, taking

no further notice of it. They walked together to the main street, where they parted and took opposite directions.

No sooner was Cosmo left alone, than the thought of the curious old mirror returned to him. A strong desire to see it more plainly arose within him, and he directed his steps once more towards the shop. The owner opened the door when he knocked, as if he had expected him. He was a little, old, withered man, with a hooked nose, and burning eyes constantly in a slow restless motion, and looking here and there as if after something that eluded them. Pretending to examine several other articles, Cosmo at last approached the mirror, and requested to have it taken down.

"Take it down yourself, master; I cannot reach it," said the old man.

Cosmo took it down carefully, when he saw that the carving was indeed delicate and costly, being both of admirable design and execution; containing withal many devices which seemed to embody some meaning to which he had no clue. This, naturally, in one of his tastes and temperament, increased the interest he felt in the old mirror; so much, indeed, that he now longed to possess it, in order to study its frame at his leisure. He pretended, however, to want it only for use; and saying he feared the plate could be of little service, as it was rather old, he brushed away a little of the dust from its face, expecting to see a dull reflection within. His surprise was great when he found the reflection brilliant, revealing a glass not only uninjured by age, but wondrously clear and perfect (should the whole correspond to this part) even for one newly from the hands of the maker. He asked carelessly what the owner wanted for the thing. The old man replied by mentioning a sum of money far beyond the reach of poor Cosmo, who proceeded to replace the mirror where it had stood before.

"You think the price too high?" said the old man.

"I do not know that it is too much for you to ask," replied Cosmo; "but it is far too much for me to give."

The old man held up his light towards Cosmo's face. "I like your look," said he.

Cosmo could not return the compliment. In fact, now he looked closely at him for the first time, he felt a kind of repugnance to him, mingled with a strange feeling of doubt whether a man or a woman stood before him.

"What is your name?" he continued.

"Cosmo von Wehrstahl."

"Ah, ah! I thought as much. I see your father in you. I knew your father very well, young sir. I dare say in some odd corners of my house, you might

find some old things with his crest and cipher upon them still. Well, I like you: you shall have the mirror at the fourth part of what I asked for it; but upon one condition."

"What is that?" said Cosmo; for, although the price was still a great deal for him to give, he could just manage it; and the desire to possess the mirror had increased to an altogether unaccountable degree, since it had seemed beyond his reach.

"That if you should ever want to get rid of it again, you will let me have the first offer."

"Certainly," replied Cosmo, with a smile; adding, "a moderate condition indeed."

"On your honour?" insisted the seller.

"On my honour," said the buyer; and the bargain was concluded.

"I will carry it home for you," said the old man, as Cosmo took it in his hands.

"No, no; I will carry it myself," said he; for he had a peculiar dislike to revealing his residence to any one, and more especially to this person, to whom he felt every moment a greater antipathy.

"Just as you please," said the old creature, and muttered to himself as he held his light at the door to show him out of the court: "Sold for the sixth time! I wonder what will be the upshot of it this time. I should think my lady had enough of it by now!"

Cosmo carried his prize carefully home. But all the way he had an uncomfortable feeling that he was watched and dogged. Repeatedly he looked about, but saw nothing to justify his suspicions. Indeed, the streets were too crowded and too ill lighted to expose very readily a careful spy, if such there should be at his heels. He reached his lodging in safety, and leaned his purchase against the wall, rather relieved, strong as he was, to be rid of its weight; then, lighting his pipe, threw himself on the couch, and was soon lapt in the folds of one of his haunting dreams.

He returned home earlier than usual the next day, and fixed the mirror to the wall, over the hearth, at one end of his long room. He then carefully wiped away the dust from its face, and, clear as the water of a sunny spring, the mirror shone out from beneath the envious covering. But his interest was chiefly occupied with the curious carving of the frame. This he cleaned as well as he could with a brush; and then he proceeded to a minute examination of its various parts, in the hope of discovering some index to the intention of the carver. In this, however, he was unsuccessful; and, at length, pausing with some

weariness and disappointment, he gazed vacantly for a few moments into the depth of the reflected room. But ere long he said, half aloud: "What a strange thing a mirror is! and what a wondrous affinity exists between it and a man's imagination! For this room of mine, as I behold it in the glass, is the same, and yet not the same. It is not the mere representation of the room I live in, but it looks just as if I were reading about it in a story I like. All its commonness has disappeared. The mirror has lifted it out of the region of fact into the realm of art; and the very representing of it to me has clothed with interest that which was otherwise hard and bare; just as one sees with delight upon the stage the representation of a character from which one would escape in life as from something unendurably wearisome. But is it not rather that art rescues nature from the weary and sated regards of our senses, and the degrading injustice of our anxious everyday life, and, appealing to the imagination, which dwells apart, reveals Nature in some degree as she really is, and as she represents herself to the eye of the child, whose everyday life, fearless and unambitious, meets the true import of the wonder-teeming world around him, and rejoices therein without questioning? That skeleton, now—I almost fear it, standing there so still, with eyes only for the unseen, like a watch-tower looking across all the waste of this busy world into the quiet regions of rest beyond. And yet I know every bone and every joint in it as well as my own fist. And that old battle-axe looks as if any moment it might be caught up by a mailed hand, and, borne forth by the mighty arm, go crashing through casque, and skull, and brain, invading the Unknown with yet another bewildered ghost. I should like to live in *that* room if I could only get into it."

Scarcely had the half-moulded words floated from him, as he stood gazing into the mirror, when, striking him as with a flash of amazement that fixed him in his posture, noiseless and unannounced, glided suddenly through the door into the reflected room, with stately motion, yet reluctant and faltering step, the graceful form of a woman, clothed all in white. Her back only was visible as she walked slowly up to the couch in the further end of the room, on which she laid herself wearily, turning towards him a face of unutterable loveliness, in which suffering, and dislike, and a sense of compulsion, strangely mingled with the beauty. He stood without the power of motion for some moments, with his eyes irrecoverably fixed upon her; and even after he was conscious of the ability to move, he could not summon up courage to turn and look on her, face to face, in the veritable chamber in which he stood. At length, with a sudden effort, in which the exercise of the will was so pure, that it seemed involuntary, he turned his face to the couch. It was vacant. In bewil-

derment, mingled with terror, he turned again to the mirror: there, on the reflected couch, lay the exquisite lady-form. She lay with closed eyes, whence two large tears were just welling from beneath the veiling lids; still as death, save for the convulsive motion of her bosom.

Cosmo himself could not have described what he felt. His emotions were of a kind that destroyed consciousness, and could never be clearly recalled. He could not help standing yet by the mirror, and keeping his eyes fixed on the lady, though he was painfully aware of his rudeness, and feared every moment that she would open hers, and meet his fixed regard. But he was, ere long, a little relieved; for, after a while, her eyelids slowly rose, and her eyes remained uncovered, but unemployed for a time; and when, at length, they began to wander about the room, as if languidly seeking to make some acquaintance with her environment, they were never directed towards him: it seemed nothing but what was in the mirror could affect her vision; and, therefore, if she saw him at all, it could only be his back, which, of necessity, was turned towards her in the glass. The two figures in the mirror could not meet face to face, except he turned and looked at her, present in his room; and, as she was not there, he concluded that if he were to turn towards the part in his room corresponding to that in which she lay, his reflection would either be invisible to her altogether, or at least it must appear to her to gaze vacantly towards her, and no meeting of the eyes would produce the impression of spiritual proximity. By-and-by her eyes fell upon the skeleton, and he saw her shudder and close them. She did not open them again, but signs of repugnance continued evident on her countenance, Cosmo would have removed the obnoxious thing at once, but he feared to discompose her yet more by the assertion of his presence which the act would involve. So he stood and watched her. The eyelids yet shrouded the eyes, as a costly case the jewels within; the troubled expression gradually faded from the countenance, leaving only a faint sorrow behind; the features settled into an unchanging expression of rest; and by these signs, and the slow regular motion of her breathing, Cosmo knew that she slept. He could now gaze on her without embarrassment. He saw that her figure, dressed in the simplest robe of white, was worthy of her face; and so harmonious, that either the delicately moulded foot, or any finger of the equally delicate hand, was an index to the whole. As she lay, her whole form manifested the relaxation of perfect repose. He gazed till he was weary, and at last seated himself near the new-found shrine, and mechanically took up a book, like one who watches by a sick-bed. But his eyes gathered no thoughts from the page before him. His intellect had been stunned by the bold contradiction,

to its face, of all its experience, and now lay passive, without assertion, or speculation, or even conscious astonishment; while his imagination sent one wild dream of blessedness after another coursing through his soul. How long he sat he knew not; but at length he roused himself, rose, and, trembling in every portion of his frame, looked again into the mirror. She was gone. The mirror reflected faithfully what his room presented, and nothing more. It stood there like a golden setting whence the central jewel has been stolen away—like a night-sky without the glory of its stars. She had carried with her all the strangeness of the reflected room. It had sunk to the level of the one without. But when the first pangs of his disappointment had passed, Cosmo began to comfort himself with the hope that she might return, perhaps the next evening, at the same hour. Resolving that if she did, she should not at least be scared by the hateful skeleton, he removed that and several other articles of questionable appearance into a recess by the side of the hearth, whence they could not possibly cast any reflection into the mirror; and having made his poor room as tidy as he could, sought the solace of the open sky and of a night wind that had begun to blow, for he could not rest where he was. When he returned, somewhat composed, he could hardly prevail with himself to lie down on his bed; for he could not help feeling as if she had lain upon it; and for him to lie there would now be something like sacrilege. However, weariness prevailed; and laying himself on the couch, dressed as he was, he slept till day.

With a beating heart, beating till he could hardly breathe, he stood in dumb hope before the mirror, on the following evening. Again the reflected room shone as through a purple vapour in the gathering twilight. Everything seemed waiting like himself for a coming splendour to glorify its poor earthliness with the presence of a heavenly joy. And just as the room vibrated with the strokes of the neighbouring church bell, announcing the hour of six, in glided the pale beauty, and again laid herself on the couch. Poor Cosmo nearly lost his senses with delight. She was there once more! Her eyes sought the corner where the skeleton had stood, and a faint gleam of satisfaction crossed her face, apparently at seeing it empty. She looked suffering still, but there was less of discomfort expressed in her countenance than there had been the night before. She took more notice of the things about her, and seemed to gaze with some curiosity on the strange apparatus standing here and there in her room. At length, however, drowsiness seemed to overtake her, and again she fell asleep. Resolved not to lose sight of her this time, Cosmo watched the sleeping form. Her slumber was so deep and absorbing that a fascinating repose

seemed to pass contagiously from her to him as he gazed upon her; and he started as if from a dream, when the lady moved, and, without opening her eyes, rose, and passed from the room with the gait of a somnambulist.

Cosmo was now in a state of extravagant delight. Most men have a secret treasure somewhere. The miser has his golden hoard; the virtuoso his pet ring; the student his rare book; the poet his favourite haunt; the lover his secret drawer; but Cosmo had a mirror with a lovely lady in it. And now that he knew by the skeleton, that she was affected by the things around her, he had a new object in life: he would turn the bare chamber in the mirror into a room such as no lady need disdain to call her own. This he could effect only by furnishing and adorning his. And Cosmo was poor. Yet he possessed accomplishments that could be turned to account; although, hitherto, he had preferred living on his slender allowance, to increasing his means by what his pride considered unworthy of his rank. He was the best swordsman in the University; and now he offered to give lessons in fencing and similar exercises, to such as chose to pay him well for the trouble. His proposal was heard with surprise by the students; but it was eagerly accepted by many; and soon his instructions were not confined to the richer students, but were anxiously sought by many of the young nobility of Prague and its neighbourhood. So that very soon he had a good deal of money at his command. The first thing he did was to remove his apparatus and oddities into a closet in the room. Then he placed his bed and a few other necessaries on each side of the hearth, and parted them from the rest of the room by two screens of Indian fabric. Then he put an elegant couch for the lady to lie upon, in the corner where his bed had formerly stood; and, by degrees, every day adding some article of luxury, converted it, at length, into a rich boudoir.

Every night, about the same time, the lady entered. The first time she saw the new couch, she started with a half-smile; then her face grew very sad, the tears came to her eyes, and she laid herself upon the couch, and pressed her face into the silken cushions, as if to hide from everything. She took notice of each addition and each change as the work proceeded; and a look of acknowledgment, as if she knew that someone was ministering to her, and was grateful for it, mingled with the constant look of suffering. At length, after she had lain down as usual one evening, her eyes fell upon some paintings with which Cosmo had just finished adorning the walls. She rose, and to his great delight, walked across the room, and proceeded to examine them carefully, testifying much pleasure in her looks as she did so. But again the sorrowful, tearful expression returned, and again she buried her face in the pillows of her couch.

Gradually, however, her countenance had grown more composed; much of the suffering manifest on her first appearance had vanished, and a kind of quiet, hopeful expression had taken its place; which, however, frequently gave way to an anxious, troubled look, mingled with something of sympathetic pity.

Meantime, how fared Cosmo? As might be expected in one of his temperament, his interest had blossomed into love, and his love—shall I call it *ripened*, or—*withered* into passion. But, alas! he loved a shadow. He could not come near her, could not speak to her, could not hear a sound from those sweet lips, to which his longing eyes would cling like bees to their honey-founts. Ever and anon he sang to himself:

"I shall die for love of the maiden;"

and ever he looked again, and died not, though his heart seemed ready to break with intensity of life and longing. And the more he did for her, the more he loved her; and he hoped that, although she never appeared to see him, yet she was pleased to think that one unknown would give his life to her. He tried to comfort himself over his separation from her, by thinking that perhaps some day she would see him and make signs to him, and that would satisfy him; "for," thought he, "is not this all that a loving soul can do to enter into communion with another? Nay, how many who love never come nearer than to behold each other as in a mirror; seem to know and yet never know the inward life; never enter the other soul; and part at last, with but the vaguest notion of the universe on the borders of which they have been hovering for years? If I could but speak to her, and knew that she heard me, I should be satisfied." Once he contemplated painting a picture on the wall, which should, of necessity, convey to the lady a thought of himself; but, though he had some skill with the pencil, he found his hand trembled so much when he began the attempt, that he was forced to give it up.

"Who lives, he dies; who dies, he is alive."

One evening, as he stood gazing on his treasure, he thought he saw a faint expression of self-consciousness on her countenance, as if she surmised that passionate eyes were fixed upon her. This grew; till at last the red blood rose over her neck, and cheek, and brow. Cosmo's longing to approach her became almost delirious. This night she was dressed in an evening costume, resplendent with diamonds. This could add nothing to her beauty, but it presented it in a

new aspect; enabled her loveliness to make a new manifestation of itself in a new embodiment. For essential beauty is infinite; and, as the soul of Nature needs an endless succession of varied forms to embody her loveliness, countless faces of beauty springing forth, not any two the same, at any one of her heart-throbs; so the individual form needs an infinite change of its environments, to enable it to uncover all the phases of its loveliness. Diamonds glittered from amidst her hair, half hidden in its luxuriance, like stars through dark rain-clouds; and the bracelets on her white arms flashed all the colours of a rainbow of lightnings, as she lifted her snowy hands to cover her burning face. But her beauty shone down all its adornment. "If I might have but one of her feet to kiss," thought Cosmo, "I should be content." Alas! he deceived himself, for passion is never content. Nor did he know that there are two ways out of her enchanted house. But, suddenly, as if the pang had been driven into his heart from without, revealing itself first in pain, and afterwards in definite form, the thought darted into his mind, "She has a lover somewhere. Remembered words of his bring the colour on her face now. I am nowhere to her. She lives in another world all day, and all night, after she leaves me. Why does she come and make me love her, till I, a strong man, am too faint to look upon her more?" He looked again, and her face was pale as a lily. A sorrowful compassion seemed to rebuke the glitter of the restless jewels, and the slow tears rose in her eyes. She left her room sooner this evening than was her wont. Cosmo remained alone, with a feeling as if his bosom had been suddenly left empty and hollow, and the weight of the whole world was crushing in its walls. The next evening, for the first time since she began to come, she came not.

And now Cosmo was in wretched plight. Since the thought of a rival had occurred to him, he could not rest for a moment. More than ever he longed to see the lady face to face. He persuaded himself that if he but knew the worst he would be satisfied; for then he could abandon Prague, and find that relief in constant motion, which is the hope of all active minds when invaded by distress. Meantime he waited with unspeakable anxiety for the next night, hoping she would return: but she did not appear. And now he fell really ill. Railed by his fellow-students on his wretched looks, he ceased to attend the lectures. His engagements were neglected. He cared for nothing, The sky, with the great sun in it, was to him a heartless, burning desert. The men and women in the streets were mere puppets, without motives in themselves, or interest to him. He saw them all as on the ever-changing field of a *camera obscura*. She—she alone and altogether—was his universe, his well of life, his incarnate good. For six evenings she came not. Let his absorbing passion, and the slow fever

that was consuming his brain, be his excuse for the resolution which he had taken and begun to execute, before that time had expired.

Reasoning with himself, that it must be by some enchantment connected with the mirror, that the form of the lady was to be seen in it, he determined to attempt to turn to account what he had hitherto studied principally from curiosity. “For,” said he to himself, “if a spell can force her presence in that glass (and she came unwillingly at first), may not a stronger spell, such as I know, especially with the aid of her half-presence in the mirror, if ever she appears again, compel her living form to come to me here? If I do her wrong, let love be my excuse. I want only to know my doom from her own lips.” He never doubted, all the time, that she was a real earthly woman; or, rather, that there was a woman, who, somehow or other, threw this reflection of her form into the magic mirror.

He opened his secret drawer, took out his books of magic, lighted his lamp, and read and made notes from midnight till three in the morning, for three successive nights. Then he replaced his books; and the next night went out in quest of the materials necessary for the conjuration. These were not easy to find; for, in love-charms and all incantations of this nature, ingredients are employed scarcely fit to be mentioned, and for the thought even of which, in connexion with her, he could only excuse himself on the score of his bitter need. At length he succeeded in procuring all he required; and on the seventh evening from that on which she had last appeared, he found himself prepared for the exercise of unlawful and tyrannical power.

He cleared the centre of the room; stooped and drew a circle of red on the floor, around the spot where he stood; wrote in the four quarters mystical signs, and numbers which were all powers of seven or nine; examined the whole ring carefully, to see that no smallest break had occurred in the circumference; and then rose from his bending posture. As he rose, the church clock struck seven; and, just as she had appeared the first time, reluctant, slow, and stately, glided in the lady. Cosmo trembled; and when, turning, she revealed a countenance worn and wan, as with sickness or inward trouble, he grew faint, and felt as if he dared not proceed. But as he gazed on the face and form, which now possessed his whole soul, to the exclusion of all other joys and griefs, the longing to speak to her, to know that she heard him, to hear from her one word in return, became so unendurable, that he suddenly and hastily resumed his preparations. Stepping carefully from the circle, he put a small brazier into its centre. He then set fire to its contents of charcoal, and while it burned up, opened his window and seated himself, waiting, beside it.

It was a sultry evening. The air was full of thunder. A sense of luxurious depression filled the brain. The sky seemed to have grown heavy, and to compress the air beneath it. A kind of purplish tinge pervaded the atmosphere, and through the open window came the scents of the distant fields, which all the vapours of the city could not quench. Soon the charcoal glowed. Cosmo sprinkled upon it the incense and other substances which he had compounded, and, stepping within the circle, turned his face from the brazier and towards the mirror. Then, fixing his eyes upon the face of the lady, he began with a trembling voice to repeat a powerful incantation. He had not gone far, before the lady grew pale; and then, like a returning wave, the blood washed all its banks with its crimson tide, and she hid her face in her hands. Then he passed to a conjuration stronger yet. The lady rose and walked uneasily to and fro in her room. Another spell; and she seemed seeking with her eyes for some object on which they wished to rest. At length it seemed as if she suddenly espied him; for her eyes fixed themselves full and wide upon his, and she drew gradually, and somewhat unwillingly, close to her side of the mirror, just as if his eyes had fascinated her. Cosmo had never seen her so near before. Now at least, eyes met eyes; but he could not quite understand the expression of hers. They were full of tender entreaty, but there was something more that he could not interpret. Though his heart seemed to labour in his throat, he would allow no delight or agitation to turn him from his task. Looking still in her face, he passed on to the mightiest charm he knew. Suddenly the lady turned and walked out of the door of her reflected chamber. A moment after she entered his room with veritable presence; and, forgetting all his precautions, he sprang from the charmed circle, and knelt before her. There she stood, the living lady of his passionate visions, alone beside him, in a thundery twilight, and the glow of a magic fire.

"Why," said the lady, with a trembling voice, "didst thou bring a poor maiden through the rainy streets alone?"

"Because I am dying for love of thee; but I only brought thee from the mirror there."

"Ah, the mirror!" and she looked up at it, and shuddered. "Alas! I am but a slave, while that mirror exists. But do not think it was the power of thy spells that drew me; it was thy longing desire to see me, that beat at the door of my heart, till I was forced to yield."

"Canst thou love me then?" said Cosmo, in a voice calm as death, but almost inarticulate with emotion.

"I do not know," she replied sadly; "that I cannot tell, so long as I am be-

wildered with enchantments. It were indeed a joy too great, to lay my head on thy bosom and weep to death; for I think thou lovest me, though I do not know;—but—"

Cosmo rose from his knees.

"I love thee as—nay, I know not what—for since I have loved thee, there is nothing else."

He seized her hand: she withdrew it.

"No, better not; I am in thy power, and therefore I may not."

She burst into tears, and kneeling before him in her turn, said—

"Cosmo, if thou lovest me, set me free, even from thyself; break the mirror."

"And shall I see thyself instead?"

"That I cannot tell, I will not deceive thee; we may never meet again."

A fierce struggle arose in Cosmo's bosom. Now she was in his power. She did not dislike him at least; and he could see her when he would. To break the mirror would be to destroy his very life to banish out of his universe the only glory it possessed. The whole world would be but a prison, if he annihilated the one window that looked into the paradise of love. Not yet pure in love, he hesitated.

With a wail of sorrow the lady rose to her feet. "Ah! he loves me not; he loves me not even as I love him; and alas! I care more for his love than even for the freedom I ask."

"I will not wait to be willing," cried Cosmo; and sprang to the corner where the great sword stood.

Meantime it had grown very dark; only the embers cast a red glow through the room. He seized the sword by the steel scabbard, and stood before the mirror; but as he heaved a great blow at it with the heavy pommel, the blade slipped half-way out of the scabbard, and the pommel struck the wall above the mirror. At that moment, a terrible clap of thunder seemed to burst in the very room beside them; and ere Cosmo could repeat the blow, he fell senseless on the hearth. When he came to himself, he found that the lady and the mirror had both disappeared. He was seized with a brain fever, which kept him to his couch for weeks.

When he recovered his reason, he began to think what could have become of the mirror. For the lady, he hoped she had found her way back as she came; but as the mirror involved her fate with its own, he was more immediately anxious about that. He could not think she had carried it away. It was much too heavy, even if it had not been too firmly fixed in the wall, for her to

remove it. Then again, he remembered the thunder; which made him believe that it was not the lightning, but some other blow that had struck him down. He concluded that, either by supernatural agency, he having exposed himself to the vengeance of the demons in leaving the circle of safety, or in some other mode, the mirror had probably found its way back to its former owner; and, horrible to think of, might have been by this time once more disposed of, delivering up the lady into the power of another man; who, if he used his power no worse than he himself had done, might yet give Cosmo abundant cause to curse the selfish indecision which prevented him from shattering the mirror at once. Indeed, to think that she whom he loved, and who had prayed to him for freedom, should be still at the mercy, in some degree, of the possessor of the mirror, and was at least exposed to his constant observation, was in itself enough to madden a chary lover.

Anxiety to be well retarded his recovery; but at length he was able to creep abroad. He first made his way to the old broker's, pretending to be in search of something else. A laughing sneer on the creature's face convinced him that he knew all about it; but he could not see it amongst his furniture, or get any information out of him as to what had become of it. He expressed the utmost surprise at hearing it had been stolen, a surprise which Cosmo saw at once to be counterfeited; while, at the same time, he fancied that the old wretch was not at all anxious to have it mistaken for genuine. Full of distress, which he concealed as well as he could, he made many searches, but with no avail. Of course he could ask no questions; but he kept his ears awake for any remotest hint that might set him in a direction of search. He never went out without a short heavy hammer of steel about him, that he might shatter the mirror the moment he was made happy by the sight of his lost treasure, if ever that blessed moment should arrive. Whether he should see the lady again, was now a thought altogether secondary, and postponed to the achievement of her freedom. He wandered here and there, like an anxious ghost, pale and haggard; gnawed ever at the heart, by the thought of what she might be suffering—all from his fault.

One night, he mingled with a crowd that filled the rooms of one of the most distinguished mansions in the city; for he accepted every invitation, that he might lose no chance, however poor, of obtaining some information that might expedite his discovery. Here he wandered about, listening to every stray word that he could catch, in the hope of a revelation. As he approached some ladies who were talking quietly in a corner, one said to another: "Have you heard of the strange illness of the Princess von Hohenweiss?"

"Yes; she has been ill for more than a year now. It is very sad for so fine a creature to have such a terrible malady. She was better for some weeks lately, but within the last few days the same attacks have returned, apparently accompanied with more suffering than ever. It is altogether an inexplicable story."

"Is there a story connected with her illness?"

"I have only heard imperfect reports of it; but it is said that she gave offence some eighteen months ago to an old woman who had held an office of trust in the family, and who, after some incoherent threats, disappeared. This peculiar affection followed soon after. But the strangest part of the story is its association with the loss of an antique mirror, which stood in her dressing-room, and of which she constantly made use."

Here the speaker's voice sank to a whisper; and Cosmo, although his very soul sat listening in his ears, could hear no more. He trembled too much to dare to address the ladies, even if it had been advisable to expose himself to their curiosity. The name of the Princess was well known to him, but he had never seen her; except indeed it was she, which now he hardly doubted, who had knelt before him on that dreadful night. Fearful of attracting attention, for, from the weak state of his health, he could not recover an appearance of calmness, he made his way to the open air, and reached his lodgings; glad in this, that he at least knew where she lived, although he never dreamed of approaching her openly, even if he should be happy enough to free her from her hateful bondage. He hoped, too, that as he had unexpectedly learned so much, the other and far more important part might be revealed to him ere long.

"Have you seen Steinwald lately?"

"No, I have not seen him for some time. He is almost a match for me at the rapier, and I suppose he thinks he needs no more lessons."

"I wonder what has become of him. I want to see him very much. Let me see; the last time I saw him he was coming out of that old broker's den, to which, if you remember, you accompanied me once, to look at some armour. That is fully three weeks ago."

This hint was enough for Cosmo. Von Steinwald was a man of influence in the court, well known for his reckless habits and fierce passions. The very possibility that the mirror should be in his possession was hell itself to Cosmo. But violent or hasty measures of any sort were most unlikely to succeed. All that he wanted was an opportunity of breaking the fatal glass; and to obtain

this he must bide his time. He revolved many plans in his mind, but without being able to fix upon any.

At length, one evening, as he was passing the house of Von Steinwald, he saw the windows more than usually brilliant. He watched for a while, and seeing that company began to arrive, hastened home, and dressed as richly as he could, in the hope of mingling with the guests unquestioned: in effecting which, there could be no difficulty for a man of his carriage.

In a lofty, silent chamber, in another part of the city, lay a form more like marble than a living woman. The loveliness of death seemed frozen upon her face, for her lips were rigid, and her eyelids closed. Her long white hands were crossed over her breast, and no breathing disturbed their repose. Beside the dead, men speak in whispers, as if the deepest rest of all could be broken by the sound of a living voice. Just so, though the soul was evidently beyond the reach of all intimations from the senses, the two ladies, who sat beside her, spoke in the gentlest tones of subdued sorrow.

"She has lain so for an hour."

"This cannot last long, I fear."

"How much thinner she has grown within the last few weeks! If she would only speak, and explain what she suffers, it would be better for her. I think she has visions in her trances, but nothing can induce her to refer to them when she is awake."

"Does she ever speak in these trances?"

"I have never heard her; but they say she walks sometimes, and once put the whole household in a terrible fright by disappearing for a whole hour, and returning drenched with rain, and almost dead with exhaustion and fright. But even then she would give no account of what had happened."

A scarce audible murmur from the yet motionless lips of the lady here startled her attendants. After several ineffectual attempts at articulation, the word "*Cosmo!*" burst from her. Then she lay still as before; but only for a moment. With a wild cry, she sprang from the couch erect on the floor, flung her arms above her head, with clasped and straining hands, and, her wide eyes flashing with light, called aloud, with a voice exultant as that of a spirit bursting from a sepulchre, "I am free! I am free! I thank thee!" Then she flung herself on the couch, and sobbed; then rose, and paced wildly up and down the room, with gestures of mingled delight and anxiety. Then turning to her motionless attendants—"Quick, Lisa, my cloak and hood!"

Then lower—"I must go to him. Make haste, Lisa! You may come with me, if you will."

In another moment they were in the street, hurrying along towards one of the bridges over the Moldau. The moon was near the zenith, and the streets were almost empty. The Princess soon outstripped her attendant, and was half-way over the bridge, before the other reached it.

"Are you free, lady? The mirror is broken: are you free?"

The words were spoken close beside her, as she hurried on. She turned; and there, leaning on the parapet in a recess of the bridge, stood Cosmo, in a splendid dress, but with a white and quivering face.

"Cosmo!—I am free—and thy servant for ever. I was coming to you now."

"And I to you, for Death made me bold; but I could get no further. Have I atoned at all? Do I love you a little—truly?"

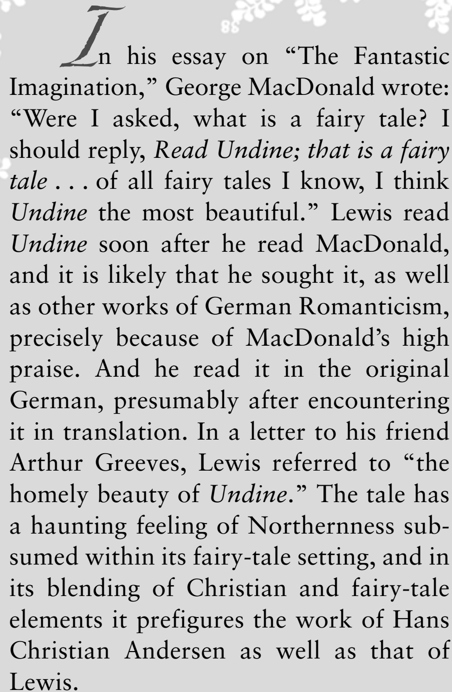
"Ah, I know now that you love me, my Cosmo; but what do you say about death?"

He did not reply. His hand was pressed against his side. She looked more closely: the blood was welling from between the fingers. She flung her arms around him with a faint bitter wail.

When Lisa came up, she found her mistress kneeling above a wan dead face, which smiled on in the spectral moonbeams.

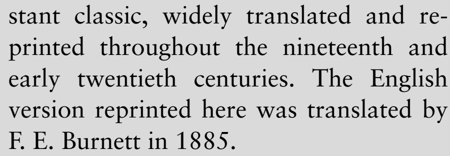
Undine

by Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué



In his essay on "The Fantastic Imagination," George MacDonald wrote: "Were I asked, what is a fairy tale? I should reply, *Read Undine; that is a fairy tale* . . . of all fairy tales I know, I think *Undine* the most beautiful." Lewis read *Undine* soon after he read MacDonald, and it is likely that he sought it, as well as other works of German Romanticism, precisely because of MacDonald's high praise. And he read it in the original German, presumably after encountering it in translation. In a letter to his friend Arthur Greeves, Lewis referred to "the homely beauty of *Undine*." The tale has a haunting feeling of Northernness subsumed within its fairy-tale setting, and in its blending of Christian and fairy-tale elements it prefigures the work of Hans Christian Andersen as well as that of Lewis.

Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué published *Undine* in 1811, and it was an in-



stant classic, widely translated and reprinted throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The English version reprinted here was translated by F. E. Burnett in 1885.

CHAPTER I.

How the Knight Came to the Fisherman.

There was once, it may be now many hundred years ago, a good old fisherman, who was sitting one fine evening before his door, mending his nets. The part of the country in which he lived was extremely pretty. The green sward, on which his cottage stood, ran far into the lake, and it seemed as if it was from love for the blue clear waters that the tongue of land had stretched itself out into them, while with an equally fond embrace the lake had encircled the green pasture rich with waving grass and flowers, and the refreshing shade of trees. The one welcomed the other, and it was just this that made each so beautiful. There were indeed few human beings, or rather none at all, to be met with on this pleasant spot, except the fisherman and his family. For at the back of this little promontory there lay a very wild forest, which, both from its gloom and pathless solitude as well as from the wonderful creatures and illusions with which it was said to abound, was avoided by most people except in cases of necessity.

The pious old fisherman, however, passed through it many a time undisturbed, when he was taking the choice fish, which he had caught at his beautiful home, to a large town situated not far from the confines of the forest. The principal reason why it was so easy for him to pass through this forest was because the tone of his thoughts was almost entirely of a religious character, and besides this, whenever he set foot upon the evil reputed shades, he was wont to sing some holy song, with a clear voice and a sincere heart.

While sitting over his nets this evening, unsuspicious of any evil, a sudden fear came upon him, at the sound of a rustling in the gloom of the forest, as of a horse and rider, the noise approaching nearer and nearer to the little promontory. All that he had dreamed, in many a stormy night, of the mysteries of the forest, now flashed at once through his mind; foremost of all, the image of a gigantic snow-white man, who kept unceasingly nodding his head in a portentous manner. Indeed, when he raised his eyes toward the wood it seemed to him as if he actually saw the nodding man approaching through the dense foliage. He soon, however, reassured himself, reflecting that nothing serious had ever befallen him even in the forest itself, and that upon this open tongue of land the evil spirit would be still less daring in the exercise of his power. At the same time he repeated aloud a text from the Bible with all his heart, and this so inspired him with courage that he almost smiled at the illusion he had allowed to possess him. The white nodding man was suddenly transformed into a brook long familiar to him, which ran foaming from the forest and discharged itself into the lake. The noise, however, which he had heard, was caused by a knight beautifully apparelled, who, emerging from the deep shadows of the wood, came riding toward the cottage. A scarlet mantle was thrown over his purple gold-embroidered doublet; a red and violet plume waved from his golden-colored head-gear; and a beautifully and richly ornamented sword flashed from his shoulder-belt. The white steed that bore the knight was more slenderly formed than war-horses generally are, and he stepped so lightly over the turf that this green and flowery carpet seemed scarcely to receive the slightest injury from his tread.

The old fisherman did not, however, feel perfectly secure in his mind, although he tried to convince himself that no evil was to be feared from so graceful an apparition; and therefore he politely took off his hat as the knight approached, and remained quietly with his nets.

Presently the stranger drew up, and inquired whether he and his horse could have shelter and care for the night. "As regards your horse, good sir," replied the fisherman. "I can assign him no better stable than this shady pasture, and no better provender than the grass growing on it. Yourself, however, I will gladly welcome to my small cottage, and give you supper and lodging as good as we have." The knight was well satisfied with this; he alighted from his horse, and, with the assistance of the fisherman, he relieved it from saddle and bridle, and turned it loose upon the flowery green. Then addressing his host, he said: "Even had I found you less hospitable and kindly disposed, my wor-

thy old fisherman, you would nevertheless scarcely have got rid of me to-day, for, as I see, a broad lake lies before us, and to ride back into that mysterious wood, with the shades of evening coming on, heaven keep me from it!"

"We will not talk too much of that," said the fisherman, and he led his guest into the cottage.

There, beside the hearth, from which a scanty fire shed a dim light through the cleanly-kept room, sat the fisherman's aged wife in a capacious chair. At the entrance of the noble guest she rose to give him a kindly welcome, but resumed her seat of honor without offering it to the stranger. Upon this the fisherman said with a smile: "You must not take it amiss of her, young sir, that she has not given up to you the most comfortable seat in the house; it is a custom among poor people, that it should belong exclusively to the aged."

"Why, husband," said the wife, with a quiet smile, "what can you be thinking of? Our guest belongs no doubt to Christian men, and how could it come into the head of the good young blood to drive old people from their chairs? Take a seat, my young master," she continued, turning toward the knight; "over there, there is a right pretty little chair, only you must not move about on it too roughly, for one of its legs is no longer of the firmest." The knight fetched the chair carefully, sat down upon it good-humoredly, and it seemed to him as if he were related to this little household, and had just returned from abroad.

The three worthy people now began to talk together in the most friendly and familiar manner. With regard to the forest, about which the knight made some inquiries, the old man was not inclined to be communicative; he felt it was not a subject suited to approaching night, but the aged couple spoke freely of their home and former life, and listened also gladly when the knight recounted to them his travels, and told them that he had a castle near the source of the Danube, and that his name was Sir Huldbrand of Ringstetten. During the conversation, the stranger had already occasionally heard a splash against the little low window, as if some one were sprinkling water against it. Every time the noise occurred, the old man knit his brow with displeasure; but when at last a whole shower was dashed against the panes, and bubbled into the room through the decayed casement, he rose angrily, and called threateningly from the window: "Undine! will you for once leave off these childish tricks? and to-day, besides, there is a stranger knight with us in the cottage." All was silent without, only a suppressed laugh was audible, and the fisherman said as he returned: "You must pardon it in her, my honored guest, and perhaps many a naughty trick besides; but she means no harm by it. It is our

foster-child, Undine, and she will not wean herself from this childishness, although she has already entered her eighteenth year. But, as I said, at heart she is thoroughly good."

"You may well talk," replied the old woman, shaking her head; "when you come home from fishing or from a journey, her frolics may then be very delightful, but to have her about one the whole day long, and never to hear a sensible word, and instead of finding her a help in the housekeeping as she grows older, always to be obliged to be taking care that her follies do not completely ruin us, that is quite another thing, and the patience of a saint would be worn out at last."

"Well, well," said her husband with a smile, "you have your troubles with Undine, and I have mine with the lake. It often breaks away my dams, and tears my nets to pieces, but for all that, I have an affection for it, and so have you for the pretty child, in spite of all your crosses and vexations. Isn't it so?"

"One can't be very angry with her, certainly," said the old woman, and she smiled approvingly.

Just then the door flew open, and a beautiful, fair girl glided laughing into the room, and said "You have only been jesting, father, for where is your guest?"

At the same moment, however, she perceived the knight, and stood fixed with astonishment before the handsome youth. Huldbrand was struck with her charming appearance, and dwelt the more earnestly on her lovely features, as he imagined it was only her surprise that gave him this brief enjoyment, and that she would presently turn from his gaze with increased bashfulness. It was, however, quite otherwise; for after having looked at him for some time, she drew near him confidingly, knelt down before him, and said, as she played with a gold medal which he wore on his breast, suspended from a rich chain: "Why, you handsome, kind guest, how have you come to our poor cottage at last? Have you been obliged then to wander through the world for years, before you could find your way to us? Do you come out of that wild forest, my beautiful knight?" The old woman's reproof allowed him no time for reply. She admonished the girl to stand up and behave herself and to go to her work. Undine, however, without making any answer drew a little footstool close to Huldbrand's chair, sat down upon it with her spinning, and said pleasantly: "I will work here." The old man did as parents are wont to do with spoiled children. He affected to observe nothing of Undine's naughtiness and was beginning to talk of something else. But this the girl would not let him do; she said:

"I have asked our charming guest whence he comes, and he has not yet answered me."

"I come from the forest, you beautiful little vision," returned Huldbrand; and she went on to say:

"Then you must tell me how you came there, for it is usually so feared, and what marvellous adventures you met with in it, for it is impossible to escape without something of the sort."

Huldbrand felt a slight shudder at this remembrance, and looked involuntarily toward the window, for it seemed to him as if one of the strange figures he had encountered in the forest were grinning in there; but he saw nothing but the deep dark night, which had now shrouded everything without. Upon this he composed himself and was on the point of beginning his little history, when the old man interrupted him by saying: "Not so, sir knight! this is no fit hour for such things." Undine, however, sprang angrily from her little stool, and standing straight before the fisherman with her fair arms fixed at her sides, she exclaimed: "He shall not tell his story, father? He shall not? but it is my will. He shall! He shall in spite of you!" and thus saying she stamped her pretty little foot vehemently on the floor, but she did it all with such a comically graceful air that Huldbrand now felt his gaze almost more riveted upon her in her anger than before in her gentleness.

The restrained wrath of the old man, on the contrary, burst forth violently. He severely reproved Undine's disobedience and unbecoming behavior to the stranger, and his good old wife joined with him heartily. Undine quickly retorted: "If you want to chide me, and won't do what I wish, then sleep alone in your old smoky hut!" and swift as an arrow she flew from the room, and fled into the dark night.

CHAPTER II.

In What Way Undine Had Come to the Fisherman.

Huldbrand and the fisherman sprang from their seats and were on the point of following the angry girl. Before they reached the cottage door, however, Undine had long vanished in the shadowy darkness without, and not even the sound of her light footstep betrayed the direction of her flight. Huldbrand looked inquiringly at his host; it almost seemed to him as if the whole sweet

apparition, which had suddenly merged again into the night, were nothing else than one of that band of the wonderful forms which had, but a short time since, carried on their pranks with him in the forest. But the old man murmured between his teeth: "This is not the first time that she has treated us in this way. Now we have aching hearts and sleepless eyes the whole night through; for who knows, that she may not some day come to harm, if she is thus out alone in the dark until daylight."

"Then let us for God's sake follow her," cried Huldbrand, anxiously.

"What would be the good of it?" replied the old man. "It would be a sin were I to allow you, all alone, to follow the foolish girl in the solitary night, and my old limbs would not overtake the wild runaway, even if we knew in what direction she had gone."

"We had better at any rate call after her, and beg her to come back," said Huldbrand; and he began to call in the most earnest manner: "Undine! Undine! Pray come back!" The old man shook his head, saying, that all that shouting would help but little, for the knight had no idea how self-willed the little truant was. But still he could not forbear often calling out with him in the dark night: "Undine! Ah! dear Undine, I beg you to come back—only this once!"

It turned out, however, as the fisherman had said. No Undine was to be heard or seen, and as the old man would on no account consent that Huldbrand should go in search of the fugitive, they were at last both obliged to return to the cottage. Here they found the fire on the hearth almost gone out, and the old wife, who took Undine's flight and danger far less to heart than her husband, had already retired to rest. The old man blew up the fire, laid some dry wood on it, and by the light of the flame sought out a tankard of wine, which he placed between himself and his guest. "You, Sir Knight," said he, "are also anxious about that silly girl, and we would both rather chatter and drink away a part of the night than keep turning round on our rush mats trying in vain to sleep. Is it not so?" Huldbrand was well satisfied with the plan; the fisherman obliged him to take the seat of honor vacated by the good old housewife, and both drank and talked together in a manner becoming two honest and trusting men. It is true, as often as the slightest thing moved before the windows, or even at times when nothing was moving, one of the two would look up and say: "She is coming!" Then they would be silent for a moment or two, and as nothing appeared, they would shake their heads and sigh and go on with their talk.

As, however, neither could think of anything but of Undine, they knew of nothing better to do than that the old fisherman should tell the story, and the

knight should hear, in what manner Undine had first come to the cottage. He therefore began as follows:—

"It is now about fifteen years ago that I was one day crossing the wild forest with my goods, on my way to the city. My wife had stayed at home, as her wont is, and at this particular time for a very good reason, for God had given us, in our tolerably advanced age, a wonderfully beautiful child. It was a little girl; and a question already arose between us, whether for the sake of the new-comer, we would not leave our lovely home that we might better bring up this dear gift of heaven in some more habitable place. Poor people indeed cannot do in such cases as you may think they ought, Sir Knight, but, with God's blessing, every one must do what he can. Well, the matter was tolerably in my head as I went along. This slip of land was so dear to me, and I shuddered when, amid the noise and brawls of the city, I thought to myself, 'In such scenes as these, or in one not much more quiet, thou wilt also soon make thy abode!' But at the same time I did not murmur against the good God; on the contrary, I thanked Him in secret for the new-born babe; I should be telling a lie, too, were I to say, that on my journey through the wood, going or returning, anything befell me out of the common way, and at that time I had never seen any of its fearful wonders. The Lord was ever with me in those mysterious shades."

As he spoke he took his little cap from his bald head, and remained for a time occupied with prayerful thoughts; he then covered himself again, and continued:

"On this side the forest, alas! a sorrow awaited me. My wife came to meet me with tearful eyes and clad in mourning. 'Oh! Good God!' I groaned, 'where is our dear child? speak!'—'With Him on whom you have called, dear husband,' she replied; and we now entered the cottage together weeping silently. I looked around for the little corpse, and it was then only that I learned how it had all happened."

"My wife had been sitting with the child on the edge of the lake, and as she was playing with it, free of all fear and full of happiness, the little one suddenly bent forward, as if attracted by something very beautiful in the water. My wife saw her laugh, the dear angel, and stretch out her little hands; but in a moment she had sprung out of her mother's arms, and had sunk beneath the watery mirror. I sought long for our little lost one; but it was all in vain; there was no trace of her to be found."

"The same evening we, childless parents, were sitting silently together in the cottage; neither of us had any desire to talk, even had our tears allowed

us. We sat gazing into the fire on the hearth. Presently, we heard something rustling outside the door: it flew open, and a beautiful little girl three or four years old, richly dressed, stood on the threshold smiling at us. We were quite dumb with astonishment, and I knew not at first whether it were a vision or a reality. But I saw the water dripping from her golden hair and rich garments, and I perceived that the pretty child had been lying in the water, and needed help. 'Wife,' said I, 'no one has been able to save our dear child; yet let us at any rate do for others what would have made us so blessed.' We undressed the little one, put her to bed, and gave her something warm; at all this she spoke not a word, and only fixed her eyes, that reflected the blue of the lake and of the sky, smilingly upon us. Next morning we quickly perceived that she had taken no harm from her wetting, and I now inquired about her parents, and how she had come here. But she gave a confused and strange account. She must have been born far from here, not only because for these fifteen years I have not been able to find out anything of her parentage, but because she then spoke, and at times still speaks, of such singular things that such as we are cannot tell but that she may have dropped upon us from the moon. She talks of golden castles, of crystal domes, and heaven knows what besides. The story that she told with most distinctness was, that she was out in a boat with her mother on the great lake, and fell into the water, and that she only recovered her senses here under the trees where she felt herself quite happy on the merry shore. We had still a great misgiving and perplexity weighing on our heart. We had, indeed, soon decided to keep the child we had found and to bring her up in the place of our lost darling; but who could tell us whether she had been baptized or not? She herself could give us no information on the matter. She generally answered our questions by saying that she well knew she was created for God's praise and glory, and that she was ready to let us do with her whatever would tend to His honor and glory.

"My wife and I thought that if she were not baptized, there was no time for delay, and that if she were, a good thing could not be repeated too often. And in pursuance of this idea, we reflected upon a good name for the child, for we now were often at a loss to know what to call her. We agreed at last that Dorothea would be the most suitable for her, for I once heard that it meant *a gift of God,* and she had surely been sent to us by God as a gift and comfort in our misery. She, on the other hand, would not hear of this, and told us that she thought she had been called Undine by her parents, and that Undine she wished still to be called. Now this appeared to me a heathenish name, not to be found in any calendar, and I took counsel therefore of a priest in the

city. He also would not hear of the name of Undine, but at my earnest request he came with me through the mysterious forest in order to perform the rite of baptism here in my cottage. The little one stood before us so prettily arrayed and looked so charming that the priest's heart was at once moved within him, and she flattered him so prettily, and braved him so merrily, that at last he could no longer remember the objections he had had ready against the name of Undine. She was therefore baptized 'Undine,' and during the sacred ceremony she behaved with great propriety and sweetness, wild and restless as she invariably was at other times. For my wife was quite right when she said that it has been hard to put up with her. If I were to tell you—"

The knight interrupted the fisherman to draw his attention to a noise, as of a rushing flood of waters, which had caught his ear during the old man's talk, and which now burst against the cottage-window with redoubled fury. Both sprang to the door. There they saw, by the light of the now risen moon, the brook which issued from the wood, widely overflowing its banks, and whirling away stones and branches of trees in its sweeping course. The storm, as if awakened by the tumult, burst forth from the mighty clouds which passed rapidly across the moon; the lake roared under the furious lashing of the wind; the trees of the little peninsula groaned from root to topmost bough, and bent, as if reeling, over the surging waters. "Undine! for Heaven's sake, Undine," cried the two men in alarm. No answer was returned, and regardless of every other consideration, they ran out of the cottage, one in this direction, and the other in that, searching and calling.

CHAPTER III.

How They Found Undine Again.

The longer Huldbrand sought Undine beneath the shades of night, and failed to find her, the more anxious and confused did he become.

The idea that Undine had been only a mere apparition of the forest, again gained ascendancy over him; indeed, amid the howling of the waves and the tempest, the cracking of the trees, and the complete transformation of a scene lately so calmly beautiful, he could almost have considered the whole peninsula with its cottage and its inhabitants as a mocking illusive vision; but from afar he still ever heard through the tumult the fisherman's anxious call for Un-

dine, and the loud praying and singing of his aged wife. At length he came close to the brink of the swollen stream, and saw in the moonlight how it had taken its wild course directly in front of the haunted forest, so as to change the peninsula into an island. "Oh God!" he thought to himself, "if Undine has ventured a step into that fearful forest, perhaps in her charming wilfulness, just because I was not allowed to tell her about it; and now the stream may be rolling between us, and she may be weeping on the other side alone, among phantoms and spectres!"

A cry of horror escaped him, and he clambered down some rocks and overthrown pine-stems, in order to reach the rushing stream and by wading or swimming to seek the fugitive on the other side. He remembered all the awful and wonderful things which he had encountered, even by day, under the now rustling and roaring branches of the forest. Above all it seemed to him as if a tall man in white, whom he knew but too well, was grinning and nodding on the opposite shore; but it was just these monstrous forms which forcibly impelled him to cross the flood, as the thought seized him that Undine might be among them in the agonies of death and alone.

He had already grasped the strong branch of a pine, and was standing supported by it, in the whirling current, against which he could with difficulty maintain himself; though with a courageous spirit he advanced deeper into it. Just then a gentle voice exclaimed near him: "Venture not, venture not, the old man, the stream, is full of tricks!" He knew the sweet tones; he stood as if entranced beneath the shadows that duskily shrouded the moon, and his head swam with the swelling of the waves, which he now saw rapidly rising to his waist. Still he would not desist.

"If thou art not really there, if thou art only floating about me like a mist, then may I too cease to live and become a shadow like thee, dear, dear Undine!" Thus exclaiming aloud, he again stepped deeper into the stream.

"Look round thee, oh! look round thee, beautiful but infatuated youth!" cried a voice again close beside him, and looking aside, he saw by the momentarily unveiled moon, a little island formed by the flood, on which he perceived under the interweaved branches of the overhanging trees, Undine smiling and happy, nestling in the flowery grass.

Oh! how much more gladly than before did the young man now use the aid of his pine-branch!

With a few steps he had crossed the flood which was rushing between him and the maiden, and he was standing beside her on a little spot of turf, safely guarded and screened by the good old trees. Undine had half-raised her-

self, and now under the green leafy tent she threw her arms round his neck, and drew him down beside her on her soft seat.

"You shall tell me your story here, beautiful friend," said she, in a low whisper; "the cross old people cannot hear us here: and our roof of leaves is just as good a shelter as their poor cottage."

"It is heaven itself!" said Huldbrand, embracing the beautiful girl and kissing her fervently.

The old fisherman meanwhile had come to the edge of the stream, and shouted across to the two young people; "Why, Sir Knight, I have received you as one honest-hearted man is wont to receive another, and now here you are caressing my foster-child in secret, and letting me run hither and thither through the night in anxious search of her."

"I have only just found her myself, old father," returned the knight.

"So much the better," said the fisherman; "but now bring her across to me without delay upon firm ground."

Undine, however, would not hear of this; she declared she would rather go with the beautiful stranger, into the wild forest itself, than return to the cottage, where no one did as she wished, and from which the beautiful knight would himself depart sooner or later. Then, throwing her arms round Huldbrand, she sang with indescribable grace:

"A Stream ran out of the misty vale
Its fortunes to obtain,
In the Ocean's depths it found a home
And ne'er returned a gain."

The old fisherman wept bitterly at her song, but this did not seem to affect her particularly. She kissed and caressed her new friend, who at last said to her: "Undine, if the old man's distress does not touch your heart, it touches mine—let us go back to him."

She opened her large blue eyes in amazement at him, and spoke at last, slowly and hesitatingly: "If you think so—well, whatever you think is right to me. But the old man yonder must first promise me that he will let you, without objection, relate to me what you saw in the wood, and—well, other things will settle themselves."

"Come, only come," cried the fisherman to her, unable to utter another word: and at the same time he stretched out his arms far over the rushing stream toward her, and nodded his head as if to promise the fulfilment of her

request, and as he did this, his white hair fell strangely over his face, and reminded Huldbrand of the nodding white man in the forest. Without allowing himself, however, to grow confused by such an idea the young knight took the beautiful girl in his arms, and bore her over the narrow passage which the stream had forced between her little island and the shore.

The old man fell upon Undine's neck and could not satisfy the exuberance of his joy; his good wife also came up and caressed the newly-found in the heartiest manner. Not a word of reproach passed their lips; nor was it thought of, for Undine, forgetting all her waywardness, almost overwhelmed her foster-parents with affection and fond expressions.

When at last they had recovered from the excess of their joy, day had already dawned, and had shed its purple hue over the lake; stillness had followed the storm, and the little birds were singing merrily on the wet branches. As Undine now insisted upon hearing the knight's promised story, the aged couple smilingly and readily acceded to her desire. Breakfast was brought out under the trees which screened the cottage from the lake, and they sat down to it with contented hearts—Undine on the grass at the knight's feet, the place chosen by herself.

Huldbrand then proceeded with his story.

CHAPTER IV.

Of That Which the Knight Encountered in the Wood.

"It is now about eight days ago since I rode into the free imperial city, which lies on the other side of the forest. Soon after my arrival, there was a splendid tournament and running at the ring, and I spared neither my horse nor my lance. Once when I was pausing at the lists, to rest after my merry toil, and was handing back my helmet to one of my squires, my attention was attracted by a female figure of great beauty, who was standing richly attired on one of the galleries allotted to spectators.

"I asked my neighbor, and learned from him, that the name of the fair lady was Bertalda, and that she was the foster-daughter of one of the powerful dukes living in the country. I remarked that she also was looking at me, and, as it is wont to be with us young knights, I had already ridden bravely, and now pursued my course with renovated confidence and courage. In the

dance that evening I was Bertalda's partner, and I remained so throughout the festival."

A sharp pain in his left hand, which hung down by his side, here interrupted Huldbrand's narrative, and drew his attention to the aching part. Undine had fastened her pearly teeth upon one of his fingers, appearing at the same time very gloomy and angry. Suddenly, however, she looked up in his eyes with an expression of tender melancholy, and whispered in a soft voice: "It is your own fault." Then she hid her face, and the knight, strangely confused and thoughtful, continued his narrative.

"This Bertalda was a haughty, wayward girl. Even on the second day she pleased me no longer as she had done on the first, and on the third day still less. Still I continued about her, because she was more pleasant to me than to any other knight, and thus it was that I begged her in jest to give me one of her gloves. 'I will give it you when you have quite alone explored the ill-famed forest,' said she, 'and can bring me tidings of its wonders.' It was not that her glove was of such importance to me, but the word had been said, and an honorable knight would not allow himself to be urged a second time to such a proof of valor."

"I think she loved you," said Undine, interrupting him.

"It seemed so," replied Huldbrand.

"Well," exclaimed the girl, laughing, "she must be stupid indeed. To drive away any one dear to her. And moreover, into an ill-omened wood. The forest and its mysteries might have waited long enough for me!"

"Yesterday morning," continued the knight, smiling kindly at Undine, "I set out on my enterprise. The stems of the trees caught the red tints of the morning light which lay brightly on the green turf, the leaves seemed whispering merrily with each other, and in my heart I could have laughed at the people who could have expected anything to terrify them in this pleasant spot. 'I shall soon have trotted through the forest there and back again,' I said to myself, with a feeling of easy gayety, and before I had even thought of it I was deep within the green shades, and could no longer perceive the plain which lay behind me. Then for the first time it struck me that I might easily lose my way in the mighty forest, and that this perhaps was the only danger which the wanderer had to fear. I therefore paused and looked round in the direction of the sun, which in the mean while had risen somewhat higher above the horizon. While I was thus looking up I saw something black in the branches of a lofty oak. I thought it was a bear and I grasped my sword; but with a human voice, that sounded harsh and ugly, it called to me from above: 'If I do not nibble

away the branches up here, Sir Malapert, what shall we have to roast you with at midnight?' And so saying it grinned and made the branches rustle, so that my horse grew furious and rushed forward with me before I had time to see what sort of a devil it really was."

"You must not call it so," said the old fisherman as he crossed himself; his wife did the same silently. Undine looked at the knight with sparkling eyes and said: "The best of the story is that they certainly have not roasted him yet; go on now, you beautiful youth!"

The knight continued his narration: "My horse was so wild that he almost rushed with me against the stems and branches of trees; he was dripping with sweat, and yet would not suffer himself to be held in. At last he went straight in the direction of a rocky precipice; then it suddenly seemed to me as if a tall white man threw himself across the path of my wild steed; the horse trembled with fear and stopped: I recovered my hold of him, and for the first time perceived that my deliverer was no white man, but a brook of silvery brightness, rushing down from a hill by my side and crossing and impeding my horse's course."

"Thanks, dear Brook," exclaimed Undine, clapping her little hands. The old man, however, shook his head and looked down in deep thought.

"I had scarcely settled myself in the saddle," continued Huldbrand, "and seized the reins firmly, when a wonderful little man stood at my side, diminutive, and ugly beyond conception. His complexion was of a yellowish brown, and his nose not much smaller than the rest of his entire person. At the same time he kept grinning with stupid courtesy, exhibiting his huge mouth, and making a thousand scrapes and bows to me. As this farce was now becoming inconvenient to me, I thanked him briefly and turned about my still trembling steed, thinking either to seek another adventure, or in case I met with none, to find my way back, for during my wild chase the sun had already passed the meridian; but the little fellow sprang round with the speed of lightning and stood again before my horse. 'Room!' I cried, angrily; 'the animal is wild and may easily run over you.'—'Ay, ay!' snarled the imp, with a grin still more horribly stupid. 'Give me first some drink-money, for I have stopped your horse; without me you and your horse would be now both lying in the stony ravine; ugh!'—'Don't make any more faces,' said I, 'and take your money, even if you are telling lies; for see, it was the good brook there that saved me, and not you, you miserable wight! And at the same time I dropped a piece of gold into his grotesque cap, which he had taken off in his begging. I then trotted on; but he screamed after me, and suddenly with inconceivable quickness

was at my side. I urged my horse into a gallop; the imp ran too, making at the same time strange contortions with his body, half-ridiculous, half-horrible, and holding up the gold-piece, he cried, at every leap, 'False money! false coin! false coin! false money!'—and this he uttered with such a hollow sound that one would have supposed that after every scream he would have fallen dead to the ground."

"His horrid red tongue moreover hung far out of his mouth. I stopped, perplexed, and asked: 'What do you mean by this screaming? take another piece of gold, take two, but leave me.' He then began again his hideous burlesque of politeness, and snarled out: 'Not gold, not gold, my young gentleman. I have too much of that trash myself, as I will show you at once?'

"Suddenly it seemed to me as if I could see through the solid soil as though it were green glass and the smooth earth were as round as a ball; and within, a multitude of goblins were making sport with silver and gold; head over heels they were rolling about, pelting each other in jest with the precious metals, and provokingly blowing the gold-dust in each other's eyes. My hideous companion stood partly within and partly without; he ordered the others to reach him up heaps of gold, and showing it to me with a laugh, he then flung it back again with a ringing noise into the immeasurable abyss.

"He then showed the piece of gold I had given him to the goblins below, and they laughed themselves half-dead over it and hissed at me. At last they all pointed at me with their metal-stained fingers, and more and more wildly, and more and more densely, and more and more madly, the swarm of spirits came clambering up to me. I was seized with terror as my horse had been before; I put spurs to him, and I know not how far I galloped for the second time wildly into the forest.

"At length, when I again halted, the coolness of evening was around me. Through the branches of the trees I saw a white foot-path gleaming, which I fancied must lead from the forest toward the city. I was anxious to work my way in that direction; but a face perfectly white and indistinct, with features ever changing, kept peering at me between the leaves; I tried to avoid it, but wherever I went it appeared also. Enraged at this, I determined at last to ride at it, when it gushed forth volumes of foam upon me and my horse, obliging us half-blinded to make a rapid retreat. Thus it drove us step by step ever away from the foot-path, leaving the way open to us only in one direction. When we advanced in this direction, it kept indeed close behind us, but did not do us the slightest harm.

"Looking around at it occasionally, I perceived that the white face that

had besprinkled us with foam belonged to a form equally white and of gigantic stature. Many a time I thought that it was a moving stream, but I could never convince myself on the subject. Wearied out, the horse and his rider yielded to the impelling power of the white man, who kept nodding his head, as if he would say, 'Quite right, quite right!' And thus at last we came out here to the end of the forest, where I saw the turf, and the lake, and your little cottage, and where the tall white man disappeared."

"It's well that he's gone," said the old fisherman; and now he began to talk of the best way by which his guest could return to his friends in the city. Upon this Undine began to laugh slyly to herself; Huldbrand observed it, and said: "I thought you were glad to see me here; why then do you now rejoice when my departure is talked of?"

"Because you cannot go away," replied Undine. "Just try it once, to cross that overflowed forest stream with a boat, with your horse, or alone, as you may fancy. Or rather don't try it, for you would be dashed to pieces by the stones and trunks of trees which are carried down by it with the speed of lightning. And as to the lake, I know it well; Father dare not venture out far enough with his boat."

Huldbrand rose, smiling, in order to see whether things were as Undine had said; the old man accompanied him, and the girl danced merrily along by their side. They found everything, indeed, as Undine had described, and the knight was obliged to submit to remain on the little tongue of land, that had become an island, till the flood should subside. As the three were returning to the cottage after their ramble, the knight whispered in the ear of the little maiden "Well, how is it, my pretty Undine—are you angry at my remaining?"

"Ah!" she replied, peevishly, "let me alone. If I had not bitten you, who knows how much of Bertalda would have appeared in your story?"

CHAPTER V.

How the Knight Lived on the Little Promontory.

After having been much driven to and fro in the world, you have perhaps, my dear reader, reached at length some spot where all was well with thee; where the love for home and its calm peace, innate to all, has again sprung up within thee; where thou hast thought that this home was rich with all the flowers of

childhood and of the purest, deepest love that rests upon the graves of those that are gone, and thou hast felt it must be good to dwell here and to build habitations. Even if thou hast erred in this, and hast had afterward bitterly to atone for the error, that is nothing to the purpose now, and thou wouldst not, indeed, voluntarily sadden thyself with the unpleasant recollection. But recall that inexpressibly sweet foreboding, that angelic sense of peace, and thou wilt know somewhat of the knight Huldbrand's feelings during his abode on the little promontory.

He often perceived with hearty satisfaction that the forest stream rolled along every day more wildly, making its bed ever broader and broader, and prolonging his sojourn on the island to an indefinite period. Part of the day he rambled about with an old cross-bow, which he had found in a corner of the cottage and had repaired; and, watching for the water-fowl, he killed all that he could for the cottage kitchen. When he brought his booty home, Undine rarely neglected to upbraid him with having so cruelly deprived the happy birds of life; indeed she often wept bitterly at the sight he placed before her. But if he came home another time without having shot anything she scolded him no less seriously, since now, from his carelessness and want of skill, they had to be satisfied with living on fish. He always delighted heartily in her graceful little scoldings, all the more as she generally strove to compensate for her ill-humor by the sweetest caresses.

The old people took pleasure in the intimacy of the young pair; they regarded them as betrothed, or even as already united in marriage, and living on this isolated spot, as a succor and support to them in their old age. It was this same sense of seclusion that suggested the idea also to Huldbrand's mind that he was already Undine's accepted one. He felt as if there were no world beyond these surrounding waters, or as if he could never recross them to mingle with other men; and when at times his grazing horse would neigh as if inquiringly to remind him of knightly deeds, or when the coat of arms on his embroidered saddle and horse-gear shone sternly upon him, or when his beautiful sword would suddenly fall from the nail on which it was hanging in the cottage, gliding from the scabbard as it fell, he would quiet the doubts of his mind by saying: "Undine is no fisherman's daughter; she belongs in all probability to some illustrious family abroad." There was only one thing to which he had a strong aversion, and this was, when the old dame reproved Undine in his presence. The wayward girl, it is true, laughed at it for the most part, without attempting to conceal her mirth; but it seemed to him as if his honor were concerned, and yet he could not blame the old fisherman's wife, for Undine always de-

served at least ten times as many reproofs as she received; so, in his heart he felt the balance in favor of the old woman, and his whole life flowed onward in calm enjoyment.

There came, however, an interruption at last. The fisherman and the knight had been accustomed at their mid-day meal, and also in the evening when the wind roared without, as it was always wont to do toward night, to enjoy together a flask of wine. But now the store which the fisherman had from time to time brought with him from the town, was exhausted, and the two men were quite out of humor in consequence.

Undine laughed at them excessively all day, but they were neither of them merry enough to join in her jests as usual. Toward evening she went out of the cottage to avoid, as she said, two such long and tiresome faces. As twilight advanced, there were again tokens of a storm, and the water rushed and roared. Full of alarm, the knight and the fisherman sprang to the door, to bring home the girl, remembering the anxiety of that night when Huldbrand had first come to the cottage. Undine, however, met them, clapping her little hands with delight. "What will you give me," she said, "to provide you with wine?" or rather, "you need not give me anything," she continued," for I am satisfied if you will look merrier and be in better spirits than you have been throughout this whole wearisome day. Only come with me; the forest stream has driven ashore a cask, and I will be condemned to sleep through a whole week if it is not a wine-cask." The men followed her, and in a sheltered creek on the shore, they actually found a cask, which inspired them with the hope that it contained the generous drink for which they were thirsting.

They at once rolled it as quickly as possible toward the cottage, for the western sky was overcast with heavy storm-clouds, and they could observe in the twilight the waves of the lake raising their white, foaming heads, as if looking out for the rain which was presently to pour down upon them. Undine helped the men as much as she was able, and when the storm of rain suddenly burst over them, she said, with a merry threat to the heavy clouds: "Come, come, take care that you don't wet us; we are still some way from shelter." The old man reproved her for this, as simple presumption, but she laughed softly to herself, and no mischief befell any one in consequence of her levity. Nay, more: contrary to all expectation, they reached the comfortable hearth with their booty perfectly dry, and it was not till they had opened the cask, and had proved that it contained some wonderfully excellent wine, that the rain burst forth from the dark cloud, and the storm raged among the tops of the trees, and over the agitated billows of the lake.

Several bottles were soon filled from the great cask, which promised a supply for many days, and they were sitting drinking and jesting round the glowing fire, feeling comfortably secured from the raging storm without. Suddenly the old fisherman became very grave and said: "Ah, great God! here we are rejoicing over this rich treasure, and he to whom it once belonged, and of whom the floods have robbed it, has probably lost this precious life in their waters."

"That he has not," declared Undine, as she smilingly filled the knight's cup to the brim.

But Huldbrand replied: "By my honor, old father, if I knew where to find and to rescue him, no knightly errand and no danger would I shirk. So much, however, I can promise you, that if ever again I reach more inhabited lands, I will find out the owner of this wine or his heirs, and requite it twofold, nay, threefold."

This delighted the old man; he nodded approvingly to the knight, and drained his cup with a better conscience and greater pleasure.

Undine, however, said to Huldbrand: "Do as you will with your gold and your reimbursement; but you spoke foolishly about the venturing out in search; I should cry my eyes out, if you were lost in the attempt, and isn't it true, that you would yourself rather stay with me and the good wine."

"Yes, indeed," answered Huldbrand, smiling.

"Then," said Undine, "you spoke unwisely. For charity begins at home, and what do other people concern us?"

The old woman turned away sighing and shaking her head; the fisherman forgot his wonted affection for the pretty girl and scolded her.

"It sounds exactly," said he, as he finished his reproof, "as if Turks and heathens had brought you up; may God forgive both me and you, you spoiled child."

"Well," replied Undine, "for all that, it is what I feel, let who will have brought me up, and all your words can't help that."

"Silence!" exclaimed the fisherman, and Undine, who, in spite of her pertness, was exceedingly fearful, shrank from him, and moving tremblingly toward Huldbrand, asked him in a soft tone: "Are you also angry, dear friend?"

The knight pressed her tender hand and stroked her hair. He could say nothing, for vexation at the old man's severity toward Undine closed his lips: and thus the two couples sat opposite to each other, with angry feelings and embarrassed silence.

CHAPTER VI.

Of a Nuptial Ceremony.

A low knocking at the door was heard in the midst of this stillness, startling all the inmates of the cottage; for there are times when a little circumstance, happening quite unexpectedly, can unduly alarm us. But there was here the additional cause of alarm that the enchanted forest lay so near, and that the little promontory seemed just now inaccessible to human beings. They looked at each other doubtingly, as the knocking was repeated accompanied by a deep groan, and the knight sprang to reach his sword. But the old man whispered softly: "If it be what I fear, no weapon will help us."

Undine meanwhile approached the door and called out angrily and boldly: "Spirits of the earth, if you wish to carry on your mischief, Kühleborn shall teach you something better."

The terror of the rest was increased by these mysterious words; they looked fearfully at the girl, and Huldbrand was just regaining courage enough to ask what she meant, when a voice said without: "I am no spirit of the earth, but a spirit indeed still within its earthly body. You within the cottage, if you fear God and will help me, open to me." At these words, Undine had already opened the door, and had held a lamp out in the stormy night, by which they perceived an aged priest standing there, who stepped back in terror at the unexpected sight of the beautiful maiden. He might well think that witchcraft and magic were at work when such a lovely form appeared at such an humble cottage door; he therefore began to pray: "All good spirits praise the Lord!"

"I am no spectre," said Undine, smiling; "do I then look so ugly? Besides you may see the holy words do not frighten me. I too know of God and understand how to praise Him; every one to be sure in his own way, for so He has created us. Come in, venerable father; you come among good people."

The holy man entered, bowing and looking round him, with a profound yet tender demeanor. But the water was dropping from every fold of his dark garment, and from his long white beard and from his gray locks. The fisherman and the knight took him to another apartment and furnished him with other clothes, while they gave the women his own wet attire to dry. The aged stranger thanked them humbly and courteously, but he would on no account accept the knight's splendid mantle, which was offered to him; but he chose instead an old gray overcoat belonging to the fisherman. They then returned

to the apartment, and the good old dame immediately vacated her easy-chair for the reverend father, and would not rest till he had taken possession of it. "For," said she, "you are old and exhausted, and you are moreover a man of God." Undine pushed under the stranger's feet her little stool, on which she had been wont to sit by the side of Huldbrand, and she showed herself in every way most gentle and kind in her care of the good old man. Huldbrand whispered some raillery at it in her ear, but she replied very seriously: "He is a servant of Him who created us all; holy things are not to be jested with." The knight and the fisherman then refreshed their reverend guest with food and wine, and when he had somewhat recovered himself, he began to relate how he had the day before set out from his cloister, which lay far beyond the great lake, intending to travel to the bishop, in order to acquaint him with the distress into which the monastery and its tributary villages had fallen on account of the extraordinary floods.

After a long, circuitous route, which these very floods had obliged him to take, he had been this day compelled, toward evening, to procure the aid of a couple of good boatmen to cross an arm of the lake, which had overflowed its banks.

"Scarcely however," continued he, "had our small craft touched the waves, than that furious tempest burst forth which is now raging over our heads. It seemed as if the waters had only waited for us, to commence their wildest whirling dance with our little boat. The oars were soon torn out of the hands of my men, and were dashed by the force of the waves further and further beyond our reach. We ourselves, yielding to the resistless powers of nature, helplessly drifted over the surging billows of the lake toward your distant shore, which we already saw looming through the mist and foam. Presently our boat turned round and round as in a giddy whirlpool; I know not whether it was upset, or whether I fell overboard. In a vague terror of inevitable death I drifted on, till a wave cast me here, under the trees on your island."

"Yes, island!" cried the fisherman; "a short time ago it was only a point of land; but now, since the forest-stream and the lake have become well-nigh bewitched, things are quite different with us."

"I remarked something of the sort," said the priest, "as I crept along the shore in the dark, and hearing nothing but the uproar around me. I at last perceived that a beaten foot-path disappeared just in the direction from which the sound proceeded. I now saw the light in your cottage, and ventured hither, and I cannot sufficiently thank my heavenly Father that after preserving me from the waters, He has led me to such good and pious people as you are; and

I feel this all the more, as I do not know whether I shall ever behold any other beings is this world, except those I now address."

"What do you mean?" asked the fisherman.

"Do you know then how long this commotion of the elements is to last?" replied the holy man. "And I am old in years. Easily enough may the stream of my life run itself out before the overflowing of the forest-stream may subside. And indeed it were not impossible that more and more of the foaming waters may force their way between you and yonder forest, until you are so far sundered from the rest of the world that your little fishing-boat will no longer be sufficient to carry you across, and the inhabitants of the continent in the midst of their diversions will have entirely forgotten you in your old age."

The fisherman's wife started at this, crossed herself and exclaimed. "God forbid." But her husband looked at her with a smile, and said "What creatures we are after all! even were it so, things would not be very different—at least not for you, dear wife—than they now are. For have you for many years been further than the edge of the forest? and have you seen any other human beings than Undine and myself? The knight and this holy man have only come to us lately. They will remain with us if we do become a forgotten island; so you would even be a gainer by it after all."

"I don't know," said the old woman; "it is somehow a gloomy thought, when one imagines that one is irrecoverably separated from other people, although, were it otherwise, one might neither know nor see them."

"Then you will remain with us! then you will remain with us!" whispered Undine, in a low, half-singing tone, as she nestled closer to Huldbrand's side. But he was absorbed in the deep and strange visions of his own mind.

The region on the other side of the forest-river seemed to dissolve into distance during the priest's last words: and the blooming island upon which he lived grew more green, and smiled more freshly in his mind's vision. His beloved one glowed as the fairest rose of this little spot of earth, and even of the whole world, and the priest was actually there. Added to this, at that moment an angry glance from the old dame was directed at the beautiful girl, because even in the presence of the reverend father she leaned so closely on the knight, and it seemed as if a torrent of reproving words were on the point of following. Presently, turning to the priest, Huldbrand broke forth: "Venerable father, you see before you here a pair pledged to each other: and if this maiden and these good old people have no objection, you shall unite us this very evening." The aged couple were extremely surprised. They had, it is true, hitherto often thought of something of the sort, but they had never yet ex-

pressed it, and when the knight now spoke thus, it came upon them as something wholly new and unprecedented.

Undine had become suddenly grave, and looked down thoughtfully while the priest inquired respecting the circumstances of the case, and asked if the old people gave their consent. After much discussion together, the matter was settled; the old dame went to arrange the bridal chamber for the young people, and to look out two consecrated tapers which she had had in her possession for some time, and which she thought essential to the nuptial ceremony. The knight in the mean while examined his gold chain, from which he wished to disengage two rings, that he might make an exchange of them with his bride.

She, however, observing what he was doing, started up from her reverie, and exclaimed: "Not so! my parents have not sent me into the world quite destitute; on the contrary, they must have anticipated with certainty that such an evening as this would come." Thus saying, she quickly left the room and reappeared in a moment with two costly rings, one of which she gave to her bridegroom, and kept the other for herself. The old fisherman was extremely astonished at this, and still more so his wife, who just then entered, for neither had ever seen these jewels in the child's possession.

"My parents," said Undine, "sewed these little things into the beautiful frock which I had on, when I came to you. They forbid me, moreover, to mention them to anyone before my wedding evening, so I secretly took them, and kept them concealed until now."

The priest interrupted all further questionings by lighting the consecrated tapers, which he placed upon a table, and summoned the bridal pair to stand opposite to him. He then gave them to each other with a few short solemn words; the elder couple gave their blessing to the younger, and the bride, trembling and thoughtful, leaned upon the knight. Then the priest suddenly said: "You are strange people after all. Why did you tell me you were the only people here on the island? and during the whole ceremony, a tall stately man, in a white mantle, has been looking at me through the window opposite. He must still be standing before the door, to see if you will invite him to come into the house."

"God forbid," said the old dame with a start; the fisherman shook his head in silence, and Huldbrand sprang to the window. It seemed even to him as if he could still see a white streak, but it soon completely disappeared in the darkness. He convinced the priest that he must have been absolutely mistaken, and they all sat down together round the hearth.

CHAPTER VII.

What Further Happened on the Evening of the Wedding.

Both before and during the ceremony, Undine had shown herself gentle and quiet; but it now seemed as if all the wayward humors which rioted within her, burst forth all the more boldly and unrestrainedly. She teased her bridegroom and her foster-parents, and even the holy man whom she had so lately reverenced, with all sorts of childish tricks; and when the old woman was about to reprove her, she was quickly silenced by a few grave words from the knight, speaking of Undine now as his wife. Nevertheless, the knight himself was equally little pleased with Undine's childish behavior; but no signs, and no reproachful words were of any avail. It is true, whenever the bride noticed her husband's dissatisfaction—and this occurred occasionally—she became more quiet, sat down by his side, caressed him, whispered something smilingly into his ear, and smoothed the wrinkles that were gathering on his brow. But immediately afterward, some wild freak would again lead her to return to her ridiculous proceedings, and matters would be worse than before. At length the priest said in a serious and kind tone: "My fair young maiden, no one indeed can look at you without delight; but remember so to attune your soul betimes, that it may ever harmonize with that of your wedded husband."

"Soul!" said Undine, laughing; "that sounds pretty enough, and may be a very edifying and useful caution for most people. But when one hasn't a soul at all, I beg you, what is there to attune then? and that is my case." The priest was silent and deeply wounded, and with holy displeasure he turned his face from the girl. She, however, went up to him caressingly, and said: "No! listen to me first, before you look angry, for your look of anger gives me pain, and you must not give pain to any creature who has done you no wrong—only have patience with me, and I will tell you properly what I mean."

It was evident that she was preparing herself to explain something in detail, but suddenly she hesitated, as if seized with an inward shuddering, and burst out into a flood of tears. They none of them knew what to make of this ebullition, and filled with various apprehensions they gazed at her in silence. At length, wiping away her tears, and looking earnestly at the reverend man, she said: "There must be something beautiful, but at the same time extremely awful, about a soul. Tell me, holy Sir, were it not better that we never shared such a gift?" She was silent again as if waiting for an answer, and her tears had

ceased to flow. All in the cottage had risen from their seats and had stepped back from her with horror. She, however, seemed to have eyes for no one but the holy man; her features wore an expression of fearful curiosity, which appeared terrible to those who saw her. "The soul must be a heavy burden," she continued, as no one answered her, "very heavy! for even its approaching image overshadows me with anxiety and sadness. And, ah! I was so light-hearted and so merry till now!" And she burst into a fresh flood of tears, and covered her face with the drapery she wore. Then the priest went up to her with a solemn air, and spoke to her, and conjured her by the name of the Most Holy to cast aside the veil that enveloped her, if any spirit of evil possessed her. But she sank on her knees before him, repeating all the sacred words he uttered, praising God, and protesting that she wished well with the whole world. Then at last the priest said to the knight: "Sir bridegroom, I will leave you alone with her whom I have united to you in marriage. So far as I can discover there is nothing of evil in her, but much indeed that is mysterious. I commend to you—prudence, love, and fidelity." So saying, he went out, and the fisherman and his wife followed him, crossing themselves.

Undine had sunk on her knees: she unveiled her face and said, looking timidly round on Huldbrand: "Alas! you will surely now not keep me as your own; and yet I have done no evil, poor child that I am!" As she said this, she looked so exquisitely graceful and touching, that her bridegroom forgot all the horror he had felt, and all the mystery that clung to her, and hastening to her he raised her in his arms. She smiled through her tears; it was a smile like the morning-light playing on a little stream.

"You cannot leave me," she whispered, with confident security, stroking the knight's cheek with her tender hand. Huldbrand tried to dismiss the fearful thoughts that still lurked in the background of his mind, persuading him that he was married to a fairy or to some malicious and mischievous being of the spirit world, only the single question half unawares escaped his lips: "My little Undine, tell me this one thing, what was it you said of spirits of the earth and of Kühleborn, when the priest knocked at the door?"

"It was nothing but fairy tales!—children's fairy tales!" said Undine, with all her wonted gayety; "I frightened you at first with them, and then you frightened me, that's the end of our story and of our nuptial evening."

"Nay! that it isn't," said the knight, intoxicated with love, and extinguishing the tapers, he bore his beautiful beloved to the bridal chamber by the light of the moon which shone brightly through the windows.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Day After the Wedding.

The fresh light of the morning awoke the young married pair. Wonderful and horrible dreams had disturbed Huldbrand's rest; he had been haunted by spectres, who, grinning at him by stealth, had tried to disguise themselves as beautiful women, and from beautiful women they all at once assumed the faces of dragons, and when he started up from these hideous visions, the moonlight shone pale and cold into the room; terrified he looked at Undine, who still lay in unaltered beauty and grace. Then he would press a light kiss upon her rosy lips, and would fall asleep again only to be awakened by new terrors. After he had reflected on all this, now that he was fully awake, he reproached himself for any doubt that could have led him into error with regard to his beautiful wife. He begged her to forgive him for the injustice he had done her, but she only held out to him her fair hand, sighed deeply, and remained silent. But a glance of exquisite fervor beamed from her eyes such as he had never seen before, carrying with it the full assurance that Undine bore him no ill-will. He then rose cheerfully and left her, to join his friends in the common apartment.

He found the three sitting round the hearth, with an air of anxiety about them, as if they dared not venture to speak aloud. The priest seemed to be praying in his inmost spirit that all evil might be averted. When, however, they saw the young husband come forth so cheerfully the careworn expression of their faces vanished.

The old fisherman even began to jest with the knight, so pleasantly, that the aged wife smiled good-humoredly as she listened to them. Undine at length made her appearance. All rose to meet her and all stood still with surprise, for the young wife seemed so strange to them and yet the same. The priest was the first to advance toward her with paternal affection beaming in his face, and, as he raised his hand to bless her, the beautiful woman sank reverently on her knees before him. With a few humble and gracious words she begged him to forgive her for any foolish things she might have said the evening before, and entreated him in an agitated tone to pray for the welfare of her soul. She then rose, kissed her foster-parents, and thanking them for all the goodness they had shown her, she exclaimed: "Oh! I now feel in my innermost heart, how much, how infinitely much, you have done for me, dear, kind people!" She could not at first desist from her caresses, but scarcely had she perceived that

the old woman was busy in preparing breakfast, than she went to the hearth, cooked and arranged the meal, and would not suffer the good old mother to take the least trouble.

She continued thus throughout the whole day, quiet, kind, and attentive—at once a little matron and a tender, bashful girl. The three who had known her longest expected every moment to see some whimsical vagary of her capricious spirit burst forth. But they waited in vain for it. Undine remained as mild and gentle as an angel. The holy father could not take his eyes from her, and he said repeatedly to the bridegroom: "The goodness of heaven, sir, has intrusted a treasure to you yesterday through me, unworthy as I am; cherish it as you ought, and it will promote your temporal and eternal welfare."

Toward evening Undine was hanging on the knight's arm with humble tenderness, and drew him gently out of the door, where the declining sun was shining pleasantly on the fresh grass, and upon the tall, slender stems of the trees. The eyes of the young wife were moist, as with the dew of sadness and love, and a tender and fearful secret seemed hovering on her lips, which, however, was only disclosed by scarcely audible sighs. She led her husband onward and onward in silence; when he spoke, she only answered him with looks, in which, it is true, there lay no direct reply to his inquiries, but a whole heaven of love and timid devotion. Thus they reached the edge of the swollen forest-stream, and the knight was astonished to see it rippling along in gentle waves, without a trace of its former wildness and swell. "By the morning it will be quite dry," said the beautiful wife, in a regretful tone, "and you can then travel away wherever you will, without anything to hinder you."

"Not without you, my little Undine," replied the knight, laughing: "remember, even if I wished to desert you, the church, and the spiritual powers, and the emperor, and the empire would interpose and bring the fugitive back again."

"All depends upon you, all depends upon you," whispered his wife, half-weeping and half-smiling. "I think, however, nevertheless, that you will keep me with you; I love you so heartily. Now carry me across to that little island that lies before us. The matter shall be decided there. I could easily indeed glide through the rippling waves, but it is so restful in your arms, and if you were to cast me off, I shall have sweetly rested in them once more for the last time." Huldbrand, full as he was of strange fear and emotion, knew not what to reply. He took her in his arms and carried her across, remembering now for the first time that this was the same little island from which he had borne her

back to the old fisherman on that first night. On the farther side he put her down on the soft grass, and was on the point of placing himself lovingly near his beautiful burden, when she said: "No, there opposite to me! I will read my sentence in your eyes, before your lips speak; now, listen attentively to what I will relate to you." And she began:

"You must know, my loved one, that there are beings in the elements which almost appear like mortals, and which rarely allow themselves to become visible to your race. Wonderful salamanders glitter and sport in the flames; lean and malicious gnomes dwell deep within the earth; spirits, belonging to the air, wander through the forests, and a vast family of water-spirits live in the lakes, and streams, and brooks. In resounding domes of crystal, through which the sky looks in with its sun and stars, these latter spirits find their beautiful abode; lofty trees of coral with blue and crimson fruits gleam in their gardens; they wander over the pure sand of the sea, and among lovely variegated shells, and amid all exquisite treasures of the old world, which the present is no longer worthy to enjoy; all these the floods have covered with their secret veils of silver, and the noble monuments sparkle below, stately and solemn, and bedewed by the loving waters which allure from them many a beautiful moss-flower and entwining cluster of sea-grass. Those, however, who dwell there are very fair and lovely to behold, and for the most part are more beautiful than human beings. Many a fisherman has been so fortunate as to surprise some tender mermaid as she rose above the waters and sang. He would tell afar of her beauty, and such wonderful beings have been given the name of Undines. You, however, are now actually beholding an Undine."

The knight tried to persuade himself that his beautiful wife was under the spell of one of her strange humors, and that she was taking pleasure in teasing him with one of her extravagant inventions. But repeatedly as he said this to himself, he could not believe it for a moment; a strange shudder passed through him; unable to utter a word, he stared at the beautiful narrator with an immovable gaze. Undine shook her head sorrowfully, drew a deep sigh, and then proceeded as follows:

"Our condition would be far superior to that of other human beings—for human beings we call ourselves, being similar to them in form and culture—but there is one evil peculiar to us. We and our like in the other elements, vanish into dust and pass away, body and spirit, so that not a vestige of us remains behind; and when you mortals hereafter awake to a purer life, we remain with

the sand and the sparks and the wind and the waves. Hence we have also no souls; the element moves us, and is often obedient to us while we live, though it scatters us to dust when we die; and we are merry, without having aught to grieve us—merry as the nightingales and the little gold-fishes and other pretty children of nature. But all things aspire to be higher than they are. Thus, my father, who is a powerful water-prince in the Mediterranean Sea, desired that his only daughter should become possessed of a soul, even though she must then endure many of the sufferings of those thus endowed. Such as we are, however, can only obtain a soul by the closest union of affection with one of your human race. I am now possessed of a soul, and my soul thanks you, my inexpressibly beloved one, and it will ever thank you, if you do not make my whole life miserable. For what is to become of me, if you avoid and reject me? Still, I would not retain you by deceit. And if you mean to reject me, do so now, and return alone to the shore. I will dive into this brook, which is my uncle; and here in the forest, far removed from other friends, he passes his strange and solitary life. He is, however, powerful, and is esteemed and beloved by many great streams; and as he brought me hither to the fisherman, a light-hearted, laughing child, he will take me back again to my parents, a loving, suffering, and soul-endowed woman."

She was about to say still more, but Huldbrand embraced her with the most heartfelt emotion and love, and bore her back again to the shore. It was not till he reached it, that he swore amid tears and kisses, never to forsake his sweet wife, calling himself more happy than the Greek Pygmalion, whose beautiful statue received life from Venus and became his loved one. In endearing confidence, Undine walked back to the cottage, leaning on his arm; feeling now for the first time, with all her heart, how little she ought to regret the forsaken crystal palaces of her mysterious father.

CHAPTER IX.

How the Knight Took His Young Wife with Him.

When Huldbrand awoke from his sleep on the following morning, and missed his beautiful wife from his side, he began to indulge again in the strange thoughts, that his marriage and the charming Undine herself were but fleeting and deceptive illusions. But at the same moment she entered the room, sat

down beside him, and said: "I have been out rather early to see if my uncle keeps his word. He has already led all the waters back again into his own calm channel, and he now flows through the forest, solitarily and dreamily as before. His friends in the water and the air have also returned to repose: all will again go on quietly and regularly, and you can travel homeward when you will, dry-shod." It seemed to Huldbrand as though he were in a waking dream, so little could he reconcile himself to the strange relationship of his wife. Nevertheless he made no remark on the matter, and the exquisite grace of his bride soon lulled to rest every uneasy misgiving.

When he was afterward standing before the door with her, and looking over the green peninsula with its boundary of clear waters, he felt so happy in this cradle of his love, that he exclaimed: "Why shall we travel so soon as to-day? We shall scarcely find more pleasant days in the world yonder than those we have spent in this quiet little shelter. Let us yet see the sun go down here twice or thrice more."

"As my lord wills," replied Undine, humbly. "It is only that the old people will, at all events, part from me with pain, and when they now for the first time perceive the true soul within me, and how I can now heartily love and honor, their feeble eyes will be dimmed with plentiful tears. At present they consider my quietness and gentleness of no better promise than before, like the calmness of the lake when the air is still; and, as matters now are, they will soon learn to cherish a flower or a tree as they have cherished me. Do not, therefore, let me reveal to them this newly-bestowed and loving heart, just at the moment when they must lose it for this world; and how could I conceal it, if we remain longer together?"

Huldbrand conceded the point; he went to the aged people and talked with them over the journey, which he proposed to undertake immediately. The holy father offered to accompany the young married pair, and, after a hasty farewell, he and the knight assisted the beautiful bride to mount her horse, and walked with rapid step by her side over the dry channel of the forest-stream into the wood beyond. Undine wept silently but bitterly, and the old people gave loud expression to their grief. It seemed as if they had a presentiment of all they were now losing in their foster-child.

The three travellers had reached in silence the densest shades of the forest. It must have been a fair sight, under that green canopy of leaves, to see Undine's lovely form, as she sat on her noble and richly ornamented steed, with the venerable priest in the white garb of his order on one side of her, and on the other the blooming young knight in his gay and splendid attire, with his

sword at his girdle. Huldbrand had no eyes but for his beautiful wife, Undine, who had dried her tears, had no eyes but for him, and they soon fell into a mute, voiceless converse of glance and gesture, from which they were only roused at length by the low talking of the reverend father with a fourth traveller, who in the mean while had joined them unobserved.

He wore a white garment almost resembling the dress of the priests order, except that his hood hung low over his face, and his whole attire floated round him in such vast folds that he was obliged every moment to gather it up, and throw it over his arm, or dispose of it in some way, and yet it did not in the least seem to impede his movements. When the young couple first perceived him, he was just saying "And so, venerable sir. I have now dwelt for many years here in the forest, and yet no one could call me a hermit, in your sense of the word. For, as I said, I know nothing of penance, and I do not think I have any especial need of it. I love the forest only for this reason, that its beauty is quite peculiar to itself, and it amuses me to pass along in my flowing white garments among the leaves and dusky shadows, while now and then a sweet sunbeam shines down unexpectedly upon me."

"You are a very strange man," replied the priest, "and I should like to be more closely acquainted with you."

"And to pass from one thing to another, who may you be yourself?" asked the stranger.

"I am called Father Heilmann," said the holy man; "and I come from the monastery of 'our Lady' which lies on the other side of the lake."

"Indeed," replied the stranger; "my name is Kühleborn, and so far as courtesy is concerned I might claim the title of Lord of Kühleborn, or free Lord of Kühleborn; for I am as free as the birds in the forest and perhaps a little more so. For example, I have now something to say to the young lady there." And before they were aware of his intention, he was at the other side of the priest, close beside Undine, stretching himself up to whisper something in her ear.

But she turned from him with alarm, and exclaimed: "I have nothing more to do with you."

"Ho, ho," laughed the stranger, "what is this immensely grand marriage you have made, that you don't know your own relations any longer? Have you forgotten your uncle Kühleborn, who so faithfully bore you on his back through this region?"

"I beg you, nevertheless," replied Undine, "not to appear in my presence

again. I am now afraid of you; and suppose my husband should learn to avoid me when he sees me in such strange company and with such relations!"

"My little niece," said Kühleborn, "you must not forget that I am with you here as a guide; the spirits of earth that haunt this place might otherwise play some of their stupid pranks with you. Let me therefore go quietly on with you; the old priest there remembered me better than you appear to have done, for he assured me just now that I seemed familiar to him, and that I must have been with him in the boat, out of which he fell into the water. I was so, truly enough; for I was the water-spout that carried him out of it and washed him safely ashore for your wedding."

Undine and the knight turned toward Father Heilmann; but he seemed walking on, as in a sort of dream, and no longer to be conscious of all that was passing. Undine then said to Kühleborn, "I see yonder the end of the forest. We no longer need your help, and nothing causes us alarm but yourself. I beg you, therefore, in all love and good-will, vanish, and let us proceed in peace."

Kühleborn seemed to become angry at this; his countenance assumed a frightful expression, and he grinned fiercely at Undine, who screamed aloud and called upon her husband for assistance. As quick as lightning, the knight sprang to the other side of the horse, and aimed his sharp sword at Kühleborn's head. But the sword cut through a waterfall, which was rushing down near them from a lofty crag; and with a splash, which almost sounded like a burst of laughter, it poured over them and wet them through to the skin.

The priest, as if suddenly awaking, exclaimed "I have long been expecting that, for the stream ran down from the height so close to us. At first it really seemed to me like a man, and as if it could speak." As the waterfall came rushing down, it distinctly uttered these words in Huldbrand's ear:

"Rash knight,
Brave knight,
Rage, feel I not,
Chide, will I not.
But ever guard thy little wife as well,
Rash knight, brave knight! Protect her well!"

A few footsteps more, and they were upon open ground. The imperial city lay bright before them, and the evening sun, which gilded its towers, kindly dried the garments of the drenched wanderers.

CHAPTER X.

How They Lived in the City.

The sudden disappearance of the young knight, Huldbrand von Ringstetten, from the imperial city, had caused great sensation and solicitude among those who had admired him, both for his skill in the tournament and the dance, and no less so for his gentle and agreeable manners. His servants would not quit the place without their master, although not one of them would have had the courage to go in quest of him into the shadowy recesses of the forest. They therefore remained in their quarters, inactively hoping, as men are wont to do, and keeping alive the remembrance of their lost lord by their lamentations. When, soon after, the violent storms and floods were observed, the less doubt was entertained as to the certain destruction of the handsome stranger; and Bertalda openly mourned for him and blamed herself for having allured the unfortunate knight into the forest. Her foster-parents, the duke and duchess, had come to fetch her away, but Bertalda entreated them to remain with her until certain intelligence had been obtained of Huldbrand's fate. She endeavored to prevail upon several young knights, who were eagerly courting her, to follow the noble adventurer to the forest. But she would not pledge her hand as a reward of the enterprise, because she always cherished the hope of belonging to the returning knight, and no glove, nor riband, nor even kiss, would tempt any one to expose his life for the sake of bringing back such a dangerous rival.

When Huldbrand now suddenly and unexpectedly appeared, his servants, and the inhabitants of the city, and almost every one, rejoiced. Bertalda alone refused to do so; for agreeable as it was to the others that he should bring with him such a beautiful bride, and Father Heilmann as a witness of the marriage, Bertalda could feel nothing but grief and vexation. In the first place, she had really loved the young knight with all her heart, and in the next, her sorrow at his absence had proclaimed this far more before the eyes of all, than was now befitting. She still, however, conducted herself as a wise maiden, reconciled herself to circumstances, and lived on the most friendly terms with Undine, who was looked upon throughout the city as a princess whom Huldbrand had rescued in the forest from some evil enchantment. When she or her husband were questioned on the matter, they were wise enough to be silent or skillfully to evade the inquiries. Father Heilmann's lips were sealed to idle gos-

sip of any kind, and moreover, immediately after Huldbrand's arrival, he had returned to his monastery; so that people were obliged to be satisfied with their own strange conjectures, and even Bertalda herself knew no more of the truth than others.

Day by day, Undine felt her affection increase for the fair maiden. "We must have known each other before," she often used to say to her, "or else, there must be some mysterious connection between us, for one does not love another as dearly as I have loved you from the first moment of our meeting without some cause—some deep and secret cause." And Bertalda also could not deny the fact that she felt drawn to Undine with a tender feeling of confidence, however much she might consider that she had cause for the bitterest lamentation at this successful rival. Biassed by this mutual affection, they both persuaded—the one her foster-parents, the other her husband—to postpone the day of departure from time to time; indeed, it was even proposed that Bertalda should accompany Undine for a time to castle Ringstetten, near the source of the Danube.

They were talking over this plan one beautiful evening, as they were walking by starlight in the large square of the Imperial city, under the tall trees that enclose it. The young married pair had incited Bertalda to join them in their evening walk, and all three were strolling up and down under the dark-blue sky, often interrupting their familiar talk to admire the magnificent fountain in the middle of the square, as its waters rushed and bubbled forth with wonderful beauty. It had a soothing happy influence upon them; between the shadows of the trees there stole glimmerings of light from the adjacent houses; a low murmur of children at play, and of others enjoying their walk, floated around them; they were so alone, and yet in the midst of the bright and living world; whatever had appeared difficult by day, now became smooth as of itself; and the three friends could no longer understand why the slightest hesitation had existed with regard to Bertalda's visit to Ringstetten. Presently, just as they were on the point of fixing the day for their common departure, a tall man approached them from the middle of the square, bowed respectfully to the company, and said something in the ear of the young wife. Displeased as she was at the interruption and its cause, she stepped a little aside with the stranger, and both began to whisper together, as it seemed, in a foreign tongue. Huldbrand fancied he knew the strange man, and he stared so fixedly at him that he neither heard nor answered Bertalda's astonished inquiries.

All at once Undine, clapping her hands joyfully, and laughing, quitted the

stranger's side, who, shaking his head, retired hastily and discontentedly, and vanished in the fountain. Huldbrand now felt certain on the point, but Bertalda asked: "And what did the master of the fountain want with you, dear Undine?"

The young wife laughed within herself, and replied: "The day after to-morrow, my dear child, on the anniversary of your name-day, you shall know it." And nothing more would she disclose. She invited Bertalda and sent an invitation to her foster-parents, to dine with them on the appointed day, and soon after they parted.

"Kühleborn? was it Kühleborn?" said Huldbrand, with a secret shudder, to his beautiful bride, when they had taken leave of Bertalda, and were now going home through the darkening streets.

"Yes, it was he," replied Undine, "and he was going to say all sorts of nonsensical things to me. But, in the midst, quite contrary to his intention, he delighted me with a most welcome piece of news. If you wish to hear it at once, my dear lord and husband, you have but to command, and I will tell it you without reserve. But if you would confer a real pleasure on your Undine, you will wait till the day after to-morrow, and you will then have your share too in the surprise."

The knight gladly complied with his wife's desire, which had been urged so sweetly, and as she fell asleep, she murmured smilingly to herself: "Dear, dear Bertalda! How she will rejoice and be astonished at what her master of the fountain told me!"

CHAPTER XI.

The Anniversary of Bertalda's Name-Day.

The company were sitting at dinner; Bertalda, looking like some goddess of spring with her flowers and jewels, the presents of her foster-parents and friends, was placed between Undine and Huldbrand. When the rich repast was ended, and the last course had appeared, the doors were left open, according to a good old German custom, that the common people might look on, and take part in the festivity of the nobles. Servants were carrying round cake and wine among the spectators. Huldbrand and Bertalda were waiting with secret impatience for the promised explanation, and sat with their eyes fixed steadily on Undine. But the beautiful wife still continued silent, and only

kept smiling to herself with secret and hearty satisfaction. All who knew of the promise she had given could see that she was every moment on the point of betraying her happy secret, and that it was with a sort of longing renunciation that she withheld it, just as children sometimes delay the enjoyment of their choicest morsels. Bertalda and Huldbrand shared this delightful feeling, and expected with fearful hope the tidings which were to fall from the lips of Undine. Several of the company pressed Undine to sing. The request seemed opportune, and ordering her lute to be brought, she sang the following words:

Bright opening day,
Wild flowers so gay,
Tall grasses their thirst that slake,
On the banks of the billowy lake!
What glimmers there so shining
The reedy growth entwining?
Is it a blossom white as snow
Fallen from heav'n here below?

It is an infant, frail and dear!
With flowerets playing in its dreams
And grasping morning's golden beams;
Oh! whence, sweet stranger, art thou here?
From some far-off and unknown strand,
The lake has borne thee to this land.

Nay, grasp not, tender little one,
With thy tiny hand outspread;
No hand will meet thy touch with love,
Mute is that flowery bed.

The flowers can deck themselves so fair
And breathe forth fragrance blest,
Yet none can press thee to itself,
Like that far-off mother's breast.

So early at the gate of life,
With smiles of heav'n on thy brow,

Thou hast the best of treasures lost,
Poor wand'ring child, nor know'st it now.

A noble duke comes riding by,
And near thee checks his courser's speed,
And full of ardent chivalry
He bears thee home upon his steed.

Much, endless much, has been thy gain!
Thou bloom'st the fairest in the land!
Yet ah! the priceless joy of all,
Thou'st left upon an unknown strand.

Undine dropped her lute with a melancholy smile, and the eyes of Bertalda's foster-parents were filled with tears. "Yes, so it was on the morning that I found you, my poor sweet orphan," said the duke, deeply agitated; "the beautiful singer is certainly right; we have not been able to give you that 'priceless joy of all.'"

"But we must also hear how it fared with the poor parents," said Undine, as she resumed her lute, and sang:

Thro' every chamber roams the mother,
Moves and searches everywhere,
Seeks, she scarce knows what, with sadness,
And finds an empty house is there.

An empty house! Oh, word of sorrow,
To her who once had been so blest,
Who led her child about by day
And cradled it at night to rest.

The beech is growing green again,
The sunshine gilds its wonted spot,
But mother, cease thy searching vain!
Thy little loved one cometh not.

And when the breath of eve blows cool,
And father in his home appears,

The smile he almost tries to wear
Is quenched at once by gushing tears.

Full well he knows that in his home
He naught can find but wild despair,
He hears the mother's grieved lament
And no bright infant greets him there.

"Oh! for God's sake, Undine, where are my parents?" cried the weeping Bertalda; "you surely know; you have discovered them, you wonderful being, for otherwise you would not have thus torn me heart. Are they perhaps already here? Can it be?" Her eye passed quickly over the brilliant company and lingered on a lady of high rank who was sitting next her foster-father. Undine, however, turned toward the door, while her eyes overflowed with the sweetest emotion. "Where are the poor waiting parents?" she inquired, and, the old fisherman and his wife advanced hesitatingly from the crowd of spectators. Their glance rested inquiringly now on Undine, now on the beautiful girl who was said to be their daughter. "It is she," said the delighted benefactress, in a faltering tone, and the two old people hung round the neck of their recovered child, weeping and praising God.

But amazed and indignant, Bertalda tore herself from their embrace. Such a recognition was too much for this proud mind, at a moment when she had surely imagined that her former splendor would even be increased, and when hope was deluding her with a vision of almost royal honors. It seemed to her as if her rival had devised all this on purpose signally to humble her before Huldbrand and the whole world. She reviled Undine, she reviled the old people, and bitter invectives, such as "deceiver" and "bribed impostors," fell from her lips. Then the old fisherman's wife said in a low voice to herself: "Ah me, she is become a wicked girl; and yet I feel in my heart that she is my child."

The old fisherman, however, had folded his hands, and was praying silently that this might not be his daughter. Undine, pale as death, turned with agitation from the parents to Bertalda, and from Bertalda to the parents; suddenly cast down from that heaven of happiness of which she had dreamed, and overwhelmed with a fear and a terror such as she had never known even in imagination. "Have you a soul? Have you really a soul, Bertalda?" she cried again and again to her angry friend, as if forcibly to rouse her to consciousness from some sudden delirium or maddening nightmare. But when Bertalda only became more and more enraged, when the repulsed parents began to weep

aloud, and the company, in eager dispute, were taking different sides, she begged in such a dignified and serious manner to be allowed to speak in this her husband's hall, that all around were in a moment silenced. She then advanced to the upper end of the table, where Bertalda has seated herself, and with a modest and yet proud air, while every eye was fixed upon her, she spoke as follows:

"My friends, you look so angry and disturbed and you have interrupted my happy feast by your disputings. Ah! I knew nothing of your foolish habits and your heartless mode of thinking, and I shall never all my life long become accustomed to them. It is not my fault that this affair has resulted in evil; believe me, the fault is with yourselves alone, little as it may appear to you to be so. I have therefore but little to say to you, but one thing I must say: I have spoken nothing but truth. I neither can nor will give you proofs beyond my own assertion, but I will swear to the truth of this. I received this information from the very person who allured Bertalda into the water, away from her parents, and who afterward placed her on the green meadow in the duke's path."

"She is an enchantress!" cried Bertalda, "a witch, who has intercourse with evil spirits. She acknowledges it herself."

"I do not," said Undine, with a whole heaven of innocence and confidence beaming, in her eyes. "I am no witch; only look at me."

"She is false and boastful," interrupted Bertalda, "and she cannot prove that I am the child of these low people. My noble parents, I beg you to take me from this company and out of this city, where they are only bent on insulting me."

But the aged and honorable duke remained unmoved, and his wife, said: "We must thoroughly examine how we are to act. God forbid that we should move a step from this hall until we have done so."

Then the old wife of the fisherman drew near, and making a low reverence to the duchess, she said: "Noble, god-fearing lady, you have opened my heart. I must tell you, if this evil-disposed young lady is my daughter, she has a mark, like a violet, between her shoulders, and another like it on the instep of her left foot. If she would only go out of the hall with me!"

"I shall not uncover myself before the peasant woman!" exclaimed Bertalda, proudly turning her back on her.

"But before me you will," rejoined the duchess, very gravely. "Follow me into that room, girl, and the good old woman shall come with us." The three disappeared, and the rest of the company remained where they were, in silent

expectation. After a short time they returned; Bertalda was pale as death. "Right is right," said the duchess; "I must therefore declare that our hostess has spoken perfect truth. Bertalda is the fisherman's daughter, and that is as much as it is necessary to inform you here."

The princely pair left with their adopted daughter; and at a sign from the duke, the fisherman and his wife followed them. The other guests retired in silence or with secret murmurs, and Undine sank weeping into Huldbrand's arms.

CHAPTER XII.

How They Left the Imperial City.

The Lord of Ringstetten would have certainly preferred the events of this day to have been different; but even as they were, he could scarcely regret them wholly, as they had exhibited his charming wife under such a good and sweet and kindly aspect. "If I have given her a soul," he could not help saying to himself, "I have indeed given her a better one than my own;" and his only thought now was to speak soothingly to the weeping Undine, and on the following morning to quit with her a place which, after this incident, must have become distasteful to her. It is true that she was not estimated differently to what she had been. As something mysterious had long been expected of her, the strange discovery of Bertalda's origin had caused no great surprise, and every one who had heard the story and had seen Bertalda's violent behavior, was disgusted with her alone. Of this, however, the knight and his lady knew nothing as yet; and, besides, the condemnation or approval of the public was equally painful to Undine, and thus there was no better course to pursue than to leave the walls of the old city behind them with all the speed possible.

With the earliest beams of morning a pretty carriage drove up to the entrance gate for Undine; the horses which Huldbrand and his squires were to ride stood near, pawing the ground with impatient eagerness. The knight was leading his beautiful wife from the door, when a fisher-girl crossed their way. "We do not need your fish," said Huldbrand to her, "we are now starting on our journey." Upon this the fisher-girl began to weep bitterly, and the young couple perceived for the first time that it was Bertalda. They immediately re-

turned with her to their apartment, and learned from her that the duke and duchess were so displeased at her violent and unfeeling conduct on the preceding day, that they had entirely withdrawn their protection from her, though not without giving her a rich portion.

The fisherman, too, had been handsomely rewarded, and had the evening before set out with his wife to return to their secluded home.

"I would have gone with them," she continued, "but the old fisherman, who is said to be my father"—

"And he is so indeed, Bertalda," interrupted Undine. "Mark me, the stranger, whom you took for the master of the fountain, told me the whole story in detail. He wished to dissuade me from taking you with me to castle Ringstetten, and this led him to disclose the secret."

"Well, then," said Bertalda, "if it must be so, my father said, 'I will not take you with me until you are changed. Venture to come to us alone through the haunted forest; that shall be the proof whether you have any regard for us. But do not come to me as a lady; come only as a fisher-girl!' So I will do just as he has told me, for I am forsaken by the whole world, and I will live and die in solitude as a poor fisher-girl, with my poor parents. I have a terrible dread though of the forest. Horrible spectres are said to dwell in it, and I am so fearful. But how can I help it? I only came here to implore pardon of the noble lady of Ringstetten for my unbecoming behavior yesterday. I feel sure, sweet lady, you meant to do me a kindness, but you knew not how you would wound me, and in my agony and surprise, many a rash and frantic expression passed my lips. Oh forgive, forgive! I am already so unhappy. Only think yourself what I was yesterday morning, yesterday at the beginning of your banquet, and what I am now!"

Her voice became stifled with a passionate flood of tears, and Undine, also weeping bitterly, fell on her neck. It was some time before the deeply agitated Undine could utter a word; at length she said:

"You can go with us to Ringstetten; everything shall remain as it was arranged before; only do not speak to me again as 'noble lady.' You see, we were exchanged for each other as children; our faces even then sprang as it were from the same stem, and we will now so strengthen this kindred destiny that no human power shall be able to separate it. Only, first of all, come with us to Ringstetten. We will discuss there how we shall share all things as sisters."

Bertalda looked timidly toward Huldbrand. He pitied the beautiful girl

in her distress, and offering her his hand he begged her tenderly to intrust herself with him and his wife. "We will send a message to your parents," he continued, "to tell them why you are not come;" and he would have added more with regard to the worthy fisherman and his wife, but he saw that Bertalda shrunk with pain from the mention of their name, and he therefore refrained from saying more.

He then assisted her first into the carriage, Undine followed her; and he mounted his horse and trotted merrily by the side of them, urging the driver at the same time to hasten his speed, so that very soon they were beyond the confines of the Imperial city and all its sad remembrances; and now the ladies began to enjoy the beautiful country through which their road lay.

After a journey of some days, they arrived one exquisite evening, at castle Ringstetten. The young knight had much to hear from his overseers and vassals, so that Undine and Bertalda were left alone.

They both repaired to the ramparts of the fortress, and were delighted with the beautiful landscape which spread far and wide through fertile Swabia.

Presently a tall man approached them, greeting them respectfully, and Bertalda fancied she saw a resemblance to the master of the fountain in the Imperial city. Still more unmistakable grew the likeness, when Undine angrily and almost threateningly waved him off, and he retreated with hasty steps and shaking head, as he had done before, and disappeared into a neighboring copse.

Undine, however, said: "Don't be afraid, dear Bertalda, this time the hateful master of the fountain shall do you no harm." And then she told her the whole story in detail, and who she was herself, and how Bertalda had been taken away from the fisherman and his wife, and Undine had gone to them. The girl was at first terrified with this relation; she imagined her friend must be seized with sudden madness, but she became more convinced that all was true, for Undine's story was so connected, and fitted so well with former occurrences, and still more she had that inward feeling with which truth never fails to make itself known to us. It seemed strange to her that she was now herself living, as it were, in the midst of one of those fairy tales to which she had formerly only listened.

She gazed upon Undine with reverence, but she could not resist a sense of dread that seemed to come between her and her friend, and at their evening repast she could not but wonder, how the knight could behave so lovingly and kindly toward a being who appeared to her, since the discovery she had just made, more of a phantom than a human being.

CHAPTER XIII.

How They Lived at Castle Ringstetten.

The writer of this story, both because it moves his own heart, and because he wishes it to move that of others, begs you, dear reader, to pardon him, if he now briefly passes over a considerable space of time, only cursorily mentioning the events that marked it. He knows well that he might portray skilfully, step by step, how Huldbrand's heart began to turn from Undine to Bertalda; how Bertalda more and more responded with ardent affection to the young knight, and how they both looked upon the poor wife as a mysterious being rather to be feared than pitied; how Undine wept, and how her tears stung the knight's heart with remorse without awakening his former love, so that though he at times was kind and endearing to her, a cold shudder would soon draw him from her, and he would turn to his fellow-mortal, Bertalda. All this the writer knows might be fully detailed, and perhaps ought to have been so; but such a task would have been too painful, for similar things have been known to him by sad experience, and he shrinks from their shadow even in remembrance. You know probably a like feeling, dear reader, for such is the lot of mortal man. Happy are you if you have received rather than inflicted the pain, for in such things it is more blessed to receive than to give. If it be so, such recollections will only bring a feeling of sorrow to your mind, and perhaps a tear will trickle down your cheek over the faded flowers that once caused you such delight. But let that be enough. We will not pierce our hearts with a thousand separate things, but only briefly state, as I have just said, how matters were.

Poor Undine was very sad, and the other two were not to be called happy. Bertalda especially thought that she could trace the effect of jealousy on the part of the injured wife whenever her wishes were in any way thwarted by her. She had therefore habituated herself to an imperious demeanor, to which Undine yielded in sorrowful submission, and the now blinded Huldbrand usually encouraged this arrogant behavior in the strongest manner. But the circumstance that most of all disturbed the inmates of the castle, was a variety of wonderful apparitions which met Huldbrand and Bertalda in the vaulted galleries of the castle, and which had never been heard of before as haunting the locality. The tall white man, in whom Huldbrand recognized only too plainly Uncle Kühleborn, and Bertalda the spectral master of the fountain, often passed before them with a threatening aspect, and especially before

Bertalda; so much so, that she had already several times been made ill with terror, and had frequently thought of quitting the castle. But still she stayed there, partly because Huldbrand was so dear to her, and she relied on her innocence, no words of love having ever passed between them, and partly also because she knew not whither to direct her steps. The old fisherman, on receiving the message from the lord of Ringstetten that Bertalda was his guest, had written a few lines in an almost illegible hand, but as good as his advanced age and long disuse would admit of. "I have now become," he wrote, "a poor old widower, for my dear and faithful wife is dead. However lonely I now sit in my cottage, Bertalda is better with you than with me. Only let her do nothing to harm my beloved Undine! She will have my curse if it be so." The last words of this letter, Bertalda flung to the winds, but she carefully retained the part respecting her absence from her father—just as we are all wont to do in similar circumstances.

One day, when Huldbrand had just ridden out, Undine summoned together the domestics of the family, and ordered them to bring a large stone, and carefully to cover with it the magnificent fountain which stood in the middle of the castle-yard. The servants objected that it would oblige them to bring water from the valley below. Undine smiled sadly. "I am sorry, my people," she replied, "to increase your work. I would rather myself fetch up the pitchers, but this fountain must be closed. Believe me that it cannot be otherwise, and that it is only by so doing that we can avoid a greater evil."

The whole household were glad to be able to please their gentle mistress; they made no further inquiry, but seized the enormous stone. They were just raising it in their hands, and were already poising it over the fountain, when Bertalda came running up, and called out to them to stop, as it was from this fountain that the water was brought which was so good for her complexion, and she would never consent to its being closed. Undine, however, although gentle as usual, was more than usually firm. She told Bertalda that it was her due, as mistress of the house, to arrange her household as she thought best, and that, in this, she was accountable to no one but her lord and husband. "See, oh, pray see," exclaimed Bertalda, in an angry, yet uneasy tone, "how the poor beautiful water is curling and writhing at being shut out from the bright sunshine and from the cheerful sight of the human face, for whose mirror it was created!"

The water in the fountain was indeed wonderfully agitated and hissing; it seemed as if something within were struggling to free itself, but Undine only the more earnestly urged the fulfilment of her orders. The earnestness was

scarcely needed. The servants of the castle were as happy in obeying their gentle mistress as in opposing Bertalda's haughty defiance; and in spite of all the rude scolding and threatening of the latter the stone was soon firmly lying over the opening of the fountain. Undine leaned thoughtfully over it, and wrote with her beautiful fingers on its surface. She must, however, have had something very sharp and cutting in her hand, for when she turned away, and the servants drew near to examine the stone, they perceived various strange characters upon it, which none of them had seen there before.

Bertalda received the knight on his return home in the evening, with tears and complaints of Undine's conduct. He cast a serious look at his poor wife, and she looked down as if distressed. Yet she said with great composure: "My lord and husband does not reprove even a bondslave without a hearing, how much less then, his wedded wife?"

"Speak," said the knight with a gloomy countenance, "what induced you to act so strangely?"

"I should like to tell you when we are quite alone," sighed Undine.

"You can tell me just as well in Bertalda's presence," was the rejoinder.

"Yes, if you command me," said Undine; "but command it not. Oh pray, pray command it not!"

She looked so humble, so sweet, and obedient, that the knight's heart felt a passing gleam from better times. He kindly placed her arm within his own, and led her to his apartment, when she began to speak as follows:

"You already know, my beloved lord, something of my evil uncle, Kuhleborn, and you have frequently been displeased at meeting him in the galleries of this castle. He has several times frightened Bertalda into illness. This is because he is devoid of soul, a mere elemental mirror of the outward world, without the power of reflecting the world within. He sees, too, sometimes, that you are dissatisfied with me; that I, in my childishness, am weeping at this, and that Bertalda perhaps is at the very same moment laughing. Hence he imagines various discrepancies in our home life, and in many ways mixes unbidden with our circle. What is the good of reproving him? What is the use of sending him angrily away? He does not believe a word I say. His poor nature has no idea that the joys and sorrows of love have so sweet a resemblance, and are so closely linked that no power can separate them. Amid tears a smile shines forth, and a smile allures tears from their secret chambers."

She looked up at Huldbrand, smiling and weeping; and he again experienced within his heart all the charm of his old love. She felt this, and pressing him more tenderly to her, she continued amid tears of joy:

"As the disturber of our peace was not to be dismissed with words, I have been obliged to shut the door upon him. And the only door by which he obtains access to us is that fountain. He is cut off by the adjacent valleys from the other water-spirits in the neighborhood, and his kingdom only commences further off on the Danube, into which some of his good friends direct their course. For this reason I had the stone placed over the opening of the fountain, and I inscribed characters upon it which cripple all my uncle's power, so that he can now neither intrude upon you, nor upon me, nor upon Bertalda. Human beings, it is true, can raise the stone again with ordinary effort, in spite of the characters inscribed on it. The inscription does not hinder them. If you wish, therefore, follow Bertalda's desire, but, truly! she knows not what she asks. The rude Kühleborn has set his mark especially upon her; and if much came to pass which he has predicted to me, and which might, indeed, happen without your meaning any evil, ah! dear one, even you would then be exposed to danger!"

Huldbrand felt deeply the generosity of his sweet wife, in her eagerness to shut up her formidable protector, while she had even been chided for it by Bertalda. He pressed her in his arms with the utmost affection, and said with emotion: "The stone shall remain, and all shall remain, now and ever, as you wish to have it, my sweet Undine."

She caressed him with humble delight, as she heard the expressions of love so long withheld, and then at length she said: "My dearest husband, you are so gentle and kind to-day, may I venture to ask a favor of you? See now, it is just the same with you as it is with summer. In the height of its glory, summer puts on the flaming and thundering crown of mighty storms, and assumes the air of a king over the earth. You, too, sometimes, let your fury rise, and your eyes flash and your voice is angry, and this becomes you well, though I, in my folly, may sometimes weep at it. But never, I pray you, behave thus toward me on the water, or even when we are near it. You see, my relatives would then acquire a right over me. They would unrelentingly tear me from you in their rage; because they would imagine that one of their race was injured, and I should be compelled all my life to dwell below in the crystal palaces, and should never dare to ascend to you again; or they would send me up to you—and that, oh God, would be infinitely worse. No, no, my beloved husband, do not let it come to that, if your poor Undine is dear to you."

He promised solemnly to do as she desired, and they both returned from the apartment, full of happiness and affection. At that moment Bertalda appeared with some workmen, to whom she had already given orders, and said

in a sullen tone, which she had assumed of late: "I suppose the secret conference is at an end, and now the stone may be removed. Go out, workmen, and attend to it."

But the knight, angry at her impertinence, desired in short and very decisive words that the stone should be left; he reproved Bertalda, too, for her violence toward his wife. Whereupon the workmen withdrew, smiling with secret satisfaction; while Bertalda, pale with rage, hurried away to her room.

The hour for the evening repast arrived, and Bertalda was waited for in vain. They sent after her, but the domestic found her apartments empty, and only brought back with him a sealed letter addressed to the knight. He opened it with alarm, and read: "I feel with shame that I am only a poor fisher-girl. I will expiate my fault in having forgotten this for a moment by going to the miserable cottage of my parents. Farewell to you, and your beautiful wife."

Undine was heartily distressed. She earnestly entreated Huldbrand to hasten after their friend and bring her back again. Alas! she had no need to urge him. His affection for Bertalda burst forth again with vehemence. He hurried round the castle, inquiring if any one had seen which way the fugitive had gone. He could learn nothing of her, and he was already on his horse in the castle-yard, resolved at a venture to take the road by which he had brought Bertalda hither. Just then a page appeared, who assured him that he had met the lady on the path to the Black Valley. Like an arrow the knight sprang through the gateway in the direction indicated, without hearing Undine's voice of agony, as she called to him from the window:

"To the Black Valley! Oh, not there! Huldbrand, don't go there! or, for Heaven's sake, take me with you!" But when she perceived that all her calling was in vain, she ordered her white palfrey to be immediately saddled, and rode after the knight, without allowing any servant to accompany her.

CHAPTER XIV.

How Bertalda Returned Home with the Knight.

The Black Valley lies deep within the mountains. What it is now called we do not know. At that time the people of the country gave it this appellation on account of the deep obscurity in which the low land lay, owing to the shadows of the lofty trees, and especially firs, that grew there. Even the brook which

bubbled between the rocks wore the same dark hue, and dashed along with none of that gladness with which streams are wont to flow that have the blue sky immediately above them. Now, in the growing twilight of evening, it looked wild and gloomy between the heights. The knight trotted anxiously along the edge of the brook, fearful at one moment that by delay he might allow the fugitive to advance too far, and at the next that by too great rapidity he might overlook her in case she were concealing herself from him. Mean while he had already penetrated tolerably far into the valley, and might soon hope to overtake the maiden, if he were on the right track. The fear that this might not be the case made his heart beat with anxiety. Where would the tender Bertalda tarry through the stormy night, which was so fearful in the valley, should he fail to find her? At length he saw something white gleaming through the branches on the slope of the mountain. He thought he recognized Bertalda's dress, and he turned his course in that direction. But his horse refused to go forward; it reared impatiently; and its master, unwilling to lose a moment, and seeing moreover that the copse was impassable on horseback, dismounted; and, fastening his snorting steed to an elm-tree, he worked his way cautiously through the bushes. The branches sprinkled his forehead and cheeks with the cold drops of the evening dew; a distant roll of thunder was heard murmuring from the other side of the mountains; everything looked so strange, that he began to feel a dread of the white figure, which now lay only a short distance from him on the ground. Still he could plainly see that it was a female, either asleep or in a swoon, and that she was attired in long white garments, such as Bertalda had worn on that day. He stepped close up to her, made a rustling with the branches, and let his sword clatter, but she moved not. "Bertalda!" he exclaimed, at first in a low voice, and then louder and louder—still she heard not. At last, when he uttered the dear name with a more powerful effort, a hollow echo from the mountain-caverns of the valley indistinctly reverberated "Bertalda!" but still the sleeper woke not. He bent down over her; the gloom of the valley and the obscurity of approaching night would not allow him to distinguish her features.

Just as he was stooping closer over her, with a feeling of painful doubt, a flash of lightning shot across the valley, and he saw before him a frightfully distorted countenance, and a hollow voice exclaimed: "Give me a kiss, you enamoured swain!"

Huldbrand sprang up with a cry of horror, and the hideous figure rose with him. "Go home!" it murmured; "wizards are on the watch. Go home! or I will have you!" and it stretched out its long white arms toward him.

"Malicious Kühleborn!" cried the knight, recovering himself, "What do you concern me, you goblin? There, take your kiss!" And he furiously hurled his sword at the figure. But it vanished like vapor, and a gush of water which wetted him through left the knight no doubt as to the foe with whom he had been engaged.

"He wishes to frighten me back from Bertalda," said he aloud to himself; "he thinks to terrify me with his foolish tricks, and to make me give up the poor distressed girl to him, so that he can wreak his vengeance on her. But he shall not do that, weak spirit of the elements as he is. No powerless phantom can understand what a human heart can do when its best energies are aroused." He felt the truth of his words, and that the very expression of them had inspired his heart with fresh courage. It seemed too as if fortune were on his side, for he had not reached his fastened horse, when he distinctly heard Bertalda's plaintive voice not far distant, and could catch her weeping accents through the ever-increasing tumult of the thunder and tempest. He hurried swiftly in the direction of the sound, and found the trembling girl just attempting to climb the steep, in order to escape in any way from the dreadful gloom of the valley. He stepped, however, lovingly in her path, and bold and proud as her resolve had before been, she now felt only too keenly the delight, that the friend whom she so passionately loved should rescue her from this frightful solitude, and that the joyous life in the castle should be again open to her. She followed almost unresisting, but so exhausted with fatigue that the knight was glad to have brought her to his horse, which he now hastily unfastened, in order to lift the fair fugitive upon it; and then, cautiously holding the reins, he hoped to proceed through the uncertain shades of the valley.

But the horse had become quite unmanageable from the wild apparition of Kühleborn. Even the knight would have had difficulty in mounting the rearing and snorting animal, but to place the trembling Bertalda on its back was perfectly impossible. They determined, therefore, to return home on foot. Drawing the horse after him by the bridle, the knight supported the tottering girl with his other hand. Bertalda exerted all her strength to pass quickly through the fearful valley, but weariness weighed her down like lead, and every limb trembled, partly from the terror she had endured when Kühleborn had pursued her, and partly from her continued alarm at the howling of the storm and the pealing of the thunder through the wooded mountain.

At last she slid from the supporting arm of her protector, and sinking down on the moss, she exclaimed: "Let me lie here, my noble lord; I suffer the

punishment due to my folly, and I must now perish here through weariness and dread."

"No, sweet friend, I will never leave you!" cried Huldbrand, vainly endeavoring to restrain his furious steed; for, worse than before, it now began to foam and rear with excitement, until at last the knight was glad to keep the animal at a sufficient distance from the exhausted maiden lest her fears should be increased. But scarcely had he withdrawn a few paces with the wild steed, than she began to call after him in the most pitiful manner, believing that he was really going to leave her in this horrible wilderness. He was utterly at a loss what course to take. Gladly would he have given the excited beast its liberty and have allowed it to rush away into the night and spend its fury, had he not feared that is this narrow defile it might come thundering with its iron-shod hoofs over the very spot where Bertalda lay.

In the midst of this extreme perplexity and distress, he heard with delight the sound of a vehicle driving slowly down the stony road behind them. He called out for help; and a man's voice replied, bidding him have patience, but promising assistance; and soon after, two gray horses appeared through the bushes, and beside them the driver in the white smock of a carter; a great white linen cloth was next visible, covering the goods apparently contained in the wagon. At a loud shout from their master, the obedient horses halted. The driver then came toward the knight, and helped him in restraining his foaming animal.

"I see well," said he, "what ails the beast. When I first travelled this way, my horses were no better. The fact is, there is an evil water-spirit haunting the place, and he takes delight in this sort of mischief. But I have learned a charm; if you will let me whisper it in your horse's ear, he will stand at once just as quiet as my gray beasts are doing there."

"Try your luck then, only help us quickly!" exclaimed the impatient knight. The wagoner then drew down the head of the rearing charger close to his own, and whispered something in his ear. In a moment the animal stood still and quiet, and his quick panting and reeking condition was all that remained of his previous unmanageableness. Huldbrand had no time to inquire how all this had been effected. He agreed with the carter that he should take Bertalda on his wagon, where, as the man assured him, there were a quantity of soft cotton-bales, upon which she could be conveyed to castle Ringstetten, and the knight was to accompany them on horseback. But the horse appeared too much exhausted by its past fury to be able to carry its master so far, so the

carter persuaded Huldbrand to get into the wagon with Bertalda. The horse could be fastened on behind. "We are going down hill," said he, "and that will make it light for my gray beasts."

The knight accepted the offer and entered the wagon with Bertalda; the horse followed patiently behind, and the wagoner, steady and attentive, walked by the side.

In the stillness of the night, as its darkness deepened and the subsiding tempest sounded more and more remote, encouraged by the sense of security and their fortunate escape, a confidential conversation arose between Huldbrand and Bertalda. With flattering words he reproached her for her daring flight; she excused herself with humility and emotion, and from every word she said a gleam shone forth which disclosed distinctly to the lover that the beloved was his. The knight felt the sense of her words far more than he regarded their meaning, and it was the sense alone to which he replied. Presently the wagoner suddenly shouted with loud voice: "Up, my grays, up with your feet, keep together! remember who you are!"

The knight leaned out of the wagon and saw that the horses were stepping into the midst of a foaming stream or were already almost swimming, while the wheels of the wagon were rushing round and gleaming like millwheels, and the wagoner had got up in front, in consequence of the increasing waters.

"What sort of a road is this? It goes into the middle of the stream," cried Huldbrand to his guide.

"Not at all, sir," returned the other, laughing, "it is just the reverse, the stream goes into the very middle of our road. Look round and see how everything is covered by the water."

The whole valley indeed was suddenly filled with the surging flood, that visibly increased. "It is Kühleborn, the evil water-spirit, who wishes to drown us!" exclaimed the knight. "Have you no charm, against him, my friend?"

"I know indeed of one," returned the wagoner, "but I cannot and may not use it until you know who I am."

"Is this a time for riddles?" cried the knight. "The flood is ever rising higher, and what does it matter to me to know who you are?"

"It does matter to you, though," said the wagoner, "for I am Kühleborn."

So saying, he thrust his distorted face into the wagon with a grin, but the wagon was a wagon no longer, the horses were not horses—all was transformed to foam and vanished in the hissing waves, and even the wagoner himself, rising as a gigantic billow, drew down the vainly struggling horse beneath

the waters, and then swelling higher and higher, swept over the heads of the floating pair, like some liquid tower, threatening to bury them irrecoverably.

Just then the soft voice of Undine sounded through the uproar, the moon emerged from the clouds, and by its light Undine was seen on the heights above the valley. She rebuked, she threatened the floods below; the menacing, tower-like wave vanished, muttering and murmuring, the waters flowed gently away in the moonlight, and like a white dove, Undine flew down from the height, seized the knight and Bertalda, and bore them with her to a fresh, green, turfy spot on the hill, where with choice refreshing restoratives, she dispelled their terrors and weariness; then she assisted Bertalda to mount the white palfrey, on which she had herself ridden here, and thus all three returned back to castle Ringstetten.

CHAPTER XV.

The Journey to Vienna.

After this last adventure, they lived quietly and happily at the castle. The knight more and more perceived the heavenly goodness of his wife, which had been so nobly exhibited by her pursuit, and by her rescue of them in the Black Valley, where Kühleborn's power again commenced; Undine herself felt that peace and security, which is never lacking to a mind so long as it is distinctly conscious of being on the right path, and besides, in the newly-awakened love and esteem of her husband, many a gleam of hope and joy shone upon her. Bertalda, on the other hand, showed herself grateful, humble and timid, without regarding her conduct as anything meritorious. Whenever Huldbrand or Undine were about to give her any explanation regarding the covering of the fountain or the adventure in the Black Valley, she would earnestly entreat them to spare her the recital, as she felt too much shame at the recollection of the fountain, and too much fear at the remembrance of the Black Valley. She learned therefore nothing further of either; and for what end was such knowledge necessary? Peace and joy had visibly taken up their abode at castle Ringstetten. They felt secure on this point, and imagined that life could now produce nothing but pleasant flowers and fruits.

In this happy condition of things, winter had come and passed away, and spring, with its fresh green shoots and its blue sky, was gladdening the joyous

inmates of the castle. Spring was in harmony with them, and they with spring. What wonder, then, that its storks and swallows inspired them also with a desire to travel? One day when they were taking a pleasant walk to one of the sources of the Danube, Huldbrand spoke of the magnificence of the noble river, and how it widened as it flowed through countries fertilized by its waters, how the charming city of Vienna shone forth on its banks, and how with every step of its course it increased in power and loveliness.

"It must be glorious to go down the river as far as Vienna!" exclaimed Bertalda, but immediately relapsing into her present modesty and humility, she paused and blushed deeply.

This touched Undine deeply, and with the liveliest desire to give pleasure to her friend, she said: "What hinders us from starting on the little voyage?"

Bertalda exhibited the greatest delight, and both she and Undine began at once to picture the tour of the Danube in the brightest colors. Huldbrand also gladly agreed to the prospect; only he once whispered anxiously in Undine's ear: "But Kühleborn becomes possessed of his power again out there!"

"Let him come," she replied with a smile, "I shall be there, and he ventures upon none of his mischief before me." The last impediment was thus removed; they prepared for the journey, and soon after set out upon it with fresh spirits and the brightest hopes.

But wonder not, oh man, if events always turn out different to what we have intended. That malicious power, lurking for our destruction, gladly lulls its chosen victim to sleep with sweet songs and golden delusions; while on the other hand the rescuing messenger from Heaven often knocks sharply and alarmingly at our door.

During the first few days of their voyage down the Danube they were extremely happy. Everything grew more and more beautiful as they sailed further and further down the proudly flowing stream. But in a region otherwise so pleasant, and in the enjoyment of which they had promised themselves the purest delight, the ungovernable Kühleborn began, undisguisedly, to exhibit his power of interference. This was indeed manifested in mere teasing tricks, for Undine often rebuked the agitated waves, or the contrary winds, and then the violence of the enemy would be immediately humbled; but again the attacks would be renewed, and again Undine's reproofs would become necessary, so that the pleasure of the little party was completely destroyed. The boatmen too were continually whispering to each other in dismay, and looking with distrust at the three strangers, whose servants even began more and more to forebode something uncomfortable, and to watch their superiors with

suspicious glances. Huldbrand often said to himself: "This comes from like not being linked with like, from a man uniting himself with a mermaid!" Excusing himself as we all love to do, he would often think indeed as he said this: "I did not really know that she was a sea-maiden, mine is the misfortune, that every step I take is disturbed and haunted by the wild caprices of her race, but mine is not the fault." By thoughts such as these, he felt himself in some measure strengthened, but on the other hand, he felt increasing ill-humor, and almost animosity toward Undine. He would look at her with an expression of anger, the meaning of which the poor wife understood well. Wearied with this exhibition of displeasure, and exhausted by the constant effort to frustrate Kühleborn's artifices, she sank one evening into a deep slumber, rocked soothingly by the softly gliding bark.

Scarcely, however, had she closed her eyes than every one in the vessel imagined he saw, in whatever direction he turned, a most horrible human head; it rose out of the waves, not like that of a person swimming, but perfectly perpendicular as if invisibly supported upright on the watery surface, and floating along in the same course with the bark. Each wanted to point out to the other the cause of his alarm, but each found the same expression of horror depicted on the face of his neighbor, only that his hands and eyes were directed to a different point where the monster, half-laughing and half-threatening, rose before him. When, however, they all wished to make each other understand what each saw, and all were crying out: "Look there! No, there!" the horrible heads all at one and the same time appeared to their view, and the whole river around the vessel swarmed with the most hideous apparitions. The universal cry raised at the sight awoke Undine. As she opened her eyes, the wild crowd of distorted visages disappeared. But Huldbrand was indignant at such unsightly jugglery. He would have burst forth in uncontrolled imprecations had not Undine said to him with a humble manner and a softly imploring tone: "For God's sake, my husband, we are on the water, do not be angry with me now."

The knight was silent, and sat down absorbed in revery. Undine whispered in his ear: "Would it not be better, my love, if we gave up this foolish journey, and returned to castle Ringstetten in peace?"

But Huldbrand murmured moodily: "So I must be a prisoner in my own castle, and only be able to breathe so long as the fountain is closed! I would your mad kindred—" Undine lovingly pressed her fair hand upon his lips. He paused, pondering in silence over much that Undine had before said to him.

Bertalda had meanwhile given herself up to a variety of strange thoughts. She knew a good deal of Undine's origin, and yet not the whole, and the fear-

ful Kühleborn especially had remained to her a terrible but wholly unrevealed mystery. She had indeed never even heard his name. Musing on these strange things, she unclasped, scarcely conscious of the act, a gold necklace, which Huldbrand had lately purchased for her of a travelling trader; half dreamingly she drew it along the surface of the water, enjoying the light glimmer it cast upon the evening-tinted stream. Suddenly a huge hand was stretched out of the Danube, it seized the necklace and vanished with it beneath the waters. Bertalda screamed aloud, and a scornful laugh resounded from the depths of the stream. The knight could now restrain his anger no longer. Starting up, he inveighed against the river; he cursed all who ventured to interfere with his family and his life, and challenged them, be they spirits or sirens, to show themselves before his avenging sword.

Bertalda wept meanwhile for her lost ornament, which was so precious to her, and her tears added fuel to the flame of the knight's anger, while Undine held her hand over the side of the vessel, dipping it into the water, softly murmuring to herself, and only now and then interrupting her strange mysterious whisper, as she entreated her husband: "My dearly loved one, do not scold me here; reprove others if you will, but not me here. You know why!" And indeed, he restrained the words of anger that were trembling on his tongue. Presently in her wet hand which she had been holding under the waves, she brought up a beautiful coral necklace of so much brilliancy that the eyes of all were dazzled by it.

"Take this," said she, holding it out kindly to Bertalda; "I have ordered this to be brought for you as a compensation, and don't be grieved any more, my poor child."

But the knight sprang between them. He tore the beautiful ornament from Undine's hand, hurled it again into the river, exclaiming in passionate rage: "Have you then still a connection with them? In the name of all the witches, remain among them with your presents, and leave us mortals in peace, you sorceress!"

Poor Undine gazed at him with fixed but tearful eyes, her hand still stretched out, as when she had offered her beautiful present so lovingly to Bertalda. She then began to weep more and more violently, like a dear innocent child bitterly afflicted. At last, wearied out she said:

"Alas, sweet friend, alas! farewell! They shall do you no harm; only remain true, so that I may be able to keep them from you. I must, alas, go away; I must go hence at this early stage of life. Oh woe, woe! what have you done! Oh woe, woe!"

She vanished over the side of the vessel. Whether she plunged into the stream, or flowed away with it, they knew not; her disappearance was like both and neither. Soon, however, she was completely lost sight of in the Danube; only a few little waves kept whispering, as if sobbing, round the boat, and they almost seemed to be saying: "Oh woe, woe! oh remain true! oh woe!"

Huldbrand lay on the deck of the vessel, bathed in hot tears, and a deep swoon soon cast its veil of forgetfulness over the unhappy man.

CHAPTER XVI.

How It Fared Further with Huldbrand.

Shall we say it is well or ill, that our sorrow is of such short duration? I mean that deep sorrow which affects the very well-spring of our life, which becomes so one with the lost objects of our love that they are no longer lost, and which enshrines their image as a sacred treasure, until that final goal is reached which they have reached before us! It is true that many men really maintain these sacred memories, but their feeling is no longer that of the first deep grief. Other and new images have thronged between; we learn at length the transitoriness of all earthly things, even to our grief, and, therefore. I must say "Alas, that our sorrow should be of such short duration!"

The lord of Ringstetten experienced this: whether for his good, we shall hear in the sequel to this history. At first he could do nothing but weep, and that as bitterly as the poor gentle Undine had wept, when he had torn from her hand that brilliant ornament with which she had wished to set everything to rights. And then he would stretch out his hand, as she had done, and would weep again, like her. He cherished the secret hope that he might at length dissolve in tears; and has not a similar hope passed before the mind of many a one of us, with painful pleasure, in moments of great affliction? Bertalda wept also, and they lived a long while quietly together at Castle Ringstetten, cherishing Undine's memory, and almost wholly forgetful of their former attachment to each other. And, therefore, the good Undine often visited Huldbrand in his dreams; caressing him tenderly and kindly, and then going away, weeping silently, so that when he awoke he often scarcely knew why his cheeks were so wet; whether they had been bathed with her tears, or merely with his own?

These dream-visions became, however, less frequent as time passed on, and the grief of the knight was less acute; still he would probably have cherished no other wish than thus to think calmly of Undine and to talk of her, had not the old fisherman appeared one day unexpectedly at the castle, and sternly insisted on Bertalda's returning with him as his child. The news of Undine's disappearance had reached him, and he had determined on no longer allowing Bertalda to reside at the castle with the widowed knight.

"For," said he, "whether my daughter love me or no, I do not care to know, but her honor is at stake, and where that is concerned, nothing else is to be thought of."

This idea of the old fisherman's, and the solitude which threatened to overwhelm the knight in all the halls and galleries of the desolate castle, after Bertalda's departure, brought out the feelings that had slumbered till now and which had been wholly forgotten in his sorrow for Undine; namely, Huldbrand's affection for the beautiful Bertalda. The fisherman had many objections to raise against the proposed marriage. Undine had been very dear to the old fisherman, and he felt that no one really knew for certain whether the dear lost one were actually dead. And if her body were truly lying cold and stiff at the bottom of the Danube, or had floated away with the current into the ocean, even then, Bertalda was in some measure to blame for her death, and it was unfitting for her to step into the place of the poor supplanted one. Yet the fisherman had a strong regard for the knight also; and the entreaties of his daughter, who had become much more gentle and submissive, and her tears for Undine, turned the scale, and he must at length have given his consent, for he remained at the castle without objection, and a messenger was despatched to Father Heilmann, who had united Undine and Huldbrand in happy days gone by, to bring him to the castle for the second nuptials of the knight.

The holy man, however, had scarcely read the letter from the knight of Ringstetten, than he set out on his journey to the castle, with far greater expedition than even the messenger had used in going to him. Whenever his breath failed in his rapid progress, or his aged limbs ached with weariness, he would say to himself: "Perhaps the evil may yet be prevented; fail not, my tottering frame, till you have reached the goal!" And with renewed power he would then press forward, and go on and on without rest or repose, until late one evening he entered the shady court-yard of castle Ringstetten.

The betrothed pair were sitting side by side under the trees, and the old fisherman was near them, absorbed in thought. The moment they recognized Father Heilmann, they sprang up, and pressed round him with warm wel-

come. But he, without making much reply, begged Huldbrand to go with him into the castle; and when the latter looked astonished, and hesitated to obey the grave summons, the reverend father said to him:

"Why should I make any delay in wishing to speak to you in private, Herr von Ringstetten? What I have to say concerns Bertalda and the fisherman as much as yourself, and what a man has to hear, he may prefer to hear as soon as possible. Are you then so perfectly certain, Knight Huldbrand, that your first wife is really dead? It scarcely seems so to me. I will not indeed say anything of the mysterious condition in which she may be existing, and I know, too, nothing of it with certainty. But she was a pious and faithful wife, that is beyond all doubt; and for a fortnight past she has stood at my bedside at night in my dreams, wringing her tender hands in anguish and sighing out: 'Oh, prevent him, good father! I am still living! oh, save his life! save his soul!' I did not understand what this nightly vision signified; when presently your messenger came, and I hurried thither, not to unite, but to separate, what ought not to be joined together. Leave her, Huldbrand! Leave him, Bertalda! He yet belongs to another; and do you not see grief for his lost wife still written on his pale cheek? No bridegroom looks thus, and a voice tells me that if you do not leave him, you will never be happy."

The three listeners felt in their innermost heart that Father Heilmann spoke the truth, but they would not believe it. Even the old fisherman was now so infatuated that he thought it could not be otherwise than they had settled it in their discussions during the last few days. They therefore all opposed the warnings of the priest with a wild and gloomy rashness, until at length the holy father quitted the castle with a sad heart, refusing to accept even for a single night the shelter offered, or to enjoy the refreshments brought him. Huldbrand, however, persuaded himself that the priest was full of whims and fancies, and with dawn of day he sent for a father from the nearest monastery, who, without hesitation, promised to perform the ceremony in a few days.

CHAPTER XVII.

The Knight's Dream.

It was between night and dawn of day that the knight was lying on his couch, half-waking, half-sleeping. Whenever he was on the point of falling asleep a

terror seemed to come upon him and scare his rest away, for his slumbers were haunted with spectres. If he tried, however, to rouse himself in good earnest he felt fanned as by the wings of a swan, and he heard the soft murmuring of waters, until soothed by the agreeable delusion, he sunk back again into a half-conscious state. At length he must have fallen sound asleep, for it seemed to him as if he were lifted up upon the fluttering wings of the swans and borne by them far over land and sea, while they sang to him their sweetest music. "The music of the swan! the music of the swan!" he kept saying to himself; "does it not always portend death?" But it had yet another meaning. All at once he felt as if he were hovering over the Mediterranean Sea. A swan was singing musically in his ear that this was the Mediterranean Sea. And while he was looking down upon the waters below they became clear as crystal, so that he could see through them to the bottom. He was delighted at this, for he could see Undine sitting beneath the crystal arch. It is true she was weeping bitterly, and looking much sadder than in the happy days when they had lived together at the castle of Ringstetten, especially at their commencement, and afterward also, shortly before they had begun their unhappy Danube excursion. The knight could not help thinking upon all this very fully and deeply, but it did not seem as if Undine perceived him.

Meanwhile Kühleborn had approached her, and was on the point of reproving her for her weeping. But she drew herself up, and looked at him with such a noble and commanding air that he almost shrunk back with fear. "Although I live here beneath the waters," said she, "I have yet brought down my soul with me; and therefore I may well weep, although you can not divine what such tears are. They too are blessed, for everything is blessed to him in whom a true soul dwells."

He shook his head incredulously, and said, after some reflection: "And yet, niece, you are subject to the laws of our element, and if he marries again and is unfaithful to you, you are in duty bound to take away his life."

"He is a widower to this very hour," replied Undine, "and his sad heart still holds me dear."

"He is, however, at the same time betrothed," laughed Kühleborn, with scorn; "and let only a few days pass, and the priest will have given the nuptial blessing, and then you will have to go upon earth to accomplish the death of him who has taken another to wife."

"That I cannot do," laughed Undine in return; "I have sealed up the fountain securely against myself and my race."

"But suppose he should leave his castle," said Kühleborn, "or should have the fountain opened again! for he thinks little enough of these things."

"It is just for that reason," said Undine, still smiling amid her tears, "it is just for that reason, that he is now hovering in spirit over the Mediterranean Sea, and is dreaming of this conversation of ours as a warning. I have intentionally arranged it so."

Kühleborn, furious with rage, looked up at the knight, threatened, stamped with his feet, and then swift as an arrow shot under the waves. It seemed as if he were swelling in his fury to the size of a whale. Again the swans began to sing, to flap their wings, and to fly. It seemed to the knight as if he were soaring away over mountains and streams, and that he at length reached the castle Ringstetten, and awoke on his couch.

He did, in reality, awake upon his couch, and his squire coming in at that moment informed him that Father Heilmann was still lingering in the neighborhood; that he had met him the night before in the forest, in a hut which he had formed for himself of the branches of trees, and covered with moss and brushwood. To the question what he was doing here, since he would not give the nuptial blessing, he had answered: "There are other blessings besides those at the nuptial altar, and though I have not gone to the wedding, it may be that I shall be at another solemn ceremony. We must be ready for all things. Besides, marrying and mourning are not so unlike, and every one not wilfully blinded must see that well."

The knight placed various strange constructions upon these words, and upon his dream, but it is very difficult to break off a thing which a man has once regarded as certain, and so everything remained as it had been arranged.

CHAPTER XVIII.

How the Knight Huldbrand Is Married.

If I were to tell you how the marriage-feast passed at castle Ringstetten, it would seem to you as if you saw a heap of bright and pleasant things, but a gloomy veil of mourning spread over them all, the dark hue of which would make the splendor of the whole look less like happiness than a mockery of the emptiness of all earthly joys. It was not that any spectral apparitions disturbed

the festive company, for we know that the castle had been secured from the mischief of the threatening water-spirits. But the knight and the fisherman and all the guests felt as if the chief personage were still lacking at the feast, and that this chief personage could be none other than the loved and gentle Undine. Whenever a door opened, the eyes of all were involuntarily turned in that direction, and if it was nothing but the butler with new dishes, or the cup-bearer with a flask of still richer wine, they would look down again sadly, and the flashes of wit and merriment which had passed to and fro, would be extinguished by sad remembrances. The bride was the most thoughtless of all, and therefore the most happy; but even to her it sometimes seemed strange that she should be sitting at the head of the table, wearing a green wreath and gold-embroidered attire, while Undine was lying at the bottom of the Danube, a cold and stiff corpse, or floating away with the current into the mighty ocean. For, ever since her father had spoken of something of the sort, his words were ever ringing in her ear, and this day especially they were not inclined to give place to other thoughts.

The company dispersed early in the evening, not broken up by the bridegroom himself, but sadly and gloomily by the joyless mood of the guests and their forebodings of evil. Bertalda retired with her maidens, and the knight with his attendants; but at this mournful festival there was no gay, laughing train of bridesmaids and bridesmen.

Bertalda wished to arouse more cheerful thoughts; she ordered a splendid ornament of jewels which Huldbrand had given her, together with rich apparel and veils, to be spread out before her, in order that from these latter she might select the brightest and most beautiful for her morning attire. Her attendants were delighted at the opportunity of expressing their good wishes to their young mistress, not failing at the same time to extol the beauty of the bride in the most lively terms. They were more and more absorbed in these considerations, till Bertalda at length, looking in a mirror, said with a sigh: "Ah, but don't you see plainly how freckled I am growing here at the side of my neck?"

They looked at her throat, and found the freckles as their fair mistress had said, but they called them beauty-spots, and mere tiny blemishes only, tending to enhance the whiteness of her delicate skin. Bertalda shook her head and asserted that a spot was always a defect.

"And I could remove them," she sighed a last, "only the fountain is closed from which I used to have that precious and purifying water. Oh! if I had but a flask of it to-day!"

"Is that all?" said an alert waiting-maid, laughing, as she slipped from the apartment.

"She will not be mad," exclaimed Bertalda, in a pleased and surprised tone, "she will not be so mad as to have the stone removed from the fountain this very evening!" At the same moment they heard the men crossing the courtyard, and could see from the window how the officious waiting-woman was leading them straight up to the fountain, and that they were carrying levers and other instruments on their shoulders. "It is certainly my will," said Bertalda, smiling, "if only it does not take too long." And, happy in the sense that a look from her now was able to effect what had formerly been so painfully refused her, she watched the progress of the work in the moonlit castle-court.

The men raised the enormous stone with an effort; now and then indeed one of their number would sigh, as he remembered that they were destroying the work of their former beloved mistress. But the labor was far lighter than they had imagined. It seemed as if a power within the spring itself were aiding them in raising the stone.

"It is just," said the workmen to each other in astonishment, "as if the water within had become a springing fountain." And the stone rose higher and higher, and almost without the assistance of the workmen, it rolled slowly down upon the pavement with a hollow sound. But from the opening of the fountain there rose solemnly a white column of water; at first they imagined it had really become a springing fountain, till they perceived that the rising form was a pale female figure veiled in white. She was weeping bitterly, raising her hands wailingly above her head and wringing them, as she walked with a slow and serious step to the castle-building. The servants fled from the spring; the bride, pale and stiff with horror, stood at the window with her attendants. When the figure had now come close beneath her room, it looked moaningly up to her, and Bertalda thought she could recognize beneath the veil the pale features of Undine. But the sorrowing form passed on, sad, reluctant, and faltering, as if passing to execution.

Bertalda screamed out that the knight was to be called, but none of her maids ventured from the spot; and even the bride herself became mute, as if trembling at her own voice.

While they were still standing fearfully at the window, motionless as statues, the strange wanderer had reached the castle, had passed up the well-known stairs, and through the well-known halls, ever in silent tears. Alas! how differently had she once wandered through them!

The knight, partly undressed, had already dismissed his attendants, and in a mood of deep dejection he was standing before a large mirror; a taper was burning dimly beside him. There was a gentle tap at his door. Undine used to tap thus when she wanted playfully to tease him. "It is all fancy," said he to himself; "I must seek my nuptial bed."

"So you must, but it must be a cold one!" he heard a tearful voice say from without, and then he saw in the mirror his door opening slowly—slowly—and the white figure entered, carefully closing it behind her. "They have opened the spring," said she softly, "and now I am here, and you must die."

He felt in his paralyzed heart that it could not be otherwise, but covering his eyes with his hands he said: "Do not make me mad with terror in my hour of death. If you wear a hideous face behind that veil, do not raise it, but take my life, and let me see you not."

"Alas!" replied the figure, "will you then not look upon me once more? I am as fair as when you wooed me on the promontory."

"Oh, if it were so!" sighed Huldbrand, "and if I might die in your fond embrace!"

"Most gladly, my loved one," said she; and throwing her veil back, her lovely face smiled forth divinely beautiful. Trembling with love and with the approach of death, she kissed him with a holy kiss; but not relaxing her hold she pressed him fervently to her, and as if she would weep away her soul. Tears rushed into the knight's eyes, and seemed to surge through his heaving breast, till at length his breathing ceased, and he fell softly back from the beautiful arms of Undine, upon the pillows of his couch—a corpse.

"I have wept him to death," said she to some servants who met her in the ante-chamber; and, passing through the affrighted group, she went slowly out toward the fountain.

CHAPTER XIX.

How the Knight Huldbrand Was Buried.

Father Heilmann had returned to the castle as soon as the death of the lord of Ringstetten had been made known in the neighborhood, and he appeared at the very same moment that the monk who had married the unfortunate couple was fleeing from the gates overwhelmed with fear and terror.

"It is well," replied Heilmann, when he was informed of this; "now my duties begin, and I need no associate."

Upon this he began to console the bride, now a widow, small result as it produced upon her worldly thoughtless mind. The old fisherman, on the other hand, although heartily grieved, was far more resigned to the fate which had befallen his daughter and son-in-law, and while Bertalda could not refrain from abusing Undine as a murderess and sorceress, the old man calmly said: "It could not be otherwise after all; I see nothing in it but the judgment of God, and no one's heart has been more deeply grieved by Huldbrand's death than that of her by whom it was inflicted—the poor forsaken Undine!"

At the same time he assisted in arranging the funeral solemnities as befitted the rank of the deceased.

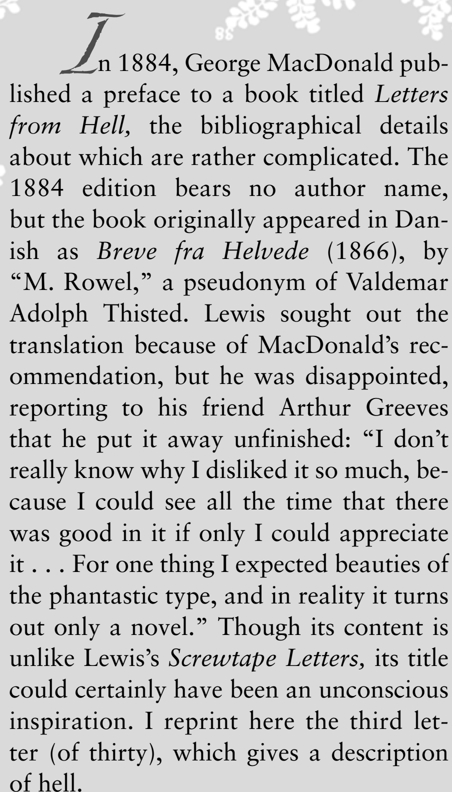
The knight was to be interred in the village churchyard which was filled with the graves of his ancestors. And this church had been endowed with rich privileges and gifts both by these ancestors and by himself. His shield and helmet lay already on the coffin, to be lowered with it into the grave, for Sir Huldbrand of Ringstetten had died the last of his race; the mourners began their sorrowful march, singing requiems under the bright, calm canopy of heaven; Father Heilmann walked in advance, bearing a high crucifix, and the inconsolable Bertalda followed, supported by her aged father. Suddenly, in the midst of the black-robed attendants in the widow's train, a snow-white figure was seen, closely veiled, and wringing her hands with fervent sorrow. Those near whom she moved felt a secret dread, and retreated either backward or to the side, increasing by their movements the alarm of the others near to whom the white stranger was now advancing, and thus a confusion in the funeral-train was well-nigh beginning. Some of the military escort were so daring as to address the figure, and to attempt to remove it from the procession; but she seemed to vanish from under their hands, and yet was immediately seen advancing again amid the dismal cortége with slow and solemn step. At length, in consequence of the continued shrinking of the attendants to the right and to the left, she came close behind Bertalda. The figure now moved so slowly that the widow did not perceive it, and it walked meekly and humbly behind her undisturbed.

This lasted till they came to the churchyard, where the procession formed a circle round the open grave. Then Bertalda saw her unbidden companion, and starting up half in anger and half in terror, she commanded her to leave the knight's last resting-place. The veiled figure, however, gently shook her head in refusal, and raised her hands as if in humble supplication to Bertalda,

deeply agitating her by the action, and recalling to her with tears how Undine had so kindly wished to give her that coral necklace on the Danube. Father Heilmann motioned with his hand and commanded silence, as they were to pray in mute devotion over the body, which they were now covering with the earth. Bertalda knelt silently, and all knelt, even the grave-diggers among the rest, when they had finished their task. But when they rose again, the white stranger had vanished; on the spot where she had knelt there gushed out of the turf a little silver spring, which rippled and murmured away till it had almost entirely encircled the knight's grave; then it ran further and emptied itself into a lake which lay by the side of the burial-place. Even to this day the inhabitants of the village show the spring, and cherish the belief that it is the poor rejected Undine, who in this manner still embraces her husband in her loving arms.

Letters from Hell: Letter III

by Valdemar Thisted



In 1884, George MacDonald published a preface to a book titled *Letters from Hell,* the bibliographical details about which are rather complicated. The 1884 edition bears no author name, but the book originally appeared in Danish as *Breve fra Helvede* (1866), by "M. Rowel," a pseudonym of Valdemar Adolph Thisted. Lewis sought out the translation because of MacDonald's recommendation, but he was disappointed, reporting to his friend Arthur Greeves that he put it away unfinished: "I don't really know why I disliked it so much, because I could see all the time that there was good in it if only I could appreciate it . . . For one thing I expected beauties of the phantastic type, and in reality it turns out only a novel." Though its content is unlike Lewis's *Screwtape Letters,* its title could certainly have been an unconscious inspiration. I reprint here the third letter (of thirty), which gives a description of hell.

How long I sat, shut in with myself and darkness, how long that terrible night continued, I cannot tell—maybe a year, maybe some hours only. This only I know, that in the space of that single night I lived over again the whole of my earthly life, and what inconceivable horrors are included in this statement!

Light broke at last, but oh how slowly! The walls of darkness seemed to shift, making way for the faintest streak of dawn. This time of expectation, of hope—if so I may call it—was the least painful time I had yet known in hell. And as I waited, longed for the returning light, a shadow, as it were, of forgetfulness wrapped me about. Ah, surely forgetfulness is the one state of bliss to be imagined here! Did I speak of light? Alas it is only less of darkness—light there is none in hell. And forgetfulness is not real, but illusive here.

But poor as the light was, it roused me to something like love of existence even. I gathered up my wretched being and went my way, following the direction of the breaking dawn. How long I moved, or how far, is of no consequence. The terrors of hell were about me. Presently, however, I reached a spot where I could rest. Did I say rest? Once for all, let me beg you not to be misled by such meaningless expressions—meaningless here, and proving old habit merely. In this place of anguish rest, in the sense you take it, naturally is impossible; all I meant to say is that I reached a spot where the pressure of motion quitted me for a while, and I stopped.

It is strange how soon I came to understand my surroundings, how soon I found my way among the vain appearances and the wretched nothingness about me. Instinctively I adapted myself to what I saw, doing as others did—in a manner however, shaped by my own individuality. I knew I was only adding my paltry share, that hell might be, what it is, a caricature of the world and her doings. I knew, moreover, that I was being mocked the while, a very fool of vanities.

You must know, then, that each wretched being here is moved by an irresistible impulse to imitate his life on earth, to continue what in sinful folly

he worked in that life. And, strange to say, as I have already hinted, we can all obtain here what we like; one need but think of anything, and there it is. Passion and wrongful desires rule here as they do in the world, only the more horribly, being void of substance. In the world they are clothed—clothed in a semblance of beauty even; lawless and pernicious though they are, they at least own the garment of nature. But here they are mere skeletons, unclothed of the flesh, an insult to nature, continuing in the evil bent of former habit, yet incapable of aught but showing their miserable nakedness. For the imaginings of hell are hollow and empty, void of truth and reality, bereft of all means of satisfaction. And yet the very punishment of hell consists in this, that we are driven to conform to this maddening unreality, this death-breathing nothingness. No matter how deeply conscious we are of the vanity of our doings—no matter how we loathe them—they have come to be our masters; we are driven, helplessly driven, to be for ever trying to be what we were on earth.

Supposing, then, that a number of spirits agree we will have a town here, that town straightway appears on the scene; or if others say, let us have a church here and a theatre and a public park, or woods and a lake and mountains, it is all there as soon as imagined. And not only that each one sees for himself what he has called up in vain desire: it is seen by all with whom he comes into contact. But everything is shadowy—nay, less than shadowy: it is empty conceit. Such a state naturally includes change upon change, incessant unrest; this also is vanity.

Neither is there any lack of assisting spirits to carry into effect any desired show. Does anyone here wish to set up an establishment, to live in style, as the phrase went on earth, he is straightway surrounded by faithless stewards, drunken butlers, thieving servants of all kinds. If you imagine that no one would care to be a servant here, you are mistaken, for the inhabitants of hell, in a mere outward way also, carry on the habits of life. Is there anyone here who likes to general an army, he will find plenty of bloodthirsty ruffians to obey his behests, provided indeed he *was* a general in his days gone by; for, mind you, without a name a man even here could not make his way.

Upon this information you will not be surprised to learn that I have a pleasant abode here not far from town, the image of my own old country-house, with park and river to please my fancy; that I am a gentleman, and see much company. I frequent fashionable society now as formerly, since it yields me gratification, both private and public. Few men knew and drained the sources of enjoyment more thoroughly than I did. But now?—ah, pity me not, for your pity cannot alter the fact. This then is the misery of hell for me; I am

hungering after enjoyment, pure or impure, but there is no sense left to gratify; reality has vanished, the greed only remains. Is it not madness?

And let me whisper it to you, I am daily meeting friends and acquaintances; but I shall not betray them, remembering how well-bred the world is. It would be a shame to hurt the feelings of ladies and gentlemen of respectable position by insinuating that any of their relatives *are* here. Let them call their departed ones blessed: it will not lessen the torments they endure.

Shall I venture upon a local description of hell? I doubt I shall not be able, but will make the attempt.

Hell has its own geography, but no one can tell how far its realm extends; it is infinite—that maybe is the most correct estimate to be given. I believe earth, sun, and moon, and all the planets, would not nearly fill it. But what foolish talk, there being neither space nor time here. And as for boundaries?—on one side only, far, far away, hell has its boundary; whether anyone ever reached it I cannot tell.

In the direction of that pale twilight, which decreases and increases alternately, there is a great gulf, a fathomless abyss, separating hell from Paradise. It *is* Paradise whence that radiance proceeds. And from the abyss, at regular intervals apparently, dead darkness gushes forth, repressing the faint far-off light of heaven, till the last ghostly glimmer is gone. Then it is night with us, the abyss appearing as a lake of molten fire, but its flames are void of light-giving power. That is Satan's residence, and the abode of damned souls. I speak of it with fear and trembling. Gradually the abyss, as it were, eats up its own darkness, the fair light reappearing and growing, till we see it as a tender radiance, clear as the twilight of a summer morn. And at times, as though a curtain of mist and cloud were suddenly rent asunder, a cataract of light bursts forth victoriously, overflowing from the heart of glory. Hell stands dazzled, struck to the core as it were. For in beauty and bliss eternal a vision of Paradise is given to the damned ones—no, not the damned ones, for though cast into hell we are not yet judged; it is given to those who, like the rich man, lift up their eyes in torment. And it is not only Paradise we see, but the blessed ones who dwell there.

All this I have learned,—as yet I have not seen it. But now, since dawn is increasing, we seem to be nearing that hour,—shall I say that happy hour? ah no—most dread! most dread! I cannot tell how long the light goes on increasing or decreasing; there is no judging of the length of dawn, as there is no judging of the duration of night itself. According to human ideas, it would seem to be a space of several years. The vision of Paradise, I feel sure, fills but

a moment, but some call it long, fearfully long. Shall I rejoice to see that moment, or must I dread it?

Again, hell has a river, the waters of which are heavy, dark, and muddy. You will be thinking of the waters of Lethe. Ah no, my friend, there is no Lethe here whence souls might draw forgetfulness: that is a happy myth; but the river I speak of is real, terribly real. It is fed by the falsehood and injustice of the world; every lie, every wrong, helps to swell it. That is why its waters are so turbid, so fearfully foul, looking like clotted blood at times. And sometimes, when the world is more wicked than usual, the river rises and floods its banks, leaving stench and pestilence behind it. It is scarcely to be endured. But we, hardened spectres of hell, we endure.

Sometimes, I am told, it rains here and snows, but not so often as one would think. It happens when folly and vanity upon earth overflow their measure. The world can stand a good deal, we know, but there are times when even the world has too much of it. The surplus then will drop into hell, and we say, by way of former fashion of speech: Look, it rains; or, Behold it snows!

There is in hell not only a certain natural succession of time, but also something of social and political order. Families herd together, and souls of one and the same century like to congregate. And there is a kind of progressive development. The most recent arrivals, as a rule, take the lowest place, advancing to make room for fresh troops appearing. Those who in the world were of one way of thinking, or alike in manner of acting, soon meet here, though of different nationality or separate centuries. Thus there is here a town of injustice, called also the town of politicians; there is a town of the Holy Inquisition; a gigantic city of Jews, of Mormons; a town of Antediluvians, and many others.

I begin to understand the moving-springs of hell. It is insatiate desire on the one hand, and remorse on the other—I had almost said sorrow; but that is too sweet a grace, admitting of sorrow for sin, for opportunity wasted, and that is unknown here; it is a dull flinty grief, a mere wailing for pain. The punishment of hell is twofold, but after all it is the self-same retribution. Some are driven continuously to brood over the same evil passions they indulged in on earth, satisfaction alone being absent; or with horror and loathing are obliged again and again to commit in the spirit the self-same crimes that polluted their days in the flesh. The miser forever is dreaming of riches, the voluptuary of uncleanness, the glutton of feasting, the murderer of his bloody deed. Others, on the contrary, are pursuing the very things they neglected on earth; they know it is hopeless, but pursue them they must. Thus men of unjust dealing

are anxiously trying to right the wrong, the unmerciful to do deeds of charity, the unnatural parent to live for her children, the suicide to prolong his days.

But whatever we suffer, our torment is not to be viewed in the light of final punishment—that is coming—we await the day of doom; no, it is merely the natural consequence of our life on earth. Oh, men and women, yet walking on earth, consider this! that all sin, great or small, has its own irretrievable consequence, which—ay, think of it—extends far beyond the limits of life, even into hell. And if mere consequence may be so terrible, what must be the punishment to come?

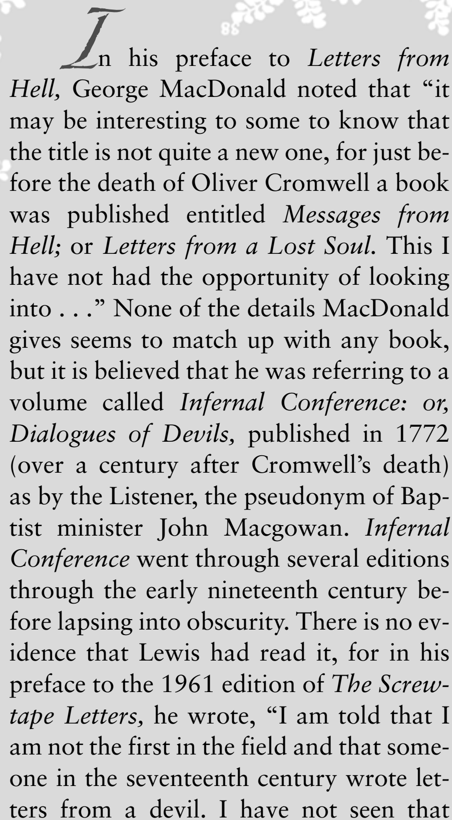
This then is the law of hell: we are not tormented—we torment ourselves! Yet remember that in dying everything depends on whether we lived in the faith of the Son of God, who gave His life that men might be saved. Our sins have that dread importance in as far as they testify that we did not believe. Do you marvel that I speak of God? Ah me, He is still our God! And we know that there is a Son of God who came into the world to save sinners, who loved them unto death, even the death of the Cross. But we know nothing of the way of salvation: everything is forgotten—the very name of the Saviour. We consume ourselves in terrible efforts to remember, were it but the faintest remnant of saving knowledge, but alas it is vain—not even His name! Could we remember that name, call it back to our hearts, I doubt not—I doubt not—even we might be saved. But it is gone—it is too late! too late!

It is incredible how much I have forgotten; indeed, I might say I have forgotten everything except myself. Yes, that is it. I have not forgotten self; on the contrary, whatever of the past concerns my person and my life has followed me hither with a minuteness of detail as strange as it is painful. But the clothes of self, as it were,—the things I once possessed by knowledge, by intellectual acquirement,—they have vanished together with the gifts of mammon and the vanities of the flesh. You will not be surprised then that the feeling of nakedness is so terribly present with me.

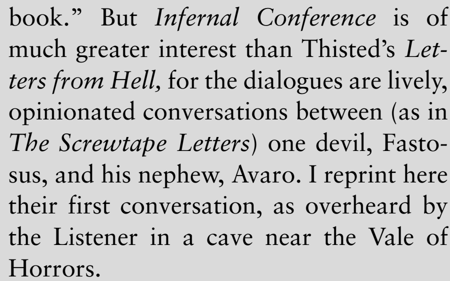
I have brought nothing hither but myself. And what comprises this self but a burning remorse which can never be stilled; a greed of desire which can never be satisfied; an unquenchable longing for things left behind; innumerable recollections of sins great and small, causing insufferable anguish, all being equally bitter, equally fraught with vainest regret! This is the picture of myself, O God,—of myself in hell.

Fastosus and Avaro

by John Macgowan



In his preface to *Letters from Hell,* George MacDonald noted that "it may be interesting to some to know that the title is not quite a new one, for just before the death of Oliver Cromwell a book was published entitled *Messages from Hell;* or *Letters from a Lost Soul.* This I have not had the opportunity of looking into . . ." None of the details MacDonald gives seems to match up with any book, but it is believed that he was referring to a volume called *Infernal Conference: or, Dialogues of Devils,* published in 1772 (over a century after Cromwell's death) as by the Listener, the pseudonym of Baptist minister John Macgowan. *Infernal Conference* went through several editions through the early nineteenth century before lapsing into obscurity. There is no evidence that Lewis had read it, for in his preface to the 1961 edition of *The Screwtape Letters,* he wrote, "I am told that I am not the first in the field and that someone in the seventeenth century wrote letters from a devil. I have not seen that



book." But *Infernal Conference* is of much greater interest than Thisted's *Letters from Hell,* for the dialogues are lively, opinionated conversations between (as in *The Screwtape Letters*) one devil, Fastosus, and his nephew, Avaro. I reprint here their first conversation, as overheard by the Listener in a cave near the Vale of Horrors.

Avaro. So ho! Fastosus, whither so fast at this time of the morning? Be not in such a hurry; but let a kindred devil exchange a few words with you. Pray, how do you do, uncle?

Fastosus. Hah! my nephew Avaro! I little thought of finding you in the Vale at present. But I am glad to see you. Pray, how do you do?

Avaro. I thank you, Sir, I am pretty well, only tired with much exercise. But pray, where were you going in such a hurry? When I called to you, you seemed to outfly the wind!

Fastosus. Indeed Avaro, I should not be willing to discover my concerns to every inquiry but I descend to make free with you, on account we are near kindred; and knowing you to be a true son of Beelzebub, I can trust you with any secret. As for my present hurry, the occasion of it is this: The right honorable *Madame de la Coquette* having an inclination to a suit, of some fashion never before invented, was thrown into a violent fever, through the dullness of the mantau-makers, who could devise no one suitable to her ladyship's desire. Finding her life to be in danger, unless she was gratified, I was last night dispatched to hell, to procure a new pattern from the best artists there; and having got it, I was going post to France, to assist my lady's mantau-maker in cutting and finishing it: Which done, I suppose I shall have a trip to London to accommodate the countess of *Prudeland* with a suit against the next court day.

Avaro. What! The courtly Fastosus become the mantau-maker! I should never have thought of such an employment for my part. You have *now* descended low indeed, uncle!

Fastosus. Indeed Avaro, your ignorance almost provokes me to be angry with you. But you need not be so much surprised at my concerns with the mantau-makers; for I assure you, that I am to much admired for my skill in dress, by both sexes of the human race, that there is scarcely a suit of clothes made, either for man or woman, without my direction. Nor shall you find a peruke maker hardy enough to venture a wig on the block, ere he has had my opinion of it. In short, cousin, there is very little done, and, in dress, there is nothing done, in high life or low, but I have a hand in it.

Avaro. If I have offended my honoured uncle, I humbly beg your pardon. I assure you, I said nothing out of disrespect to you. We all know that your spirit is princely, your monarchy great, and your dominion very extensive. But indeed I never thought of your being conversant with tailors, barbers, and mantau-makers.

Fastosus. Nay, nephew, I am not angry. Nevertheless, you ought to revere me as your elder and better, and not take upon you to call in question the truth of what I say. As for the barbers, they are a set of transformists established wholly by my dexterity; and but for my sovereignty over man, these transformations had never been introduced. Now the transforming trade goes on so successfully, that there is reason to hope very many will be at last transformed into the likeness and nature of our sable fraternity.

Avaro. Pray, uncle, be not angry with me, if I do not speak altogether as you would have me; for you know I never had any inclination to learning or politeness; and I cannot help expressing my wonder at some things you say. Besides, I am amazed to see you look so thin; why you look like a skeleton! What have you been doing, or where have you been? By your looks, you might have traveled barefooted to the Holy-land, or crept on your hands and feet to Medina, and wept forty days by the tomb of our dear fried Mahommet. You have not been on pilgrimage, sure!

Fastosus. I thought, from what I had said, you might have known that I have not been on pilgrimage very lately: Though, I assure you, I have often traveled to Jerusalem and to Mecca as a guide to those holy pilgrims. There is not one of all the bare-legged travellers, who will stir their foot from home, until their good fried Fastosus is equipped in palmerion habiliments, to press forward in the van as their protector. Nor are these pilgrims my only vassals; for the superstitious, of all denominations, have with one consent devoted themselves to me.

Avaro. Well, but, uncle, I am sure they worship me with sincere regard, as well as they do you; and I either attend them in person, or pour my influ-

ences upon every one of them, in all their religious journies to Jerusalem, Mecca, or elsewhere.

Fastosus. It may be so, Avaro; but their prostitution to covetousness hinders not their devotion to pride: For I have conducted many of this fraternity to the supposed sepulchre of Jesus of Nazareth who, in their own opinion, were made so holy thereby, that when they returned to their native country, they thought the earth itself unworthy to bear the pressure of a foot, which had trod the threshold of the adored sepulchre. These religious adventures (especially if they obtain some precious relicks, of which there are great store in Palestine) generally lift them so far above their fellow-creatures, that thenceforward they can hold no intercourse with the common people, lest their supposed spotless garments should be polluted with worldly filthiness. Nor is it uncommon for these fantastical devotees to imagine, that by their journies to Judea they have gained considerably above the price of heaven. So that when they come to die, they have holiness sufficient for themselves, and a handsome legacy to bequeath, as an help-out to some poor brother, who loves home better than the Holy-land.

Avaro. Aye, Fastosus, but then you may thank my brother Falax and me for your Jerusalem journies: None of them would have been instituted but through falsehood, deceit, and covetousness. And I really think that we did excellent service to the great Beelzebub and the sublime port of hell, in imposing that cheat upon mankind. Though, by the way, one would wonder that the reasonable mind should be so easily deceived, seeing there is nothing in any of these pilgrimages, that has so much as the appearance of religion.

Often have I laughed in my sleeve, to see the foolish pilgrims, with holy awe and profound reverence, approach a log of rotten wood, fully believing it to be part of the cross on which Immanuel was crucified. Oh! how have I seen them congratulate themselves on their supposed happiness, if by any means they had procured a diminutive chip of an old gate post from the hand of a venerable priest, with his holy word upon it, that it was part of the cross! And, to speak the truth, which you know I am not very fond of, these reverend gentlemen have words and wood equally plenty; for when one log is sold off they immediately replace it with another; so that this market will not stop for want of merchandise, whilst there is a tree left in the forest of Lebanon. I would not on any account, that the world should know that the traffick in relicks is all a cheat by the help whereof my dear children, the Jerusalem priests, get more money for chips of rotten wood, than the greatest merchant in Norway gets for his masts, and yards, &c.

Fastosus. By what you say, and I own it to be right, cousin, you and I must share the persons and divide the spoil betwixt us, on the day of reckoning. You and cousin Falax have laid the snare very craftily, and I, by my haughty influences, drive the fools to it. Good Avaro, your game would not go well without my assistance; and while you and I continue to play into each other's hand, we can readily bring the two fools to meet, each deceiving and being deceived. I mean, we can bring the covetous fool and the credulous fool together. The credulous deceives the covetous fool with his money, and the covetous deceives the credulous with his rotten wood. Dear Avaro, our work goes forward apace and we shall have them both at last.

Avaro. No doubt of it, Fastosus; for both the covetous and over credulous are ours, by common consent. Our game could not well go better than it doth at present; for all ranks and degrees of people are subjected to our potent sway. No doubt but you have heard of that noble piece of architecture called the Triple-Crown, which I and my brother Falax made for our very worthy friend and steadfast ally the Pope of Rome.

Fastosus. Heard of it! Surely I have. Was not I the principal person concerned in the work? But, Avaro, you have an ugly way of denying people the due honors of their labour. But for me, his Holiness would never have thought of such an invention. And as I had the principal hand in it. I aver, that the best mathematician in hell could not have invented a more excellent piece. I have thought, ever since, that the artful Falax acted his part with as much dexterity, in the formation of that capital ornament, as when he and we assisted our venerable friend, Mahommet, in composing the Alcoran. But the chief beauty of it was, to see our hoary friend, the pope, with greater confidence than if he had been one of ourselves, exalt his papal chair above all that is called God. So that now, in the sense of the Romish imposter, saving and damning depend no longer on the justice and mercy of the Eternal, but upon the will and pleasure of him who fills the infallible chair.

Were we anything but Devils, whose hatred to Truth is implacable, it would have grieved us to see how she sighed and sobbed, as if her heart would break, when the imposter assumed the character of infallibility. She knocked with violence at the gates of the bishop's palace; but there was no admission for her there. She begged and prayed that the inferiour ranks of the reverend clergy would receive her; but not one of them would suffer her to come under their roof; so that the poor heaven-born lady swooned in the streets, and there was none to assist her. Her eyes became as fountains of briny tears, trickling down her radiant cheeks; her locks were dishevelled, and her apparel hung

dangling around her. In this mournful plight she went through all the streets of the mystick Babylon, uttering her lamentations in every publick place, and in every concourse of the people. But, as in former times she had piped to them, and none of the worshipers of the Beast would dance; so now she mourned to them, but none of them would lament. She stretched forth her hands all the day long, but none of them would attend to her; the venerable pope, father of the world, having published a decree, that none of them should suffer her under their roof, nor administer the least comfort to her in her calamity, under pain of the Rack, the Gibbet, the Wheel, or Fire and Faggot. Yea more; when his Holiness saw the importunity of Divine Truth, and perceived that she would be a perpetual thorn in his side, if not timely and wisely prevented, by forcing her out of the world, he clad himself in Vulcanian armour, sought for her in every corner of Babylon; when he met with her, launched his fatal spear with papal force against her, that wounding her so deeply, she fainted and fell to the ground and no doubt had died if she had not been immortal. When the most holy bishop had thus deprest her, he cried out, in devilish triumph, *"I am the successor of Peter, the vicar of Christ, the pillar of truth, the porter of heaven, and the supreme head of the church."* At which words, Truth entirely disappeared, and to this day has not been suffered to set one foot within the limits of the papacy.

Avaro. It was a noble enterprise; nothing could exceed it. I am persuaded, that the man who was in-dwelt by our brother Legion, and resided among the tombs, was never capable of coming so near to us devils in cruelty, deceit, and falsehood, as that same venerable man, his infallible holiness, hath upon every occasion.

Fastosus. Indeed, Avaro, Legion, though a many-viced devil, is but a fool, when compared to his holiness; but it is highly necessary that he should be well qualified in devilism, seeing he is appointed Beelzebub's great vicegerent in the Christian world.

Avaro. Great are the abilities requisite to such a station; and his holiness possesseth them liberally. Did you ever hear, Fastosus, the manner in which our Italian success was received by Beelzebub the great, and his infernal nobility?

Fastosus. I suppose I have; but I have so many things to think of that at present it has escaped my memory: Therefore, if you remember it, I shall be obliged to you for the recital.

Avaro. With all my heart. I assure you it is well worth you hearing for thereby it appeared that his infernal majesty had the deepest sense of our ser-

vices, and conceived the strongest hope of the increase of his kingdom from the alliance formed betwixt the sublime Port of Hell, and the apostolic chair at Rome.

As soon as swift-winged Fame arrived at the gate, known by the name of Earth-Gate, she knocked violently, as you know is customary with her upon any emergent occasion. Our friend Cerberus, the porter, no sooner saw that it was Fame, but he immediately sent a messenger to court, to inform his majesty and peers, that the ambassadress Fame was arrived. In shorter time than a lawyer could frame a lie, hell was all in an uproar, every inhabitant being big with expectation of some important news from our friends on earth. Fifty of the nobility were dispatched from court, to congratulate Fame on her arrival, and to conduct her in state to the court-end of the city. The mighty Beelzebub ascended the flaming throne, to receive the ambassadress with imperial grandeur; and as soon as arrived, she was introduced to his sublime presence, by Lucifer, prime minister of state, and in full court related all that had passed concerning the change at Rome in the system of religion: Which desirable news was received with all the demonstrations of joy damned spirits are capable of. Fame having finished her relation, the mighty prince, who sat on the stupendous throne, arrayed in all the majesty becoming his elevated station, lifted his war-like arm, waved the imperial sceptre for audience, and thus addressed his courtiers, his eyes blazing as burning furnaces, while he spake.

"My lords, my brethren in sovereignty and sharers of my glory; from the just sense I have of your steady attachment to my interest and government, as hath always appeared from your unwearied study, as far as possible, to destroy the creatures of our arch-enemy, whom, constrained, we call the Almighty; and promoting to the utmost our common interest among mankind. From such considerations, I cannot forbear congratulating your highness on the happy turn our affairs on the earth have taken, by the indefatigable pains and vigilant endeavours of our worthy friends and genuine descendants, Fastosus, Avaro, Falax, &c. &c. as appears by the report you have just now heard from the mouth of our swift-winged ambassadress, Fame. By the industry of those worthy spirits, worms of the earth are wrought up to such a degree of pride and self-conceit, as to undertake enterprises that we, who are of angelick-race, could not accomplish, yea, even to assume prerogatives, which never once came into our minds. My noble lords, there is reason to believe that this revolution will prove a leading step towards a very plentiful harvest. I signify it therefore as my will and pleasure, that your highnesses take special care that

the lodgings at the court-end of the city are kept in due repair, as henceforth we may expect at every term, numerous shoals of popish priests of all ranks, to take up their residence with us; and you may be sure they will take it very ill, if they are not accommodated according to their quality.

"I think, my lords, it is worthy of observation, that all the missionaries we ever dispatched among the heathens, could not prevail with poor pagan priests to aspire to that degree of impiety, which the pope hath now assumed. I hope, my lords, that Truth and Holiness are in a fair way of being banished from the face of the earth; for I am persuaded, that this universal father, his cardinals, legates, and bishops, will exert all their influence to promote our interest in the suppression of our enemies." Having said this, a flaming billow rolled over the imperial seat, and so stunned the good old prince, that he could speak no more for a season.

Fastosus. All those things I well remember, now you have mentioned them. But I want to know what you have got in that leather bag. You are not become nailer, sure?

Avaro. This bag, sir, contains a thousand pounds, which a certain attorney, a dear child of mine, wants to have deposited in some place of security, as he has not at present an opportunity of putting it out to generate, an increasing faculty with which all his other cash is endued. This same gentleman is a person of great worth, ready to assist the rich and great, provided always that his good deeds are handsomely rewarded. But so cautious and prudent is he, that he utterly abhors parting with even so small a pittance as a guinea, to relieve a poor distressed tradesman; and indeed for this very sufficient reason that he cannot, in such a case, obtain land-security for his money; so that if the poor man is ever so honest and industrious, he must even reconcile his thoughts to a dungeon, or seek relief from another quarter; for our worthy lawyer would part with no money to deliver him from it. His present fear is, lest any of his poor neighbours, knowing that he has plenty of money by him, should, by their pressing solicitations, over-persuade him to part with a little to help them in their distresses; for he, like many other honest men, is determined to keep what he has got, if one half of the parish should die for want of bread.

Fastosus. By your description of the worthy lawyer, I may expect his children as my pupils after his decease. I warrant me, Avaro, before their father is half consumed by the worms, I shall have them bowing and cringing to me as their god. I have remarked, for some thousands of years, that when the parents have worshipped the god Avaro, by giving themselves up to covetousness,

for the most part, after their decease the children have made choice of me and our cousin Prophanity for their patrons. Surely, if covetous parents knew what courses children would follow when their heads are laid low in the grave, and their souls still lower in hell, they would quarrel with their god Avaro, or die with grief on the prospect.

Avaro. Aye, uncle; but there is not one of all my numerous disciples, who knows me by my proper name; and I am by far too subtle for them to find out the cheat. My English vassals, for instance, commonly worship me under the false names of industry or frugality, prudence or laudable care; but there is not one of them who can be prevailed with to believe himself a worshipper of the devil Avaro, which is, you know, my true and proper name.

Fastosus. Nothing equals our success; for you damn the parents by covetousness, and we damn the children by pride and prophanity. Good Avaro, we have them hip and thigh; it is but a few of all the mundane race that we lose; and those also we should have, if they were not forcibly taken from us: But this is one comfort, that if we must have the mortification of seeing any of the human race get safe to heaven, we have also the pleasure of disturbing and distracting their minds on their journey; and many of them we bring to the stake or gibbet, under the direction of our good friend Crudelis, who presides over those hells upon earth, known by the name the holy inquisitions.

Avaro. Hells, did you say? Right, hells indeed! One holy inquisitor goes beyond an hundred of our fraternity in the art of cruelty, which you know is the first of the learned sciences at Rome. Such wonderful inventions of torturing, one would have thought, could never have been contrived. What ingenuity does the rack display! How excellently formed for exquisite torture! What an apt resemblance of the infernal furnace is the dry-pan! A contrivance worthy the most skilful among the Beezebubian artists. But their watery torment, the gag and pitcher, is what raises them most in my esteem. Almost every blockhead hath some notion of a hell fire; but it is peculiar to the skill of an holy inquisitor to contrive a hell of water. In this, Fastosus, we must all knock under to them, for indeed they are our betters. And, to enhance their merit, their torments are inflicted upon the unhappy wretches, who fall into their hands, under a shew of the greatest sanctity towards God, and pity to the unhappy victim of their cruelty. And so very strictly do they and their assisting familiars observe the rules of inviolable secrecy, that the world can never know the hundredth part of their villainy.

Fastosus. Secrecy is indispensably necessary to a people so much devoted to our interest as the worthy inquisitors and the rest of the Romish clergy are.

Were it known to the world what methods they take to aggrandize themselves, and support the papal hierarchy, the cheat would be discovered, the fabrick would fall to the ground, the craft by which they have their wealth would soon be at an end, and their reverences be brought into contempt.

Certainly the great Beelzebub will deal gratefully with the holy father at Rome, and his cardinals, inquisitors and bishops, when they arrive in hell. For my own part, I steadfastly believe that if our good friends the popes and inquisitors are not served below their quality, they will be put in possession of the seats on the right hand of his majesty's throne, as our friend Mahommet and his mufties were in those on the left. And when their extraordinary merit is considered, our infernal nobility will have no reason to grumble at their advancement; for nothing less can be deemed adequate to their uncommon merit and usefulness in confirming our interest at heart, that it would be very extraordinary indeed, if any of them should be lost, and fall short of our dreary abode.

Avaro. The basest ingratitude to use them otherwise, Fastosus. For my own part, I shall always give place to a pope or inquisitor, and I think it is the duty of all our sable fraternity so to do; for when their inferiour species is considered, it will appear that they not only vie with, but even exceed the most dexterous among us in many things.

Fastosus. I am thinking, Avaro, of the easy station you have got, in comparison of mine. You are concerned but with a few, I am concerned with everyone. You chiefly serve the higher ranks of people, but I am hackneyed night and day by all sorts of men, from his holiness the pope to the hermit in his cell, from the queen on the throne to Bridget the farmer's maid. But was it not that I find my account in it, and by that means am adored as a divinity, my princely mind would never submit to such constant drudgery.

Avaro. Good Fastosus, I speak it with reverence, but you are exceedingly mistaken in my business. I assure you, it increaseth every day upon my hands, and requires very constant application; insomuch, that for these twelve years I have not had time to close my eyes for one refreshing nap. Ah, uncle! I am concerned with, and for many; and with none more than with the sons of the mystick whore. This old bawd, with the scarlet gown, hath many children, who swarm as locusts along the face of many European countries, and eat up the good of the land before them. And there is not one amongst them, who knows how to spend a day without my company. When I would gladly lay me down for a little rest, one or other of them conjures me up to inquire after pay

for this funeral mass, that dispensation, or the other pardon. For you may know, that with them there is nothing to be done without ready cash; for they never give credit.

Fastosus. That old proverb "Money answereth all things," seems well adapted to the tenets of your disciples, Avaro.

Avaro. Wonderfully adapted, sir! very wonderfully adapted; for money forwards their devotion vastly, and helps them strangely on, in their way to heaven. Dear children of mine I own them to be! for, notwithstanding their pretended love to devotion and the souls of their fellow-creatures; if a poor man travelling from earth to heaven, should happen to be arrested by any of the officers of purgatory (who make it their business to way-lay travellers) and be turned over to the tormentors; if such a man has not left a sufficient sum for purgatorial masses, and no well-disposed lay-person is found to supply the deficient assets of the prisoner, he may lie, if it be possible, until he is burned to tinder, ere any parson of the convent will put one hand to help him out of those dreary flames. But, on the other hand, if a sufficient sum is left for masses to be said to the lady of Loretto, St. Dominick, St. Dennis, or any other eloquent saint, all the parsons will apply as cheerfully as young dromedaries, and put their shoulders to the work like so many bulls in a yoke, until they have cleared him of his prison. You may always be sure that with them, according to a well known proverb, "It is money that makes the mare to go."

Fastosus. I pray you, Avaro, where does this same purgatory stand? I have often heard of it, but never could meet with it, either in this or the other world, notwithstanding I have sought it with care.

Avaro. You have sought for it in the wrong place, uncle; you should have ransacked the brains of the pope and his clergy; for there, and no where else, the chimera is to be found. It is only a scheme to get money, that I contrived for them; and hitherto it has answered our highest expectations; for by this craft the parsons have great emolument.

Fastosus. This I do know, that nothing is more attractive of the attention of their reverences, than brilliant gold; for the sake of which, systems the most absurd are imposed upon mankind, with the sanction of priestly authority. Indeed, it is presumed that these holy men will authorise nothing but what is lucrative. O the wonderful trade of priestcraft! Indeed, Avaro, I begin to think you a devil of good abilities, and an honour to the race of Beelzebub.

Avaro. I am highly obliged to you for your good opinion, sir; and assure you, that were you acquainted with the system of our government, I should go

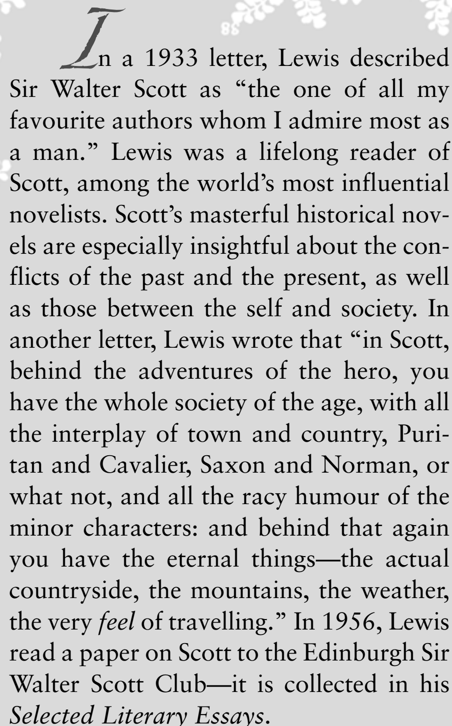
near to rivet myself in your esteem; an honour which I much desire, and in order to which, I shall relate a certain affair, which wonderfully displays the genius of priestcraft, and the most just idea of the doctrine of purgatory.

Fastosus. I shall be glad to hear it another time, cousin; but for the present I must be gone, to forward my lady's robes; for the mantau-maker dare not touch them before my arrival at Paris. Exactly four hours hence, I shall give you the meeting.

Avaro. I shall think of the appointment, uncle. Success to your enterprise.

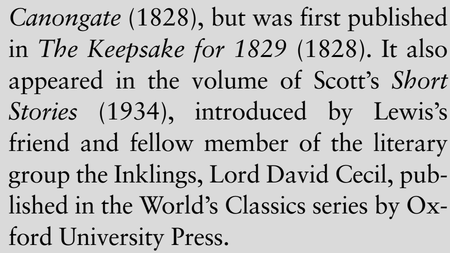
The Tapestried Chamber; or, The Lady in the Sacque

by Sir Walter Scott



In a 1933 letter, Lewis described Sir Walter Scott as "the one of all my favourite authors whom I admire most as a man." Lewis was a lifelong reader of Scott, among the world's most influential novelists. Scott's masterful historical novels are especially insightful about the conflicts of the past and the present, as well as those between the self and society. In another letter, Lewis wrote that "in Scott, behind the adventures of the hero, you have the whole society of the age, with all the interplay of town and country, Puritan and Cavalier, Saxon and Norman, or what not, and all the racy humour of the minor characters: and behind that again you have the eternal things—the actual countryside, the mountains, the weather, the very *feel* of travelling." In 1956, Lewis read a paper on Scott to the Edinburgh Sir Walter Scott Club—it is collected in his *Selected Literary Essays*.

"The Tapestried Chamber" was originally intended to be included in the second series of *The Chronicles of the*



Canongate (1828), but was first published in *The Keepsake for 1829* (1828). It also appeared in the volume of Scott's *Short Stories* (1934), introduced by Lewis's friend and fellow member of the literary group the Inklings, Lord David Cecil, published in the World's Classics series by Oxford University Press.

The following narrative is given from the pen, so far as memory permits, in the same character in which it was presented to the author's ear; nor has he claim to further praise, or to be more deeply censured, than in proportion to the good or bad judgment which he has employed in selecting his materials, as he has studiously avoided any attempt at ornament which might interfere with the simplicity of the tale.

At the same time it must be admitted, that the particular class of stories which turns on the marvellous, possesses a stronger influence when told, than when committed to print. The volume taken up at noonday, though rehearsing the same incidents, conveyed a much more feeble impression, than is achieved by the voice of the speaker on a circle of fireside auditors, who hang upon the narrative as the narrator details the minute incidents which serve to give it authenticity, and lowers his voice with an affectation of mystery while he approaches the fearful and wonderful part. It was with such advantages that the present writer heard the following events related, more than twenty years since, by the celebrated Miss Seward, of Litchfield, who, to her numerous accomplishments, added, in a remarkable degree, the power of narrative in private conversation. In its present form the tale must necessarily lose all the interest which was attached to it, by the flexible voice and intelligent features of the gifted narrator. Yet still, read aloud, to an undoubting audience by the doubtful light of the closing evening, or, in silence, by a decaying taper, and amidst the solitude of a half-lighted apartment, it may redeem its character as a good ghost-story. Miss Seward always affirmed that she had derived her information from an authentic source, although she suppressed the names

of the two persons chiefly concerned. I will not avail myself of any particulars I may have since received concerning the localities of the detail, but suffer them to rest under the same general description in which they were first related to me; and, for the same reason, I will not add to, or diminish the narrative, by any circumstance, whether more or less material, but simply rehearse, as I heard it, a story of supernatural terror.

About the end of the American war, when the officers of Lord Cornwallis's army, which surrendered at Yorktown, and others, who had been made prisoners during the impolitic and ill-fated controversy, were returning to their own country, to relate their adventures, and repose themselves after their fatigues; there was amongst them a general officer, to whom Miss S. gave the name of Browne, but merely, as I understood, to save the inconvenience of introducing a nameless agent in the narrative. He was an officer of merit, as well as a gentleman of high consideration for family and attainments.

Some business had carried General Browne upon a tour through the western counties, when, in the conclusion of a morning stage, he found himself in the vicinity of a small country town, which presented a scene of uncommon beauty, and of a character peculiarly English.

The little town, with its stately old church, whose tower bore testimony to the devotion of ages long past, lay amidst pastures and cornfields of small extent, but bounded and divided with hedgerow timber of great age and size. There were few marks of modern improvement. The environs of the place intimated neither the solitude of decay, nor the bustle of novelty; the houses were old, but in good repair; and the beautiful little river murmured freely on its way to the left of the town, neither restrained by a dam, nor bordered by a towing-path.

Upon a gentle eminence, nearly a mile to the southward of the town, were seen, amongst many venerable oaks and tangled thickets, the turrets of a castle, as old as the walls of York and Lancaster, but which seemed to have received important alterations during the age of Elizabeth and her successor. It had not been a place of great size; but whatever accommodation it formerly afforded, was, it must be supposed, still to be obtained within its walls; at least, such was the inference which General Browne drew from observing the smoke arise merrily from several of the ancient wreathed and carved chimney-stalks. The wall of the park ran alongside of the highway for two or three hundred yards; and through the different points by which the eye found glimpses

into the woodland scenery, it seemed to be well stocked. Other points of view opened in succession; now a full one, of the front of the old castle, and now a side glimpse at its particular towers; the former rich in all the bizarrerie of the Elizabethan school, while the simple and solid strength of other parts of the building seemed to show that they had been raised more for defence than ostentation.

Delighted with the partial glimpses which he obtained of the castle through the woods and glades by which this ancient feudal fortress was surrounded, our military traveller was determined to enquire whether it might not deserve a nearer view, and whether it contained family pictures or other objects of curiosity worthy of a stranger's visit; when, leaving the vicinity of the park, he rolled through a clean and well-paved street, and stopped at the door of a well-frequented inn.

Before ordering horses to proceed on his journey, General Browne made enquiries concerning the proprietor of the chateau which had so attracted his admiration; and was equally surprised and pleased at hearing in reply a nobleman named, whom we shall call Lord Woodville. How fortunate! Much of Browne's early recollections, both at school and at college, had been connected with young Woodville, whom, by a few questions, he now ascertained to be the same with the owner of this fair domain. He had been raised to the peerage by the decease of his father a few months before, and, as the General learned from the landlord, the term of mourning being ended, was now taking possession of his paternal estate, in the jovial season of merry autumn, accompanied by a select party of friends to enjoy the sports of a country famous for game.

This was delightful news to our traveller. Frank Woodville had been Richard Browne's fag at Eton, and his chosen intimate at Christ Church; their pleasures and their tasks had been the same; and the honest soldier's heart warmed to find his early friend in possession of so delightful a residence, and of an estate, as the landlord assured him with a nod and a wink, fully adequate to maintain and add to his dignity. Nothing was more natural than that the traveller should suspend a journey, which there was nothing to render hurried, to pay a visit to an old friend under such agreeable circumstances.

The fresh horses, therefore, had only the brief task of conveying the General's travelling carriage to Woodville Castle. A porter admitted them at a modern Gothic Lodge, built in that style to correspond with the Castle itself, and at the same time rang a bell to give warning of the approach of visitors. Apparently the sound of the bell had suspended the separation of the com-

pany, bent on the various amusements of the morning; for, on entering the court of the château, several young men were lounging about in their sporting dresses, looking at, and criticising, the dogs which the keepers held in readiness to attend their pastime. As General Browne alighted, the young lord came to the gate of the hall, and for an instant gazed, as at a stranger, upon the countenance of his friend, on which war, with its fatigues and its wounds, had made a great alteration. But the uncertainty lasted no longer than till the visitor had spoken, and the hearty greeting which followed was such as can only be exchanged betwixt those who have passed together the merry days of careless boyhood or early youth.

"If I could have formed a wish, my dear Browne," said Lord Woodville, "it would have been to have you here, of all men, upon this occasion, which my friends are good enough to hold as a sort of holiday. Do not think you have been unwatched during the years you have been absent from us. I have traced you through your dangers, your triumphs, your misfortunes, and was delighted to see that, whether in victory or defeat, the name of my old friend was always distinguished with applause."

The General made a suitable reply, and congratulated his friend on his new dignities, and the possession of a place and domain so beautiful.

"Nay, you have seen nothing of it as yet," said Lord Woodville, "and I trust you do not mean to leave us till you are better acquainted with it. It is true, I confess, that my present party is pretty large, and the old house, like other places of the kind, does not possess so much accommodation as the extent of the outward walls appears to promise. But we can give you a comfortable old-fashioned room, and I venture to suppose that your campaigns have taught you to be glad of worse quarters."

The General shrugged his shoulders, and laughed. "I presume," he said, "the worst apartment in your château is considerably superior to the old tobacco-cask, in which I was fain to take up my night's lodging when I was in the Bush, as the Virginians call it, with the light corps. There I lay, like Diogenes himself, so delighted with my covering from the elements, that I made a vain attempt to have it rolled on to my next quarters; but my commander for the time would give way to no such luxurious provision, and I took farewell of my beloved cask with tears in my eyes."

"Well, then, since you do not fear your quarters," said Lord Woodville, "you will stay with me a week at least. Of guns, dogs, fishing-rods, flies, and means of sport by sea and land, we have enough and to spare: you cannot pitch on an amusement but we will find the means of pursuing it. But if you

prefer the gun and pointers, I will go with you myself, and see whether you have mended your shooting since you have been amongst the Indians of the back settlements."

The General gladly accepted his friendly host's proposal in all its points. After a morning of manly exercise, the company met at dinner, where it was the delight of Lord Woodville to conduce to the display of the high properties of his recovered friend, so as to recommend him to his guests, most of whom were persons of distinction. He led General Browne to speak of the scenes he had witnessed; and as every word marked alike the brave officer and the sensible man, who retained possession of his cool judgment under the most imminent dangers, the company looked upon the soldier with general respect, as on one who had proved himself possessed of an uncommon portion of personal courage; that attribute, of all others, of which everybody desires to be thought possessed.

The day at Woodville Castle ended as usual in such mansions. The hospitality stopped within the limits of good order; music, in which the young lord was a proficient, succeeded to the circulation of the bottle: cards and billiards, for those who preferred such amusements, were in readiness: but the exercise of the morning required early hours, and not long after eleven o'clock the guests began to retire to their several apartments.

The young lord himself conducted his friend, General Browne, to the chamber destined for him, which answered the description he had given of it, being comfortable, but old-fashioned. The bed was of the massive form used in the end of the seventeenth century, and the curtains of faded silk, heavily trimmed with tarnished gold. But then the sheets, pillows, and blankets looked delightful to the campaigner, when he thought of his "mansion, the cask." There was all air of gloom in the tapestry hangings, which, with their worn-out graces, curtained the walls of the little chamber, and gently undulated as the autumnal breeze found its way through the ancient lattice-window, which pattered and whistled as the air gained entrance. The toilet too, with its mirror, turbaned after the manner of the beginning of the century, with a coiffure of murrey-coloured silk, and its hundred strange-shaped boxes, providing for arrangements which had been obsolete for more than fifty years, had an antique, and in so far a melancholy, aspect. But nothing could blaze more brightly and cheerfully than the two large wax candles; or if aught could rival them, it was the flaming bickering fagots in the chimney, that sent at once their gleam and their warmth through the snug apartment; which, notwithstanding the general antiquity of its appearance, was not want-

ing in the least convenience, that modern habits rendered either necessary or desirable.

"This is an old-fashioned sleeping apartment, General," said the young lord; "but I hope you find nothing that makes you envy your old tobacco-cask."

"I am not particular respecting my lodgings," replied the General; "yet were I to make any choice, I would prefer this chamber by many degrees, to the gayer and more modern rooms of your family mansion. Believe me, that when I unite its modern air of comfort with its venerable antiquity, and recollect that it is your lordship's property, I shall feel in better quarters here, than if I were in the best hotel London could afford."

"I trust—I have no doubt—that you will find yourself as comfortable as I wish you, my dear General," said the young nobleman; and once more bidding his guest good-night, he shook him by the hand, and withdrew.

The General once more looked round him, and internally congratulating himself on his return to peaceful life, the comforts of which were endeared by the recollection of the hardships and dangers he had lately sustained, undressed himself, and prepared for a luxurious night's rest.

Here, contrary to the custom of this species of tale, we leave the General in possession of his apartment until the next morning.

The company assembled for breakfast at an early hour, but without the appearance of General Browne, who seemed the guest that Lord Woodville was desirous of honouring above all whom his hospitality had assembled around him. He more than once expressed surprise at the General's absence, and at length sent a servant to make enquiry after him. The man brought back information that General Browne had been walking abroad since an early hour of the morning, in defiance of the weather, which was misty and ungenial.

"The custom of a soldier,"—said the young nobleman to his friends; "many of them acquire habitual vigilance, and cannot sleep after the early hour at which their duty usually commands them to be alert."

Yet the explanation which Lord Woodville thus offered to the company seemed hardly satisfactory to his own mind, and it was in a fit of silence and abstraction that he waited the return of the General. It took place near an hour after the breakfast bell had rung. He looked fatigued and feverish. His hair, the powdering and arrangement of which was at this time one of the most important occupations of a man's whole day, and marked his fashion as much as, in the present time, the tying of a cravat, or the want of one, was di-

shevelled, uncurled, void of powder, and dank with dew. His clothes were huddled on with a careless negligence, remarkable in a military man, whose real or supposed duties are usually held to include some attention to the toilet; and his looks were haggard and ghastly in a peculiar degree.

"So you have stolen a march upon us this morning, my dear General," said Lord Woodville; "or you have not found your bed so much to your mind as I had hoped and you seemed to expect. How did you rest last night?"

"Oh, excellently well! remarkably well! never better in my life"—said General Browne rapidly, and yet with an air of embarrassment which was obvious to his friend. He then hastily swallowed a cup of tea, and, neglecting or refusing whatever else was offered, seemed to fall into a fit of abstraction.

"You will take the gun to-day, General?" said his friend and host, but had to repeat the question twice ere he received the abrupt answer, "No, my lord; I am sorry I cannot have the honour of spending another day with your lordship; my post horses are ordered, and will be here directly."

All who were present showed surprise, and Lord Woodville immediately replied, "Post horses, my good friend! what can you possibly want with them, when you promised to stay with me quietly for at least a week?"

"I believe," said the General, obviously much embarrassed, "that I might, in the pleasure of my first meeting with your lordship, have said something about stopping here a few days; but I have since found it altogether impossible."

"That is very extraordinary," answered the young nobleman. "You seemed quite disengaged yesterday, and you cannot have had a summons today; for our post has not come up from the town, and therefore you cannot have received any letters."

General Browne, without giving any further explanation, muttered something of indispensable business, and insisted on the absolute necessity of his departure in a manner which silenced all opposition on the part of his host, who saw that his resolution was taken, and forbore all further importunity.

"At least, however," he said, "permit me, my dear Browne, since go you will or must, to show you the view from the terrace, which the mist, that is now rising, will soon display."

He threw open a sash-window, and stepped down upon the terrace as he spoke. The General followed him mechanically, but seemed little to attend to what his host was saying, as, looking across an extended and rich prospect, he pointed out the different objects worthy of observation. Thus they moved on till Lord Woodville had attained his purpose of drawing his guest entirely

apart from the rest of the company, when, turning round upon him with an air of great solemnity, he addressed him thus:

"Richard Browne, my old and very dear friend, we are now alone. Let me conjure you to answer me upon the word of a friend, and the honour of a soldier. How did you in reality rest during last night?"

"Most wretchedly indeed, my lord," answered the General, in the same tone of solemnity;—"so miserably, that I would not run the risk of such a second night, not only for all the lands belonging to this castle, but for all the country which I see from this elevated point of view."

"This is most extraordinary," said the young lord, as if speaking to himself; "then there must be something in the reports concerning that apartment." Again turning to the General, he said, "For God's sake, my dear friend, be candid with me, and let me know the disagreeable particulars which have befallen you under a roof, where, with consent of the owner, you should have met nothing save comfort."

The General seemed distressed by this appeal, and paused a moment before he replied. "My dear lord," he at length said, "what happened to me last night is of a nature so peculiar and so unpleasant, that I could hardly bring myself to detail it even to your lordship, were it not that, independent of my wish to gratify any request of yours, I think that sincerity on my part may lead to some explanation about a circumstance equally painful and mysterious. To others, the communication I am about to make, might place me in the light of a weak-minded, superstitious fool, who suffered his own imagination to delude and bewilder him; but you have known me in childhood and youth, and will not suspect me of having adopted in manhood the feelings and frailties from which my early years were free." Here he paused, and his friend replied:

"Do not doubt my perfect confidence in the truth of your communication, however strange it may be," replied Lord Woodville; "I know your firmness of disposition too well, to suspect you could be made the object of imposition, and am aware that your honour and your friendship will equally deter you from exaggerating whatever you may have witnessed."

"Well then," said the General, "I will proceed with my story as well as I can, relying upon your candour; and yet distinctly feeling that I would rather face a battery than recall to my mind the odious recollections of last night."

He paused a second time, and then perceiving that Lord Woodville remained silent and in an attitude of attention, he commenced, though not without obvious reluctance, the history of his night adventures in the Tapestried Chamber.

* * *

"I undressed and went to bed, so soon as your lordship left me yesterday evening; but the wood in the chimney, which nearly fronted my bed, blazed brightly and cheerfully, and, aided by a hundred exciting recollections of my childhood and youth, which had been recalled by the unexpected pleasure of meeting your lordship, prevented me from falling immediately asleep. I ought, however, to say, that these reflections were all of a pleasant and agreeable kind, grounded on a sense of having for a time exchanged the labour, fatigues, and dangers of my profession, for the enjoyments of a peaceful life, and the reunion of those friendly and affectionate ties, which I had torn asunder at the rude summons of war.

"While such pleasing reflections were stealing over my mind, and gradually lulling me to slumber, I was suddenly aroused by a sound like that of the rustling of a silken gown, and the tapping of a pair of high-heeled shoes, as if a woman were walking in the apartment. Ere I could draw the curtain to see what the matter was, the figure of a little woman passed between the bed and the fire. The back of this form was turned to me, and I could observe, from the shoulders and neck, it was that of an old woman, whose dress was an old-fashioned gown, which, I think, ladies call a sacque; that is, a sort of robe completely loose in the body, but gathered into broad plaits upon the neck and shoulders, which fall down to the ground, and terminate in a species of train.

"I thought the intrusion singular enough, but never harboured for a moment the idea that what I saw was any thing more than the mortal form of some old woman about the establishment, who had a fancy to dress like her grandmother, and who, having perhaps (as your lordship mentioned that you were rather straitened for room) been dislodged from her chamber for my accommodation, had forgotten the circumstance, and returned by twelve to her old haunt. Under this persuasion I moved myself in bed and coughed a little, to make the intruder sensible of my being in possession of the premises. She turned slowly around, but, gracious heaven! my lord, what a countenance did she display to me! There was no longer any question what she was, or any thought of her being a living being. Upon a face which wore the fixed features of a corpse, were imprinted the traces of the vilest and most hideous passions which had animated her while she lived. The body of some atrocious criminal seemed to have been given up from the grave, and the soul restored from the penal fire, in order to form, for a space, an union with the ancient accomplice of its guilt. I started up in bed, and sat upright, supporting myself on my

palms, as I gazed on this horrible spectre. The hag made, as it seemed, a single and swift stride to the bed where I lay, and squatted herself down upon it, in precisely the same attitude which I had assumed in the extremity of horror, advancing her diabolical countenance within half a yard of mine, with a grin which seemed to intimate the malice and the derision of an incarnate fiend."

Here General Browne stopped, and wiped from his brow the cold perspiration with which the recollection of his horrible vision had covered it.

"My lord," he said, "I am no coward. I have been in all the mortal dangers incidental to my profession, and I may truly boast, that no man ever knew Richard Browne dishonour the sword he wears; but in these horrible circumstances, under the eyes, and as it seemed, almost in the grasp of an incarnation of an evil spirit, all firmness forsook me, all manhood melted from me like wax in the furnace, and I felt my hair individually bristle. The current of my life-blood ceased to flow, and I sank back in a swoon, as verily a victim to panic as ever was a village girl, or a child of ten years old. How long I lay in this condition I cannot pretend to guess.

"But I was roused by the castle clock striking one, so loud that it seemed as if it were in the very room. It was some time before I dared open my eyes, lest they should again encounter the horrible spectacle. When, however, I summoned courage to look up, she was no longer visible. My first idea was to pull my bell, wake the servants, and remove to a garret or a hay-loft, to be ensured against a second visitation. Nay, I will confess the truth, that my resolution was altered, not by the shame of exposing myself, but by the fear that, as the bell-cord hung by the chimney, I might in making my way to it, be again crossed by the fiendish hag, who, I figured to myself, might be still lurking about some corner of the apartment.

"I will not pretend to describe what hot and cold fever-fits tormented me for the rest of the night, through broken sleep, weary vigils, and that dubious state which forms the neutral ground between them. An hundred terrible objects appeared to haunt me; but there was the great difference betwixt the vision which I have described, and those which followed, that I knew the last to be deceptions of my own fancy and over-excited nerves.

"Day at last appeared, and I rose from my bed ill in health, and humiliated in mind. I was ashamed of myself as a man and a soldier, and still more so, at feeling my own extreme desire to escape from the haunted apartment, which, however, conquered all other considerations; so that, huddling on my clothes with the most careless haste, I made my escape from your lordship's mansion, to seek in the open air some relief to my nervous system, shaken as

it was by this horrible re-encounter with a visitant, for such I must believe her, from the other world. Your lordship has now heard the cause of my discomposure, and of my sudden desire to leave your hospitable castle. In other places I trust we may often meet; but God protect me from ever spending a second night under that roof!"

Strange as the General's tale was, he spoke with such a deep air of conviction, that it cut short all the usual commentaries which are made on such stories. Lord Woodville never once asked him if he was sure he did not dream of the apparition, or suggested any of the possibilities by which it is fashionable to explain supernatural appearances, as wild vagaries of the fancy, or deceptions of the optic nerves. On the contrary, he seemed deeply impressed with the truth and reality of what he had heard; and, after a considerable pause, regretted, with much appearance of sincerity, that his early friend should in his house have suffered so severely.

"I am the more sorry for your pain, my dear Browne," he continued, "that it is the unhappy, though most unexpected, result of an experiment of my own! You must know, that for my father and grandfather's time, at least, the apartment which was assigned to you last night, had been shut on account of reports that it was disturbed by supernatural sights and noises. When I came, a few weeks since, into possession of the estate, I thought the accommodation, which the castle afforded for my friends, was not extensive enough to permit the inhabitants of an invisible world to retain possession of a comfortable sleeping apartment. I therefore caused the Tapestried Chamber, as we call it, to be opened; and, without destroying its air of antiquity, I had such new articles of furniture placed in it as became the modern times. Yet as the opinion that the room was haunted very strongly prevailed among the domestics, and was also known in the neighbourhood and to many of my friends, I feared some prejudice might be entertained by the first occupant of the Tapestried Chamber, which might tend to revive the evil report which it had laboured under, and so disappoint my purpose of rendering it a useful part of the house. I must confess, my dear Browne, that your arrival yesterday, agreeable to me for a thousand reasons besides, seemed the most favourable opportunity of removing the unpleasant rumours which attached to the room, since your courage was indubitable, and your mind free of any preoccupation on the subject. I could not, therefore, have chosen a more fitting subject for my experiment."

"Upon my life," said General Browne, somewhat hastily, "I am infinitely obliged to your lordship—very particularly indebted indeed. I am likely to remember for some time the consequences of the experiment, as your lordship is pleased to call it."

"Nay, now you are unjust, my dear friend," said Lord Woodville. "You have only to reflect for a single moment, in order to be convinced that I could not augur the possibility of the pain to which you have been so unhappily exposed. I was yesterday morning a complete sceptic on the subject of supernatural appearances. Nay, I am sure that had I told you what was said about that room, those very reports would have induced you, by your own choice, to select it for your accommodation. It was my misfortune, perhaps my error, but really cannot be termed my fault, that you have been afflicted so strangely."

"Strangely indeed!" said the General, resuming his good temper; "and I acknowledge that I have no right to be offended with your lordship for treating me like what I used to think myself—a man of some firmness and courage. But I see my post horses are arrived, and I must not detain your lordship from your amusement."

"Nay, my old friend," said Lord Woodville, "since you cannot stay with us another day, which, indeed, I can no longer urge, give me at least half an hour more. You used to love pictures, and I have a gallery of portraits, some of them by Vandyke, representing ancestry to whom this property and castle formerly belonged. I think that several of them will strike you as possessing merit."

General Browne accepted the invitation, though somewhat unwillingly. It was evident he was not to breathe freely or at ease till he left Woodville Castle far behind him. He could not refuse his friend's invitation, however; and the less so, that he was a little ashamed of the peevishness which he had displayed towards his well-meaning entertainer.

The General, therefore, followed Lord Woodville through several rooms, into a long gallery hung with pictures, which the latter pointed out to his guest, telling the names, and giving some account of the personages whose portraits presented themselves in progression. General Browne was but little interested in the details which these accounts conveyed to him. They were, indeed, of the kind which are usually found in an old family gallery. Here was a cavalier who had ruined the estate in the royal cause; there a fine lady who had reinstated it by contracting a match with a wealthy Roundhead. There hung a gallant who had been in danger for corresponding with the exiled Court at Saint Germains; here one who had taken arms for William at the

Revolution; and there a third that had thrown his weight alternately into the scale of Whig and Tory.

While Lord Woodville was cramming these words into his guest's ear, "against the stomach of his sense," they gained the middle of the gallery, when he beheld General Browne suddenly start, and assume an attitude of the utmost surprise, not unmixed with fear, as his eyes were caught and suddenly riveted by a portrait of an old lady in a sacque, the fashionable dress of the end of the seventeenth century.

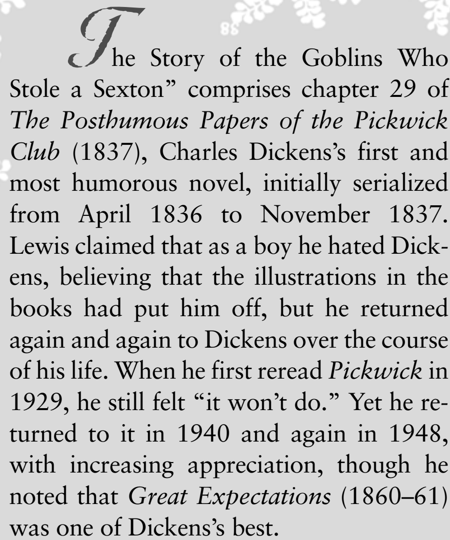
"There she is!" he exclaimed; "there she is in form and features, though inferior in demoniac expression to the accursed hag who visited me last night!"

"If that be the case," said the young nobleman, "there can remain no longer any doubt of the horrible reality of your apparition. That is the picture of a wretched ancestress of mine, of whose crimes a black and fearful catalogue is recorded in a family history in my charter-chest. The recital of them would be too horrible; it is enough to say, that in yon fatal apartment incest and unnatural murder were committed. I will restore it to the solitude to which the better judgment of those who preceded me had consigned it; and never shall any one, so long as I can prevent it, be exposed to a repetition of the supernatural horrors which could shake courage such as yours."

Thus the friends, who had met with such glee, parted in a very different mood; Lord Woodville to command the Tapestried Chamber to be unmantled, and the door built up; and General Browne to seek in some less beautiful country, and with some less dignified friend, forgetfulness of the painful night which he had passed in Woodville Castle.

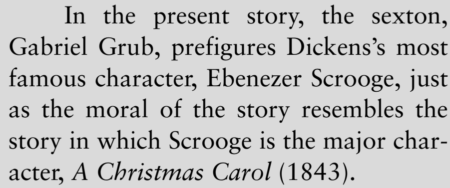
The Story of the Goblins Who Stole a Sexton

by Charles Dickens



"The Story of the Goblins Who Stole a Sexton" comprises chapter 29 of *The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club* (1837), Charles Dickens's first and most humorous novel, initially serialized from April 1836 to November 1837. Lewis claimed that as a boy he hated Dickens, believing that the illustrations in the books had put him off, but he returned again and again to Dickens over the course of his life. When he first reread *Pickwick* in 1929, he still felt "it won't do." Yet he returned to it in 1940 and again in 1948, with increasing appreciation, though he noted that *Great Expectations* (1860–61) was one of Dickens's best.

Dickens had a genius for depicting and naming humorous and eccentric characters, brought to life with a wealth of meaningful detail. One can see some of his influence on Lewis in the rather Dickensian cast of characters found in *That Hideous Strength,* and perhaps in the names of the devils, and the satire on bureaucracy, in *The Screwtape Letters*.



In the present story, the sexton, Gabriel Grub, prefigures Dickens's most famous character, Ebenezer Scrooge, just as the moral of the story resembles the story in which Scrooge is the major character, *A Christmas Carol* (1843).

In an old abbey town, down in this part of the country, a long, long while ago—so long, that the story must be a true one, because our great-grandfathers implicitly believed it—there officiated as sexton and grave-digger in the churchyard, one Gabriel Grub. It by no means follows that because a man is a sexton, and constantly surrounded by the emblems of mortality, therefore he should be a morose and melancholy man; your undertakers are the merriest fellows in the world; and I once had the honour of being on intimate terms with a mute, who in private life, and off duty, was as comical and jocose a little fellow as ever chirped out a devil-may-care song, without a hitch in his memory, or drained off a good stiff glass without stopping for breath. But notwithstanding these precedents to the contrary, Gabriel Grub was an ill-conditioned, cross-grained, surly fellow—a morose and lonely man, who consorted with nobody but himself, and an old wicker bottle which fitted into his large deep waistcoat pocket—and who eyed each merry face, as it passed him by, with such a deep scowl of malice and ill-humour, as it was difficult to meet without feeling something the worse for.

A little before twilight, one Christmas Eve, Gabriel shouldered his spade, lighted his lantern, and betook himself towards the old churchyard; for he had got a grave to finish by next morning, and, feeling very low, he thought it might raise his spirits, perhaps, if he went on with his work at once. As he went his way, up the ancient street, he saw the cheerful light of the blazing fires gleam through the old casements, and heard the loud laugh and the cheerful shouts of those who were assembled around them; he marked the bustling preparations for next day's cheer, and smelled the numerous savoury odours consequent thereupon, as they steamed up from the kitchen windows

in clouds. All this was gall and wormwood to the heart of Gabriel Grub; and when groups of children bounded out of the houses, tripped across the road, and were met, before they could knock at the opposite door, by half a dozen curly-headed little rascals who crowded round them as they flocked upstairs to spend the evening in their Christmas games, Gabriel smiled grimly, and clutched the handle of his spade with a firmer grasp, as he thought of measles, scarlet fever, thrush, whooping-cough, and a good many other sources of consolation besides.

In this happy frame of mind, Gabriel strode along, returning a short, sullen growl to the good-humoured greetings of such of his neighbours as now and then passed him, until he turned into the dark lane which led to the churchyard. Now, Gabriel had been looking forward to reaching the dark lane, because it was, generally speaking, a nice, gloomy, mournful place, into which the townspeople did not much care to go, except in broad daylight, and when the sun was shining; consequently, he was not a little indignant to hear a young urchin roaring out some jolly song about a merry Christmas, in this very sanctuary which had been called Coffin Lane ever since the days of the old abbey, and the time of the shaven-headed monks. As Gabriel walked on, and the voice drew nearer, he found it proceeded from a small boy, who was hurrying along, to join one of the little parties in the old street, and who, partly to keep himself company, and partly to prepare himself for the occasion, was shouting out the song at the highest pitch of his lungs. So Gabriel waited until the boy came up, and then dodged him into a corner, and rapped him over the head with his lantern five or six times, just to teach him to modulate his voice. And as the boy hurried away with his hand to his head, singing quite a different sort of tune, Gabriel Grub chuckled very heartily to himself, and entered the churchyard, locking the gate behind him.

He took off his coat, set down his lantern, and getting into the unfinished grave, worked at it for an hour or so with right goodwill. But the earth was hardened with the frost, and it was no very easy matter to break it up, and shovel it out; and although there was a moon, it was a very young one, and shed little light upon the grave, which was in the shadow of the church. At any other time, these obstacles would have made Gabriel Grub very moody and miserable, but he was so well pleased with having stopped the small boy's singing, that he took little heed of the scanty progress he had made, and looked down into the grave, when he had finished work for the night, with grim satisfaction, murmuring as he gathered up his things—

Brave lodgings for one, brave lodgings for one,
A few feet of cold earth, when life is done;
A stone at the head, a stone at the feet,
A rich, juicy meal for the worms to eat;
Rank grass overhead, and damp clay around,
Brave lodgings for one, these, in holy ground!

"Ho! ho!" laughed Gabriel Grub, as he sat himself down on a flat tombstone which was a favourite resting-place of his, and drew forth his wicker bottle. "A coffin at Christmas! A Christmas box! Ho! ho! ho!"

"Ho! ho! ho!" repeated a voice which sounded close behind him.

Gabriel paused, in some alarm, in the act of raising the wicker bottle to his lips, and looked round. The bottom of the oldest grave about him was not more still and quiet than the churchyard in the pale moonlight. The cold hoar frost glistened on the tombstones, and sparkled like rows of gems, among the stone carvings of the old church. The snow lay hard and crisp upon the ground; and spread over the thickly-strewn mounds of earth, so white and smooth a cover that it seemed as if corpses lay there, hidden only by their winding sheets. Not the faintest rustle broke the profound tranquillity of the solemn scene. Sound itself appeared to be frozen up, all was so cold and still.

"It was the echoes," said Gabriel Grub, raising the bottle to his lips again.

"It was *not*," said a deep voice.

Gabriel started up, and stood rooted to the spot with astonishment and terror; for his eyes rested on a form that made his blood run cold.

Seated on an upright tombstone, close to him, was a strange, unearthly figure, whom Gabriel felt at once, was no being of this world. His long, fantastic legs which might have reached the ground, were cocked up, and crossed after a quaint, fantastic fashion; his sinewy arms were bare; and his hands rested on his knees. On his short, round body, he wore a close covering, ornamented with small slashes; a short cloak dangled at his back; the collar was cut into curious peaks, which served the goblin in lieu of ruff or neckerchief; and his shoes curled up at his toes into long points. On his head, he wore a broad-brimmed sugar-loaf hat, garnished with a single feather. The hat was covered with the white frost; and the goblin looked as if he had sat on the same tombstone very comfortably, for two or three hundred years. He was sitting perfectly still; his tongue was put out, as if in derision; and he was grinning at Gabriel Grub with such a grin as only a goblin could call up.

"It was *not* the echoes," said the goblin.

Gabriel Grub was paralysed, and could make no reply.

"What do you do here on Christmas Eve?" said the goblin sternly.

"I came to dig a grave, Sir," stammered Gabriel Grub.

"What man wanders among graves and churchyards on such a night as this?" cried the goblin.

"Gabriel Grub! Gabriel Grub!" screamed a wild chorus of voices that seemed to fill the churchyard. Gabriel looked fearfully round—nothing was to be seen.

"What have you got in that bottle?" said the goblin.

"Hollands, sir," replied the sexton, trembling more than ever; for he had bought it of the smugglers, and he thought that perhaps his questioner might be in the excise department of the goblins.

"Who drinks Hollands alone, and in a churchyard, on such a night as this?" said the goblin.

"Gabriel Grub! Gabriel Grub!" exclaimed the wild voices again.

The goblin leered maliciously at the terrified sexton, and then raising his voice, exclaimed—

"And who, then, is our fair and lawful prize?"

To this inquiry the invisible chorus replied, in a strain that sounded like the voices of many choristers singing to the mighty swell of the old church organ—a strain that seemed borne to the sexton's ears upon a wild wind, and to die away as it passed onward; but the burden of the reply was still the same, "Gabriel Grub! Gabriel Grub!"

The goblin grinned a broader grin than before, as he said, "Well, Gabriel, what do you say to this?"

The sexton gasped for breath.

"What do you think of this, Gabriel?" said the goblin, kicking up his feet in the air on either side of the tombstone, and looking at the turned-up points with as much complacency as if he had been contemplating the most fashionable pair of Wellingtons in all Bond Street.

"It's—it's—very curious, Sir," replied the sexton, half dead with fright; "very curious, and very pretty, but I think I'll go back and finish my work, Sir, if you please."

"Work!" said the goblin, "what work?"

"The grave, Sir; making the grave," stammered the sexton.

"Oh, the grave, eh?" said the goblin; "who makes graves at a time when all other men are merry, and takes a pleasure in it?"

Again the mysterious voices replied, "Gabriel Grub! Gabriel Grub!"

"I am afraid my friends want you, Gabriel," said the goblin, thrusting his tongue farther into his cheek than ever—and a most astonishing tongue it was—"I'm afraid my friends want you, Gabriel," said the goblin.

"Under favour, Sir," replied the horror-stricken sexton, "I don't think they can, Sir; they don't know me, Sir; I don't think the gentlemen have ever seen me, Sir."

"Oh, yes, they have," replied the goblin; "we know the man with the sulky face and grim scowl, that came down the street to-night, throwing his evil looks at the children, and grasping his burying-spade the tighter. We know the man who struck the boy in the envious malice of his heart, because the boy could be merry, and he could not. We know him, we know him."

Here, the goblin gave a loud, shrill laugh, which the echoes returned twentyfold; and throwing his legs up in the air, stood upon his head, or rather upon the very point of his sugar-loaf hat, on the narrow edge of the tombstone, whence he threw a Somerset with extraordinary agility, right to the sexton's feet, at which he planted himself in the attitude in which tailors generally sit upon the shop-board.

"I—I—am afraid I must leave you, Sir," said the sexton, making an effort to move.

"Leave us!" said the goblin, "Gabriel Grub going to leave us. Ho! ho! ho!"

As the goblin laughed, the sexton observed, for one instant, a brilliant illumination within the windows of the church, as if the whole building were lighted up; it disappeared, the organ pealed forth a lively air, and whole troops of goblins, the very counterpart of the first one, poured into the churchyard, and began playing at leap-frog with the tombstones, never stopping for an instant to take breath, but "overing" the highest among them, one after the other, with the most marvellous dexterity. The first goblin was a most astonishing leaper, and none of the others could come near him; even in the extremity of his terror the sexton could not help observing, that while his friends were content to leap over the common-sized gravestones, the first one took the family vaults, iron railings and all, with as much ease as if they had been so many street-posts.

At last the game reached to a most exciting pitch; the organ played quicker and quicker, and the goblins leaped faster and faster, coiling themselves up, rolling head over heels upon the ground, and bounding over the tombstones like footballs. The sexton's brain whirled round with the rapidity

of the motion he beheld, and his legs reeled beneath him, as the spirits flew before his eyes; when the goblin king, suddenly darting towards him, laid his hand upon his collar, and sank with him through the earth.

When Gabriel Grub had had time to fetch his breath, which the rapidity of his descent had for the moment taken away, he found himself in what appeared to be a large cavern, surrounded on all sides by crowds of goblins, ugly and grim; in the centre of the room, on an elevated seat, was stationed his friend of the churchyard; and close behind him stood Gabriel Grub himself, without power of motion.

"Cold to-night," said the king of the goblins, "very cold. A glass of something warm here!"

At this command, half a dozen officious goblins, with a perpetual smile upon their faces, whom Gabriel Grub imagined to be courtiers, on that account, hastily disappeared, and presently returned with a goblet of liquid fire, which they presented to the king.

"Ah!" cried the goblin, whose cheeks and throat were transparent, as he tossed down the flame, "this warms one, indeed! Bring a bumper of the same, for Mr. Grub."

It was in vain for the unfortunate sexton to protest that he was not in the habit of taking anything warm at night; one of the goblins held him while another poured the blazing liquid down his throat; the whole assembly screeched with laughter, as he coughed and choked, and wiped away the tears which gushed plentifully from his eyes, after swallowing the burning draught.

"And now," said the king, fantastically poking the taper corner of his sugar-loaf hat into the sexton's eye, and thereby occasioning him the most exquisite pain; "and now, show the man of misery and gloom, a few of the pictures from our own great storehouse!"

As the goblin said this, a thick cloud which obscured the remoter end of the cavern rolled gradually away, and disclosed, apparently at a great distance, a small and scantily furnished, but neat and clean apartment. A crowd of little children were gathered round a bright fire, clinging to their mother's gown, and gambolling around her chair. The mother occasionally rose, and drew aside the window-curtain, as if to look for some expected object; a frugal meal was ready spread upon the table; and an elbow chair was placed near the fire. A knock was heard at the door; the mother opened it, and the children crowded round her, and clapped their hands for joy, as their father entered. He was wet and weary, and shook the snow from his garments, as the children crowded round him, and seizing his cloak, hat, stick, and gloves, with

busy zeal, ran with them from the room. Then, as he sat down to his meal before the fire, the children climbed about his knee, and the mother sat by his side, and all seemed happiness and comfort.

But a change came upon the view, almost imperceptibly. The scene was altered to a small bedroom, where the fairest and youngest child lay dying; the roses had fled from his cheek, and the light from his eye; and even as the sexton looked upon him with an interest he had never felt or known before, he died. His young brothers and sisters crowded round his little bed, and seized his tiny hand, so cold and heavy; but they shrank back from its touch, and looked with awe on his infant face; for calm and tranquil as it was, and sleeping in rest and peace as the beautiful child seemed to be, they saw that he was dead, and they knew that he was an angel looking down upon, and blessing them, from a bright and happy Heaven.

Again the light cloud passed across the picture, and again the subject changed. The father and mother were old and helpless now, and the number of those about them was diminished more than half; but content and cheerfulness sat on every face, and beamed in every eye, as they crowded round the fireside, and told and listened to old stories of earlier and bygone days. Slowly and peacefully, the father sank into the grave, and, soon after, the sharer of all his cares and troubles followed him to a place of rest. The few who yet survived them, kneeled by their tomb, and watered the green turf which covered it with their tears; then rose, and turned away, sadly and mournfully, but not with bitter cries, or despairing lamentations, for they knew that they should one day meet again; and once more they mixed with the busy world, and their content and cheerfulness were restored. The cloud settled upon the picture, and concealed it from the sexton's view.

"What do you think of *that*?" said the goblin, turning his large face towards Gabriel Grub.

Gabriel murmured out something about its being very pretty, and looked somewhat ashamed, as the goblin bent his fiery eyes upon him.

"You miserable man!" said the goblin, in a tone of excessive contempt. "You!" He appeared disposed to add more, but indignation choked his utterance, so he lifted up one of his very pliable legs, and, flourishing it above his head a little, to insure his aim, administered a good sound kick to Gabriel Grub; immediately after which, all the goblins in waiting crowded round the wretched sexton, and kicked him without mercy, according to the established and invariable custom of courtiers upon earth, who kick whom royalty kicks, and hug whom royalty hugs.

"Show him some more!" said the king of the goblins.

At these words, the cloud was dispelled, and a rich and beautiful landscape was disclosed to view—there is just such another, to this day, within half a mile of the old abbey town. The sun shone from out the clear blue sky, the water sparkled beneath his rays, and the trees looked greener, and the flowers more gay, beneath its cheering influence. The water rippled on with a pleasant sound, the trees rustled in the light wind that murmured among their leaves, the birds sang upon the boughs, and the lark carolled on high her welcome to the morning. Yes, it was morning; the bright, balmy morning of summer; the minutest leaf, the smallest blade of grass, was instinct with life. The ant crept forth to her daily toil, the butterfly fluttered and basked in the warm rays of the sun; myriads of insects spread their transparent wings, and revelled in their brief but happy existence. Man walked forth, elated with the scene; and all was brightness and splendour.

"*You* a miserable man!" said the king of the goblins, in a more contemptuous tone than before. And again the king of the goblins gave his leg a flourish; again it descended on the shoulders of the sexton; and again the attendant goblins imitated the example of their chief.

Many a time the cloud went and came, and many a lesson it taught to Gabriel Grub, who, although his shoulders smarted with pain from the frequent applications of the goblins' feet thereunto, looked on with an interest that nothing could diminish. He saw that men who worked hard, and earned their scanty bread with lives of labour, were cheerful and happy; and that to the most ignorant, the sweet face of Nature was a never-failing source of cheerfulness and joy. He saw those who had been delicately nurtured, and tenderly brought up, cheerful under privations, and superior to suffering, that would have crushed many of a rougher grain, because they bore within their own bosoms the materials of happiness, contentment, and peace. He saw that women, the tenderest and most fragile of all God's creatures, were the oftenest superior to sorrow, adversity, and distress; and he saw that it was because they bore, in their own hearts, an inexhaustible well-spring of affection and devotion. Above all, he saw that men like himself, who snarled at the mirth and cheerfulness of others, were the foulest weeds on the fair surface of the earth; and setting all the good of the world against the evil, he came to the conclusion that it was a very decent and respectable sort of world after all. No sooner had he formed it, than the cloud which had closed over the last picture, seemed to settle on his senses, and lull him to repose. One by one, the goblins faded from his sight; and, as the last one disappeared, he sank to sleep.

The day had broken when Gabriel Grub awoke, and found himself lying at full length on the flat gravestone in the churchyard, with the wicker bottle lying empty by his side, and his coat, spade, and lantern, all well whitened by the last night's frost, scattered on the ground. The stone on which he had first seen the goblin seated, stood bolt upright before him, and the grave at which he had worked, the night before, was not far off. At first, he began to doubt the reality of his adventures, but the acute pain in his shoulders when he attempted to rise, assured him that the kicking of the goblins was certainly not ideal. He was staggered again, by observing no traces of footsteps in the snow on which the goblins had played at leap-frog with the gravestones, but he speedily accounted for this circumstance when he remembered that, being spirits, they would leave no visible impression behind them. So, Gabriel Grub got on his feet as well as he could, for the pain in his back; and, brushing the frost off his coat, put it on, and turned his face towards the town.

But he was an altered man, and he could not bear the thought of returning to a place where his repentance would be scoffed at, and his reformation disbelieved. He hesitated for a few moments; and then turned away to wander where he might, and seek his bread elsewhere.

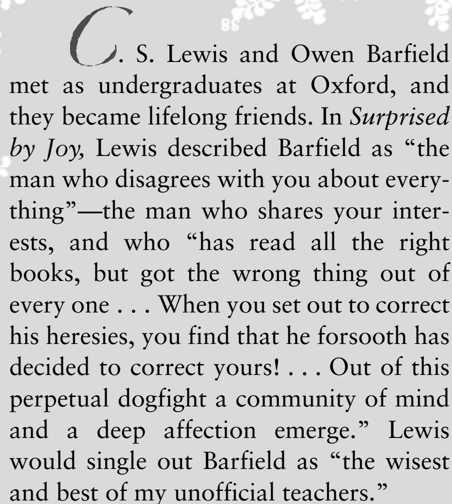
The lantern, the spade, and the wicker bottle were found, that day, in the churchyard. There were a great many speculations about the sexton's fate, at first, but it was speedily determined that he had been carried away by the goblins; and there were not wanting some very credible witnesses who had distinctly seen him whisked through the air on the back of a chestnut horse blind of one eye, with the hind-quarters of a lion, and the tail of a bear. At length all this was devoutly believed; and the new sexton used to exhibit to the curious, for a trifling emolument, a good-sized piece of the church weathercock which had been accidentally kicked off by the aforesaid horse in his aerial flight, and picked up by himself in the churchyard, a year or two afterwards.

Unfortunately, these stories were somewhat disturbed by the unlooked-for reappearance of Gabriel Grub himself, some ten years afterwards, a ragged, contented, rheumatic old man. He told his story to the clergyman, and also to the mayor; and in course of time it began to be received as a matter of history, in which form it has continued down to this very day. The believers in the weathercock tale, having misplaced their confidence once, were not easily prevailed upon to part with it again, so they looked as wise as they could, shrugged their shoulders, touched their foreheads, and murmured something about Gabriel Grub having drunk all the Hollands, and then fallen asleep on

the flat tombstone; and they affected to explain what he supposed he had witnessed in the goblin's cavern, by saying that he had seen the world, and grown wiser. But this opinion, which was by no means a popular one at any time, gradually died off; and be the matter how it may, as Gabriel Grub was afflicted with rheumatism to the end of his days, this story has at least one moral, if it teach no better one—and that is, that if a man turn sulky and drink by himself at Christmas time, he may make up his mind to be not a bit the better for it: let the spirits be never so good, or let them be even as many degrees beyond proof, as those which Gabriel Grub saw in the goblin's cavern.

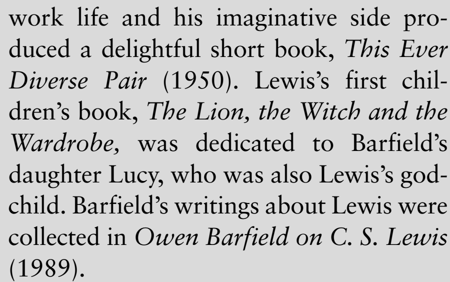
The Child and the Giant

by Owen Barfield



C. S. Lewis and Owen Barfield met as undergraduates at Oxford, and they became lifelong friends. In *Surprised by Joy,* Lewis described Barfield as "the man who disagrees with you about everything"—the man who shares your interests, and who "has read all the right books, but got the wrong thing out of every one . . . When you set out to correct his heresies, you find that he forsooth has decided to correct yours! . . . Out of this perpetual dogfight a community of mind and a deep affection emerge." Lewis would single out Barfield as "the wisest and best of my unofficial teachers."

Barfield's first book was a fairy tale, *The Silver Trumpet* (1925), which he followed with philosophical books about the relationship of language, myth, and perception, including a revision of his B. Litt. (Bachelor of Letters) thesis, *Poetic Diction* (1928), dedicated to Lewis. Barfield's work as a solicitor limited his literary output for many years, but his humorous examination of the contrast between his



work life and his imaginative side produced a delightful short book, *This Ever Diverse Pair* (1950). Lewis's first children's book, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe,* was dedicated to Barfield's daughter Lucy, who was also Lewis's godchild. Barfield's writings about Lewis were collected in *Owen Barfield on C. S. Lewis* (1989).

Barfield published only a small amount of fiction. "The Child and the Giant" was written in 1930 for the Upper School English Class at The New School, Streatham. It delightfully exhibits many of Barfield's interests in a lighter mode.

There was once a child who, having no father and mother, lived alone with a Giant in the middle of a deep forest. Things had been like this as long as the child could remember and, as he himself was always quite happy, he never stopped to inquire how they came to be so. How did the Giant live? Every night when the child was asleep, he used to creep out to the nearest town where he would catch a man or woman and eat them up. This is the way he kept himself alive—and it is perfectly true, although he never told the child anything about it.

One day, however, he did happen to mention by accident the word "man" while he was talking to the child. Whereupon the child, who did not remember ever seeing any living thing except the Giant himself and the beasts of the forest, asked:

"What is a man?"

"A man," replied the Giant quickly, feeling that he had made a mistake, "is—well it is a thing of no importance." And as he spoke, he looked sharply at the child. There was no denying it, the child was growing bigger! Now it had never occurred to the Giant before that such a thing as this could happen for, in spite of his enormous size, he was as stupid as an old sheep. Finding the

beasts and birds all too clever for him, he had stolen the child from its father and mother some years ago to be a companion to him. And now, thought the Giant, the child will grow up and get clever like the rest, and then I shall have no one to play with. What am I to do? And his great eyes filled with tears. For, in spite of his cruelty, he was a great baby at heart and liked playing childish games.

At last he remembered how he had heard that the Owl was the wisest of all birds, and resolved accordingly to ask its advice, for the Giant could understand the language of birds and beasts, though the child could not.

He went to the Owl, whom he found sitting perfectly still on the branch of a big oak-tree.

"How can I stop the child growing up and getting clever?" he asked. The Owl shifted one claw about half an inch to the right and set its head very slightly on one side.

"I will tell you:" it said, "tonight, when the child is asleep, cut open your breast and take out one of your heart-strings. With this make an Aeolian Harp, by stretching it tightly between two trees. Then the child will be so enchanted with the never-ending music, which the wind will make in the harp, that he will not *want* to grow up. And therefore he won't. And, besides that—" but here the Owl stopped short, thinking that perhaps after all he would not tell the Giant what else would happen if he were to make an Aeolian Harp out of his own heartstrings.

"Yes," said the Giant eagerly, "besides—"

"*Be sure* and tell him, never *on any account* to cut or break the string. For if it is cut, the child will suddenly grow through all the years he has missed in between. And besides that—."

But here the Owl stopped once more, thinking that perhaps after all he would not tell the Giant what else would happen if the Aeolian Harp broke.

"Yes," said the Giant, "besides that—"

"Besides that—" said the Owl, "it's time for me to go to sleep again. Good day to you!" And he shifted his claw half an inch to the left, set his head straight, hunched up his shoulders round his ears, winked one eye and went off to sleep with both eyes wide open.

So that night the Giant did as the Owl had told him, and when the child woke in the morning he was so delighted with the never-ending music which the changing breezes made as they trembled through the Giant's heart-string, where it hung stretched taut between two trees, that he would sit for days on end listening to the mournful and magical sound and also watching the inces-

sant ripples on the surface of a little pool of water which had collected underneath the trees during the night. For though the wind blew sometimes stronger and sometimes weaker, blowing through the harp-string and sounding it, and though the ripples were sometimes higher and sometimes lower and the sound swelled now louder and now again more faintly, yet day and night the wind never *quite* dropped, and day and night therefore the ripples rippled and the string sang out.

Moreover (and this was the *first* thing which the Owl had suddenly thought perhaps he wouldn't tell the Giant) the effect of this wonderful new music was such that the child could now understand the language of the birds and beasts just as well as the Giant could. Here was a new source of delight. He would listen and listen and listen to all that they said to one another and was as happy as the day is long. The Giant was also very happy now that he felt he had secured his companion to himself forever.

One day the child sat beside the Harp listening idly to its music and, at the same time, to two or three rather mischievous young swallows who were swooping and darting and wheeling through the summer air with shrill little screams of delight. The child noticed that each swallow screamed out something particularly loud every time it swooped past a certain old oak tree that stood near. This made him curious, so he got up and walked over to it. Sure enough there was an old Owl sitting on one of the branches, quite still and very solemn, like an ugly old professor with a large round pair of spectacles on his nose. And every time one of these rude young swallows darted past the Owl, it screamed out something like this:

Owl, Owl, with your ugly great jowl:
You really are the funniest fowl!

They were hoping to annoy it. But the wise old bird simply sat there, taking no notice of them whatever, and the child couldn't help thinking how strange it was that, while the swallows never left off flying to and fro from the moment they woke up to the moment they went to sleep (for their food consisted of little flies which they caught on the wing), yet the Owl spent quite a lot of time just sitting still. The child wondered what it felt like to fly.

"I say, Swallow," he cried next time one of the youngsters passed near him, "what does it feel like to fly?"

"What is that you say?" asked the Swallow flying round the child's head as it spoke, for it could not stop flying even for a moment.

"What does it feel like to fly?" asked the child again.

"To fly," said the Swallow. "What does that mean? I don't know the word." And it started screaming out: "To-fly-ee! To-fly-ee! To-fly-ee! What a funny word!"

"Why!" said the child, "that's impossible. You're flying yourself all day long."

"I?" replied the Swallow. "Nonsense, I'm nothing of the sort. I'm a swallow!"

The child saw that he would never make the Swallow understand, so he turned to the Owl.

"Do you know what it feels like to fly, Owl?" he asked.

"Of course," said the Owl gravely.

"How is it that *you* know, if the Swallow doesn't?"

"Because I can sit still just as easily as I can fly," said the Owl.

"Tell me what it does feel like!" said the child.

"I don't see any particular reason why I *should*," replied the Owl. "And it would be no use if I *did*. For the only way to find out is by flying yourself. However, when you can answer the question I am going to ask *you*, perhaps I will. But by that time you will know already."

"What is your question, Owl?" asked the child.

"This," said the Owl: "What does it feel like to be a child?" The child laughed.

"That's easy!" he cried. "It feels like—it feels like—" and he tried with all his might to think of some words. "Well, it feels like being *me*!" he said at last.

"I don't call that an answer!" said the Owl. "It is exactly what the Swallow said."

Now by this time the child was *longing* with all his heart and soul to know what it feels like to fly. "I don't know what it feels like to be a child," he said to the Owl humbly. "Will you please tell me how I can find out, so that I can answer your question?"

"Certainly," said the Owl. "Go and ask the White Fairy!"

"But where shall I find the White Fairy?" inquired the child.

"Follow me!" said the Owl. And he flew off with long slow lazy flaps of his wings, the child following behind.

"And how shall I know the White Fairy, when I see her?" asked the child, as they went.

"You will know her easily," said the Owl, "because her face will be the

most beautiful face and her voice the most beautiful voice that you can possibly imagine!"

But when at last they reached a large clearing in the forest, which the child had never seen before, the Owl flew on ahead. It flew on faster and faster, until before long it had left the child quite a long way behind. The last thing the child saw of the Owl was when it flapped its wings three times in a peculiar way over a little hut in the middle of the clearing—the only one the child had ever seen in the forest—before vanishing suddenly out of sight. That must be meant for a sign that the White Fairy lives *there*! thought the child, so when he came up to the hut, he knocked on the door.

"What do you want?" cried a voice inside. It did not sound like a very beautiful voice.

The child thought he could easily imagine a much more beautiful one. So he asked if it were indeed the White Fairy speaking, whereat the voice immediately said, "Yes!"

"Well," cried the child, "I want to know how to find out what it feels like to be a child!"

"You shall!" replied the voice from within, "You shall!" and with that the door opened and a dreadful old creature with a nose like a meat hook and a skin like a piece of lawyers parchment came hobbling out of the hut. She was dressed in *black* from head to foot, and carried under her arm an enormous pair of shears.

"Ha! ha!" she cried out, chuckling ferociously and rubbing her hands together with glee. "*I'll* soon show you! Come along back, dear!" But now the poor child thought in dismay: Oh, this *can't* be the White Fairy! and he tried to tell the old woman that he had changed his mind and did not really want any answer to his question now.

"Nonsense!" replied the Old Woman, "a question asked is a question asked, and the sun, moon and stars together cannot unask it again. Come along with you!" And she caught the child's wrist in her bony fingers with a grip like iron and began hurrying him along the way he had come, for although she hobbled, she moved surprisingly fast over the ground.

Before long they were back at the place where the Giant lived. The Giant was away hunting food for the child.

The White Fairy let go of the child's hand and with one swift stride pounced on the harp-string which she snipped and snipped through in several places with her sharp shears.

"That will teach you what you want to know, my dear!" she said, with

a chuckle, and immediately hobbled off again as fast as she had come. At the same instant there was a terrible roar of pain, and then another and another, as the Giant came staggering in and fell down stone dead under one of the trees.

The thread of his life had been cut with the snapping of his heart-string; and that was the *second* thing that the Owl had thought it better not to tell the Giant, when he had begun asking it questions.

Hopeless was the desolation of the unhappy child from now on. Not only was he alone in the forest with no-one to care for him, but his favourite, if not his only toy, the great Aeolian Harp, was silenced forever, and with it were silenced for him the voices of birds and beasts and insects. He could no longer understand them. Moreover with the snapping of the heart-string, the very wind dropped dead, so that there was no longer so much as a murmur from the leaves of the trees. As for the little pool, the child no longer had the heart even to look upon it.

For all he knew it might be drying up altogether, for day followed day, week followed week and month followed month, without any rain falling on the forest. Meanwhile he himself moved away to another part of the forest. He felt sure he must die of hunger, for he had never before had to do anything for himself, the Giant having brought him every bite of food he could remember eating.

But necessity is a stern master, and the child was surprised to find how strong he was, now that he had to be so. Thus he contrived to make himself a bow and arrows and with these he hunted the wild beasts and so kept himself miserably alive. But every night when he had finished his labours and made himself safe, he would wring his hands in despair and wish himself dead, crying out aloud, as he lay down to sleep, "What a hopeless fate is mine! Life alone in this huge forest is worse than death, yet such a life is all I have to look forward to, till my dying day, and then I shall lie down alone like a wild beast and the crows will peck my eyes out perhaps before I am dead, and my bones will whiten in the glaring sun!"

One night, however, the thought of bones reminded him of his dear friend, the Giant, whose body he had left unburied. So the next morning he hastened back to the old spot, and there sure enough were the Giant's huge bones all picked clean by the crows and bleached white by the sun. What surprised him still more was to see the old Owl, which had given him such bad advice, now sitting reflectively on the Giant's skull. Full of rage the child at once grasped his bow and took aim.

"Don't shoot!" said the Owl quietly, and the child nearly dropped the bow in his astonishment. For since the breaking of the harp he had no longer been able to understand what any of the birds said.

"How is it I am still able to understand you?" he asked the Owl.

"Because," said the Owl, "I happen to be the one creature left that you *can* understand. But do not waste time asking questions. Do what I tell you!" Now when the child remembered what had come about before from his doing what the Owl told him, he was not much inclined to obey this suggestion. But then he thought to himself: If the Owl is the only creature in the forest I can understand, I may as well do what it says. Whatever happens, I can scarcely be worse off than I am now. Besides I have a bow and arrows, and if it deceives me again, I will shoot it.

So he agreed to do what the Owl told him and the first thing was to look about on the ground among the bones and pick up the snapped pieces of harp-string. The crows, which had eaten the rest of the Giant's heart, had found these much too dry and stringy, so they had let them lie. He found seven of them and when he had collected them together, the Owl told him to find the Giant's breast bone. So he found this and then, with help of the wise Owl's advice, he bored holes in it and fastened the seven broken strings, which were all of different lengths, side by side across the breast bone, stretching them good and tight.

"Well?" he said, as he finished doing all this.

"I leave the rest to you!" said the Owl, and it flew away. The child sat down and could not avoid thinking sorrowfully of the many happy days he had spent in the past with the great creature, whose breast bone and heart-strings were all that he now held in his hands. As he did so, his fingers began to pluck idly at the strings, and immediately, to his great surprise, there arose from them a burst of harmony so sweet, so pure, so joyful and yet, in the same breath, so unutterably sad that it thrilled him to the very marrow of his bones. He plucked the strings again, and again there came swelling forth from them a wonderful burst of harmony—far, far more wonderful than anything the Aeolian Harp had ever given forth. For whereas that had sounded one note only, this sang many different ones, all of them mingling together in a noble union. The child sat on, plucking at the strings, like one enchanted. The Giant's clumsy and cruel limbs might indeed be dead forever, but his childish and companionable heart seemed to live on in these waves of liquid music.

By now the sun had sunk low in the sky, but there sat the child still plucking melody upon melody from the strings and weaving them together into one another with a skill that seemed to come less from his own fingers than from

the strings on which they played. And though he did not at first notice it, every time he began to play, all the beasts and birds ceased from their movements, the insects were silent in the grass, and the grass itself stopped growing to listen. Even the restless swallows came and perched beside him, as if they had been swallows moulded from clay, and waited without stirring so much as a feather until his fingers should come to rest again and the music die away. But as soon as he ceased playing, the beasts all returned to their natural movements and occupations, and now each creature seemed to know what it was doing and to be speaking of it to the others.

"I am crawling!" said the snake, "I like it!"

"I am buzzing!" said the fly, "Buzz-z-zing yezz! buz-z-z-z-zing, I am!"

"I am eating," murmured a gazelle contentedly.

"So am I!" roared a lion.

"And I am being eaten!" called out the kid, which was just then between the lion's jaws. And, whether it were the influence of the music or simply the child's imagination, or for some other cause, the kid positively did not seem to mind being eaten at all!

"And I am flying!" shrieked a young swallow. "Swoop! Whoop! Look out! Flyee-ing! Isn't it lovely!"

The child rose to his feet and gazed into the pool of water, whose surface, unruffled by any wind, reflected his own figure back to him for the first time in his life. He saw a tall man crowned with a garland of flowers and holding in his hands a lyre.

"Why, I am a man!" he exclaimed in surprise.

"You are a poet!" screamed the swallows circling round his head. It was they who had crowned him with the flowers.

"One and the same thing!" said a voice behind him. It was the Owl's, and the child, or rather the man, wondered how it was he had never noticed before that that voice was the most beautiful voice he could possibly imagine. He turned round to speak to the Owl and saw to his surprise, not a bird standing there but a tall white being with the most beautiful face in the world.

"Who are you?" he asked, "if you are not the Owl?"

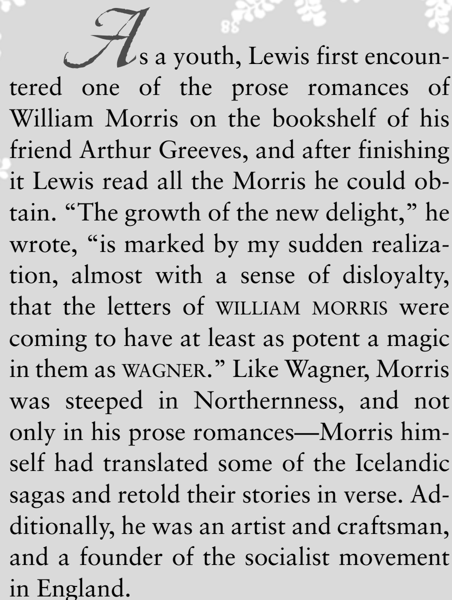
"I am the White Fairy."

"Why did you do all this?" asked the man, greatly puzzled.

"To teach you what it feels like to fly," said the White Fairy and, as she spoke, she spread wide her beautiful wings and caught up the man with her, so that the two of them floated high over the forest together, and there they are floating still for all I know.

A King's Lesson

by William Morris



As a youth, Lewis first encountered one of the prose romances of William Morris on the bookshelf of his friend Arthur Greeves, and after finishing it Lewis read all the Morris he could obtain. "The growth of the new delight," he wrote, "is marked by my sudden realization, almost with a sense of disloyalty, that the letters of WILLIAM MORRIS were coming to have at least as potent a magic in them as WAGNER." Like Wagner, Morris was steeped in Northernness, and not only in his prose romances—Morris himself had translated some of the Icelandic sagas and retold their stories in verse. Additionally, he was an artist and craftsman, and a founder of the socialist movement in England.

Lewis was pleased in 1930 to acquire a set of the twenty-four volumes of *The Collected Works of William Morris* (1910–15), edited by his daughter May Morris. Lewis noted: "I am delighted with the Morris, tho it seems to be rather carelessly printed." Lewis's mature evalu-

ation of Morris, read to the Martlet Society in November 1937, can be found in his *Selected Literary Essays*.

The story "A King's Lesson" is one of the few works by Morris in which he explicitly mixed his political views in with his fantasy writing. It was originally published in *The Commonweal* for September 18, 1886.

It is told of Matthias Corvinus, king of Hungary—the Alfred the Great of his time and people—that he once heard (once *only?*) that some (only *some*, my lad?) of his peasants were over-worked and under-fed. So he sent for his Council, and bade come thereto also some of the mayors of the good towns, and some of the lords of land and their bailiffs, and asked them of the truth thereof; and in diverse ways they all told one and the same tale, how the peasant carles were stout and well able to work and had enough and to spare of meat and drink, seeing that they were but churls; and how if they worked not at the least as hard as they did, it would be ill for them and ill for their lords; for that the more the churl hath the more he asketh; and that when he knoweth wealth, he knoweth the lack of it also, as it fared with our first parents in the Garden of God. The King sat and said but little while they spake, but he misdoubted them that they were liars. So the Council brake up with nothing done; but the King took the matter to heart, being, as kings go, a just man, besides being more valiant than they mostly were, even in the old feudal time. So within two or three days, says the tale, he called together such lords and councillors as he deemed fittest, and bade busk them for a ride; and when they were ready he and they set out, over rough and smooth, decked out in all the glory of attire which was the wont of those days. Thus they rode till they came to some village or thorpe of the peasant folk, and through it to the vineyards where men were working on the sunny southern slopes that went up from the river: my tale does not say whether that were Theiss, or Donau, or what river. Well, I judge it was late spring or early summer, and the vines but

just beginning to show their grapes; for the vintage is late in those lands, and some of the grapes are not gathered till the first frosts have touched them, whereby the wine made from them is the stronger and sweeter. Anyhow there were the peasants, men and women, boys and young maidens, toiling and swinking; some hoeing between the vine-rows, some bearing baskets of dung up the steep slopes, some in one way, some in another, labouring for the fruit they should never eat, and the wine they should never drink. Thereto turned the King and got off his horse and began to climb up the stony ridges of the vineyard, and his lords in like manner followed him, wondering in their hearts what was toward; but to the one who was following next after him he turned about and said with a smile, "Yea, lords, this is a new game we are playing to-day, and a new knowledge will come from it." And the lord smiled, but somewhat sourly.

As for the peasants, great was their fear of those gay and golden lords. I judge that they did not know the King, since it was little likely that any one of them had seen his face; and they knew of him but as the Great Father, the mighty warrior who kept the Turk from harrying their thorpe. Though, forsooth, little matter was it to any man there whether Turk or Magyar was their over-lord, since to one master or another they had to pay the due tale of labouring days in the year, and hard was the livelihood that they earned for themselves on the days when they worked for themselves and their wives and children.

Well, belike they knew not the King; but amidst those rich lords they saw and knew their own lord, and of him they were sore afraid. But nought it availed them to flee away from those strong men and strong horses—they who had been toiling from before the rising of the sun, and now it wanted little more than an hour of noon: besides, with the King and lords was a guard of crossbowmen, who were left the other side of the vineyard wall,—keen-eyed Italians of the mountains, straight shooters of the bolt. So the poor folk fled not; nay they made as if all this were none of their business, and went on with their work. For indeed each man said to himself, "If I be the one that is not slain, to-morrow I shall lack bread if I do not work my hardest to-day; and maybe I shall be headman if some of these be slain and I live."

Now comes the King amongst them and says: "Good fellows, which of you is the headman?"

Spake a man, sturdy and sunburnt, well on in years and grizzled: "I am the headman, lord."

"Give me thy hoe, then," says the King; "for now shall I order this mat-

ter myself, since these lords desire a new game, and are fain to work under me at vine-dressing. But do thou stand by me and set me right if I order them wrong: but the rest of you go play!"

The carle knew not what to think, and let the King stand with his hand stretched out, while he looked askance at his own lord and baron, who wagged his head at him grimly as one who says, "Do it, dog!"

Then the carle lets the hoe come into the King's hand; and the King falls to, and orders his lords for vine-dressing, to each his due share of the work: and whiles the carle said yea and whiles nay to his ordering. And then ye should have seen velvet cloaks cast off, and mantles of fine Flemish scarlet go to the dusty earth; as the lords and knights busked them to the work.

So they buckled to; and to most of them it seemed good game to play at vine-dressing. But one there was who, when his scarlet cloak was off, stood up in a doublet of glorious Persian web of gold and silk, such as men make not now, worth a hundred florins the Bremen ell. Unto him the King with no smile on his face gave the job of toing and froing up and down the hill with the biggest and the frailest dung-basket that there was; and thereat the silken lord screwed up a grin, that was sport to see, and all the lords laughed; and as he turned away he said, yet so that none heard him, "Do I serve this son's son of a whore that he should bid me carry dung?" For you must know that the King's father, John Hunyad, one of the great warriors of the world, the Hammer of the Turks, was not gotten in wedlock, though he were a king's son.

Well, they sped the work bravely for a while, and loud was the laughter as the hoes smote the earth and the flint stones tinkled and the cloud of dust rose up; the brocaded dung-bearer went up and down, cursing and swearing by the White God and the Black; and one would say to another, "See ye how gentle blood outgoes churls' blood, even when the gentle does the churl's work: these lazy loons smote but one stroke to our three." But the King, who worked no worse than any, laughed not at all; and meanwhile the poor folk stood by, not daring to speak a word one to the other; for they were still sore afraid, not now of being slain on the spot, but this rather was in their hearts: "These great and strong lords and knights have come to see what work a man may do without dying: if we are to have yet more days added to our year's tale of lords' labour, then are we lost without remedy." And their hearts sank within them.

So sped the work; and the sun rose yet higher in the heavens, and it was noon and more. And now there was no more laughter among those toiling lords, and the strokes of the hoe and mattock came far slower, while the dung-

bearer sat down at the bottom of the hill and looked out on the river; but the King yet worked on doggedly, so for shame the other lords yet kept at it. Till at last the next man to the King let his hoe drop with a clatter, and swore a great oath. Now he was a strong black-bearded man in the prime of life, a valiant captain of that famous Black Band that had so often rent the Turkish array; and the King loved him for his sturdy valour; so he says to him, "Is aught wrong, Captain?"

"Nay, lord," says he, "ask the headman carle yonder what ails us."

"Headman," says the King, "what ails these strong knights? Have I ordered them wrongly?"

"Nay, but shirking ails them, lord," says he, "for they are weary; and no wonder, for they have been playing hard, and are of gentle blood."

"Is that so, lord," says the King, "that ye are weary already?"

Then the rest hung their heads and said nought, all save that captain of war; and he said, being a bold man and no liar: "King, I see what thou wouldst be at; thou hast brought us here to preach us a sermon from that Plato of thine; and to say sooth, so that I may swink no more, and go eat my dinner, now preach thy worst! Nay, if thou wilt be priest I will be thy deacon. Wilt thou that I ask this labouring carle a thing or two?"

"Yea," said the King. And there came, as it were, a cloud of thought over his face.

Then the captain straddled his legs and looked big, and said to the carle: "Good fellow, how long have we been working here?"

"Two hours or thereabout, judging by the sun above us," says he.

"And how much of thy work have we done in that while?" says the captain, and winks his eye at him withal.

"Lord," says the carle, grinning a little despite himself, "be not wroth with my word. In the first half-hour ye did five-and-forty minutes' work of ours, and in the next half-hour scant a thirty minutes' work, and the third half-hour a fifteen minutes' work, and in the fourth half-hour two minutes' work." The grin now had faded from his face, but a gleam came into his eyes as he said: "And now, as I suppose, your day's work is done, and ye will go to your dinner, and eat the sweet and drink the strong; and we shall eat a little rye-bread, and then be working here till after the sun has set and the moon has begun to cast shadows. Now for you, I wot not how ye shall sleep nor where, nor what white body ye shall hold in your arms while the night flits and the stars shine; but for us, while the stars yet shine, shall we be at it again, and bethink ye for what! I know not what game and play ye shall be devising for to-

morrow as ye ride back home; but for us when we come back here to-morrow, it shall be as if there had been no yesterday and nothing done therein, and that work of that to-day shall be nought to us also, for we shall win no respite from our toil thereby, and the morrow of to-morrow will all be to begin again once more, and so on and on till no to-morrow abideth us. Therefore, if ye are thinking to lay some new tax or tale upon us, think twice of it, for we may not bear it. And all this I say with the less fear, because I perceive this man here beside me, in the black velvet jerkin and the gold chain on his neck, is the King; nor do I think he will slay me for my word since he hath so many a Turk before him and his mighty sword!"

Then said the captain: "Shall I smite the man, O King? or hath he preached thy sermon for thee?"

"Smite not, for he hath preached it," said the King. "Hearken to the carle's sermon, lords and councillors of mine! Yet when another hath spoken our thought, other thoughts are born therefrom, and now have I another sermon to preach; but I will refrain me as now. Let us down and to our dinner."

So they went, the King and his gentles, and sat down by the river under the rustle of the poplars, and they ate and drank and were merry. And the King bade bear up the broken meats to the vine-dressers, and a good draught of the archer's wine, and to the headman he gave a broad gold piece, and to each man three silver pennies. But when the poor folk had all that under their hands, it was to them as though the kingdom of heaven had come down to earth.

In the cool of the evening home rode the King and his lords. The King was distraught and silent; but at last the captain, who rode beside him, said to him: "Preach me now thine after-sermon, O King!"

"I think thou knowest it already," said the King, "else hadst thou not spoken in such wise to the carle; but tell me what is thy craft and the craft of all these, whereby ye live, as the potter by making pots, and so forth?"

Said the captain: "As the potter lives by making pots, so we live by robbing the poor."

Again said the King: "And my trade?"

Said he, "Thy trade is to be a king of such thieves, yet no worser than the rest."

The King laughed.

"Bear that in mind," said he, "and then shall I tell thee my thought while yonder carle spake. 'Carle,' I thought, 'were I thou or such as thou, then would I take in my hand a sword or a spear, or were it only a hedge-stake, and

bid others do the like, and forth would we go; and since we would be so many, and with nought to lose save a miserable life, we would do battle and prevail, and make an end of the craft of kings and of lords and of usurers, and there should be but one craft in the world, to wit, to work merrily for ourselves and to live merrily thereby.' "

Said the captain: "This then is thy sermon. Who will heed it if thou preach it?"

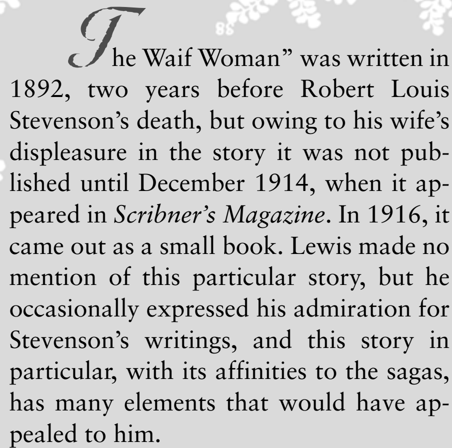
Said the King: "They who will take the mad king and put him in a king's madhouse, therefore do I forbear to preach it. Yet it *shall* be preached."

"And not heeded," said the captain, "save by those who head and hang the setters forth of new things that are good for the world. Our trade is safe for many and many a generation."

And therewith they came to the King's palace, and they ate and drank and slept and the world went on its ways.

The Waif Woman: A Cue—From a Saga

by Robert Louis Stevenson



The Waif Woman” was written in 1892, two years before Robert Louis Stevenson’s death, but owing to his wife’s displeasure in the story it was not published until December 1914, when it appeared in *Scribner’s Magazine*. In 1916, it came out as a small book. Lewis made no mention of this particular story, but he occasionally expressed his admiration for Stevenson’s writings, and this story in particular, with its affinities to the sagas, has many elements that would have appealed to him.

This is a tale of Iceland, the isle of stories, and of a thing that befell in the year of the coming there of Christianity.

In the spring of that year a ship sailed from the South Isles to traffic, and fell becalmed inside Snowfellness. The winds had speeded her; she was the first comer of the year; and the fishers drew alongside to hear the news of the south, and eager folk put out in boats to see the merchandise and make prices. From the doors of the hall on Frodis Water, the house folk saw the ship becalmed and the boats about her, coming and going; and the merchants from the ship could see the smoke go up and the men and women trooping to their meals in the hall.

The goodman of that house was called Finnward Keelfarer, and his wife Aud the Light-Minded; and they had a son Eyolf, a likely boy, and a daughter Asdis, a slip of a maid. Finnward was well-to-do in his affairs, he kept open house and had good friends. But Aud his wife was not so much considered: her mind was set on trifles, on bright clothing, and the admiration of men, and the envy of women; and it was thought she was not always so circumspect in her bearing as she might have been, but nothing to hurt.

On the evening of the second day men came to the house from sea. They told of the merchandise in the ship, which was well enough and to be had at easy rates, and of a waif woman that sailed in her, no one could tell why, and had chests of clothes beyond comparison, fine coloured stuffs, finely woven, the best that ever came into that island, and gewgaws for a queen. At the hearing of that Aud's eyes began to glisten. She went early to bed; and the day was not yet red before she was on the beach, had a boat launched, and was pulling to the ship. By the way she looked closely at all boats, but there was no woman in any; and at that she was better pleased, for she had no fear of the men.

When they came to the ship, boats were there already, and the merchants and the shore folk sat and jested and chaffered in the stern. But in the fore part

of the ship, the woman sat alone, and looked before her sourly at the sea. They called her Thorgunna. She was as tall as a man and high in flesh, a buxom wife to look at. Her hair was of the dark red, time had not changed it. Her face was dark, the cheeks full, and the brow smooth. Some of the merchants told that she was sixty years of age and others laughed and said she was but forty; but they spoke of her in whispers, for they seemed to think that she was ill to deal with and not more than ordinary canny.

Aud went to where she sat and made her welcome to Iceland. Thorgunna did the honours of the ship. So for a while they carried it on, praising and watching each other, in the way of women. But Aud was a little vessel to contain a great longing, and presently the cry of her heart came out of her.

"The folk say," says she, "you have the finest women's things that ever came to Iceland?" and as she spoke her eyes grew big.

"It would be strange if I had not," quoth Thorgunna. "Queens have no finer."

So Aud begged that she might see them.

Thorgunna looked on her askance. "Truly," said she, "the things are for no use but to be shown." So she fetched a chest and opened it. Here was a cloak of the rare scarlet laid upon with silver, beautiful beyond belief; hard by was a silver brooch of basket-work that was wrought as fine as any shell and was as broad as the face of the full moon; and Aud saw the clothes lying folded in the chest, of all the colours of the day, and fire, and precious gems; and her heart burned with envy. So, because she had so huge a mind to buy, she began to make light of the merchandise. "They are good enough things," says she, "though I have better in my chest at home. It is a good enough cloak, and I am in need of a new cloak." At that she fingered the scarlet, and the touch of the fine stuff went to her mind like singing. "Come," says she, "if it were only for your civility in showing it, what will you have for your cloak?"

"Woman," said Thorgunna, "I am no merchant." And she closed the chest and locked it, like one angry.

Then Aud fell to protesting and caressing her. That was Aud's practice; for she thought if she hugged and kissed a person none could say her nay. Next she went to flattery, said she knew the things were too noble for the like of her—they were made for a stately, beautiful woman like Thorgunna; and at that she kissed her again, and Thorgunna seemed a little pleased. And now Aud pled poverty and begged for the cloak in a gift; and now she vaunted the wealth of her goodman and offered ounces and ounces of fine

silver, the price of three men's lives. Thorgunna smiled, but it was a grim smile, and still she shook her head. At last Aud wrought herself into extremity and wept. "I would give my soul for it," she cried.

"Fool!" said Thorgunna. "But there have been fools before you!" And a little after, she said this: "Let us be done with beseeching. The things are mine. I was a fool to show you them; but where is their use, unless we show them? Mine they are and mine they shall be till I die. I have paid for them dear enough," said she.

Aud saw it was of no avail; so she dried her tears, and asked Thorgunna about her voyage, and made believe to listen while she plotted in her little mind. "Thorgunna," she asked presently, "do you count kin with any folk in Iceland?"

"I count kin with none," replied Thorgunna. "My kin is of the greatest, but I have not been always lucky, so I say the less."

"So that you have no house to pass the time in till the ship return?" cries Aud. "Dear Thorgunna, you must come and live with us. My goodman is rich, his hand and his house are open, and I will cherish you like a daughter."

At that Thorgunna smiled on the one side; but her soul laughed within her at the woman's shallowness. "I will pay her for that word *daughter*," she thought, and she smiled again.

"I will live with you gladly," says she, "for your house has a good name, and I have seen the smoke of your kitchen from the ship. But one thing you shall understand. I make no presents, I give nothing where I go—not a rag and not an ounce. Where I stay, I work for my upkeep; and as I am strong as a man and hardy as an ox, they that have had the keeping of me were the better pleased."

It was a hard job for Aud to keep her countenance, for she was like to have wept. And yet she felt it would be unseemly to eat her invitation; and like a shallow woman and one that had always led her husband by the nose, she told herself she would find some means to cajole Thorgunna and come by her purpose after all. So she put a good face on the thing, had Thorgunna into the boat, her and her two great chests, and brought her home with her to the hall by the beach.

All the way in she made much of the wife; and when they were arrived gave her a locked bed-place in the hall, where was a bed, a table, and a stool, and space for the two chests.

"This shall be yours while you stay here," said Aud. And she attended on her guest.

Now Thorgunna opened the second chest and took out her bedding—sheets of English linen, the like of it never seen, a cover of quilted silk, and curtains of purple wrought with silver. At the sight of these Aud was like one distracted, greed blinded her mind; the cry rose strong in her throat, it must out.

"What will you sell your bedding for?" she cried, and her cheeks were hot.

Thorgunna looked upon her with a dusky countenance. "Truly you are a courteous hostess," said she, "but I will not sleep on straw for your amusement."

At that Aud's two ears grew hot as her cheeks; and she took Thorgunna at her word; and left her from that time in peace.

The woman was as good as her spoken word. Inside the house and out she wrought like three, and all that she put her hand to was well done. When she milked, the cows yielded beyond custom; when she made hay, it was always dry weather; when she took her turn at the cooking, the folk licked their spoons. Her manners when she pleased were outside imitation, like one that had sat with kings in their high buildings. It seemed she was pious too, and the day never passed but she was in the church there praying. The rest was not so well. She was of few words, and never one about her kin and fortunes. Gloom sat on her brow, and she was ill to cross. Behind her back they gave her the name of the Waif Woman or the Wind Wife; to her face it must always be Thorgunna. And if any of the young men called her *mother*, she would speak no more that day, but sit apart in the hall and mutter with her lips.

"This is a queer piece of goods that we have gotten," says Finnward Keelfarer, "I wish we get no harm by her! But the goodwife's pleasure must be done," said he, which was his common word.

When she was at work, Thorgunna wore the rudest of plain clothes, though ever clean as a cat; but at night in the hall she was more dainty, for she loved to be admired. No doubt she made herself look well, and many thought she was a comely woman still, and to those she was always favourable and full of pleasant speech. But the more that some pleased her, it was thought by good judges that they pleased Aud the less.

When midsummer was past, a company of young men upon a journey came to the house by Frodis Water. That was always a great day for Aud, when there were gallants at table; and what made this day the greater, Alf of the Fells was in the company, and she thought Alf fancied her. So be sure Aud wore her best. But when Thorgunna came from the bed-place, she was arrayed like any queen and the broad brooch was in her bosom. All night in the

hall these women strove with each other; and the little maid, Asdis, looked on, and was ashamed and knew not why. But Thorgunna pleased beyond all; she told of strange things that had befallen in the world; when she pleased she had the cue to laughter; she sang, and her voice was full and her songs new in that island; and whenever she turned, the eyes shone in her face and the brooch glittered at her bosom. So that the young men forgot the word of the merchants as to the woman's age, and their looks followed her all night.

Aud was sick with envy. Sleep fled her; her husband slept, but she sat upright beside him in the bed, and gnawed her fingers. Now she began to hate Thorgunna, and the glittering of the great brooch stood before her in the dark. "Sure," she thought, "it must be the glamour of that brooch! She is not so fair as I; she is as old as the dead in the hillside; and as for her wit and her songs, it is little I think of them!" Up she got at that, took a light from the embers, and came to her guest's bed-place. The door was locked, but Aud had a master-key and could go in. Inside, the chests were open, and in the top of one the light of her taper shone upon the glittering of the brooch. As a dog snatches food she snatched it, and turned to the bed. Thorgunna lay on her side; it was to be thought she slept, but she talked the while to herself, and her lips moved. It seemed her years returned to her in slumber, for her face was grey and her brow knotted; and the open eyes of her stared in the eyes of Aud. The heart of the foolish woman died in her bosom; but her greed was the stronger, and she fled with that which she had stolen.

When she was back in bed, the word of Thorgunna came to her mind, that these things were for no use but to be shown. Here she had the brooch and the shame of it, and might not wear it. So all night she quaked with the fear of discovery, and wept tears of rage that she should have sinned in vain. Day came, and Aud must rise; but she went about the house like a crazy woman. She saw the eyes of Asdis rest on her strangely, and at that she beat the maid. She scolded the house folk, and, by her way of it, nothing was done aright. First she was loving to her husband and made much of him, thinking to be on his good side when trouble came. Then she took a better way, picked a feud with him, and railed on the poor man till his ears rang, so that he might be in the wrong beforehand. The brooch she hid without, in the side of a hayrick.

All this while Thorgunna lay in the bed-place, which was not her way, for by custom she was early astir. At last she came forth, and there was that in her face that made all the house look one at the other and the heart of Aud to be straitened. Never a word the guest spoke, not a bite she swallowed, and they

saw the strong shudderings take and shake her in her place. Yet a little, and still without speech, back she went into her bed-place, and the door was shut.

"That is a sick wife," said Finnward. "Her weird has come on her." And at that the heart of Aud was lifted up with hope.

All day Thorgunna lay on her bed, and the next day sent for Finnward.

"Finnward Keelfarer," said she, "my trouble is come upon me, and I am at the end of my days."

He made the customary talk.

"I have had my good things; now my hour is come; and let suffice," quoth she. "I did not send for you to hear your prating."

Finnward knew not what to answer, for he saw her soul was dark.

"I sent for you on needful matters," she began again. "I die here—I!—in this black house, in a bleak island, far from all decency and proper ways of man; and now my treasure must be left. Small pleasure have I had of it, and leave it with the less!" cried she.

"Good woman, as the saying is, needs must," says Finnward, for he was nettled with that speech.

"For that I called you," quoth Thorgunna. "In these two chests are much wealth and things greatly to be desired. I wish my body to be laid in Skalaholt in the new church, where I trust to hear the mass-priests singing over my head so long as time endures. To that church I will you to give what is sufficient, leaving your conscience judge of it. My scarlet cloak with the silver, I will to that poor fool your wife. She longed for it so bitterly, I may not even now deny her. Give her the brooch as well. I warn you of her; I was such as she, only wiser; I warn you, the ground she stands upon is water, and whoso trusts her leans on rottenness. I hate her and I pity her. When she comes to lie where I lie—" There she broke off. "The rest of my goods I leave to your black-eyed maid, young Asdis, for her slim body and clean mind. Only the things of my bed, you shall see burned."

"It is well," said Finnward.

"It may be well," quoth she, "if you obey. My life has been a wonder to all and a fear to many. While I lived none thwarted me and prospered. See to it that none thwart me after I am dead. It stands upon your safety."

"It stands upon my honour," quoth Finnward, "and I have the name of an honourable man."

"You have the name of a weak one," says Thorgunna. "Look to it, look to it, Finnward. Your house shall rue it else."

"The rooftree of my house is my word," said Finnward.

"And that is a true saying," says the woman. "See to it, then. The speech of Thorgunna is ended."

With that she turned her face against the wall and Finnward left her.

The same night, in the small hours of the clock, Thorgunna passed. It was a wild night for summer, and the wind sang about the eaves and clouds covered the moon, when the dark woman wended. From that day to this no man has learned her story or her people's name; but be sure the one was stormy and the other great. She had come to that isle, a waif woman, on a ship; thence she flitted, and no more remained of her but her heavy chests and her big body.

In the morning the house women streaked and dressed the corpse. Then came Finnward, and carried the sheets and curtains from the house, and caused build a fire upon the sands. But Aud had an eye on her man's doings.

"And what is this that you are at?" said she. So he told her.

"Burn the good sheets!" she cried. "And where would I be with my two hands? No, troth," said Aud, "not so long as your wife is above ground!"

"Good wife," said Finnward, "this is beyond your province. Here is my word pledged and the woman dead I pledged it to. So much the more am I bound. Let me be doing as I must, goodwife."

"Tilly-valley!" says she, "and a fiddlestick's end, goodman! You may know well about fishing and be good at shearing sheep for what I know; but you are little of a judge of damask sheets. And the best word I can say is just this," she says, laying hold of one end of the goods, "that if ye are made up to burn the plenishing, you must burn your wife along with it."

"I trust it will not go so hard," says Finnward, "and I beg you not to speak so loud and let the house folk hear you."

"Let them speak low that are ashamed!" cries Aud. "I speak only in reason."

"You are to consider that the woman died in my house," says Finnward, "and this was her last behest. In truth, goodwife, if I were to fail, it is a thing that would stick long in my throat, and would give us an ill name with the neighbours."

"And you are to consider," says she, "that I am your true wife and worth all the witches ever burnt, and loving her old husband"—here she put her arms about his neck. "And you are to consider that what you wish to do is to destroy fine stuff, such as we have no means of replacing; and that she bade you do it singly to spite me, for I sought to buy this bedding from her while

she was alive at her own price; and that she hated me because I was young and handsome."

"That is a true word that she hated you, for she said so herself before she wended," says Finnward.

"So that here is an old faggot that hated me, and she dead as a bucket," says Aud; "and here is a young wife that loves you dear, and is alive forby"—and at that she kissed him—"and the point is, which are you to do the will of?"

The man's weakness caught him hard, and he faltered. "I fear some hurt will come of it," said he.

There she cut in, and bade the lads tread out the fire, and the lasses roll the bed-stuff up and carry it within.

"My dear," says he, "my honour—this is against my honour."

But she took his arm under hers, and caressed his hand, and kissed his knuckles, and led him down the bay. "Bubble-bubble-bubble!" says she, imitating him like a baby, though she was none so young. "Bubble-bubble, and a silly old man! We must bury the troll wife, and here is trouble enough, and a vengeance! Horses will sweat for it before she comes to Skalaholt; 'tis my belief she was a man in a woman's habit. And so now, have done, good man, and let us get her waked and buried, which is more than she deserves, or her old duds are like to pay for. And when that is ended, we can consult upon the rest."

So Finnward was but too well pleased to put it off.

The next day they set forth early for Skalaholt across the heaths. It was heavy weather, and grey overhead; the horses sweated and neighed, and the men went silent, for it was nowhere in their minds that the dead wife was canny. Only Aud talked by the way, like a silly sea-gull piping on a cliff, and the rest held their peace. The sun went down before they were across Whitewater; and the black night fell on them this side of Netherness. At Netherness they beat upon the door. The goodman was not abed nor any of his folk, but sat in the hall talking; and to them Finnward made clear his business.

"I will never deny you a roof," said the goodman of Netherness. "But I have no food ready, and if you cannot be doing without meat, you must e'en fare farther."

They laid the body in a shed, made fast their horses, and came into the house, and the door was closed again. So there they sat about the lights, and there was little said, for they were none so well pleased with their reception.

Presently, in the place where the food was kept, began a clattering of dishes; and it fell to a bondman of the house to go and see what made the clatter. He was no sooner gone than he was back again; and told it was a big, buxom woman, high in flesh and naked as she was born, setting meats upon a dresser. Finnward grew pale as the dawn; he got to his feet, and the rest rose with him, and all the party of the funeral came to the buttery-door. And the dead Thorgunna took no heed of their coming, but went on setting forth meats, and seemed to talk with herself as she did so; and she was naked to the buff.

Great fear fell upon them; the marrow of their back grew cold. Not one word they spoke, neither good nor bad; but back into the hall, and down upon their bended knees, and to their prayers.

"Now, in the name of God, what ails you?" cried the goodman of Netherness.

And when they had told him, shame fell upon him for his churlishness.

"The dead wife reproves me," said the honest man.

And he blessed himself and his house, and caused spread the tables, and they all ate of the meats that the dead wife laid out.

This was the first walking of Thorgunna, and it is thought by good judges it would have been the last as well, if men had been more wise. The next day they came to Skalaholt, and there was the body buried, and the next after they set out for home. Finnward's heart was heavy, and his mind divided. He feared the dead wife and the living; he feared dishonour and he feared dispeace; and his will was like a seagull in the wind. Now he cleared his throat and made as if to speak; and at that Aud cocked her eye and looked at the goodman mocking, and his voice died unborn. At the last, shame gave him courage.

"Aud," said he, "yon was a most uncanny thing at Netherness."

"No doubt," said Aud.

"I have never had it in my mind," said he, "that yon woman was the thing she should be."

"I dare say not," said Aud. "I never thought so either."

"It stands beyond question she was more than canny," says Finnward, shaking his head. "No manner of doubt but what she was ancient of mind."

"She was getting pretty old in body, too," says Aud.

"Wife," says he, "it comes in upon me strongly this is no kind of woman to disobey; above all, being dead and her walking. I think, wife, we must even do as she commanded."

"Now what is ever your word?" says she, riding up close and setting her

hand upon his shoulder. "'The goodwife's pleasure must be done'; is not that my Finnward?"

"The good God knows I grudge you nothing," cried Finnward. "But my blood runs cold upon this business. Worse will come of it!" he cried, "worse will flow from it!"

"What is this to-do?" cries Aud. "Here is an old brimstone hag that should have been stoned with stones, and hated me besides. Vainly she tried to frighten me when she was living; shall she frighten me now when she is dead and rotten? I trow not. Think shame to your beard, goodman! Are these a man's shoes I see you shaking in, when your wife rides by your bridle-hand, as bold as nails?"

"Ay, ay," quoth Finnward. "But there goes a byword in the country: Little wit, little fear."

At this Aud began to be concerned, for he was usually easier to lead. So now she tried the other method on the man.

"Is that your word?" cried she. "I kiss the hands of ye! If I have not wit enough, I can rid you of my company. Wit is it he seeks?" she cried. "The old broomstick that we buried yesterday had wit for you."

So she rode on ahead and looked not the road that he was on. Poor Finnward followed on his horse, but the light of the day was gone out, for his wife was like his life to him. He went six miles and was true to his heart; but the seventh was not half through when he rode up to her.

"Is it to be the goodwife's pleasure?" she asked.

"Aud, you shall have your way," says he; "God grant there come no ill of it!"

So she made much of him, and his heart was comforted.

When they came to the house, Aud had the two chests to her own bedplace, and gloated all night on what she found. Finnward looked on, and trouble darkened his mind.

"Wife," says he at last, "you will not forget these things belong to Asdis?"

At that she barked upon him like a dog.

"Am I a thief?" she cried. "The brat shall have them in her turn when she grows up. Would you have me give her them now to turn her minx's head with?"

So the weak man went his way out of the house in sorrow and fell to his affairs. Those that wrought with him that day observed that now he would labour and toil like a man furious, and now would sit and stare like one stupid; for in truth he judged the business would end ill.

For a while there was no more done and no more said. Aud cherished her treasures by herself, and none was the wiser except Finnward. Only the cloak she sometimes wore, for that was hers by the will of the dead wife; but the others she let lie, because she knew she had them foully, and she feared Finnward somewhat and Thorgunna much. At last husband and wife were bound to bed one night, and he was the first stripped and got in.

"What sheets are these?" he screamed, as his legs touched them, for these were smooth as water, but the sheets of Iceland were like sacking.

"Clean sheets, I suppose," says Aud, but her hand quavered as she wound her hair.

"Woman!" cried Finnward, "these are the bed-sheets of Thorgunna—these are the sheets she died in! do not lie to me!"

At that Aud turned and looked at him. "Well?" says she, "they have been washed."

Finnward lay down again in the bed between Thorgunna's sheets, and groaned; never a word more he said, for now he knew he was a coward and a man dishonoured. Presently his wife came beside him, and they lay still, but neither slept.

It might be twelve in the night when Aud felt Finnward shudder so strong that the bed shook.

"What ails you?" said she.

"I know not," he said. "It is a chill like the chill of death. My soul is sick with it." His voice fell low. "It was so Thorgunna sickened," said he. And he arose and walked in the hall in the dark till it came morning.

Early in the morning he went forth to the sea-fishing with four lads. Aud was troubled at heart and watched him from the door, and even as he went down the beach she saw him shaken with Thorgunna's shudder. It was a rough day, the sea was wild, the boat laboured exceedingly, and it may be that Finnward's mind was troubled with his sickness. Certain it is that they struck, and their boat was burst, upon a skerry under Snowfellness. The four lads were spilled into the sea, and the sea broke and buried them, but Finnward was cast upon the skerry, and clambered up, and sat there all day long: God knows his thoughts. The sun was half-way down, when a shepherd went by on the cliffs about his business, and spied a man in the midst of the breach of the loud seas, upon a pinnacle of reef. He hailed him, and the man turned and hailed again. There was in that cove so great a clashing of the seas and so shrill a cry of sea-fowl that the herd might hear the voice and not the words. But the name Thorgunna came to him, and he saw the

face of Finnward Keelfarer like the face of an old man. Lively ran the herd to Finnward's house; and when his tale was told there, Eyolf the boy was lively to out a boat and hasten to his father's aid. By the strength of hands they drove the keel against the seas, and with skill and courage Eyolf won upon the skerry and climbed up. There sat his father dead; and this was the first vengeance of Thorgunna against broken faith.

It was a sore job to get the corpse on board, and a sorer yet to bring it home before the rolling seas. But the lad Eyolf was a lad of promise, and the lads that pulled for him were sturdy men. So the break-faith's body was got home, and waked, and buried on the hill. Aud was a good widow and wept much, for she liked Finnward well enough. Yet a bird sang in her ears that now she might marry a young man. Little fear that she might have her choice of them, she thought, with all Thorgunna's fine things; and her heart was cheered.

Now, when the corpse was laid in the hill, Asdis came where Aud sat solitary in hall, and stood by her awhile without speech.

"Well, child?" says Aud; and again "Well?" and then "Keep us holy, if you have anything to say, out with it!"

So the maid came so much nearer. "Mother," says she, "I wish you would not wear these things that were Thorgunna's."

"Aha," cries Aud. "This is what it is? You begin early, brat! And who has been poisoning your mind? Your fool of a father, I suppose." And then she stopped and went all scarlet. "Who told you they were yours?" she asked again, taking it all the higher for her stumble. "When you are grown, then you shall have your share and not a day before. These things are not for babies."

The child looked at her and was amazed. "I do not wish them," she said. "I wish they might be burned."

"Upon my word, what next?" cried Aud. "And why should they be burned?"

"I know my father tried to burn these things," said Asdis, "and he named Thorgunna's name upon the skerry ere he died. And, O mother, I doubt they have brought ill luck."

But the more Aud was terrified, the more she would make light of it. Then the girl put her hand upon her mother's. "I fear they are ill come by," said she.

The blood sprang in Aud's face. "And who made you a judge upon your mother that bore you?" cried she.

"Kinswoman," said Asdis, looking down, "I saw you with the brooch."

"What do you mean? When? Where did you see me?" cried the mother.

"Here in the hall," said Asdis, looking on the floor, "the night you stole it."

At that Aud let out a cry. Then she heaved up her hand to strike the child. "You little spy!" she cried. Then she covered her face, and wept, and rocked herself. "What can you know?" she cried. "How can you understand, that are a baby, not so long weaned? *He* could—your father could, the dear good man, dead and gone! He could understand and pity, he was good to me. Now he has left me alone with heartless children! Asdis," she cried, "have you no nature in your blood? You do not know what I have done and suffered for them. I have done—oh, and I could have done anything! And there is your father dead. And after all, you ask me not to use them? No woman in Iceland has the like. And you wish me to destroy them? Not if the dead should rise!" she cried. "No, no," and she stopped her ears, "not if the dead should rise, and let that end it!"

So she ran into her bed-place, and clapped at the door, and left the child amazed.

But for all Aud spoke with so much passion, it was noticed that for long she left the things unused. Only she would be locked somewhile daily in her bed-place, where she pored on them and secretly wore them for her pleasure.

Now winter was at hand; the days grew short and the nights long; and under the golden face of morning the isle would stand silver with frost. Word came from Holyfell to Frodis Water of a company of young men upon a journey; that night they supped at Holyfell, the next it would be at Frodis Water; and Alf of the Fells was there, and Thongbrand Ketilson, and Hall the Fair. Aud went early to her bed-place, and there she pored upon these fineries till her heart was melted with self-love. There was a kirtle of a mingled colour, and the blue shot into the green, and the green lightened from the blue, as the colours play in the ocean between deeps and shallows: she thought she could endure to live no longer and not wear it. There was a bracelet of an ell long, wrought like a serpent and with fiery jewels for the eyes; she saw it shine on her white arm and her head grew dizzy with desire. "Ah!" she thought, "never were fine lendings better met with a fair wearer." And she closed her eyelids, and she thought she saw herself among the company and the men's eyes go after her admiring. With that she considered that she must soon marry one of them and wondered which; and she thought Alf was perhaps the best, or Hall the Fair, but was not certain, and then she remembered Finnward Keelfarer in his cairn upon the hill, and was concerned. "Well, he was a good husband to

me," she thought, "and I was a good wife to him. But that is an old song now." So she turned again to handling the stuffs and jewels. At last she got to bed in the smooth sheets, and lay, and fancied how she would look, and admired herself, and saw others admire her, and told herself stories, till her heart grew warm and she chuckled to herself between the sheets. So she shook a while with laughter; and then the mirth abated but not the shaking; and a grue took hold upon her flesh, and the cold of the grave upon her belly, and the terror of death upon her soul. With that a voice was in her ear: "It was so Thorgunna sickened." Thrice in the night the chill and the terror took her, and thrice it passed away; and when she rose on the morrow, death had breathed upon her countenance.

She saw the house folk and her children gaze upon her; well she knew why! She knew her day was come, and the last of her days, and her last hour was at her back; and it was so in her soul that she scarce minded. All was lost, all was past mending, she would carry on until she fell. So she went as usual, and hurried the feast for the young men, and railed upon her house folk, but her feet stumbled, and her voice was strange in her own ears, and the eyes of the folk fled before her. At times, too, the chill took her and the fear along with it; and she must sit down, and the teeth beat together in her head, and the stool tottered on the floor. At these times, she thought she was passing, and the voice of Thorgunna sounded in her ear: "The things are for no use but to be shown," it said. "Aud, Aud, have you shown them once? No, not once!" And at the sting of the thought her courage and strength would revive, and she would rise again and move about her business.

Now the hour drew near, and Aud went to her bed-place, and did on the bravest of her finery, and came forth to greet her guests. Was never woman in Iceland robed as she was. The words of greeting were yet between her lips, when the shuddering fell upon her strong as labour, and a horror as deep as hell. Her face was changed amidst her finery, and the faces of her guests were changed as they beheld her: fear puckered their brows, fear drew back their feet; and she took her doom from the looks of them, and fled to her bed-place. There she flung herself on the wife's coverlet, and turned her face against the wall.

That was the end of all the words of Aud; and in the small hours on the clock her spirit wended. Asdis had come to and fro, seeing if she might help, where was no help possible of man or woman. It was light in the bed-place when the maid returned, for a taper stood upon a chest. There lay Aud in her

fine clothes, and there by her side on the bed the big dead wife Thorgunna squatted on her hams. No sound was heard, but it seemed by the movement of her mouth as if Thorgunna sang, and she waved her arms as if to singing.

"God be good to us!" cried Asdis, "she is dead."

"Dead," said the dead wife.

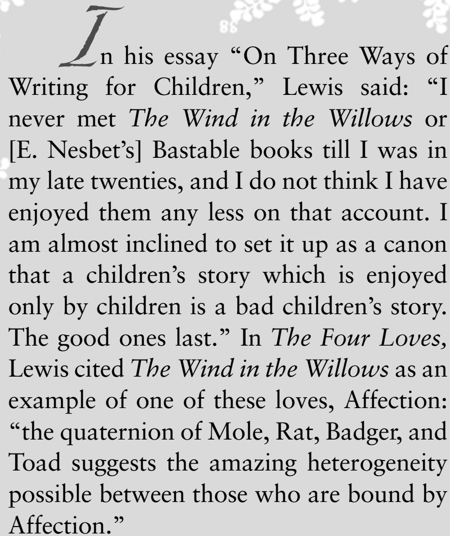
"Is the weird passed?" cried Asdis.

"When the sin is done the weird is dreed," said Thorgunna, and with that she was not.

But the next day Eyolf and Asdis caused build a fire on the shore betwixt tide-marks. There they burned the bedclothes, and the clothes, and the jewels, and the very boards of the waif woman's chests; and when the tide returned it washed away their ashes. So the weird of Thorgunna was lifted from the house on Frodis Water.

First Whisper of *The Wind in the Willows*

by Kenneth Grahame

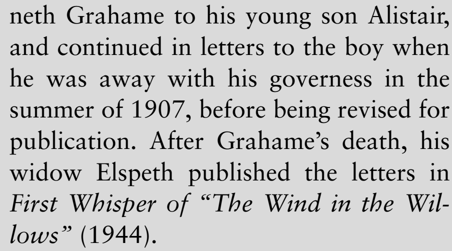


In his essay "On Three Ways of Writing for Children," Lewis said: "I never met *The Wind in the Willows* or [E. Nesbet's] Bastable books till I was in my late twenties, and I do not think I have enjoyed them any less on that account. I am almost inclined to set it up as a canon that a children's story which is enjoyed only by children is a bad children's story. The good ones last." In *The Four Loves,* Lewis cited *The Wind in the Willows* as an example of one of these loves, Affection: "the quaternion of Mole, Rat, Badger, and Toad suggests the amazing heterogeneity possible between those who are bound by Affection."

Lewis returned to *The Wind in the Willows* many times, and it exercised a noticeable influence on his own fiction. For example, in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe,* Mr. and Mrs. Beaver's house is very similar to Mole's cozy hole, while Mr. Tumnus's cave resembles Badger's.

The Wind in the Willows (1908) originated in bedtime stories told by Ken-

neth Grahame to his young son Alistair, and continued in letters to the boy when he was away with his governess in the summer of 1907, before being revised for publication. After Grahame's death, his widow Elspeth published the letters in *First Whisper of "The Wind in the Willows"* (1944).



Green Bank Hotel, Falmouth,
10th May 1907

My Darling Mouse,

. . . Have you heard about the Toad? He was never taken prisoner by brigands at all. It was all a horrid low trick of his. He wrote that letter himself—the letter saying that a hundred pounds must be put in the hollow tree. And he got out of the window early one morning, & went off to a town called Buggleton, & went to the Red Lion Hotel & there he found a party that had just motored down from London, & while they were having breakfast he went into the stable-yard & found their motor-car & went off in it without even saying Poop-poop! And now he has vanished & every one is looking for him, including the police. I fear he is a bad low animal.

Goodbye, from
Your loving Daddy.

Green Bank Hotel, Falmouth,
23rd May 1907

My Dearest Mouse,

. . . No doubt you have met some of the animals & have heard about Toad's Adventures since he was dragged off to prison by the bobby & the con-

stable. At first he lay full length on the floor, and shed bitter tears, and abandoned himself to dark despair. For he said "How can I ever hope to be set free again, I who have been imprisoned—and justly—so often, for stealing so many—so many—he could not utter the word, for his sobs choked him. Base animal that I am (he said): O unhappy and abandoned toad (he said); I must languish in this dungeon (he said) till people have forgotten the very name of Mr. Toad. With lamentations such as these he passed his days & nights, refusing consolation, refusing food or other light refreshments: till one day the gaoler's daughter, who was a tenderhearted young woman, took pity on him & said "Cheer up toad! & try & eat a bit of dinner." But the toad lay on the floor & wailed & wouldn't eat his dinner. Then the gaoler's daughter went & fetched a cup of hot tea & some very hot buttered toast, cut thick, very brown on both sides, with the butter running through the holes in it in great golden drops like honey. When the toad smelt the buttered toast he sat up & dried his eyes for he was exceedingly fond of buttered toast; & the gaoler's daughter comforted him & he drank his tea & had another plate of toast. Then they discussed plans for his escape from the dungeon, & the gaoler's daughter said "Tomorrow my aunt, who is the washerwoman to the prison, will bring home your week's washing, & I will dress you up in her clothes & you will escape as the washerwoman." So when the washerwoman came with the linen, they dressed toad up in her clothes & put a bonnet on his head & out he marched, past the gaolers, as bold as you please. As he was passing one of them, the man said "Hullo mother washerwoman, why didn't you send home my Sunday shirt last week, you lazy old pig?" & he took his stick & beat her full sore. And the toad was mad with rage, because he wanted to give him a punch in the eye, but he controlled himself & ran on through the door, which banged behind him & he was *Free*. This is as far as I have heard at present.

Your affectionate Daddy.

The Fowey Hotel, Fowey, Cornwall,
28 May 1907

My dearest Mouse,

. . . Now I daresay you will want to hear something more of the sad misadventures of Mr. Toad. Well, when he found himself outside the prison gates it was quite dark & he was in a strange land, with no friends, & he was fright-

ened, & didn't know what to do. But he could hear the puffing of steam-engines not very far off, & he saw some red & green lights through the trees, & he said to himself "That must be a railway station, & if I am to get home the first thing to do is to get into a train that goes there." So he made his way down to the station & went into the ticket office & asked for a ticket. And the man said "Where for?" And the toad told him. And the man said "That will cost five shillings." So the toad felt for his pocket, to find the money, when to his horror & dismay he couldn't find any pocket! Because he had got the washerwoman's dress on. Then he remembered that when he had changed clothes in such a hurry he had left all his money, & his keys, & pencil, & matches, & everything, in the pockets of the clothes he had taken off. So there he was, miles & miles from home, dressed like a washerwoman, without a penny of money. Then Mr. Toad shed bitter tears, & said to the man "Please I have lost all my money—will you be very kind & give me a ticket for nothing." But the man only laughed and said "Go away old woman! We don't carry washerwomen for nothing on this railway!" So the toad went away crying, and wandered down the platform by the side of the train, thinking whatever should he do, till he came to where the engine was. And the engine-driver saw he was crying, & said cheerfully "What's the matter, mother?" And the toad replied "I want to get home, so badly, but I've lost all my money, & I can't buy a ticket." Now the engine-driver was a kind-hearted man, & he said "Look here, washerwoman! This engine-driving is very dirty work, and I dirty so many shirts that my wife says she's tired of washing 'em. If you will wash two shirts for me next week, I'll let you ride on the engine with me now, & so you will get home for nothing!" Then the toad was overjoyed, and he sprang up on the engine with great delight. Of course he had never washed a shirt in his life, and couldn't if he tried, but he thought "When I get home, & get some more money, I will send the engine-driver some, to pay for his washing, & that will be just the same." Presently the engine-driver blew his whistle & the train began to move out of the station; & soon they were puffing and rattling through the country, ever so fast, & the toad was jumping up & down with sheer delight, to think that soon he would be home again.

Suddenly the engine-driver began to listen; presently he said "It's very funny, but I believe I hear another train following us!" The toad began to feel nervous. Then the engine-driver looked over the back of the train, for the moon was shining brightly & he could see a long way down the line, & at last he cried out "Yes! I see an engine! It is coming along very fast. I believe we are being pursued!" And the toad began to feel *very* nervous. Presently the engine-

driver looked again, & then he cried "Yes, they are gaining on us! I can see them clearly now! It is an engine pursuing us! It is full of policemen, and they are all brandishing revolvers & calling out Stop, Stop, Stop, STOP, STOP!!!!

This is all the news I have up to the present time.

Your affectionate Daddy.

The Fowey Hotel, Fowey, Cornwall,
31st May 1907

My dearest Mouse,

. . . Now you may like to hear something further about poor Toad. When Toad heard that they were being pursued by an engine full of policemen with revolvers, he fell on his knees among the coals & cried out, "O kind Mr. Engine-driver, save me, save me, & I will confess everything! I am not the washerwoman I seem to be! I am a toad—the well-known Mr. Toad, of Toad Hall—& I have escaped from prison, & those policemen are coming to recapture me!" Then the engine-driver looked very grave, & said, "What were you in prison for, toad?" And the toad blushed deeply & said, "I only borrowed a motor-car while the people were having lunch. I didn't mean to steal it really."

"Well," said the engine-driver, "you have evidently been a bad toad. But I will save you if I can." So he piled more coals on the fire, and the engine flew over the rails, but the engine behind kept gaining & gaining, & presently the engine-driver said with a sigh, "I'm afraid it's no use. They must catch us up soon, & then they will climb along our train till they get to our engine, & if we attempt to resist they will shoot us dead with their revolvers." Then the toad said, "O dear kind Mr. Engine-driver, do think of something to save me!" And the engine-driver thought a bit & then he said, "There's just one thing I can do, & it's your only chance. We are coming to a long tunnel, & on the other side of the tunnel is a thick wood. I will put on all speed while we are running through the tunnel, & as soon as we are through I will 'slow up' for a few seconds, & you must jump off & run into the wood & hide yourself before the other engine gets through the tunnel, & then I will go on at full speed & they will continue to chase me, thinking you are still on the train."

Next moment they shot into the tunnel, & the engine-driver piled on

more coals, & the sparks flew, & the train rushed & roared and rattled through the tunnel & at last they shot out into the moonlight on the other side, & then the engine-driver put on his brakes hard & the train slowed down to almost a walking pace & the toad got down on the step & the engine-driver said, "Now jump!" and the toad jumped, & rolled down the embankment & scrambled into the wood & hid himself. Then he peeped out & saw the train get up speed again & go off very fast. And presently the other engine came roaring & whistling out of the tunnel, in hot pursuit, with the policemen waving their revolvers & shouting "Stop, Stop, Stop!!!" Then toad had a good laugh—for the first time since he was put into prison.

But it was now very late, & dark, & cold, & here he was in a wild wood, with no money & no friends. And little animals peeped out of their holes & pointed at him & made fun of him; & a fox came slinking by, & said "Hullo washerwoman! How's the washing business doing?" and sniggered. And the toad looked for a stone to throw at him, & couldn't find one, which made him sad. Presently he came to a hollow tree, full of dry leaves; & there he curled himself up as comfortably as he could, & slept till the morning.

In my next letter I will try to tell you the Adventure of the Toad & the Bargee; & about the Gipsy, & how the Toad went into Horse-dealing.

Ever your affectionate Daddy.

The Fowey Hotel, Fowey, Cornwall,
7th June 1907

My dearest Mouse,

. . . You may be wishing to hear what further things happened to Toad on his way home, after his escape from the policemen who were pursuing him to take him back to prison. Well, next morning the sun shone brightly into the hollow tree, & woke up Mr. Toad, who was sleeping soundly after his fatiguing exertions of the previous day. He got up, shook himself, combed the dead leaves out of his hair with his fingers, & set off walking briskly, for he was very cold & rather hungry. Well, he walked & he walked, till he came to a canal, & he thought that must lead to a town, so he walked along the tow-path, & presently he met a horse, with a long rope attached to it, towing a barge; & he waited for the barge to come up, & there was a man steering it, & he nodded, & said "Good-morning, washerwoman! what are you doing

here?" Then the toad made a pitiful face, & said "Please, kind Sir, I am going to pay a visit to my married daughter, who lives near a fine house called 'Toad Hall'; but I've lost my way, & spent all my money & I'm very tired." Then the man said, "Toad Hall? Why, I'm going that way myself. Jump in, & I'll give you a lift." So he steered the barge close to the bank, & the toad stepped on board & sat down, very pleased with himself. Presently the man said, "I don't see why I should give you a lift for nothing, so you take that tub of water standing over there, & that bit of yellow soap, & here are some shirts, & you can be washing them as we go along." Then the toad was rather frightened, for he had never washed a shirt in his life; but he dabbed the shirt into the water, & he dabbed some soap on it, but it never seemed to get any cleaner, & his fingers got very cold & he began to get very cross. Presently the man came to see how he was getting on, & burst out laughing at him, & said "Call yourself a washerwoman? That's not the way to wash a shirt, you very silly old woman!" Then the toad lost his temper, & quite forgot himself, & said "Don't you dare to speak to your betters like that! And don't call me a silly old woman! I'm no more an old woman than you are yourself, you common, low, vulgar bargee!" Then the bargee looked closely at him, & cried out "Why, no, I can see you're not really a washerwoman at all! You're nothing but an old toad!" Then he grabbed the toad by one hind-leg & one fore-leg, & swung him round & sent him flying through the air. SPLOSH. He found himself head-over-ears in the water!

When the toad came to the surface he wiped the water out of his eyes & struck out for the shore; but the woman's dress he was wearing got round his legs, & made it very hard work. When at last he was safely on the tow-path again, he saw the barge disappearing in the distance, & the man looking back & laughing at him. This made Mr. Toad mad with rage. He tucked the wet skirt up well under his arms, & ran as hard as he could along the path, & passed the barge, & ran on till he overtook the horse that was towing it, and unfastened the tow-rope, & jumped on the horse's back, & dug his heels into its sides, & off they went at a gallop! He took one look back as they went, & he saw that the barge had run into the opposite bank of the canal, & stuck, & the bargee was shaking his fist at him & calling out "Stop, Stop, Stop!!" But the toad never stopped, but only laughed & galloped on & on & on, across country, over fields & hedges, until he had left the canal, & the barge, & the bargee, miles & miles behind him.

I am afraid the Gipsy will have to wait till the next letter.

Your affectionate Daddy.

16 Durham Villas, Campden Hill, W.
21 June 1907

My dearest Mouse,

No doubt you will be interested to hear the further adventures of Mr. Toad, after he galloped away across country on the bargee's horse, with the bargee shouting after him in vain. Well presently the horse got tired of galloping so fast, and broke from a gallop into a trot, and then from a trot into a walk, & then he stopped altogether & began to nibble grass. And the toad looked round about him & found he was on a large common. On the common stood a gipsy tent, and a gipsy man was sitting beside it, on a bucket turned upside-down, smoking. In front of the tent a fire of sticks was burning, & over the fire hung an iron pot, and out of the pot came steam, & bubblings, and the most beautiful good smell that ever you smelt. Then the toad felt very hungry indeed, for he had had no breakfast that morning, & no supper the night before; so he sniffed & sniffed, & looked at the pot, & the gipsy; & the gipsy sat & smoked, & looked back at him.

Presently the gipsy took his pipe out of his mouth & said "Like to sell that there horse of yours?" (Now you must understand that gipsies are very fond of buying & selling horses, & never miss an opportunity.)

This was an entirely new idea to Toad. He had never thought of trying to sell the horse; but now he saw a way of getting a little money, which he wanted so badly. So he said, "What, sell this beautiful young animal o' mine? No, I can't say I had thought of selling this beautiful young animal o' mine. You see it's such a beautiful young animal—half an Arab & half a Race Horse & half a Prize Hackney. However, how much might you feel disposed to give me for this very beautiful young animal o' mine?"

The gipsy looked at the horse, & he looked at the Toad, & he looked at the horse again, & then he said—"Shilling a leg," & turned away & went on smoking.

"A shilling a leg?" said Mr. Toad—"please I shall want a little time to work that out, & add it up, & see what it comes to." So he climbed down off the horse & left it to graze, & sat down by the gipsy, & counted on his fingers, & did sums in his head, & presently he said "A shilling a leg? Why, that comes to exactly four shillings. O no. I could not think of selling this beautiful young animal for four shillings."

"Well," said the gipsy, "I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll make it five shillings & that's a shilling more than he's worth; & that's my last word."

Then the toad pondered deeply. For he was penniless, & five shillings seemed a very large sum of money. On the other hand, it did not seem very much to get for a horse. But then the horse hadn't cost him anything, so it was all clear profit. At last he said, "Look here, gipsy. You shall give me six shillings & sixpence, cash, & as much breakfast as I can eat, out of that iron pot of yours that keeps sending forth such delicious smells. And I will give you my fine young horse & all the beautiful harness that is on him." Well the gipsy grumbled a bit, but at last he agreed. And he counted out six shillings & sixpence into toad's paw; & then he fetched plates out of the tent, & poured hot stew into them out of the pot; & it was the most beautiful stew, made of partridges & pheasants & chickens & hares & rabbits & pea-hens & guinea fowls. And the toad stuffed & stuffed, & kept asking for more & thought that he had never eaten so good a breakfast in all his life.

Your affectionate Daddy.

16 Durham Villas, Campden Hill, W.
17 July 1907

My dear Robinson,

Well!

So when the Toad had stuffed as much breakfast inside of him as he could possibly hold, he stood up, and shook hands with the Gipsy and said goodbye to him, & said goodbye to the horse, & set off in the direction of Toad Hall. And by this time he was feeling very happy, for the sun was shining brightly, & his wet clothes were quite dry again, & he had had a first-rate breakfast, & he had got money in his pocket, & he was getting near his home. And he thought of his adventures, & all the dangers he had escaped, & he began to be very proud & stuck-up, and "Ho ho," he said to himself as he tramped along, "What a clever animal I am! There is no one like me in the whole world! My enemies shut me up in prison; I escape with the greatest ease. They pursue me with engines & policemen & revolvers; I simply laugh at them & disappear. I am thrown into canals; I swim to land, seize a horse, sell it for a pocketful of money, get breakfasts given me & am made welcome wherever I go! Ho ho! I am The Toad, the handsome, the popular, the glorious Toad!" Then he got so puffed up with pride & conceit that he made up a

song, in praise of himself, & sang it as he walked along & it *was* a conceited song! Here are some of the verses:—

The world has held great Heroes,
As history-books have showed,
never a name to go down to fame
Compared with that of Mr. Toad!

The clever men at Oxford
Know all that there is to be knowed;
But they none of them know one half as much
As intelligent Mr. Toad!

The animals sat in the Ark & cried,
Their tears in torrents flowed;
Who was it said "There's land ahead"?
Encouraging Mr. Toad!

The Army all saluted
As they marched along the road.
—Was it the King?—or Kitchener?
No; it was Mr. Toad.

The Queen and her Ladies-in-waiting
Sat at the window and sewed.
She cried "Look! who's that *handsome* man?"
They answered: "Mr. Toad!"

This was the sort of stuff that he sang, the conceited animal. But his pride was soon to have a fall. Let it be a lesson to us, not to be so puffed up & conceited as the proud Toad.

Presently he came to the high-road which ran past the common; and as he glanced up it, he saw, very far away, a dark speck, which gradually grew larger & larger & larger; & then he heard a faint humming noise, which gradually grew louder & louder & louder; & then he heard a very well-known sound, & that was

Poop! poop!

"Ho ho!" said the Toad, "this is life, this is what I like! I will stop them & ask them to give me a lift, & so I will drive up to Toad Hall in triumph on a motor-car! And perhaps I shall be able to—borrow that motor-car." He did not *say* "steal," but I fear the wicked animal *thought* it. He stepped out into the road to hail the car, when suddenly his face turned very pale, his knees trembled & shook, & he had a bad pain in his tummy. Why was this? Because he had suddenly recognized the car as the very one he had stolen out of the yard of the Red Lion Hotel! And the people sitting inside were the very people who had gone into the Hotel for refreshments on that fatal day!

(To be continued)

16 Durham Villas, Campden Hill, W.
7th August, 1907

My dear Michael Robinson,

When the Toad saw that his enemies were close upon him, his heart turned to water, his muscles failed, & he sank down in a shabby miserable heap in the road, murmuring to himself "It's all up! It's all over now! Prison again! Dry bread and water again! Chains and policemen again? O what a fool I have been! What did I want to go strutting about the country for, singing conceited songs, instead of going quietly home by back ways & hiding, until it all blew over! O unhappy toad! O miserable animal!" And his head sank down in the dust.

The terrible motor-car drew nearer & nearer & nearer. Then it stopped. Some gentlemen got out. They walked round the trembling heap of misery lying in the road, & one of them said—"O dear! Here is a poor old washerwoman who has fainted in the road! Perhaps she is overcome by the heat, poor thing, or perhaps she has not had enough food! Anyhow, let us lift her into the motor-car & take her to the nearest village."

So they tenderly lifted the toad into the motor-car & propped him up on the cushions, & started off. When the toad heard them talk in that kind way, & knew that he was not recognized, his courage began to revive, & he opened one of his eyes. Then one of the gentlemen said: "See, she is better already! The fresh air is doing her good! How do you feel now, washerwoman?"

The toad answered in a feeble voice, "Thank you kindly, Sir, I'm feeling

rather better. I think if I might sit on the front seat, beside the chauffeur, where I could get more air, I should soon be quite right again."

"That's a very sensible woman," said the gentleman. So they helped him into the front seat, beside the chauffeur, & on went the car. The toad began to sit up, & look about him & presently he said to the chauffeur, "Please Mr. Chauffeur, I wish you would let me try to drive the car for a little; it looks so easy; I'm sure I could do it quite well!"

The chauffeur laughed, heartily. But one of the gentlemen said "Bravo, washerwoman! I like your spirit! Let her try. She won't do any harm."

So the chauffeur gave up his seat to the toad, & he took the steering wheel in his hands, & set the car going, & off they went, very slowly & carefully at first, for the toad was prudent. The gentlemen clapped their hands, & cried "Bravo, washerwoman! How well she does it! Fancy a washerwoman driving a motor-car! Bravo!"

Then the Toad went a little faster. The gentlemen applauded. The Toad went faster still.

Then, when he felt the air singing past his ears, & the car throbbing under him, the Toad began to lose his head. He went faster & faster still. The gentlemen called out warningly, "Be careful, washerwoman!" Then the Toad lost his head entirely. He stood up in his seat and shouted "Ho ho! Who are you calling washerwoman! I am the Toad! the famous Mr. Toad! The motor-car driver, the toad who always escapes, who baffles his enemies, who dodges policemen, who breaks out of prison, the always-victorious, the triumphant Toad!"

Then the gentlemen & the chauffeur arose & flung themselves upon him. "Seize him!" they cried, "Seize the toad, the wicked animal who stole our motor-car! Bind him, chain him, drag him to the police-station! Down with the Toad!"

Alas! They ought to have remembered to stop the motor-car before playing any pranks of that sort. With a half-turn of the wheel the Toad sent the car crashing through the hedge. Then it gave an enormous bound, and Sploosh! it landed in a horse-pond! The Toad found himself flying through the air like a swallow. He was just beginning to wonder whether he would ever come down again or whether he had somehow got a pair of wings & turned into a toad-bird, when bump! He landed on his back. He jumped up at once, & found himself in a meadow. Looking back, he saw the car, almost entirely covered by the water, while the gentlemen & the chauffeur were floundering about in their long thick motor-coats in the pond. He did not stay to help them. No!

He set off running at once, & ran & ran & ran, across country, till he was quite pumped out. Then he settled down into a walk, & as he walked along presently he began to giggle, & from giggling he took to laughing, & he laughed & laughed until he had to sit down under a hedge. "Ho ho!" he roared, "The Toad again! Always Mr. Toad! Who got them to give him a lift? Who wanted to sit on the front seat to get fresh air? Who got the chauffeur to let him drive? Who upset them all into the horse-pond? Who escaped, free & unhurt, while they were floundering about in the water? Toad, clever Toad, *great* Toad, *good* Toad!" Then he burst into song again, & sang

> The motor-car went poop-poop-poop
>   As it whizzed along the road;
> Who was it steered it into the pond?
>   Ingenious Mr. Toad!

O how clever I am! How clever, how clever, how clev—" He heard a slight noise behind him. He looked back. O horror! O misery! O despair!

About two fields behind him, a chauffeur and two *large* policemen were running towards him as hard as they could!

The toad sprang to his feet & set off running again, his heart in his mouth. "O my!" he gasped as he panted along, "What an ass I am! what a *conceited* ass! O my! O my! O my!"

He looked back & saw they were gaining on him. He kept looking back as he ran, & saw that they still gained. He struggled on, but he was a fat animal, & his legs were short, & as he looked back he saw that they still gained. They were near him now! He never looked where he was going, but ran on wildly, looking over his shoulder at the approaching enemy, when suddenly SPLOSH!

The toad found himself head over ears in deep water, in a rapid stream. He had run straight into the river! He rose to the surface, & tried to grasp the reeds & the rushes that grew along the bank, but the stream was so fast that it tore them out of his hands. "O my!" said the poor toad, "If ever I steal a motor-car again—" Then down he went, & came up spluttering. Presently he saw a big dark hole in the bank, above his head, & as the stream bore him past he reached out a paw and caught hold of the edge. Then he slowly drew himself up out of the water, till he was able to rest his elbows on the edge of the hole. There he remained for some minutes, puffing & panting, for he was quite exhausted.

Presently, as he gazed into the big dark hole, he saw a tiny speck of light, that looked like a glow-worm, or a distant star. As he looked, it winked & glittered & got more & more like a tiny eye! He looked & looked, & saw the outline of a tiny face round it!

A dark little face——
    and Whiskers!——
It
    was
        the
            water-rat!

(To be continued)

16 Durham Villas, Campden Hill, W.
12th August, 1907

Dear Robinson,

The Water-Rat put out a neat little brown paw, & gave Toady a big hoist & a pull, over the edge of the hole, & there was Mr. Toad at last, standing safe & sound in the hall, covered with mud, & with the water streaming off him, but pleased & happy at being in a friend's house at last after so many perilous adventures. "O Ratty!" he cried, "I've been having such times, you can't think! Such dangers, such escapes, and all through my own cleverness! Been in prison—got out of it! Been thrown into a canal—swam ashore! Stole a horse—sold him for a pocketful of money! O I *am* a smart Toad & no mistake! Tell you what I did, only just now—"

"Toad," said the Water-Rat firmly: "You go off upstairs at once, & take off that old cotton rag that looks as if it had once belonged to a washerwoman, & clean yourself, & put on some of my clothes & try & look like a gentleman if you *can*; for a more shabby be-draggled disreputable-looking object than you are I never saw in my life! Now stop swaggering & be off!"

So the Toad went very humbly upstairs to the rat's dressing-room, & changed his clothes, & brushed his hair, & by the time he came down again dinner was ready, & very glad the Toad was to see it, for he was very hungry

again by this time, in spite of his good breakfast. There was roast veal, stuffed, & vegetable marrow; & a cherry tart.

While they ate their dinner the Toad told the Rat all his adventures, not forgetting all his own cleverness, & presence of mind, & cunning; but the Rat looked very grave. When the Toad had done, the Rat said "Now Toady, seriously, don't you see what an old ass you are? You've been beaten, kicked, imprisoned, chased, thrown into water; there's no fun in that. And all because you tried to steal a motor-car. There's no need for you to steal motor-cars; you've got lots of money; you can buy a beauty if you like. When are you going to be sensible, & a credit to your friends?"

Now the Toad was really a very good-hearted animal, & never minded being jawed: so although, while the rat was talking, he kept saying to himself, "But it *was* fun, though!" & making strange suppressed noises inside him, k-i-i-ck, & poop-p-p- & other sounds like snorts, or the opening of soda-water-bottles, yet when the rat had done he said very nicely & humbly, "Quite right, Ratty! I have been a conceited old ass, I can see; but I'm going to be a good Toad, & not do it any more. As soon as we've had our coffee, *and* a smoke, I'm going to stroll down to Toad Hall, & I'm going to lead a respectable life there, & have a bit of dinner for my friends when they come to see me, & have a pony-chaise to jog about the country in, just as I used to in the old days."

"Stroll down to Toad Hall?" cried the Rat. "What are you talking about? Haven't you *heard*?"

"Heard what?" said the Toad, turning rather pale. "Go on, Ratty! what haven't I heard?"

"Do you mean to tell me," said the Rat, thumping with his little fist upon the table, "that you haven't heard—"

(To be contd.)

16 Durham Villas, Campden Hill, W.
16 August, 1907

Dear Robinson,

"Do you mean to tell me," shouted the Water-Rat, thumping with his little fist upon the table, "That you've never heard about the animals?"

"N-n-no," murmured the Toad, trembling in every limb.

"—and how they've been & taken Toad Hall?" went on the Rat.

Toad leaned his elbows on the table, & his chin on his hands; & a large tear welled up in each of his eyes, overflowed, & splashed on the table, plop! plop!

"Go on, Ratty," he murmured: "tell me all; I can bear it."

"When you—got into that trouble of yours," said the Rat, slowly and impressively: "I mean when you—disappeared, you know, over that you-know-what—"

The Toad nodded.

"Well, it was a good deal talked about here, naturally," said the Rat. "Not only in the village but in the wild-wood. And the animals went about saying that this time you would never come back, never, never!"

The Toad nodded.

"—But the Mole and the Badger," continued the Water-Rat. "They held out that you would come back somehow; they didn't know how, but somehow."

The Toad sat up in his chair, & began to smirk a little.

"—So the Mole & the Badger," went on the Rat, "determined they would move their things in to Toad Hall, & sleep there, to look after it for you. The fact is, they didn't trust the animals!"

"I should think not indeed!" said Toad.

"One dark night," said the Rat, lowering his voice, "one *very* dark night—and it was blowing hard too, & raining cats-&-dogs—a band of weasels, armed to the teeth, crept silently up the carriage-drive. At the same time a band of desperate ferrets advanced through the kitchen-garden; & a number of stoats who stuck at nothing surrounded the backdoor.

The mole & the badger were sitting by the fire, smoking & telling each other stories, when these bloodthirsty villains broke down the doors & rushed in upon them. They made the best fight they could, but what are two people against hundreds? They took & beat them severely with sticks, the two poor faithful creatures, & turned them out into the cold & the wet."

Here the Toad sniggered a little, & then pulled himself up & tried to look very solemn.

"—And they've been living in Toad Hall ever since," continued the Rat, "and going on anyhow! Lying in bed half the day, & breakfast at all hours, & the place in such a mess it's not fit to be seen! Eating your grub, & drinking your drink, & making jokes about you, & singing vulgar songs about you & about—prisons & magistrates & all that; & they tell everybody they've come to stay for good!"

"O have they?" said Toad, getting up & seizing his stick. "I'll jolly soon see about that!"

"It's no good, Toad!" called the Rat after him. "You'd better come back! You'll only get into trouble!"

But the Toad was off, & there was no holding him. He marched valiantly down the road, his stick over his shoulder, till he got near the front gate, when suddenly behind the palings there popped up a long yellow ferret with a gun.

"Who comes there?" cried the ferret.

"Stuff & nonsense," said the Toad angrily. "What do you mean by talking like that to me? What do you—"

The ferret said never a word, but he brought his gun up to his shoulder. The Toad dropped flat in the road. *Bang!* a bullet whistled over his head. The Toad scrambled to his feet, & scampered off down the road; & as he ran he heard the ferret laughing.

He went back & told the Water-rat. "What did I tell you?" said Rat.

Still, the Toad would not give in at once. He got a boat, & set off rowing up the river to the back of Toad Hall, to where the garden came down to the riverside. All seemed very peaceful & deserted. As he rested on his oars he could see Toad Hall quiet in the sunshine, with the pigeons cooing on the roof, & the garden, & the creek that led to the boathouse, & the little wooden bridge that crossed it. He paddled up very cautiously & turned to go under the bridge, & was just passing it when

CRASH!

A great stone, flung from the bridge, smashed through the bottom of the boat, & Toad found himself struggling in deep water. He looked up, & saw two stoats leaning over the bridge watching him. "It'll be your head next time, Toady!" said they. And as Toad swam to shore, the stoats laughed & laughed & laughed, till they nearly had two fits—that is, one fit each, of course.

The Toad went back & told the Water-Rat. "What did I tell you?" said Ratty crossly: "& look here! now you've been & ruined my nice clothes that I lent you!"

Then the Toad was very humble, & apologized to the Rat for getting his clothes wet, & said "Ratty, I have been a headstrong & a wilful Toad. Henceforward I will be humble & submissive, & will do nothing without your kind advice & approval."

"If that is really so," said the Rat, "then my advice is, to sit down & have

your supper & be patient. For I am sure that we can do nothing until we have seen the Mole & the Badger, & heard their news, & taken their advice in the matter."

"Oho, the Mole and the Badger!" said the Toad lightly: "Why, what's become of them? I had forgotten all about them."

"Well may you ask," replied the Rat reproachfully. "While you were riding about in motor-cars, those two faithful animals have been hiding in the wild-wood, living very rough & sleeping very hard, spying & planning & contriving, how to get back Toad Hall again for you. See what it is to have true friends! Some day you'll be sorry you didn't value them more while you had got them."

So the Toad was humble & contrite again, of course, & they sat down to supper.

When they were about half-way through, there came a knock at the door. The Rat nodded mysteriously to the Toad, & went to the door & opened it; & in walked the Badger. His shoes were covered with mud, & he looked very rough & touzled; but then he was never a very smart man, the Badger, at the best of times. He shook Toad by the hand & said "Welcome home, Toad! Ah, what am I saying? Home, indeed! This is a sad meeting. Alas, poor, poor Toad!" Then he sat down at the table & helped himself to a large slice of cold pie.

The Toad was rather alarmed at this sort of greeting; but the Rat nudged him & whispered "Don't say anything. He takes it very much to heart. And he's always very low when he's wanting his victuals."

Presently there was another knock. The Rat nodded to the Toad, & went to the door & ushered in the Mole, very shabby & unwashed, with bits of hay & straw sticking in his fur.

(To be continued)

16 Durham Villas, Campden Hill, W.
21st Aug. 1907

Dear Robinson,

"Why, it's Toad!" cried the Mole, his face brightening up. "Fancy seeing you here!" And he began to dance round him. "Thought you were locked up in prison for the rest of your days! Why, you must have managed to escape, you *clever* Toad!"

The Rat pulled him by the arm, but it was too late. The Toad was puffing & swelling already.

"Clever? Well, I'm cleverer than you fellows seem to think me," said he. "Of *course* I escaped. What's a prison to me? But that's nothing to what I've done since. Just let me tell you!"

"Well, well," said the Mole, moving towards the table. "You can talk while I eat. Not a bite since breakfast! O my, o my!" And he sat down & helped himself liberally to cold beef & pickles.

The Toad straddled on the hearth-rug, thrust his hands into his pockets, & pulled out a handful of silver. "Look at that!" he said. "That's not bad, for a few minutes' work. And how do you think I done it? Horse-dealing! That's how I done it!"

"Go on, Toad!" said the Mole, immensely interested.

"Toad, do be quiet, please," said the Rat: "and don't you egg him on, Mole, but please tell us what the position is, & what's best to be done."

"There isn't anything to be done, that I can see," replied the Mole, grumpily. "It's like the old riddle, 'Who goes round & round the house & never inside the house?' The Badger & I have been round & round the house, night & day: always the same thing. Sentries everywhere, guns poked out at us, stones thrown at us; always an animal on the look-out, and my! how they do laugh! That's what annoys me most."

"It's very difficult," said the Rat, reflecting deeply: "But I think I see what Toad ought to do. He ought to—"

"No, he oughtn't!" shouted the Mole, with his mouth full. "Nothing of the sort. He ought to—"

"Well, I shan't do it, any way," cried the Toad, getting excited. "I'm not going to be ordered about by you fellows. I'm going to—"

By this time they were all three talking at once, at the top of their voices, & the noise was simply deafening, when a small dry voice said, "Be quiet, all of you!" and instantly every one was silent.

It was the Badger, who had finished his pie & turned round in his chair. When he saw that they were all evidently waiting for him to address them, he turned to the table again & reached out for the cheese. And so great was the respect commanded by the solid qualities of that admirable animal, that not another word was uttered till he had quite finished his supper & brushed the crumbs from his legs. The Toad fidgeted a bit, but the Rat held him firmly down.

When the Badger had quite done, he got up & stood before the fire, re-

flecting. "Toad!" he said severely. "You're a bad little animal! What would your father have said, if he had been here to-night?"

The Toad began to shed tears, at once.

"There, there!" said the Badger, more kindly, "never mind. We're going to let by-gones be by-gones. But what the Mole says is quite true. The Stoats are on guard, & they're the best sentinels in the world. It's no good our attacking the place. They're too strong for us."

"Then it's all over," sobbed the Toad, crying into the sofa-cushions. "I shall go & enlist for a soldier, & never see my dear Toad-Hall any more!"

"Cheer up, Toady," said the Badger; "now I'm going to tell you a secret."

The Toad sat up at once & dried his eyes. He liked to be told secrets, & then to go & tell them to some other animal, after he had promised not to.

"There-is-a-secret-passage," said the Badger impressively, "leading right into the middle of Toad Hall!"

"O nonsense, Badger," said the Toad rather airily: "I know every inch of Toad Hall, inside & out. Nothing of the sort, I do assure you!"

"My young friend," said the Badger severely, "Your father, who was a very worthy animal—much worthier than some others I know—was a great friend of mine. He made that passage, in case of danger, & when he had made it he showed it to me. 'Don't tell my son,' said he. 'He's a good fellow, but he has a light character & can't hold his tongue. If he is ever in a real fix you may tell him, but not before!'"

The other animals looked hard at Toad, to see how he would take it. Toad was inclined to be sulky at first. Then he brightened up, being a good fellow.

"Well, well," said he, "perhaps I am rather a talker. A popular fellow like me—my friends get round me—& then I talk. Go on, Badger! How's this going to help us?"

"To-morrow night," continued the Badger, "as I have found out by calling at the back-door in the disguise of a sweep, there is going to be a great banquet. It's somebody's birthday—the Head Weasel's, I believe. And the animals will be gathered in the dining-hall, feasting & laughing & carrying on, & suspecting nothing. No guns, no swords, no sticks, no arms of any sort."

"But the sentries will be posted, as usual," remarked the Rat.

"Exactly," said the Badger. They will trust entirely to the sentries. And that's where our passage comes in. This blessed old passage leads right up under the butler's pantry, next to the dining-hall!"

"Aha, that squeaky board in the butler's pantry!" cried the Toad. "Now I understand it."

"—We shall creep out quietly into the butler's pantry," cried the Mole—

"—with our swords & our sticks & things!" shouted the Rat—

"—And rush in upon 'em!—" said the Badger—

"And whack 'em, & whack 'em, and whack 'em!—" cried the Toad in ecstasy, running round & round the room & jumping over the chairs.

"Very well then," said the Badger, becoming suddenly grave & severe once more. "Now that's settled, all of you go off to bed, *at once* & we'll make our arrangements to-morrow."

The Toad felt a great deal too excited to sleep. But he had had a long & tiring day, & his head had not been long on the pillow before he was snoring. Of course he dreamt a great deal—such a jumble of gipsies, motor-cars & policemen, fallings into water & fishings out again, as never was; & the secret passage twisted & turned, & shook itself, & sat up on its end; but somehow he was in Toad Hall at the last, & his friends sat round him, saying what a *clever* Toad he was.

He slept till a very late hour next morning, & when he got down the other animals had finished their breakfast a long time. The Mole had gone out by himself, without saying where he was going to. The Badger sat in the armchair, reading the paper, & not troubling himself in the slightest about what was going to happen that evening. The Rat was running round excitedly with his arms full of weapons, distributing them in four little heaps, & saying rapidly under his breath, as he ran, "Here's-a-sword-for-the-Rat, here's-a-sword-for-the-Mole, here's-a-sword-for-the-Toad, here's-a-sword-for-the-Badger! Here's-a-pistol-for-the-Rat, here's-a-pistol-for-the-Mole," & so on.

(To be continued)

16 Durham Villas, Campden Hill, W.
26th August, 1907

Dear Robinson,

"That's all very well, Rat," said the Badger, looking at him over the edge of his newspaper, "I'm not blaming you. But just let us once get past those

stoats, with their horrid guns, & I assure you we shan't want any swords or pistols. We four, with our sticks, once we're inside the dining-hall—why, we shall clear the floor of 'em, in five minutes. I'd have done the thing by myself, but I didn't want to deprive you fellows of the fun!"

"It's as well to be on the safe side," said the Rat, polishing a pistol-barrel on his sleeve & looking along it.

The Toad picked up a stout stick & swung it vigorously, thrashing imaginary animals with it. "I'll learn 'em to steal my house!" he cried, "I'll learn 'em, I'll learn 'em!"

"Don't say 'learn 'em,' Toad," said the Rat, greatly shocked: "it's not good English!"

"What are you always nagging at Toad for?" inquired the Badger. "What's the matter with his English? It's the same what I use myself, & what's good enough for me ought to be good enough for you!"

"I'm sorry," said the Rat humbly: "Only I *think* it ought to be 'teach 'em,' not 'learn 'em.'"

"But we don't want to teach 'em!" said the Badger. "We want to *learn* 'em,—learn 'em, learn 'em! & what's more, we're *going* to!"

"O all right, have it your own way," said the Rat. He was getting rather muddled about it himself, & presently retired into a corner, where he was heard muttering "learn 'em, teach 'em, teach 'em, learn 'em"—till the Badger told him rather sharply to leave off.

Presently the Mole tumbled into the room, evidently very pleased with himself. "I've been humbugging the Stoats," he began. "It was great fun. I put on that old washerwoman-dress that Toad came home in—found it hanging before the kitchen fire—*and* the bonnet, & went off to Toad Hall, & found the Stoat-sentries with their guns at the gate. 'Good morning, gentlemen!' I says. 'Want any washing done today?' They looked at me proud, & haughty, & said, 'Go away washerwoman! we don't do any washing on duty!' 'Or any other time?' says I! 'Haw, haw, haw!' Wasn't I *funny*, Toad!"

"Poor, frivolous animal!" said the Toad very loftily. The fact is, he was jealous of Mole, for what he had done. It was just what he would have liked to do himself, if he had only thought of it.

"Some of the stoats turned quite pink," continued the Mole: "and the Sergeant said to me, very stiffly, 'Now run away, my good woman, run away!' 'Run away?' I said, 'it won't be me that'll be running away, in a very short time from now.'"

"O *Moly!*" said the Rat, dismayed.

The Badger laid down his paper.

"I could see them pricking up their ears," went on Mole. "My daughter," I said, "washes for Mr. Badger, so I know what I'm talking about. A hundred bloodthirsty badgers, armed with rifles, are going to attack to-night by way of the paddock. Six boat-loads of rats, with pistols and cutlasses, will come up the river & effect a landing in the kitchen-garden; & a picked body of Toads, known as the Die-hards, or the Death-or-Glory Toads, will storm the orchard." Then I ran away & hid: & presently I came creeping back through the bushes. They were all as nervous & excited as could be: running all ways at once, & every one giving different orders, & the Sergeant sending off bodies of stoats to distant parts of the grounds in different directions; and I heard one stoat say, 'That's *just* like the weasels; they're to stop comfortably at home, & have feasting & all sorts of fun, & we're to stay out in the cold & the dark & be cut to pieces by bloodthirsty badgers'."

"You *silly* ass, Mole," cried the Toad, "You've been & spoilt everything!"

"Mole," said the Badger, in his dry quiet way, "you have more sense in your little finger than some other animals have in the whole of their fat bodies. I begin to have great hopes of you. *Good* Mole! *Clever* Mole!"

The Toad was simply wild with jealousy, especially as he couldn't see what the Mole had done that was particularly clever; but before he could say more the dinner-bell rang. It was bacon & broad beans, & a macaroni pudding; & when they had quite done, the badger settled himself into an armchair & said, "Well, we've got our work cut out for us tonight, & we shall be up rather late, so I'm going to have forty winks." And he drew a handkerchief over his face & was soon snoring.

The Rat was still taken up with his arrangements, & continued running between his four little heaps, muttering "Here's-a-belt-for-the-Rat, here's-a-belt-for-the-Mole, here's-a-belt-for-the-Toad, here's-a-belt-for-the-Badger," & so on, so the Mole put his arm through the Toad's & drew him into the garden, where he put him into a wicker-chair & made him tell him all his adventures from beginning to end, which the Toad was very willing to do. Indeed, he not only told him everything, but I'm afraid he also told him several things that had not actually occurred; but they were all things that the Toad had intended to do, if he had had time; so perhaps he had almost persuaded himself that he *had* really done them.

When it grew dark, the Rat called them into the parlour, & stood each of them by his little heap, & proceeded to dress them up. He was very earnest about it & it took quite a long time. First there was a belt to go on each animal, & then a sword to be stuck into each belt, & then a cutlass on the other side to balance it, & then a pair of pistols, & a policeman's truncheon, & a pair of handcuffs, & some bandages & sticking-plaster, & a sandwich-case. The Badger laughed good-humouredly, & said, "All right, Rat; it amuses you & it doesn't hurt me. But I'm going to do all I've got to do with this here stick!" But the Rat said, "*Please*, Badger! You know I shouldn't like you to blame me afterwards, & say I had forgotten *anything*!"

When all was ready, the Badger took a dark lantern in his hand & said, "Now then, follow me! Mole first, 'cos I'm very pleased with him! Rat next; Toad last. And look here, Toady! don't you chatter quite so much!"

The Toad was so anxious to begin the attack that he took up the inferior position assigned to him without a murmur, & the animals set off. The Badger led them along by the river for some way, & then suddenly swung himself over the edge into a hole in the river-bank. The others followed silently one by one: of course when it came to the Toad's turn he managed to slip & fall into the water with a loud splash. He was hauled out by the others, & rubbed down, & comforted; but the Badger was seriously angry & told him that the next time he made a fool of himself he would be left behind.

(To be contd.)

16 Durham Villas, Campden Hill, W.
7 Sept. 1907

Dear Robinson,

So at last they were in the secret passage!

It was cold, & dark, & damp, & muddy, & low; & the Toad began to shiver with dread, & partly also because he was wet through; & he lagged behind, & the others called out impatiently, "*Come* on, Toad!" Then he "came on" with such a rush that he upset the Rat into the Mole & the Mole into the Badger. And the Badger thought they were attacked from behind, & drew a pistol, as there wasn't room to use a stick; & he nearly put a bullet through Mr. Toad. When he found out what had really happened he was *very* angry,

& said, "Now Toad *shall* be left behind this time!" But Toad whimpered, & the other two promised they would be answerable for him, & at last the Badger was pacified, & the Toad was allowed to proceed, only this time the Rat brought up the rear, with a firm grip on the shoulder of Toad.

So they groped along & shuffled along, with their paws on their pistols, & presently the Badger said, "We must be getting very near the Hall now!" Then they heard, far away & over their heads, a confused murmur of sound, as if people were shouting & cheering & stamping & hammering on tables: & the Toad got nervous, but the Badger only said, "Well, they *are* going it, those Weasels!"

They groped along a bit further, & presently the noise broke out again, quite distinct this time, & close above them. "OOray-oo-ray-oo-ray-oo-ray!" they heard, & the stamping of little feet on the floor, & the clinking of glasses as little paws hammered on the table. "They *are* going it!" said the Badger: "Come on!" And they hurried along the passage till they found themselves standing under the trap-door that led into the butler's pantry!

There was such a noise going on in the Hall that there was little danger of their being overheard. The Badger said "Now, all together!" And the four of them put their shoulders to the trap-door & heaved it back. In another second they all stood in the pantry, with only a door between them & the dining-hall!

For the moment the noise was simply deafening. As the cheering & hammering slowly subsided, a voice was heard, saying, "Well, I will not detain you longer" (much applause). "But before I sit down" (great cheering), "I should like to say one word about our host Mr. Toad! We all know Toad! (laughter) *Good* Toad, *honest* Toad, *modest* Toad!" (Shrieks of merriment).

"Only let me get at him!" muttered Toad, grinding his teeth.

"Hold hard a minute!" said the Badger, restraining him with difficulty.

"—Let me sing you a little song," went on the voices: "which I have composed on the subject of Toad!" (Much applause.)

Then the head-weasel—for it was he—began in a high squeaky voice

> Toad he went a-pleasuring
> Gaily down the street—

The Badger drew himself up, took a firm grip of his stick in both hands, & cried

"The hour is come! Follow me!" and flung the door open wide.

My!

What a squealing & a squeaking & a screeching filled the air!

Well might the terrified weasels dive under the tables & spring at the windows! Well might the ferrets rush for the fire-place & get jammed in the chimney! Well might tables & chairs be upset & glass & china sent smashing on the floor, in the panic of that terrible moment when the Four Heroes strode wrathfully into the room! The Mighty Badger, his whiskers bristling, his great cudgel whistling through the air! Mole, black & grim & terrible, brandishing his stick & shouting his awful war-cry, "A Mole, A Mole!" Rat, desperate & determined, his belt bulging with weapons of every age & every variety; Toad, frenzied with excitement & injured pride, swollen to twice his ordinary size, leaping into the air & emitting Toad-whoops that chilled the marrow! "Toad he went a-pleasuring!" he yelled. "*I'll* pleasure 'em!" They were but four, yet to the panic-stricken weasels the hall seemed full of monstrous animals, grey, black, brown, & yellow, whooping & flourishing enormous sticks; & they broke & fled with squeals of terror, this way & that, through the windows, up the chimney, anywhere to get out of reach of those terrible cudgels.

The affair was soon over. Up & down, the length of the Hall, strode the four Animals, whacking with their sticks at every head that showed itself.

In five minutes the room was cleared. Through the broken windows the shrieks of terrified weasels escaping across the lawn were borne faintly to their ears; on the floor lay some dozen or so of the enemy, on whom the Mole was busily engaged in fitting handcuffs. The Badger, resting from his labours, leaned on his stick & wiped his honest brow. "Mole!" he said. "You're the best of fellows! Cut along outside & look after those stoats of yours! I've an idea we shan't have much trouble from *them* tonight!"

The Mole vanished through a window; & then the Badger bade the other two set a table on its legs, & pick up some plates & glasses, & see if they could find materials for a supper. "I want some grub, I do," he said, in the rather common way he had of speaking: "Stir your stumps, Toad, & look lively. We're doing all this for you, & you don't trouble to produce so much as a sandwich!"

The Toad felt rather hurt that the Badger didn't say pleasant things to him, as he had to the Mole, & tell him what a fine fellow he was, how splendidly he had fought for he was rather particularly pleased with himself, & the way he had gone for the head weasel & sent him flying across the table with one blow of his stick; but he bustled about, & so did the others, & presently they found some guava jelly in a glass dish, a cold chicken, a tongue that had

hardly been touched, some trifle, & quite a lot of lobster salad; & in the pantry was a basket-full of French rolls, & a quantity of celery & cheese. They were just sitting down when the Mole clambered in through the window chuckling, his arms full of rifles.

"It's all over," he said. "When the stoats heard the shrieks & the yells & the uproar inside the hall, most of them threw down their rifles & fled. The rest stood fast, but when the weasels rushed out upon them they thought they were betrayed, & the stoats grappled with the weasels, & the weasels fought to get away, & they wrestled & wriggled & rolled till they fell into the river! And I've got all their rifles, so *that's* all right."

"Excellent animal," said the Badger, his mouth full of chicken & trifle: "Now there's just one more thing I want you to do for us, Mole, before you sit down to your supper along of us: because I can trust you to see a thing done, & I wish I could say the same of everybody I know."

(To be contd.)

16 Durham Villas, Kensington,
Sept. 1907

Dear Robinson,

"What I want you to do, Mole," said the Badger, "is to take those fellows on the floor there, upstairs with you, & have some bedrooms cleaned out, & tidied, & made really comfortable. Make them put clean linen on all the beds, & turn down one corner of the bed-clothes, just as you know it ought to be done; & have a can of hot water & clean towels put in each room; & then you can give them a licking apiece, if you've a mind to, & put them outside the door—they won't trouble us any further, I'll lay. And then come in & have some of this cold tongue. It's real good. I'm *very* pleased with you, Mole!"

So the good-natured Mole formed his prisoners up in a line on the floor, & said, "Quick, March!" & marched them off to the bedrooms: & presently he came down smiling, & said every room was ready, & as clean as a new pin. "And I didn't have to lick them either," he added. "I thought they had had licking enough for one night, & the weasels, when I put it to them, *quite* agreed with me. And they were very very sorry & very penitent, & said it was

all the fault of the head-weasel & the stoats, & if ever they could do anything for us at any time—& so on. So I gave them a roll apiece & let them out at the back door, & off they ran!"

Then the Mole pulled his chair to the table & pitched into the cold tongue; & the Toad with an effort put aside all his jealousy, & said heartily, "Mole, you're a brick, & a clever brick! I wish I had your headpiece!" The Badger was pleased at that, & said "Good old Toad!" So they finished their supper in great joy & contentment, & presently retired to rest, between clean sheets, in the ancestral home of Toad, which they had won back by their valour, their strategy & their sticks.

Next morning the Toad, who had overslept himself, came down to breakfast disgracefully late, & found a certain quantity of eggshells on the table, some fragments of cold toast, a coffee-pot two-thirds empty, & really very little else; which did not tend to improve his temper, considering that after all it was his own house. The Mole & the Water-Rat were sitting in wicker-chairs out on the lawn, telling each other stories; roaring with laughter & kicking their short legs up in the air. The Badger, who was deep in the morning paper, merely looked up & nodded when the Toad came in. But the Toad knew his man, so he sat down & made the best breakfast he could, observing to himself that he would get square with the others, sooner or later.

When he had nearly finished the Badger remarked rather shortly: "I'm afraid there's a heavy morning's work in front of you, Toad; you see we ought to have a Banquet, to celebrate this affair!"

"O, all right," said the Toad, readily: "anything to oblige friends! Though why on earth you should want to have a Banquet in the morning I cannot understand. But you know I do not live to please myself, but only to give pleasure to my friends, & do everything they want, you dear Badger!"

"Don't pretend to be stupider than you are," said the Badger crossly; "& don't chuckle & splutter in your coffee when you're talking. It's rude. What I mean is, the Banquet will be at night, of course, but the invitations have got to go out at once, and you've got to write 'em! Now sit down at that table—there's stacks of paper on it, with 'Toad Hall' at the top in blue & gold—& write to all your friends, & perhaps if you stick to it you'll have done by lunch-time. And *I'll* help you, too. I'll order the Banquet!"

"What!" cried the Toad, dismayed: "Me write a lot of rotten letters on a jolly morning like this, when I want to go round my property, & get everything & everybody to rights, & enjoy myself! I'll be—I'll see you—stop a minute though! Why, certainly, dear Badger! What is my pleasure or conve-

nience to that of others? You wish it done & it shall be done. Go, my dear Badger, join our young friends outside in their innocent amusements. I sacrifice this fair morning on the altar of duty & friendship!"

The Badger looked at him very suspiciously, but Toad's frank open countenance made it difficult to suggest any unworthy motive in this change of attitude. As soon as the door had closed behind the Badger, the Toad hurried to the writing-table. He had had a fine idea while he was talking. He *would* write the invitations, to the otter, & all the hedgehogs, & the squirrels, & all the rest of them: & he would work in, somehow, what he had done during the fight, & how he had laid the head-weasel flat; & the invitation-cards should have a note at the foot, something like this:

SPEECH . . . . by Toad
(There will be other speeches by Toad during the evening)
SONG. . . . . by Toad
(composed by himself)
Other compositions . . by Toad
will be sung at intervals . . by the Composer

The idea pleased him mightily, & he worked hard & got the letters finished by lunch-time, when it was reported that there was a small & rather bedraggled weasel at the door, inquiring timidly whether he could be of any service to the gentlemen. The Toad went out, & found it was one of the handcuffed ones of the previous evening, very timid & very respectful. Toad patted him on the head, shoved the invitations into his paw, & told him to deliver them all at once, & if he would come back the next day perhaps there might be a shilling for him & perhaps there mightn't; & the poor weasel seemed really quite grateful, & hurried off eagerly to do his mission.

The other animals came in to lunch very boisterous & happy, after a morning's boating on the river, & expecting to find Toad somewhat sulky & depressed. Instead, he was so uppish & inflated that of course they began to suspect something; & the Rat & the Badger exchanged significant glances. After the meal was over the Toad thrust his hands deep into his trouser-pockets, & was swaggering off in to the garden, where he wanted to think out a few ideas for his speeches, when the Rat caught him by the arm.

(To be continued)

16 Durham Villas, Kensington,
Sept. 1907

Dear Robinson,

The Toad rather suspected what he was after, & did his best to get away; but the Badger taking him firmly by the other arm, he saw that the game was up. The animals conducted him between them into the small smoking-room that opened out of the entrance-hall, shut the door & put him down into a chair. Then they stood in front of him, while the Toad sat silent & looked at them with much suspicion & ill-humour.

"Now look here, Toad," said the Rat: "about this Banquet. We want you to understand, once & for all: there must be no speeches, and no songs. We're not arguing with you; we're just telling you." The Toad saw he was trapped. They understood him, they saw through him, they got ahead of him. His pleasant dream was shattered.

"Mayn't I sing them just one *little* song?" he said piteously.

"No, not one little song," said the Rat firmly, though his heart bled as he noticed the trembling lip of the poor disappointed Toad. "It's no good, Toady; you know your songs are all conceit & boasting, & vanity; & your speeches are all self-praise and-and-gross exaggeration and—and—"

"And *gas*," put in the Badger, in his common way.

"It's for your own good, Toady," went on the Rat. "You *must* turn over a new leaf, & now seems a splendid time to begin. Don't think that saying this doesn't hurt me more than it hurts you!"

The Toad remained a long while plunged in thought; at last he raised his head, & the traces of strong emotion were visible on his features. "You have conquered, my friends!" he said. "It was but a small thing that I asked—merely leave to 'blow' for yet one more evening, to let myself go & hear the tumultuous applause which always seems to me—somehow—to bring out my best qualities! But you are right, I know, & I am wrong. Henceforth I will be an altered toad. My friends, you shall never have occasion to blush for me again. But, O dear O dear, this is a *hard* world!"

And, pressing his handkerchief to his face, he left the room with faltering footsteps.

"Badger," said the Rat, "*I* feel like a brute; what do *you* feel like?"

"O I know, I know," said Badger: "but the thing's got to be done. This dear good fellow has got to live here; do you want him to be mocked, & scorned, & laughed at, by stoats & *weasels*?"

"Talking of weasels," said the Rat, "It's lucky we came upon that little weasel just as he was setting out with Toad's invitations. I confiscated the lot, and the good Mole is now sitting in the blue boudoir, filling up plain simple invitation-cards." . . .

When at last the hour for the banquet began to draw near, Toad slipped away from the others & went upstairs to his own bedroom, very melancholy & thoughtful. Sitting down in an armchair he rested his brow upon his hand & pondered long. Gradually his countenance cleared, & he began to smile long slow smiles; then he took to giggling in a shy, self-conscious, manner. Then he got up, locked the door, drew the curtains across the windows, took all the chairs in the room & arranged them in a semicircle, & took up his position in front of them, swelling visibly. Then he lifted his voice &, letting himself go, sang loudly

TOAD'S LAST LITTLE SONG!

The Toad—came home!
There was panic in the parlours and howling in the halls,
There was crying in the cowsheds & shrieking in the stalls,
When the Toad—came—home!

When the Toad—came—home!
There was smashing in of window and crashing in of door,
There was chivvying of weasels that fainted on the floor,
When the Toad—came—home!

Bang go the drums!
The trumpeters are tooting & the soldiers are saluting
And the cannon they are shooting and the—motor-cars are hooting
As the Hero comes!

Shout—Hoo-ray!
And let each one of the crowd do his best to shout it *loud*,
In honour of an animal of whom you're rightly proud,
For it's Toad's great day!

He sang it, as has been said, very loud; also, he sang it over twice.

Then he heaved a deep sigh; a long, long, long sigh.

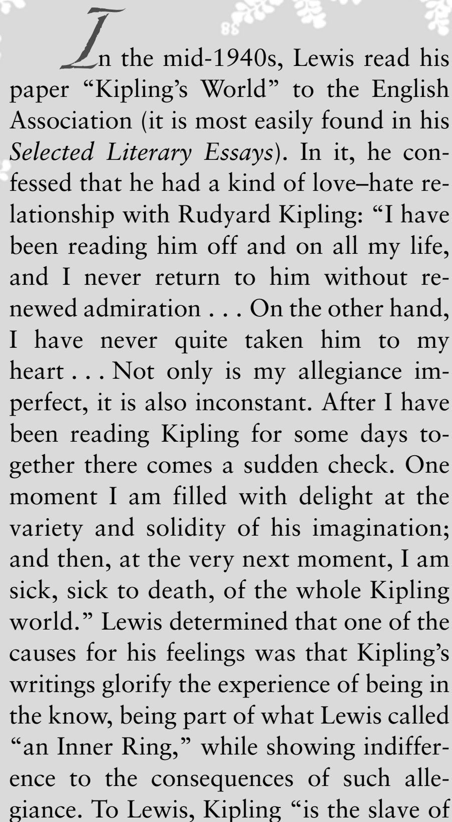
Then he dipped his hair-brush in the water-jug, parted his hair in the middle, & plastered it down very straight & sleek on each side; and, unlocking the door, went quietly down the stairs to greet his guests, who were assembling in the drawing-room.

Everyone shouted when he entered, & crowded round him to congratulate him & say nice things about his courage, & his cleverness, & his fighting qualities; but Toad only smiled faintly & murmured, "Not at all, not at all!" or sometimes "On the contrary!" The animals were evidently quite puzzled & taken aback by this new attitude of his; & Toad felt, as he moved from one guest to another, making his modest responses, that he was an object of absorbing interest to every one.

The Badger had ordered everything of the best, & the banquet was a great success. There was much talking, & laughter, & chaff, but through it all the Toad, who was in the Chair, looked down his nose & murmured pleasant nothings to the animals on each side of him. At intervals he stole a glance at the Badger & the Rat, & saw them looking at each other with their mouths open; & this gave him the greatest satisfaction.

The Wish House

by Rudyard Kipling



In the mid-1940s, Lewis read his paper "Kipling's World" to the English Association (it is most easily found in his *Selected Literary Essays*). In it, he confessed that he had a kind of love–hate relationship with Rudyard Kipling: "I have been reading him off and on all my life, and I never return to him without renewed admiration . . . On the other hand, I have never quite taken him to my heart . . . Not only is my allegiance imperfect, it is also inconstant. After I have been reading Kipling for some days together there comes a sudden check. One moment I am filled with delight at the variety and solidity of his imagination; and then, at the very next moment, I am sick, sick to death, of the whole Kipling world." Lewis determined that one of the causes for his feelings was that Kipling's writings glorify the experience of being in the know, being part of what Lewis called "an Inner Ring," while showing indifference to the consequences of such allegiance. To Lewis, Kipling "is the slave of

the Inner Ring; he expresses the passion, but does not stand outside to criticise it . . . he has nothing very much to say to us." Lewis's novel *That Hideous Strength* shows his distaste for inner rings, as a young academic's advance into a sinister government organization becomes a descent into hell.

Of Kipling's works, Lewis particularly singled out for praise his "queer" or "rum" stories—that is, his weird fiction: "These may be his best work, but they are not his most characteristic." Though Lewis did not name "The Wish House" among them, it belongs there. It was first published in *Maclean's Magazine,* October 15, 1924, and collected in *Debits and Credits* (1926).

The events of "The Wish House" have a curious parallel with Lewis's own life. Lewis told his friend Nevill Coghill that he was able to ease the suffering of his wife, a cancer victim, by taking on her pain. This substitution follows the doctrine of co-inherence expounded to Lewis by his friend Charles Williams: that through Christian love, one has the power to accept into one's own body the pain of someone else.

The new Church Visitor had just left after a twenty minutes' call. During that time, Mrs. Ashcroft had used such English as an elderly, experienced, and pensioned cook should, who had seen life in London. She was the readier, therefore, to slip back into easy, ancient Sussex ("t"s softening to "d"s as one warmed) when the 'bus brought Mrs. Fettley from thirty miles away for a visit, that pleasant March Saturday. The two had been friends since childhood; but, of late, destiny had separated their meetings by long intervals.

Much was to be said, and many ends, loose since last time, to be ravelled up on both sides, before Mrs. Fettley, with her bag of quilt-patches, took the couch beneath the window commanding the garden, and the football-ground in the valley below.

"Most folk got out at Bush Tye for the match there," she explained, "so there weren't no one for me to cushion agin, the last five mile. An' she *do* just-about bounce ye."

"You've took no hurt," said her hostess. "You don't brittle by agein', Liz."

Mrs. Fettley chuckled and made to match a couple of patches to her liking. "No, or I'd ha' broke twenty year back. You can't ever mind when I was so's to be called round, can ye?"

Mrs. Ashcroft shook her head slowly—she never hurried—and went on stitching a sack-cloth lining into a list-bound rush tool-basket. Mrs. Fettley laid out more patches in the Spring light through the geraniums on the window-sill, and they were silent awhile.

"What like's this new Visitor o' yourn?" Mrs. Fettley inquired, with a nod towards the door. Being very short-sighted, she had, on her entrance, almost bumped into the lady.

Mrs. Ashcroft suspended the big packing-needle judicially on high, ere she stabbed home. "Settin' aside she don't bring much news with her yet, I dunno as I've anythin' special agin her."

"Ourn, at Keyneslade," said Mrs. Fettley, "she's full o' words an' pity, but she don't stay for answers. Ye can get on with your thoughts while she clacks."

"This 'un don't clack. She's aimin' to be one o' those High Church nuns, like."

"Ourn's married, but, by what they say, she've made no great gains of it . . ." Mrs. Fettley threw up her sharp chin. "Lord! How they dam' cherubim do shake the very bones o' the place!"

The tile-sided cottage trembled at the passage of two specially chartered forty-seat charabancs on their way to the Bush Tye match; a regular Saturday "shopping" 'bus, for the county's capital, fumed behind them; while, from one of the crowded inns, a fourth car backed out to join the procession, and held up the stream of through pleasure-traffic.

"You're as free-tongued as ever, Liz," Mrs. Ashcroft observed.

"Only when I'm with you. Otherwhiles, I'm Granny—three times over. I lay that basket's for one o' your gran'chiller—ain't it?"

" 'Tis for Arthur—my Jane's eldest."

"But he ain't workin' nowheres, is he?"

"No. 'Tis a picnic-basket."

"You're let off light. My Willie, he's allus at me for money for them aireated wash-poles folk puts up in their gardens to draw the music from Lunnon, like. An' I give it 'im—pore fool me!"

"An' he forgets to give you the promise-kiss after, don't he?" Mrs. Ashcroft's heavy smile seemed to strike inwards.

"He do. 'No odds 'twixt boys now an' forty year back. 'Take all an' give naught—an' we to put up with it! Pore fool we! Three shillin' at a time Willie'll ask me for!"

"They don't make nothin' o' money these days," Mrs. Ashcroft said.

"An' on'y last week," the other went on, "me daughter, she ordered a quarter pound suet at the butchers's; an' she sent it back to 'im to be chopped. She said she couldn't bother with choppin' it."

"I lay he charged her, then."

"I lay he did. She told me there was a whisk-drive that afternoon at the Institute, an' she couldn't bother to do the choppin'."

"Tck!"

Mrs. Ashcroft put the last firm touches to the basket-lining. She had scarcely finished when her sixteen-year-old grandson, a maiden of the moment in attendance, hurried up the garden-path shouting to know if the thing were ready, snatched it, and made off without acknowledgment. Mrs. Fettley peered at him closely.

"They're goin' picnickin' somewheres," Mrs. Ashcroft explained.

"Ah," said the other, with narrowed eyes. "I lay *he* won't show much mercy to any he comes across, either. Now 'oo the dooce do he remind me of, all of a sudden?"

"They must look arter theirselves—'same as we did." Mrs. Ashcroft began to set out the tea.

"No denyin' *you* could, Gracie," said Mrs. Fettley.

"What's in your head now?"

"Dunno . . . But it come over me, sudden-like—about dat woman from Rye—I've slipped the name—Barnsley, wadn't it?"

"Batten—Polly Batten, you're thinkin' of."

"That's it—Polly Batten. That day she had it in for you with a hay-fork—'time we was all hayin' at Smalldene—for stealin' her man."

"But you heered me tell her she had my leave to keep him?" Mrs. Ashcroft's voice and smile were smoother than ever.

"I did—an' we was all looking that she'd prod the fork spang through your breastes when you said it."

"No-oo. She'd never go beyond bounds—Polly. She shruck too much for reel doin's."

"Allus seems to *me*," Mrs. Fettley said after a pause, "that a man 'twixt two fightin' women is the foolishest thing on earth. 'Like a dog bein' called two ways."

"Mebbe. But what set ye off on those times, Liz?"

"That boy's fashion o' carryin' his head an' arms. I haven't rightly looked at him since he's growed. Your Jane never showed it, but—*him*! Why, 'tis Jim Batten and his tricks come to life again! . . . Eh?"

"Mebbe. There's some that would ha' made it out so—bein' barren-like, themselves."

"Oho! Ah well! Dearie, dearie me, now! . . . An' Jim Batten's been dead this—"

"Seven and twenty years," Mrs. Ashcroft answered briefly. "Won't ye draw up, Liz?"

Mrs. Fettley drew up to buttered toast, currant bread, stewed tea, bitter as leather, some home-preserved pears, and a cold boiled pig's tail to help down the muffins. She paid all the proper compliments.

"Yes. I dunno as I've ever owed me belly much," said Mrs. Ashcroft thoughtfully. "We only go through this world once."

"But don't it lay heavy on ye, sometimes?" her guest suggested.

"Nurse says I'm a sight liker to die o' me indigestion than me leg." For Mrs. Ashcroft had a long-standing ulcer on her shin, which needed regular care from the Village Nurse, who boasted (or others did, for her) that she had dressed it one hundred and three times already during her term of office.

"An' you that *was* so able, too! It's all come on ye before your full time, like. *I*'ve watched ye goin'." Mrs. Fettley spoke with real affection.

"Somethin's bound to find ye sometime. I've me 'eart left me still," Mrs. Ashcroft returned.

"You was always big-hearted enough for three. That's somethin' to look back on at the day's eend."

"I reckon you've *your* back-lookin's, too," was Mrs. Ashcroft's answer.

"You know it. But I don't think much regardin' such matters excep' when I'm along with you, Gra'. 'Takes two sticks to make a fire."

Mrs. Fettley stared, with jaw half-dropped, at the grocer's bright calendar on the wall. The cottage shook again to the roar of the motor-traffic, and

the crowded football-ground below the garden roared almost as loudly; for the village was well set to its Saturday leisure.

Mrs. Fettley had spoken very precisely for some time without interruption, before she wiped her eyes. "And," she concluded, "they read 'is death-notice to me, out o' the paper last month. O' course it wadn't any o' *my* becomin' concerns—let be I 'adn't set eyes on him for so long. O' course *I* couldn't say nor show nothin'. Nor I've no rightful call to go to Eastbourne to see 'is grave, either. I've been schemin' to slip over there by the 'bus some day; but they'd ask questions at 'ome past endurance. So I 'aven't even *that* to stay me."

"But you've 'ad your satisfactions?"

"Godd! Yess! Those four years 'e was workin' on the rail near us. An' the other drivers they gave him a brave funeral, too."

"Then you've naught to cast-up about. 'Nother cup o' tea?"

The light and air had changed a little with the sun's descent, and the two elderly ladies closed the kitchen-door against chill. A couple of jays squealed and skirmished through the undraped apple-trees in the garden. This time, the word was with Mrs. Ashcroft, her elbows on the tea-table, and her sick leg propped on a stool. . . .

"Well I never! But what did your 'usband say to that?" Mrs. Fettley asked, when the deep-toned recital halted.

" 'E said I might go where I pleased for all of 'im. But seein' 'e was bedrid, I said I'd 'tend 'im out. 'E knowed I wouldn't take no advantage of 'im in that state. 'E lasted eight or nine week. Then he was took with a seizure-like; an' laid stone-still for days. Then 'e propped 'imself up abed an' says: 'You pray no man'll ever deal with you like you've dealed with some.' 'An' you?' I says, for *you* know, Liz, what a rover 'e was. 'It cuts both ways,' says 'e, 'but *I*'m death-wise, an' I can see what's comin' to you.' He died a-Sunday an' was buried a-Thursday . . . An' yet I'd set a heap by him—one time or—did I ever?"

"You never told me that before," Mrs. Fettley ventured.

"I'm payin' ye for what ye told me just now. Him bein' dead, I wrote up, sayin' I was free for good, to that Mrs. Marshall in Lunnon—which gave me my first place as kitchen-maid—Lord, how long ago! She was well pleased, for they two was both gettin' on, an' I knowed their ways. You remember, Liz,

I used to go to ’em in service between whiles, for years—when we wanted money, or—or my ’usband was away—on occasion.”

“ ’E *did* get that six months at Chichester, didn’t ’e?” Mrs. Fettley whispered. “We never rightly won to the bottom of it.”

“ ’E’d ha’ got more, but the man didn’t die.”

“ ’None o’ your doin’s, was it, Gra’?”

“No! ’Twas the woman’s husband this time. An’ so, my man bein’ dead, I went back to them Marshall’s, as cook, to get me legs under a gentleman’s table again, and be called with a handle to me name. That was the year you shifted to Portsmouth.”

“Cosham,” Mrs. Fettley corrected. “There was a middlin’ lot o’ new buildin’ bein’ done there. My man went first, an’ got the room, an’ I follered.”

“Well, then, I was a year-abouts in Lunnon, all at a breath, like, four meals a day an’ livin’ easy. Then, ’long towards autumn, they two went travellin’, like, to France; keepin’ me on, for they couldn’t do without me. I put the house to rights for the caretaker, an’ then I slipped down ’ere to me sister Bessie—me wages in me pockets, an’ all ’ands glad to be’old of me.”

“That would be when I was at Cosham,” said Mrs. Fettley.

“*You* know, Liz, there wasn’t no cheap-dog pride to folk, those days, no more than there was cinemas nor whisk-drives. Man or woman ’ud lay hold o’ any job that promised a shillin’ to the backside of it, didn’t they? I was all peaked up after Lunnon, an’ I thought the fresh airs ’ud serve me. So I took on at Smalldene, obligin’ with a hand at the early potato-liftin, stubbin’ hens, an’ such-like. They’d ha’ mocked me sore in my kitchen in Lunnon, to see me in men’s boots, an me petticoats all shorted.”

“Did it bring ye any good?” Mrs. Fettley asked.

“ ’Twadn’t for that I went. You know, ’s’well’s me, that na’un happens to ye till it ’*as* ’appened. Your mind don’t warn ye before’and of the road ye’ve took, till you’re at the far eend of it. We’ve only a backwent view of our proceedin’s.”

“ ’Oo was it?”

“ ’Arry Mockler.” Mrs. Ashcroft’s face puckered to the pain of her sick leg.

Mrs. Fettley gasped. “ ’Arry? Bert Mockler’s son! An’ *I* never guessed!”

Mrs. Ashcroft nodded. “An’ I told myself—*an*’ I beleft it—that I wanted field-work.”

“What did ye get out of it?”

“The usuals. Everythin’ at first—worse than naught after. I had signs an’

warnings a-plenty, but I took no heed of 'em. For we was burnin' rubbish one day, just when we'd come to know how 'twas with—with both of us. 'Twas early in the year for burnin', an' I said so. 'No!' says he. 'The sooner dat old stuff's off an' done with,' 'e says, 'the better.' 'Is face was harder'n rocks when he spoke. Then it come over me that I'd found me master, which I 'adn't ever before. I'd allus owned 'em, like."

"Yes! Yes! They're yourn or you're theirn," the other sighed. "I like the right way best."

"I didn't. But 'Arry did . . . 'Long then, it come time for me to go back to Lunnon. I couldn't. I clean couldn't! So, I took an' tipped a dollop o' scaldin' water out o' the copper one Monday mornin' over me left 'and and arm. Dat stayed me where I was for another fortnight."

"Was it worth it?" said Mrs. Fettley, looking at the silvery scar on the wrinkled fore-arm.

Mrs. Ashcroft nodded. "An' after that, we two made it up 'twixt us so's 'e could come to Lunnon for a job in a liv'ry-stable not far from me. 'E got it. *I* 'tended to that. There wadn't no talk nowhere. His own mother never suspicioned how 'twas. He just slipped up to Lunnon, an' there we abode that winter, not 'alf a mile t'other from each."

"Ye paid 'is fare an' all, though"; Mrs. Fettley spoke convincedly.

Again Mrs. Ashcroft nodded. "Dere wadn't much I didn't do for him. 'E was me master, an'—O God, help us!—we'd laugh over it walkin' together after dark in them paved streets, an' me corns fair wrenchin' in me boots! I'd never been like that before. Ner he! Ner he!"

Mrs. Fettley clucked sympathetically.

"An' when did ye come to the eend?" she asked.

"When 'e paid it all back again, every penny. Then I knowed, but I wouldn't *suffer* meself to know. 'You've been mortal kind to me,' he says. 'Kind!' I said. ' 'Twixt *us*?' But 'e kep' all on tellin' me 'ow kind I'd been an' 'e'd never forget it all his days. I held it from off o' me for three evenin's, because I would *not* believe. Then 'e talked about not bein' satisfied with 'is job in the stables, an' the men there puttin' tricks on 'im, an' all they lies which a man tells when 'e's leavin' ye. I heard 'im out, neither 'elpin nor 'inderin'. At the last, I took off a fiddle brooch which he'd give me an' I says: 'Dat'll do. *I* ain't askin' na'un'.' An' I turned me round an' walked off to me own sufferin's. 'E didn't make 'em worse. 'E didn't come nor write after that. 'E slipped off 'ere back 'ome to 'is mother again."

"An' 'ow often did ye look for 'en to come back?" Mrs. Fettley demanded mercilessly.

"More'n once—more'n once! Goin' over the streets we'd used, I thought de very pave-stones 'ud shruck out under me feet."

"Yes," said Mrs. Fettley. "I dunno but dat don't 'urt as much as aught else. An' dat was all ye got?"

"No. 'Twadn't. That's the curious part, if you'll believe it, Liz."

"I do. I lay you're further off lyin' now than in all your life, Gra'."

"I am . . . An' I suffered, like I'd not wish my most arrantest enemies to. God's Own Name! I went through the hoop that spring! One part of it was headaches which I'd never known all me days before. Think o' *me* with an 'ed-dick! But I come to be grateful for 'em. They kep' me from thinkin' . . ."

" 'Tis like a tooth," Mrs. Fettley commented. "It must rage an' rugg till it tortures itself quiet on ye; an' then—then there's na'un left."

"*I* got enough lef' to last me all *my* days on earth. It come about through our charwoman's liddle girl—Sophy Ellis was 'er name—all eyes an' elbers an' hunger. I used to give 'er vittles. Otherwhiles, I took no special notice of 'er, an' a sight less, o' course, when me trouble about 'Arry was on me. But—you know how liddle maids first feel it sometimes—she come to be crazy-fond o' me, pawin' an' cuddlin' all whiles; an' I 'adn't the 'eart to beat 'er off . . . One afternoon, early in spring 'twas, 'er mother 'ad sent 'er round to scutchel up what vittles she could off of us. I was settin' by the fire, me apern over me head, half-mad with the 'eddick, when she slips in. I reckon I was middlin' short with 'er. 'Lor'!' she says. 'Is *that* all? I'll take it off you in two-twos!' I told her not to lay a finger on me, for I thought she'd want to stroke my fore-head; an'—I ain't that make. '*I* won't tech ye,' she says, an' slips out again. She 'adn't been gone ten minutes 'fore me old 'eddick took off quick as bein' kicked. So I went about my work. Prasin'ly, Sophy comes back, an' creeps into my chair quiet as a mouse. 'Er eyes was deep in 'er 'ead an' 'er face all drawed. I asked 'er what 'ad 'appened. 'Nothin',' she says. 'On'y *I*'ve got it now.' 'Got what?' I says. 'Your 'eddick,' she says, all hoarse an' sticky-lipped. 'I've took it on me.' 'Nonsense,' I says, 'it went of itself when you was out. Lay still an' I'll make ye a cup o' tea.' "Twon't do no good,' she says, 'till your time's up. 'Ow long do *your* 'eddicks last?' 'Don't talk silly,' I says, 'or I'll send for the Doctor.' It looked to me like she might be hatchin' de measles. 'Oh, Mrs. Ashcroft,' she says, stretchin' out 'er fiddle thin arms. 'I *do* love ye.' There wasn't any holdin' agin that. I took 'er into me lap an' made much of 'er. 'Is it

truly gone?' she says. 'Yes,' I says, 'an' if 'twas you took it away, I'm truly grateful.' ''*Twas* me,' she says, layin' 'er cheek to mine. 'No one but me knows how.' An' then she said she'd changed me 'eddick for me at a Wish 'Ouse."

"Whatt?" Mrs. Fettley spoke sharply.

"A Wish 'Ouse. No! *I* 'adn't 'eard o' such things, either. I couldn't get it straight at first, but, puttin' all together, I made out that a Wish 'Ouse 'ad to be a house which 'ad stood unlet an' empty long enough for Some One, like, to come an' in'abit there. She said a liddle girl that she'd played with in the livery-stables where 'Arry worked 'ad told 'er so. She said the girl 'ad belonged in a caravan that laid up, o' winters, in Lunnon. Gipsy, I judge."

"Ooh! There's no sayin' what Gippos know, but *I*'ve never 'eard of a Wish 'Ouse, an' I know—some things," said Mrs. Fettley.

"Sophy said there was a Wish 'Ouse in Wadloes Road—just a few streets off, on the way to our green-grocer's. All you 'ad to do, she said, was to ring the bell an' wish your wish through the slit o' the letter-box. I asked 'er if the fairies give it 'er? 'Don't ye know,' she says, 'there's no fairies in a Wish 'Ouse? There's on'y a Token.' "

"Goo' Lord A'mighty! Where did she come by *that* word?" cried Mrs. Fettley; for a Token is a wraith of the dead or, worse still, of the living.

"The caravan-girl 'ad told 'er, she said. Well, Liz, it troubled me to 'ear 'er, an' lyin' in me arms she must ha' felt it. 'That's very kind o' you,' I says, holdin' 'er tight, 'to wish me 'eddick away. But why didn't ye ask somethin' nice for yourself?' 'You can't do that,' she says. 'All you'll get at a Wish 'Ouse is leave to take some one else's trouble. I've took Ma's 'eddicks, when she's been kind to me; but this is the first time I've been able to do aught for you. Oh, Mrs. Ashcroft, I *do* just-about love you.' An' she goes on all like that. Liz, I tell you my 'air e'en a'most stood on end to 'ear 'er. I asked 'er what like a Token was. 'I dunno,' she says, 'but after you've ringed the bell, you'll 'ear it run up from the basement, to the front door. Then say your wish,' she says, 'an' go away.' 'The Token don't open de door to ye, then?' I says. 'Oh no,' she says. 'You on'y 'ear gigglin', like, be'ind the front door. Then you say you'll take the trouble off of 'oo ever 'tis you've chose for your love; an' yell get it,' she says. I didn't ask no more—she was too 'ot an' fevered. I made much of 'er till it come time to light de gas, an' a liddle after that, 'er 'eddick—mine, I suppose—took off, an' she got down an' played with the cat."

"Well, I never!" said Mrs. Fettley. "Did—did ye foller it up, anyways?"

"She askt me to, but I wouldn't 'ave no such dealin's with a child."

"What *did* ye do, then?"

" 'Sat in me own room 'stid o' the kitchen when me 'eddicks come on. But it lay at de back o' me mind."

" 'Twould. Did she tell ye more, ever?"

"No. Besides what the Gippo girl 'ad told 'er, she knew naught, 'cept that the charm worked. An', next after that—in May 'twas—I suffered the summer out in Lunnon. 'Twas hot an' windy for weeks, an' the streets stinkin' o' dried 'orsedung blowin' from side to side an' lyin' level with the kerb. We don't get that nowadays. I 'ad my 'ol'day just before hoppin', an' come down 'ere to stay with Bessie again. She noticed I'd lost flesh, an' was all poochy under the eyes."

"Did ye see 'Arry?"

Mrs. Ashcroft nodded. "The fourth—no, the fifth day. Wednesday 'twas. I knowed 'e was workin' at Smalldene again. I asked 'is mother in the street, bold as brass. She 'adn't room to say much, for Bessie—you know 'er tongue—was talkin' full-clack. But that Wednesday, I was walkin' with one o' Bessie's chillern hangin' on me skirts, at de back o' Chanter's Tot. Prasin'ly, I felt 'e was be'ind me on the footpath, an' I knowed by 'is tread 'e'd changed 'is nature. I slowed, an' I heard 'im slow. Then I fussed a piece with the child, to force him past me, like. So 'e '*ad* to come past. 'E just says 'Good-evenin',' and goes on, tryin' to pull 'isself together."

"Drunk, was he?" Mrs. Fettley asked.

"Never! S'runk an' wizen; 'is clothes 'angin' on 'im like bags, an' the back of 'is neck whiter'n chalk. 'Twas all I could do not to oppen my arms an' cry after him. But I swallered me spittle till I was back 'ome again an' the chillern abed. Then I says to Bessie, after supper, 'What in de world's come to 'Arry Mockler?' Bessie told me 'e'd been a-Hospital for two months, 'long o' cuttin' 'is foot wid a spade, muckin' out the old pond at Smalldene. There was poison in de dirt, an' it rooshed up 'is leg, like, an' come out all over him. 'E 'adn't been back to 'is job—carterin' at Smalldene—more'n a fortnight. She told me the Doctor said he'd go off, likely, with the November frostes; an' 'is mother 'ad told 'er that 'e didn't rightly eat nor sleep, an' sweated 'imself into pools, no odds 'ow chill 'e lay. An' spit terrible o' mornin's. 'Dearie me,' I says. 'But, mebbe, hoppin' 'll set 'im right again,' an' I licked me thread-point an' I fetched me needle's eye up to it an' I threads me needle under de lamp, steady as rocks. An' dat night (me bed was in de wash-house) I cried an' I cried. An' *you* know, Liz—for you've been with me in my throes—it takes summat to make me cry."

"Yes; but Chile-bearin' is on'y just pain," said Mrs. Fettley.

"I come round by cock-crow, an' dabbed cold tea on me eyes to take away the signs. Long towards nex' evenin'—I was settin' out to lay some flowers on me 'usband's grave, for the look o' the thing—I met 'Arry over against where the War Memorial is now. 'E was comin' back from 'is 'orses, so 'e couldn't *not* see me. I looked 'im all over, an' ' 'Arry,' I says twix' me teeth, 'come back an' rest-up in Lunnon.' 'I won't take it,' he says, 'for I can give ye naught.' 'I don't ask it,' I says. 'By God's Own Name, I don't ask na'un ! On'y come up an' see a Lunnon doctor.' 'E lifts 'is two 'eavy eyes at me: ' 'Tis past that, Gra',' 'e says. 'I've but a few months left.' ' 'Arry!' I says. '*My* man!' I says. I couldn't say no more. 'Twas all up in me throat. 'Thank ye kindly, Gra',' 'e says (but 'e never says 'my woman'), an' 'e went on upstreet an' 'is mother—Oh, damn 'er!—she was watchin' for 'im, an' she shut de door be'ind 'im."

Mrs. Fettley stretched an arm across the table, and made to finger Mrs. Ashcroft's sleeve at the wrist, but the other moved it out of reach.

"So I went on to the churchyard with my flowers, an' I remembered my 'usband's warnin' that night he spoke. 'E *was* death-wise, an' it '*ad* 'appened as 'e said. But as I was settin' down de jam-pot on the grave-mound, it come over me there was one thing I *could* do for 'Arry. Doctor or no Doctor, I thought I'd make a trial of it. So I did. Nex' mornin', a bill came down from our Lunnon green-grocer. Mrs. Marshall, she'd lef' me petty cash for suchlike—o' course—but I tole Bess 'twas for me to come an' open the 'ouse. So I went up, afternoon train."

"An'—but I know you 'adn't—'adn't you no fear?"

"What for? There was nothin' front o' me but my own shame an' God's croolty. I couldn't ever get 'Arry—'ow *could* I? I knowed it must go on burnin' till it burned me out."

"Aie!" said Mrs. Fettley, reaching for the wrist again, and this time Mrs. Ashcroft permitted it.

"Yit 'twas a comfort to know I could try *this* for 'im. So I went an' I paid the green-grocer's bill, an' put 'is receipt in me hand-bag, an' then I stepped round to Mrs. Ellis—our char—an' got the 'ouse-keys an' opened the 'ouse. First, I made me bed to come back to (God's Own Name! Me bed to lie upon!). Nex' I made me a cup o' tea an' sat down in the kitchen thinkin', till 'long towards dusk. Terrible close, 'twas. Then I dressed me an' went out with the receipt in me 'and-bag, feignin' to study it for an address, like. Fourteen, Wadloes Road, was the place—a liddle basement-kitchen 'ouse, in a row of twenty-thirty such, an' tiddy strips o' walled garden in front—the paint off the front doors, an' na'un done to na'un since ever so long. There wasn't 'ardly no

one in the streets 'cept the cats. '*Twas* 'ot, too! I turned into the gate bold as brass; up de steps I went an' I ringed the front-door bell. She pealed loud, like it do in an empty house. When she'd all ceased, I 'eard a cheer, like, pushed back on de floor o' the kitchen. Then I 'eard feet on de kitchen-stairs, like it might ha' been a heavy woman in slippers. They come up to de stairhead, acrost the hall—I 'eard the bare boards creak under 'em—an' at de front door dey stopped. I stooped me to the letter-box slit, an' I says: 'Let me take everythin' bad that's in store for my man, 'Arry Mockler, for love's sake.' Then, whatever it was t'other side de door let its breath out, like, as if it 'ad been holdin' it for to 'ear better."

"Nothin' was *said* to ye?" Mrs. Fettley demanded.

"Na'un. She just breathed out—a sort of *A-ah*, like. Then the steps went back an' down-stairs to the kitchen—all draggy—an' I heard the cheer drawed up again."

"An' you abode on de doorstep, throughout all, Gra'?"

Mrs. Ashcroft nodded.

"Then I went away, an' a man passin' says to me: 'Didn't you know that house was empty?' 'No,' I says. 'I must ha' been give the wrong number.' An' I went back to our 'ouse, an' I went to bed; for I was fair flogged out. 'Twas too 'ot to sleep more'n snatches, so I walked me about, lyin' down betweens, till crack o' dawn. Then I went to the kitchen to make me a cup o' tea, an' I hitted meself just above the ankle on an old roastin' jack o' mine that Mrs. Ellis had moved out from the corner, her last cleanin'. An' so—nex' after that—I waited till the Marshalls come back o' their holiday."

"Alone there? I'd ha' thought you'd 'ad enough of empty houses," said Mrs. Fettley, horrified.

"Oh, Mrs. Ellis an' Sophy was runnin' in an' out soon's I was back, an' 'twixt us we cleaned de house again top-to-bottom. There's allus a hand's turn more to do in every house. An' that's 'ow 'twas with me that autumn an' winter, in Lunnon."

"Then na'un hap—overtook ye for your doin's?"

Mrs. Ashcroft smiled. "No. Not then. 'Long in November I sent Bessie ten shillin's."

"You was allus free-'anded," Mrs. Fettley interrupted.

"An' I got what I paid for, with the rest o' the news. She said the hoppin' 'ad set 'im up wonderful. 'E'd 'ad six weeks of it, and now 'e was back again carterin' at Smalldene. No odds to me '*ow* it 'ad 'appened—'slong's it '*ad*. But I dunno as my ten shillin's eased me much. 'Arry bein' *dead*, like, 'e'd ha' been

mine, till Judgment. 'Arry bein' alive, 'e'd like as not pick up with some woman middlin' quick. I raged over that. Come spring, I 'ad somethin' else to rage for. I'd growed a nasty little weepin' boil, like, on me shin, just above the boot-top, that wouldn't heal no shape. It made me sick to look at it, for I'm clean-fleshed by nature. Chop me all over with a spade, an' I'd heal like turf. Then Mrs. Marshall she set 'er own doctor at me. 'E said I ought to ha' come to him at first go-off, 'stead o' drawn' all manner o' dyed stockin's over it for months. 'E said I'd stood up too much to me work, for it was settin' very close atop of a big swelled vein, like, behither the small o' me ankle. 'Slow come, slow go,' 'e says. 'Lay your leg up on high an' rest it,' he says, 'an' 'twill ease off. Don't let it close up too soon. You've got a very fine leg, Mrs. Ashcroft,' 'e says. An' he put wet dressin's on it."

" 'E done right." Mrs. Fettley spoke firmly. "Wet dressin's to wet wounds. They draw de humours, same's a lamp-wick draws de oil."

"That's true. An' Mrs. Marshall was allus at me to make me set down more, an' dat nigh healed it up. An' then after a while they packed me off down to Bessie's to finish the cure; for I ain't the sort to sit down when I ought to stand up. You was back in the village then, Liz."

"I was. I was, but—never did I guess!"

"I didn't desire ye to." Mrs. Ashcroft smiled. "I saw 'Arry once or twice in de street, wonnerful fleshed up an' restored back. Then, one day I didn't see 'im, an' 'is mother told me one of 'is 'orses 'ad lashed out an' caught 'im on the 'ip. So 'e was abed an' middlin' painful. An' Bessie, she says to his mother, 'twas a pity 'Arry 'adn't a woman of 'is own to take the nursin' off 'er. And the old lady *was* mad! She told us that 'Arry 'ad never looked after any woman in 'is born days, an' as long as she was atop the mowlds, she'd contrive for 'im till 'er two 'ands dropped off. So I knowed she'd do watch-dog for me, 'thout askin' for bones."

Mrs. Fettley rocked with small laughter.

"That day," Mrs. Ashcroft went on, "I'd stood on me feet nigh all the time, watchin' the doctor go in an' out; for they thought it might be 'is ribs, too. That made my boil break again, issuin' an' weepin'. But it turned out 'twadn't ribs at all, an' 'Arry 'ad a good night. When I heard that, nex' mornin', I says to meself, 'I won't lay two an' two together *yit*. I'll keep me leg down a week, an' see what comes of it.' It didn't hurt me that day, to speak of—'seemed more to draw the strength out o' me like—an' 'Arry 'ad another good night. That made me persevere; but I didn't dare lay two an' two to-

gether till the week-end, an' then, 'Arry come forth e'en a'most 'imself again—na'un hurt outside ner in of him. I nigh fell on me knees in de washhouse when Bessie was up-street. 'I've got ye now, my man,' I says. 'You'll take your good from me 'thout knowin' it till my life's end. O God, send me long to live for 'Arry's sake!' I says. An' I dunno that didn't still me ragin's."

"For good?" Mrs. Fettley asked.

"They come back, plenty times, but, let be how 'twould, I knowed I was doin' for 'im. I *knowed* it. I took an' worked me pains on an' off, like regulatin' my own range, till I learned to 'ave 'em at my commandments. An' that was funny, too. There was times, Liz, when my trouble 'ud all s'rink an' dry up, like. First, I used to try an' fetch it on again; bein' fearful to leave 'Arry alone too long for anythin' to lay 'old of. Prasin'ly I come to see that was a sign he'd do all right awhile, an' so I saved myself."

"'Ow long for?" Mrs. Fettley asked, with deepest interest.

"I've gone de better part of a year onct or twice with na'un more to show than the liddle weepin' core of it, like. *All* s'rinked up an' dried off. Then he'd inflame up—for a warnin'—an' I'd suffer it. When I couldn't no more—an' I '*ad* to keep on goin' with my Lunnon work—I'd lay me leg high on a cheer till it eased. Not too quick. I knowed by the feel of it, those times, dat 'Arry was in need. Then I'd send another five shillin's to Bess, or somethin' for the chillern, to find out if, mebbe, 'e 'd took any hurt through my neglects. 'Twas *so*! Year in, year out, I worked it dat way, Liz, an' 'e got 'is good from me 'thout knowin'—for years and years."

"But what did *you* get out of it, Gra'?" Mrs. Fettley almost wailed. "Did ye see 'im reg'lar?"

"Times—when I was 'ere on me 'ol 'days. An' more, now that I'm 'ere for good. But 'e's never looked at me, ner any other woman 'cept 'is mother. 'Ow I used to watch an' listen! So did she."

"Years an' years!" Mrs. Fettley repeated. "An' where's 'e workin' at now?"

"Oh, 'e's give up carterin' quite a while. He's workin' for one o' them big tractorisin' firms—plowin' sometimes, an' sometimes off with lorries—fur as Wales, I've 'eard. He comes 'ome to 'is mother 'tween whiles; but I don't set eyes on him now, fer weeks on end. No odds! 'Is job keeps 'im from continuin' in one stay anywheres."

"But—just for de sake o' sayin' somethin'—s'pose 'Arry *did* get married?" said Mrs. Fettley.

Mrs. Ashcroft drew her breath sharply between her still even and natural teeth. "*Dat* ain't been required of me," she answered. "I reckon my pains 'ull be counted agin that. Don't *you*, Liz?"

"It ought to be, dearie. It ought to be."

"It *do* 'urt sometimes. You shall see it when Nurse comes. She thinks I don't know it's turned."

Mrs. Fettley understood. Human nature seldom walks up to the word "cancer."

"Be ye certain sure, Gra'?" she asked.

"I was sure of it when old Mr. Marshall 'ad me up to 'is study an' spoke a long piece about my faithful service. I've obliged 'em on an' off for a goodish time, but not enough for a pension. But they give me a weekly 'lowance for life. I knew what *that* sinnified—as long as three years ago."

"Dat don't *prove* it, Gra'."

"To give fifteen bob a week to a woman 'oo'd live twenty year in the course o' nature? It *do*!"

"You're mistook! You're mistook!" Mrs. Fettley insisted.

"Liz, there's *no* mistakin' when the edges are all heaped up, like—same as a collar. You'll see it. An' I laid out Dora Wickwood, too. *She* 'ad it under the arm-pit, like."

Mrs. Fettley considered awhile, and bowed her head in finality.

" 'Ow long d'you reckon 'twill allow ye, countin' from now, dearie?"

"Slow come, slow go. But if I don't set eyes on ye 'fore next hoppin', this'll be good-bye, Liz."

"Dunno as I'll be able to manage by then—not 'thout I have a liddle dog to lead me. For de chillern, dey won't be troubled, an'—O Gra'! I'm blindin' up—I'm blindin' up!"

"Oh, *dat* was why you didn't more'n finger with your quilt-patches all this while! I was wonderin' . . . But the pain *do* count, don't ye think, Liz? The pain *do* count to keep 'Arry—where I want 'im. Say it can't be wasted, like."

"I'm sure of it—sure of it, dearie. You'll 'ave your reward."

"I don't want no more'n this—*if* de pain is taken into de reckonin'."

" 'Twill be—'twill be, Gra'."

There was a knock on the door.

"That's Nurse. She's before 'er time," said Mrs. Ashcroft. "Open to 'er."

The young lady entered briskly, all the bottles in her bag clicking. "Evenin', Mrs. Ashcroft," she began. "I've come around a little earlier than usual because of the Institute dance to-na-ite. You won't ma-ind, will you?"

"Oh, no. Me dancin' days are over." Mrs. Ashcroft was the self-contained domestic at once. "My old friend, Mrs. Fettley 'ere, has been settin' talkin' with me a while."

"I hope she 'asn't been fatiguing you?" said the Nurse a little frostily.

"Quite the contrary. It 'as been a pleasure. Only—only—just at the end I felt a bit—a bit flogged out like."

"Yes, yes." The Nurse was on her knees already, with the washes to hand. "When old ladies get together they talk a deal too much, I've noticed."

"Mebbe we do," said Mrs. Fettley, rising. "So, now, I'll make myself scarce."

"Look at it first, though," said Mrs. Ashcroft feebly. "I'd like ye to look at it."

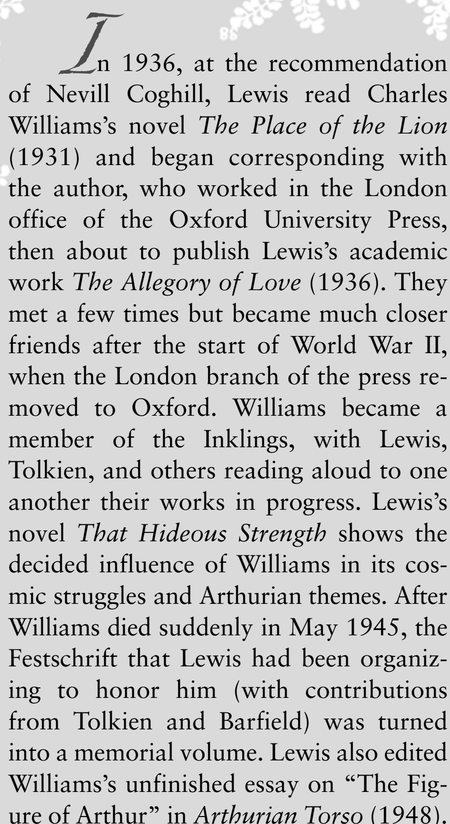
Mrs. Fettley looked, and shivered. Then she leaned over, and kissed Mrs. Ashcroft once on the waxy yellow forehead, and again on the faded grey eyes.

"It *do* count, don't it—de pain?" The lips that still kept trace of their original moulding hardly more than breathed the words.

Mrs. Fettley kissed them and moved towards the door.

Et in Sempiternum Pereant

by Charles Williams



In 1936, at the recommendation of Nevill Coghill, Lewis read Charles Williams's novel *The Place of the Lion* (1931) and began corresponding with the author, who worked in the London office of the Oxford University Press, then about to publish Lewis's academic work *The Allegory of Love* (1936). They met a few times but became much closer friends after the start of World War II, when the London branch of the press removed to Oxford. Williams became a member of the Inklings, with Lewis, Tolkien, and others reading aloud to one another their works in progress. Lewis's novel *That Hideous Strength* shows the decided influence of Williams in its cosmic struggles and Arthurian themes. After Williams died suddenly in May 1945, the Festschrift that Lewis had been organizing to honor him (with contributions from Tolkien and Barfield) was turned into a memorial volume. Lewis also edited Williams's unfinished essay on "The Figure of Arthur" in *Arthurian Torso* (1948).

In Lewis's 1962 list (published in *The Christian Century* magazine) of the ten books that did the most to shape his vocational attitude and his philosophy of life, Charles Williams's novel *Descent into Hell* (1937) was ranked as number nine.

"Et in Sempiturnam Pereant" (and may they be forever damned) is apparently the only short story that Williams published. It appeared in the December 1935 issue of *The London Mercury*. Its character, Lord Arglay, previously appeared in Williams's novel *Many Dimensions* (1931). The final line of the story comes from the conclusion of Dante's *Inferno*—it translates: "and thence we issued forth to see again the stars."

Lord Arglay came easily down the road. About him the spring was as gaudy as the restraint imposed by English geography ever lets it be. The last village lay a couple of miles behind him; as far in front, he had been told, was a main road on which he could meet a motor bus to carry him near his destination. A casual conversation in a club had revealed to him, some months before, that in a country house of England there were supposed to lie a few yet unpublished legal opinions of the Lord Chancellor Bacon. Lord Arglay, being no longer Chief Justice, and having finished and published his *History of Organic Law*, had conceived that the editing of these papers might provide a pleasant variation upon his present business of studying the more complex parts of the Christian Schoolmen. He had taken advantage of a week-end spent in the neighbourhood to arrange, by the good will of the owner, a visit of inspection; since, as the owner had remarked, with a bitterness due to his financial problems, "everything that is smoked isn't Bacon." Lord Arglay had smiled—it hurt him a little to think that he had smiled—and said, which was true enough, that Bacon himself would not have made a better joke.

It was a very deserted part of the country through which he was walking. He had been careful to follow the directions given him, and in fact there were only two places where he could possibly have gone wrong, and at both of them Lord Arglay was certain he had not gone wrong. But he seemed to be taking a long time—a longer time than he had expected. He looked at his watch again, and noted with sharp disapproval of his own judgment that it was only six minutes since he had looked at it last. It had seemed more like sixteen. Lord Arglay frowned. He was usually a good walker, and on that morning he was not conscious of any unusual weariness. His host had offered to send him in a car, but he had declined. For a moment, as he put his watch back, he was almost sorry he had declined. A car would have made short time of this road, and at present his legs seemed to be making rather long time of it. "Or," Lord Arglay said aloud, "making time rather long." He played a little, as he went on, with the fancy that every road in space had a corresponding measure in time; that it tended, merely of itself, to hasten or delay all those that drove or walked upon it. The nature of some roads, quite apart from their material effectiveness, might urge men to speed, and of others to delay. So that the intentions of all travellers were counterpointed continually by the media they used. The courts, he thought, might reasonably take that into consideration in case of offences against right speed, and a man who accelerated upon one road would be held to have acted under the improper influence of the way, whereas one who did the same on another would be known to have defied and conquered the way.

Lord Arglay just stopped himself looking at his watch again. It was impossible that it should be more than five minutes since he had last done so. He looked back to observe, if possible, how far he had since come. It was not possible; the road narrowed and curved too much. There was a cloud of trees high up behind him; it must have been half an hour ago that he passed through it, yet it was not merely still in sight, but the trees themselves were in sight. He could remark them as trees; he could almost, if he were a little careful, count them. He thought, with some irritation, that he must be getting old more quickly, and more unnoticeably, than he had supposed. He did not much mind about the quickness, but he did mind about the unnoticeableness. It had given him pleasure to watch the various changes which age tended to bring; to be as stealthy and as quick to observe those changes as they were to come upon him—the slower pace, the more meditative voice, the greater reluctance to decide, the inclination to fall back on habit, the desire for the familiar which is the first skirmishing approach of unfamiliar death. He neither welcomed nor

grudged such changes; he only observed them with a perpetual interest in the curious nature of the creation. The fantasy of growing old, like the fantasy of growing up, was part of the ineffable sweetness, touched with horror, of existence, itself the lordliest fantasy of all. But now, as he stood looking back over and across the hidden curves of the road, he felt suddenly that time had outmarched and out-twisted him, that it was spreading along the countryside and doubling back on him, so that it troubled and deceived his judgment. In an unexpected and unusual spasm of irritation he put his hand to his watch again. He felt as if it were a quarter of an hour since he had looked at it; very well, making just allowance for his state of impatience, he would expect the actual time to be five minutes. He looked; it was only two.

Lord Arglay made a small mental effort, and almost immediately recognized the effort. He said to himself: "This is another mark of age. I am losing my sense of duration." He said also: "It is becoming an effort to recognize these changes." Age was certainly quickening its work in him. It approached him now doubly; not only his method of experience, but his awareness of experience was attacked. His knowledge of it comforted him—perhaps, he thought, for the last time. The knowledge would go. He would savour it then while he could. Still looking back at the trees, "It seems I'm decaying," Lord Arglay said aloud. "And that anyhow is one up against decay. Am I procrastinating? I am, and in the circumstances procrastination is a proper and pretty game. It is the thief of time, and quite right too! Why should time have it all its own way?"

He turned to the road again, and went on. It passed now between open fields; in all those fields he could see no one. It was pasture, but there were no beasts. There was about him a kind of void, in which he moved, hampered by this growing oppression of duration. Things *lasted*. He had exclaimed, in his time, against the too swift passage of the world. This was a new experience; it was lastingness—almost, he could have believed, everlastingness. The measure of it was but his breathing, and his breathing, as it grew slower and heavier, would become the measure of everlasting labour—the labour of Sisyphus, who pushed his own slow heart through each infinite moment, and relaxed but to let it beat back and so again begin. It was the first touch of something Arglay had never yet known, of simple and perfect despair.

At that moment he saw the house. The road before him curved sharply, and as he looked he wondered at the sweep of the curve; it seemed to make a full half-circle and so turn back in the direction that he had come. At the farthest point there lay before him, tangentially, another path. The sparse hedge

was broken by an opening which was more than footpath and less than road. It was narrow, even when compared with the narrowing way by which he had come, yet hard and beaten as if by the passage of many feet. There had been innumerable travellers, and all solitary, all on foot. No cars or carts could have taken that path; if there had been burdens, they had been carried on the shoulders of their owners. It ran for no long distance, no more than in happier surroundings might have been a garden path from gate to door. There, at the end, was the door.

Arglay, at the time, took all this in but half-consciously. His attention was not on the door but on the chimney. The chimney, in the ordinary phrase, was smoking. It was smoking effectively and continuously. A narrow and dense pillar of dusk poured up from it, through which there glowed, every now and then, a deeper undershade of crimson, as if some trapped genius almost thrust itself out of the moving prison that held it. The house itself was not much more than a cottage. There was a door, shut; on the left of it a window, also shut; above, two little attic windows, shut, and covered within by some sort of dark hanging, or perhaps made opaque by smoke that filled the room. There was no sign of life anywhere, and the smoke continued to mount to the lifeless sky. It seemed to Arglay curious that he had not noticed this grey pillar in his approach, that only now when he stood almost in the straight and narrow path leading to the house did it become visible, an exposition of tall darkness reserved to the solitary walkers upon that wearying road.

Lord Arglay was the last person in the world to look for responsibilities. He shunned them by a courteous habit; a responsibility had to present itself with a delicate emphasis before he acceded to it. But when any so impressed itself he was courteous in accepting as in declining; he sought friendship with necessity, and as young lovers call their love fatal, so he turned fatality of life into his love. It seemed to him, as he stood and gazed at the path, the shut door, the smoking chimney, that here perhaps was a responsibility being delicately emphatic. If everyone was out—if the cottage had been left for an hour—ought he to do something? Of course, they might be busy about it within; in which case a thrusting stranger would be inopportune. Another glow of crimson in the pillar of cloud decided him. He went up the path.

As he went he glanced at the little window, but it was blurred by dirt; he could not very well see whether the panes did or did not hide smoke within. When he was so near the threshold that the window had almost passed out of his vision, he thought he saw a face looking out of it—at the extreme edge, nearest the door—and he checked himself, and went back a step to look again.

It had been only along the side of his glance that the face, if face it were, had appeared, a kind of sudden white scrawl against the blur, as if it were a mask hung by the window rather than any living person, or as if the glass of the window itself had looked sideways at him, and he had caught the look without understanding its cause. When he stepped back, he could see no face. Had there been a sun in the sky he would have attributed the apparition to a trick of the light, but in the sky over this smoking house there was no sun. It had shone brightly that morning when he started; it had paled and faded and finally been lost to him as he had passed along his road. There was neither sun nor peering face. He stepped back to the threshold, and knocked with his knuckles on the door.

There was no answer. He knocked again and again waited, and as he stood there he began to feel annoyed. The balance of Lord Arglay's mind had not been achieved without the creation of a considerable counter-energy to the violence of Lord Arglay's natural temper. There had been people whom he had once come very near hating, hating with a fury or selfish rage and detestation; for instance, his brother-in-law. His brother-in-law had not been a nice man; Lord Arglay, as he stood by the door and, for no earthly reason, remembered him, admitted it. He admitted, at the same moment, that no lack of niceness on that other's part could excuse any indulgence of vindictive hate on his own, nor could he think why, then and there, he wanted him, wanted to have him merely to hate. His brother-in-law was dead. Lord Arglay almost regretted it. Almost he desired to follow, to be with him, to provoke and torment him, to. . . .

Lord Arglay struck the door again. "There is," he said to himself, "entire clarity in the Omnipotence." It was his habit of devotion, his means of recalling himself into peace out of the angers, greeds, sloths and perversities that still too often possessed him. It operated; the temptation passed into the benediction of the Omnipotence and disappeared. But there was still no answer from within. Lord Arglay laid his hand on the latch. He swung the door, and, lifting his hat with his other hand, looked into the room—a room empty of smoke as of fire, and of all as of both.

Its size and appearance were those of a rather poor cottage, rather indeed a large brick hut than a cottage. It seemed much smaller within than without. There was a fireplace—at least, there was a place for a fire—on his left. Opposite the door, against the right-hand wall, there was a ramshackle flight of wooden steps, going up to the attics, and at its foot, swinging on a broken hinge, a door which gave a way presumably to a cellar. Vaguely, Arglay found

himself surprised; he had not supposed that a dwelling of this sort would have a cellar. Indeed, from where he stood, he could not be certain. It might only be a cupboard. But, unwarrantably, it seemed more, a hinted unseen depth, as if the slow slight movement of the broken wooden door measured that labour of Sisyphus, as if the road ran past him and went coiling spirally into the darkness of the cellar. In the room there was no furniture, neither fragment of paper nor broken bit of wood; there was no sign of life, no flame in the grate nor drift of smoke in the air. It was completely and utterly void.

Lord Arglay looked at it. He went back a few steps and looked up again at the chimney. Undoubtedly the chimney was smoking. It was received into a pillar of smoke; there was no clear point where the dark chimney ended and the dark smoke began. House leaned to roof, roof to chimney, chimney to smoke, and smoke went up for ever and ever over those roads where men crawled infinitely through the smallest measurements of time. Arglay returned to the door, crossed the threshold, and stood in the room. Empty of flame, empty of flame's material, holding within its dank air the very opposite of flame, the chill of ancient years, the room lay round him. Lord Arglay contemplated it. "There's no smoke without fire," he said aloud. "Only apparently there is. Thus one lives and learns. Unless indeed this is the place where one lives without learning."

The phrase, leaving his lips, sounded oddly about the walls and in the corners of the room. He was suddenly revolted by his own chance words—"a place where one lives without learning," where no courtesy or integrity could any more be fined or clarified. The echo daunted him; he made a sharp movement, he took a step aside towards the stairs, and before the movement was complete, was aware of a change. The dank chill became a concentration of dank and deadly heat, pricking at him, entering his nostrils and his mouth. The fantasy of life without knowledge materialized, inimical, in the air, life without knowledge, corrupting life without knowledge, jungle and less than jungle, and though still the walls of the bleak chamber met his eyes, a shell of existence, it seemed that life, withdrawn from all those normal habits of which the useless memory was still drearily sustained by the thin phenomenal fabric, was collecting and corrupting in the atmosphere behind the door he had so rashly passed—outside the other door which swung crookedly at the head of the darker hole within.

He had recoiled from the heat, but not so as to escape it. He had even taken a step or two up the stairs, when he heard from without a soft approach. Light feet were coming up the beaten path to the house. Some other Good

Samaritan, Arglay thought, who would be able to keep his twopence in his pocket. For certainly, whatever was the explanation of all and wherever it lay, in the attics above or in the pit of the cellar below, responsibility was gone. Lord Arglay did not conceive that either he or anyone else need rush about the country in an anxious effort to preserve a house which no one wanted and no one used. Prematurely enjoying the discussion, he waited. Through the doorway someone came in.

It was, or seemed to be, a man, of ordinary height, wearing some kind of loose dark overcoat that flapped about him. His head was bare; so, astonishingly, were his legs and feet. At first, as he stood just inside the door, leaning greedily forward, his face was invisible, and for a moment Arglay hesitated to speak. Then the stranger lifted his face and Arglay uttered a sound. It was emaciated beyond imagination; it was astonishing at the appalling degree of hunger revealed: that the man could walk or move at all, or even stand as he was now doing, and turn that dreadful skull from side to side. Arglay came down the steps of the stair in one jump; he cried out again, he ran forward, and as he did so the deep burning eyes in the turning face of bone met his full and halted him. They did not see him, or if they saw did not notice; they gazed at him and moved on. Once only in his life had Arglay seen eyes remotely like those; once, when he had pronounced the death-sentence upon a wretched man who had broken under the long strain of his trial and filled the court with shrieks. Madness had glared at Lord Arglay from that dock, but at least it had looked at him and seen him; these eyes did not. They sought something—food, life, or perhaps only a form and something to hate, and in that energy the stranger moved. He began to run round the room. The bones that were his legs and feet jerked up and down. The head turned from side to side. He ran circularly, round and again round, crossing and recrossing, looking up, down, around, and at last, right in the centre of the room, coming to a halt, where, as if some terrible pain of starvation gripped him, he bent and twisted downward until he squatted grotesquely on the floor. There, squatting and bending, he lowered his head and raised his arm, and as the fantastic black coat slipped back, Arglay saw a wrist, saw it marked with scars. He did not at first think what they were; only when the face and wrist of the figure swaying in its pain came together did he suddenly know. They were teeth-marks; they were bites; the mouth closed on the wrist and gnawed. Arglay cried out and sprang forward, catching the arm, trying to press it down, catching the other shoulder, trying to press it back. He achieved nothing. He held, he felt, he grasped; he

could not control. The long limb remained raised, the fierce teeth gnawed. But as Arglay bent, he was aware once more of that effluvia of heat risen round him, and breaking out with the more violence when suddenly the man, if it were a man, cast his arm away, and with a jerk of movement rose once more to his feet. His eyes, as the head went back, burned close into Arglay's, who, what with the heat, the eyes, and his sickness at the horror, shut his own against them, and was at the same moment thrown from his balance by the rising form, and sent staggering a step or two away, with upon his face the sensation of a light hot breath, so light that only in the utter stillness of time could it be felt, so hot that it might have been the inner fire from which the pillar of smoke poured outward to the world.

He recovered his balance; he opened his eyes; both motions brought him into a new corner of that world. The odd black coat the thing had worn had disappeared, as if it had been a covering imagined by a habit of mind. The thing itself, a wasted flicker of pallid movement, danced and gyrated in white flame before him. Arglay saw it still, but only now as a dreamer may hear, half-asleep and half-awake, the sound of dogs barking or the crackling of fire in his very room. For he opened his eyes not to such things, but to the thing that on the threshold of this place, some seconds earlier or some years, he had felt and been pleased to feel, to the reality of his hate. It came in a rush within him, a fountain of fire, and without and about him images of the man he hated swept in a thick cloud of burning smoke. The smoke burned his eyes and choked his mouth; he clutched at it, at images within it—at his greedy loves and greedy hates—at the cloud of the sin of his life, yearning to catch but one image and renew again the concentration for which he yearned. He could not. The smoke blinded and stifled him, yet more than stifling or blinding was the hunger for one true thing to lust or hate. He was starving in the smoke, and all the hut was full of smoke, for the hut and the world were smoke, pouring up round, him from him and all like him—a thing once wholly, and still a little, made visible to his corporeal eyes in forms which they recognized, but in itself of another nature. He swung and twisted and crouched. His limbs ached from long wrestling with the smoke, for as the journey to this place had prolonged itself infinitely, so now, though he had no thought of measurement, the clutch of his hands and the growing sickness that invaded him struck through him the sensation of the passage of years and the knowledge of the passage of moments. The fire sank within him, and the sickness grew, but the change could not bring him nearer to any end. The end here was not

at the end, but in the beginning. There was no end to this smoke, to this fever and this chill, to crouching and rising and searching, unless the end was now. *Now—now* was the only possible other fact, chance, act. He cried out, defying infinity, "*Now!*"

Before his voice the smoke of his prison yielded, and yielded two ways at once. From where he stood he could see in one place an alteration in that perpetual grey, an alternate darkening and lightening as if two ways, of descent and ascent, met. There was, he remembered, a way in, therefore a path out; he had only to walk along it. But also there was a way still farther in, and he could walk along that. Two doors had swung, to his outer senses, in that small room. From every gate of hell there was a way to heaven, yes, and in every way to heaven there was a gate to deeper hell.

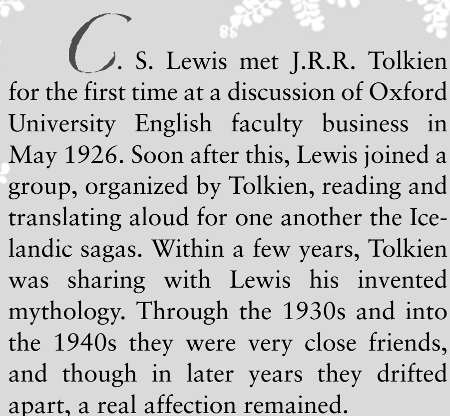
Yet for a moment he hesitated. There was no sign of the phenomenon by which he had discerned the passage of that other spirit. He desired—very strongly he desired—to be of use to it. He desired to offer himself to it, to make a ladder of himself, if that should be desired, by which it might perhaps mount from the nature of the lost, from the dereliction of all minds that refuse living and learning, postponement and irony, whose dwelling is necessarily in their undying and perishing selves. Slowly, unconsciously, he moved his head as if to seek his neighbour.

He saw, at first he felt, nothing. His eyes returned to that vibrating oblong of an imagined door, the heart of the smoke beating in the smoke. He looked at it; he remembered the way; he was on the point of movement, when the stinging heat struck him again, but this time from behind. It leapt through him; he was seized in it and loosed from it; its rush abandoned him. The torrent of its fiery passage struck the darkening hollow in the walls. At the instant that it struck, there came a small sound; there floated up a thin shrill pipe, too short to hear, too certain to miss, faint and quick as from some single insect in the hedgerow or the field, and yet more than single—a weak wail of multitudes of the lost. The shrill lament struck his ears, and he ran. He cried as he sprang: "Now is God: now is glory in God," and as the dark door swung before him it was the threshold of the house that received his flying feet. As he passed, another form slipped by him, slinking hastily into the house, another of the hordes going so swiftly up that straight way, hard with everlasting time; each driven by his own hunger, and each alone. The vision, a face looking in as a face had looked out, was gone. Running still, but more lightly now, and with some communion of peace at heart, Arglay came into the curving road. The trees were all about him; the house was at their heart. He ran on through

them; beyond, he saw, he reached, the spring day and the sun. At a little distance a motor bus, gaudy within and without, was coming down the road. The driver saw him. Lord Arglay instinctively made a sign, ran, mounted. As he sat down, breathless and shaken, "*E quindi uscimmo*," his mind said, "*a riveder le stelle*."

The Dragon's Visit

by J.R.R. Tolkien



C. S. Lewis met J.R.R. Tolkien for the first time at a discussion of Oxford University English faculty business in May 1926. Soon after this, Lewis joined a group, organized by Tolkien, reading and translating aloud for one another the Icelandic sagas. Within a few years, Tolkien was sharing with Lewis his invented mythology. Through the 1930s and into the 1940s they were very close friends, and though in later years they drifted apart, a real affection remained.

It was a late-night discussion with Tolkien and Hugo Dyson in September 1931 that was decisive in Lewis's conversion to Christianity. Lewis read *The Hobbit* in manuscript (and reviewed it twice on publication), and heard *The Lord of the Rings* read aloud to the Inklings over the many years of its composition (and reviewed it on publication as well). Lewis and Tolkien had a famous toss-up around 1936, when they decided that since there were so few stories with what they really liked in them, they would have to write

some themselves. Lewis took the theme of space travel and produced *Out of the Silent Planet,* while Tolkien focused on time travel, ending up with only a few promising chapters called "The Lost Road" before leaving it incomplete. Hints of Tolkien's work occasionally appear in Lewis's—such as the direct reference in the preface to *That Hideous Strength,* where Lewis wrote that "those who would like to learn further about *Numinor* and the True West must (alas!) await the publication of much that exists only in the MSS. of my friend, Professor J. R. R. Tolkien." *The Screwtape Letters* is dedicated to Tolkien. But Tolkien disliked his friend's Narnia books for a number of complex reasons, not least of which being what he considered their hasty composition and their mixture of mythological creatures diminished from their original contexts.

Tolkien's short narrative poem "The Dragon's Visit" was first published in the *Oxford Magazine* of February 4, 1937. Lewis also contributed many poems to this magazine, beginning in 1933. The dragon was a motif that Tolkien explored in many of his works, from *The Hobbit* and elsewhere in his invented mythology, to his academic criticism of the monsters in the poem *Beowulf*. Lewis wrote of dragons in the closing chapters of *The Pilgrim's Regress* (1933), even giving the Northern Dragon a song in the form of a poem, collected in his *Poems* (1964) under the title "The Dragon Speaks."

The dragon lay on the cherry trees
a-simmering and a-dreaming:
Green was he, and the blossom white,
and the yellow sun gleaming.
He came from the land of Finis-Terre,
From over the Blue Mountains,
Where dragons live, and the moon shines
on high white fountains.

"Please, Mister Higgins, do you know
What's a laying in your garden?
There's a dragon in your cherry trees!"
"Eh, what? I beg your pardon?"
Mister Higgins fetched the garden hose,
and the dragon woke from dreaming;
He blinked, and cocked his long green ears
when he felt the water streaming.

"How cool," he said, "delightfully cool
are Mister Higgins' fountains!
I'll sit and sing till the moon comes,
as they sing beyond the mountains;
And Higgins, and his neighbours, Box,
Miss Biggins and old Tupper,
Will be enchanted by my voice:
they will enjoy their supper!"

Mister Higgins sent for the fire brigade
with a long red ladder.
And men with golden helmets on.
The dragon's heart grew sadder:

"It reminds me of the bad old days
when warriors unfeeling
Used to hunt dragons in their dens,
their bright gold stealing."

Captain George, he up the ladder came.
The dragon said: "Good people,
Why all this fuss? Please go away!
Or your church-steeple
I shall throw down, and blast your trees,
and kill and eat for supper
You, Cap'n George, and Higgins, Box,
and Biggins and old Tupper!"

"Turn on the hose!" said Captain George,
and down the ladder tumbled.
The dragon's eyes from green went red,
and his belly rumbled.
He steamed, he smoked, he threshed his tail,
and down the blossom fluttered;
Like snow upon the lawn it lay,
and the dragon growled and muttered.

They poked with poles from underneath
(where he was rather tender):
The dragon gave a dreadful cry
and rose like thunder.
He smashed the town to smithereens,
and over the Bay of Bimble
Sailors could see the burning red
From Bumpus Head to Trimble.

Mister Higgins was tough; and as for Box
just like his name he tasted.
The dragon munching his supper said:
"So all my trouble's wasted!"
And he buried Tupper and Captain George,
and the remains of old Miss Biggins,

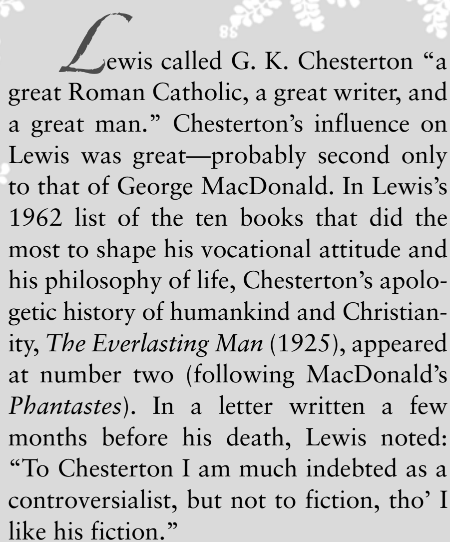
On a cliff above the long white shore;
and he sang a dirge for Higgins.

A sad song, while the moon rose,
with the sea below sighing
On the grey rocks of Bimble Bay,
and the red blaze dying.
Far over the sea he saw the peaks
found his own land ranging;
And he mused on the folk of Bimble Bay
and the old order changing:

"They have not got the wit to admire
a dragon's song or colour,
Nor heart to kill him brave and quick—
the world is getting duller!"
And the moon shone through his green wings
the night winds beating,
And he flew back over the dappled sea
to a green dragons' meeting.

The Coloured Lands

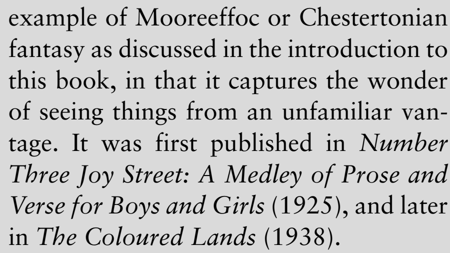
by G. K. Chesterton



Lewis called G. K. Chesterton "a great Roman Catholic, a great writer, and a great man." Chesterton's influence on Lewis was great—probably second only to that of George MacDonald. In Lewis's 1962 list of the ten books that did the most to shape his vocational attitude and his philosophy of life, Chesterton's apologetic history of humankind and Christianity, *The Everlasting Man* (1925), appeared at number two (following MacDonald's *Phantastes*). In a letter written a few months before his death, Lewis noted: "To Chesterton I am much indebted as a controversialist, but not to fiction, tho' I like his fiction."

Chesterton's fiction includes the philosophical and fantastic novels *The Napoleon of Notting Hill* (1904) and *The Man Who Was Thursday* (1908), and the detective stories of a quiet Roman Catholic priest, Father Brown, collected in *The Innocence of Father Brown* (1911) and other volumes.

"The Coloured Lands" is a perfect



example of Mooreeffoc or Chestertonian fantasy as discussed in the introduction to this book, in that it captures the wonder of seeing things from an unfamiliar vantage. It was first published in *Number Three Joy Street: A Medley of Prose and Verse for Boys and Girls* (1925), and later in *The Coloured Lands* (1938).

Once upon a time there was a little boy whose name was Tommy. As a matter of fact his name was Tobias Theodore; the former because it was an old name in the family, and the latter because it was an entirely new name in the neighbourhood. It is to be hoped that the parents who called him Tobias Theodore, moved by a natural desire to keep it quiet, agreed to call him Tommy; and anyhow we will agree to call him Tommy. It is always assumed in stories that Tommy is a common name for a boy; just as it is always assumed that Tomkins is a common name for a man. I do not really know very many boys named Tommy. I do not know any man named Tomkins. Do you? Does anybody? But this enquiry would lead us far.

Anyhow Tommy was sitting one very hot afternoon on a green lawn outside the cottage that his father and mother had taken in the country. The cottage had a bare white-washed wall; and at that moment it seemed to Tommy very bare. The summer sky was of a blank blue, which at that moment seemed to him very blank. The dull yellow thatch looked very dull and rather dusty; and the row of flower-pots in front of him, with red flowers in them, looked irritatingly straight, so that he wanted to knock some of them over like ninepins. Even the grass around him moved him only to pluck it up in a vicious way; almost as if he were wicked enough to wish it was his sister's hair. Only he had no sister; and indeed no brothers. He was an only child and at that moment rather a lonely child, which is not necessarily the same thing. For Tommy, on that hot and empty afternoon, was in that state of mind in which grown-up people go away and write books about their view of the whole world, and stories about what it is like to be married, and plays about the important prob-

lems of modern times. Tommy, being only ten years old, was not able to do harm on this large and handsome scale. So he continued to pull out the grass like the green hair of an imaginary and irritating sister, when he was surprised to hear a stir and a step behind him, on the side of the garden far away from the garden gate.

He saw walking towards him a rather strange-looking young man wearing blue spectacles. He was clad in a suit of such very light grey that it looked almost white in the strong sunlight; and he had long loose hair of such very light or faint yellow that the hair might almost have been white as well as the clothes. He had a large limp straw hat to shade him from the sun; and, presumably for the same purpose, he flourished in his left hand a Japanese parasol of a bright peacock green. Tommy had no idea of how he had come onto that side of the garden; but it appeared most probable that he had jumped over the hedge.

All that he said was, with the most casual and familiar accent, "Got the blues?"

Tommy did not answer and perhaps did not understand; but the strange young man proceeded with great composure to take off his blue spectacles.

"Blue spectacles are a queer cure for the blues," he said cheerfully. "But you just look through these for a minute."

Tommy was moved to a mild curiosity and peered through the glasses; there certainly was something weird and quaint about the discoloration of everything; the red roses black and the white wall blue, and the grass a bluish green like the plumes of a peacock.

"Looks like a new world, doesn't it?" said the stranger. "Wouldn't you like to go wandering in a blue world once in a blue moon?"

"Yes," said Tommy and put the spectacles down with a rather puzzled air. Then his expression changed to surprise; for the extraordinary young man had put on another pair of spectacles, and this time they were red.

"Try these," he said affably. "These, I suppose, are revolutionary glasses. Some people call it looking through rose-coloured spectacles. Others call it seeing red."

Tommy tried the spectacles, and was quite startled by the effect; it looked as if the whole world were on fire. The sky was of a glowing or rather glaring purple, and the roses were not so much red as red-hot. He took off the glasses almost in alarm, only to note that the young man's immovable countenance was now adorned with yellow spectacles. By the time that these had been followed by green spectacles, Tommy thought he had been looking at four totally different landscapes.

"And so," said the young man, "you would like to travel in a country of your favourite colour. I did it once myself."

Tommy was staring up at him with round eyes. "Who are you?" he asked suddenly.

"I'm not sure," replied the other. "I rather think I am your long-lost brother."

"But I haven't got a brother," objected Tommy.

"It only shows how very long-lost I was," replied his remarkable relative. "But I assure you that, before they managed to long-lose me, I used to live in this house myself."

"When you were a little boy like me?" asked Tommy with some reviving interest.

"Yes," said the stranger gravely. "When I was a little boy and very like you. I also used to sit on the grass and wonder what to do with myself. I also got tired of the blank white wall. I also got tired even of the beautiful blue sky. I also thought the thatch was just thatch and wished the roses did not stand in a row."

"Why, how do you know I felt like that?" asked the little boy, who was rather frightened.

"Why, because I felt like that myself," said the other with a smile.

Then after a pause he went on.

"And I also thought that everything might look different if the colours were different; if I could wander about on blue roads between blue fields and go on wandering till all was blue. And a Wizard who was a friend of mine actually granted my wish, and I found myself walking in forests of great blue flowers like gigantic lupins and larkspurs, with only glimpses now and then of pale blue skies over a dark blue sea. The trees were inhabited by blue jays and bright blue kingfishers. Unfortunately they were also inhabited by blue baboons."

"Were there any people in that country?" enquired Tommy.

The traveller paused to reflect for a moment; then he nodded and said:

"Yes; but of course wherever there are people there are troubles. You couldn't expect all the people in the Blue Country to get on with each other very well. Naturally there was a crack regiment called the Prussian Blues. Unfortunately there was also a very energetic semi-naval brigade called French Ultramarines. You can imagine the consequence." He paused again for a moment and then said: "I met one person who made rather an impression on me. I came upon him in a place of great gardens shaped in a crescent like the

moon, and in the centre above a fringe of bluegum trees there rose a great blue lustrous dome, like the Mosque of Omar. And I heard a great and terrible voice that seemed to toss the trees to and fro; and there came out between them a tremendously tall man, with a crown of huge sapphires round his turban; and his beard was quite blue. I need not explain that he was Bluebeard."

"You must have been frightened," said the little boy.

"At first perhaps," replied the stranger, "but I came to the conclusion that Bluebeard is not so black—or perhaps so blue—as he is painted. I had a little confidential talk with him, and really there was something to be said on his side of the case. Living where he did, he naturally married wives who were all blue-stockings."

"What are blue-stockings?" asked Tommy.

"Naturally you don't know," replied the other. "If you did, you would sympathise more with Bluebeard. They were ladies who were always reading books. They even read them aloud."

"What sort of books were they?"

"Blue-books, of course," replied the traveller. "They are the only kind of book allowed there. That is why I decided to leave. With the assistance of my friend the Wizard I obtained a passport to cross the frontier, which was a very vague and shadowy one, like the fine shade between two tints of the rainbow. I only felt that I was passing over peacock-coloured seas and meadows and the world was growing greener and greener till I knew I was in a Green Country. You would think that was more restful, and so it was, up to a point. The point was when I met the celebrated Green Man, who has given his name for so many excellent public houses. And then there is always a certain amount of limitation in the work and trade of these beautiful harmonious landscapes. Have you ever lived in a country where all the people were green-grocers? I think not. After all, I asked myself, why should all grocers be green? I felt myself longing to look at a yellow grocer. I saw rise up before me the glowing image of a red grocer. It was just about this time that I floated insensibly into the Yellow Country; but I did not stay there very long. At first it was very splendid; a radiant scene of sunflowers and golden crowns; but I soon found it was almost entirely filled with Yellow Fever and the Yellow Press discussing the Yellow Peril. Of the three I preferred the Yellow Fever; but I could not get any real peace or happiness even out of that. So I faded through an orange haze until I came to the Red Country, and it was there that I really found out the truth of the matter."

"What did you find out?" asked Tommy, who was beginning to listen much more attentively.

"You may have heard," said the young man, "a very vulgar expression about painting the town red. It is more probable that you have heard the same thought put in a more refined form by a very scholarly poet who wrote about a rose-red city, half as old as time. Well, do you know, it is a curious fact that in a rose-red city you cannot really see any roses. Everything is a great deal too red. Your eyes are tired until it might just as well all be brown. After I had been walking for ten minutes on scarlet grass under a scarlet sky and scarlet trees, I called out in a loud voice, 'Oh, this is all a mistake.' And the moment I had said that the whole red vision vanished; and I found myself standing in quite a different sort of place; and opposite me was my old friend the Wizard, whose face and long rolling beard were all one sort of colourless colour like ivory, but his eyes of a colourless blinding brilliance like diamonds.

"'Well,' he said, 'you don't seem very easy to please. If you can't put up with any of these countries, or any of these colours, you shall jolly well make a country of your own.'

"And then I looked round me at the place to which he had brought me; and a very curious place it was. It lay in great ranges of mountains, in layers of different colours; and it looked something like sunset clouds turned solid and something like those maps that mark geological soils, grown gigantic. And all along the terraces of the hills they were trenched and hollowed into great quarries; and I think I understood without being told that this was the great original place from which all the colours came, like the paint-box of creation. But the most curious thing of all was that right in front of me there was a huge chasm in the hills that opened into sheer blank daylight. At least sometimes I thought it was a blank and sometimes a sort of wall made of frozen light or air and sometimes a sort of tank or tower of clear water; but anyhow the curious thing about it was that if you splashed some of the coloured earths upon it, they remained where you had thrown them, as a bird hangs in the air. And there the Wizard told me, rather impatiently, to make what sort of world I liked for myself, for he was sick of my grumbling at everything.

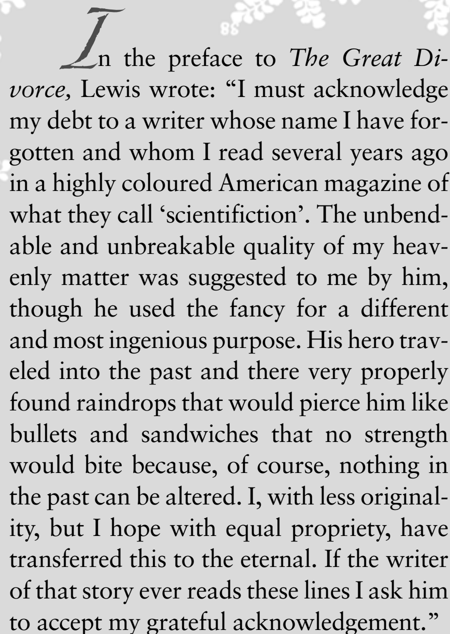
"So I set to work very carefully; first blocking in a great deal of blue, because I thought it would throw up a sort of square of white in the middle; and then I thought a fringe of a sort of dead gold would look well along the top of the white; and I spilt some green at the bottom of it. As for red, I had already found out the secret about red. You have to have a very little of it to make a lot of it. So I just made a row of little blobs of bright red on the white just

above the green; and as I went on working at the details, I slowly discovered what I was doing; which is what very few people ever discover in this world. I found I had put back, bit by bit, the whole of that picture over there in front of us. I had made that white cottage with the thatch and that summer sky behind it and that green lawn below; and the row of the red flowers just as you see them now. That is how they come to be there. I thought you might be interested to know it."

And with that he turned so sharply that Tommy had not time to turn and see him jump over the hedge; for Tommy remained staring at the cottage, with a new look in his eyes.

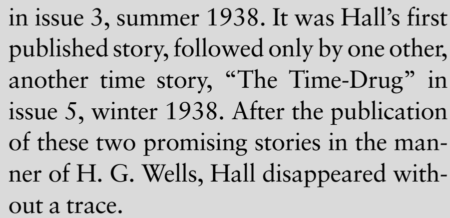
The Man Who Lived Backwards

by Charles F. Hall



In the preface to *The Great Divorce,* Lewis wrote: “I must acknowledge my debt to a writer whose name I have forgotten and whom I read several years ago in a highly coloured American magazine of what they call ‘scientifiction’. The unbendable and unbreakable quality of my heavenly matter was suggested to me by him, though he used the fancy for a different and most ingenious purpose. His hero traveled into the past and there very properly found raindrops that would pierce him like bullets and sandwiches that no strength would bite because, of course, nothing in the past can be altered. I, with less originality, but I hope with equal propriety, have transferred this to the eternal. If the writer of that story ever reads these lines I ask him to accept my grateful acknowledgement.”

Lewis was wrong about the piece appearing in an American magazine. It in fact appeared in a short-lived, highly colored British magazine, *Tales of Wonder*. The story is “The Man Who Lived Backwards” by Charles F. Hall, and it appeared



in issue 3, summer 1938. It was Hall's first published story, followed only by one other, another time story, "The Time-Drug" in issue 5, winter 1938. After the publication of these two promising stories in the manner of H. G. Wells, Hall disappeared without a trace.

THE DISAPPEARANCE

The case of Nicolai Rostof was bewildering enough in its confirmed facts, without taking into account his personal narrative. With regard to the latter, the public immediately hailed him as a modern Baron Münchhausen, news reporters as a heaven-sent opportunity for a farcical write-up, and scientists as a maundering lunatic.

That is where I think the little man was done a grave injustice. For the Press, seizing on his story as an incredible explanation of an even more incredible situation, wrote it up in the way it always does in such cases—as a huge joke. The public, gulping its morning coffee and bacon, shuffled blindly after the leader-writers' pipings and started a great big laugh that echoed from Peckham to Kamschatka; and that, of course, made any scientist who might have thought of starting a serious investigation shy clear of the whole affair like a frightened horse.

I am not a scientist—not in the physics line, at any rate; but I have had twenty years' experience as a practising psychologist, and I will stake my life on this: Rostof believed every word of his account was true, believed that the whole amazing sequence of events had actually happened to him, no matter what other explanation may be offered.

If we stop to consider his story logically and dispassionately, together with the known facts, instead of indulging in mere cachinnation, the disquieting thought comes to us that there is no known law which says it could *not* have happened. You may assert that Rostof cannot prove his story, but at least you can't *dis*prove it.

Let us start with the known facts. The beginning (or the end of the affair, whichever way you choose to regard it) had plenty of witnesses.

Nicolai Rostof, dark, inoffensive and five-foot-six, was physics and chemistry master at Gayling Grammar School. He had no relations in England, but he had two friends, one Hans Schouten, a Dutchman, and the other Harold Matheson, history-master at the Grammar School. These three had a common interest which brought them together at leisure-time in a hut on some waste land on the outskirts of Gayling.

They were all interested in modern experimental physics, and had got together a rough, but fairly efficient laboratory in which they were trying to duplicate and extend some of Lord Rutherford's experiments in the transmutation of elements. In connection with this, at the time, they were studying the effect of high-frequency, high-voltage electrical discharges—"miniature lightning flashes of a million volts," to use Rostof's words.

On Tuesday, January 20th, at 3 p.m., Rostof was on the platform of his classroom in the Grammar School taking the third form. He was standing in full view away from his desk; he did not seem in any way unusual in manner or state of mind. There was not the slightest warning that anything out of the ordinary was about to occur. Yet, as he was tapping the blackboard with his pointer, demonstrating some point, something happened to him which startled his politely blank-faced class far more than if he had stood on his head and screamed.

He disappeared.

No sound; no flash—nothing. . . . Only thirty-two round-eyed, open-mouthed boys staring at an empty platform.

It says much for the impression which the incident made upon them that they sat in silence for fully three minutes before one or two older boys made a tentative search, and finally went for the head-master.

But the most painstaking scrutiny by a combined force of masters and prefects revealed only one thing: that the science-master had vanished in a split second from Gayling Grammar School.

The third form meanwhile found its voice and discussed the miracle from every conceivable angle, though the only explanation meeting with almost general agreement came from a golden-haired infant who darkly hinted that the devil had claimed his own.

To suggest that the whole of these thirty-two witnesses were hypnotised is going a little too far. Besides, the masters were certainly not hypnotised; and as Matheson confided to me when talking over the case afterwards, "Anyone

who thinks he can hypnotise those young devils had never had any experience of Gayling Grammar scholars."

ROSTOF'S STORY

As you know, that wasn't the last that was seen of Rostof on that amazing Tuesday afternoon. For at precisely the same instant that he disappeared from his classroom platform, or as nearly as can be ascertained, he appeared out of the air in the grounds of Mrs. Van der Rorvik's stately house, approximately a mile and a half away from the Grammar School.

A minor detail is that he had no slightest vestige of clothing on him.

The only witness to his coming in this case was the head gardener, a simple-minded man by the name of Curle, although the postman, in response to Curle's shout, caught sight of him about two minutes afterwards.

To see a man pop up out of nothingness in the middle of an empty lawn is not exactly a sedative for the nerves. Curle had been looking across the lawn toward the house, presumably turning over in his mind some manner of begonias or seedling stocks, when—*flick!* There was a naked man, staggering slightly, hair dishevelled, eyes staring wildly, a red scar on the whiteness of his shoulder and blood on his arm.

The gardener's natural alarm was increased by Rostof's first action which was to run towards him shouting the strange words: "Thank God it's stopped! You're moving right; you're moving right!"

Curle admits frankly that he thought he had to deal with a lunatic, and reached hurriedly for a spade, at the same time calling to the postman whom he had seen passing down the drive. Rostof, however, made no hostile act, but simply kept shaking the gardener's hand and babbling incoherently. On seeing him at closer quarters, Curle realised that the man was weak and exhausted; he had a two days' stubble of beard on his cheeks and his eyes were bloodshot.

With the arrival of the postman, Curle recovered some measure of his wits and took off his coat to drape about Rostof. Then together the two men led him to the doctor's house, which was fortunately only two doors away. As they went, Curle described the stranger's sudden appearance to the incredulous postman, as best he could, and both agreed that he must be some men-

tally deranged person, though the manner of his appearance they could not explain.

Doctor Seebohm had the intelligence to see that Rostof was suffering from a severe shock and physical exhaustion, administered some restoratives and arranged for him to have two or three days in hospital. Not until then did he listen to Curle, and to Rostof's incoherent story.

As luck would have it, a *Gayling Guardian* reporter who was friendly with Seebohm was on the spot and scented a hot story. He took full notes, and the minute Rostof disappeared into the ambulance, acted swiftly. The result was that the morning papers trumpeted the whole story, although it was not until the next evening that it was connected with the Gayling Grammar School affair.

Those first accounts of Rostof's amazing experience were garbled in the extreme, and for the sake of clearness I will set down here, not the first disjointed recital, but the story as Rostof told it to me later, soberly and earnestly. It began with him being in the laboratory on the outskirts of Gayling at 6:30 p.m. on *Thursday, January 22nd*.

It was here that the public drew breath and let out its first great whoop of laughter. For on the Wednesday morning when the story appeared, Thursday simply hadn't been. It was to-morrow; it was the misty future; it was a dream more transient than a bursting bubble; and it smashed Rostof's reputation as a truthful man at the very start. But try to keep an open mind and listen to his story as he told it.

For he swore that on Tuesday, he had conducted his class without the slightest untoward incident. On Wednesday he had got up, shaved, breakfasted, gone through a normal school day, witnessed a fire at the Elite cinema at night, gone to bed; and so on again through Thursday until, at that fateful moment of half-past six, he was in the laboratory which he shared with Schouten and Matheson.

The other two were also there, in the main work-room, getting ready for a discharge which was to take place at seven. Schouten, who had no professional ties, had been there since three p.m., attending to the generators that were building up the charge in the great copper cone which hung four feet above the ground-plate.

The discharge gap acted very much in the same manner as an ordinary simple spark-circuit works, with certain modifications due to size. A condenser, in which was stored the charge built up by the generators an enormous flat-ribbed inductance, and the gap itself, formed the major parts of the circuit. The break-

down voltage across the gap was in the neighbourhood of 1,000,000 volts, and when the flash took place the condenser would empty and re-charge some thousands of times per second, in tune with the high-frequency oscillations.

THE OTHER ROSTOF

Rostof said that on the Thursday evening he had been in the small cubby-hole adjacent to the main room, where he had some short-wave radio apparatus. He had been listening-in for some twenty minutes, but got only poor results, due to very bad atmospherics, when he became aware that a freak thunderstorm was approaching outside. It was very unusual for the time of year, but there had been a spell of mild weather previously.

Anyhow, he gave up the radio as a bad job, got up and went into the next room. He had intended to hang his head-phones on their hook, and he pulled the terminals from their sockets for that purpose, but instead of bothering to go to the rack at that moment, kept them on his head and slung the dangling leads over his shoulder.

He was surprised to find how dark it had grown when he entered the main laboratory, and realised that the storm must be much nearer than he had thought. He crossed toward the discharge gap with the intention of taking a look at the meters, and remembers Schouten making some warning remark about not touching the negative cone; though, of course, he new well enough himself not to touch any of the charged apparatus.

He went to take a look at the main volt-meter, and to see it behind its mica covering in the poor light he had to lean sideways and peer closely. The strain in the condensers and across the gap would then be roughly 850,000 volts.

As he bent, the loop of flex from the head-phones slipped from his shoulder and fell across the ground-plate, the tips of the metal terminals resting on the bare copper. Instantly he dropped a hand to switch them off, but before he could do so there came a blinding flare of light all about him and a stunning crash of sound.

He threw himself back, blinded and dazed. His first thought was that in some inconceivable manner the gap had shorted and he was electrocuted; but when he could think clearly he realised that the charge was not sufficient for a flash, and in any case, Schouten had not closed the switch which completed the circuit.

After a moment of blinking and a fleeting sensation of severe nausea had passed, he was surprised and relieved to find himself still alive. Surprisingly, too, the laboratory seemed to have suffered no damage; the gap was there, windows, apparatus, all unchanged, his friends bending over a bench. . . .

No; something was wrong! His clothes, the head-phones, had vanished completely. He stood agape with amazement beside the gleaming copper gap stark naked.

For some time, he told me, he could do nothing but stand there like a village idiot, with staring eyes and hanging jaw. Helplessly he gazed around, as though the missing clothes might be dangling in mid-air, and as he did so he became aware that there was someone else in the room whom he had not noticed before. This was a smallish dark-haired man, thin-faced, clad in a sober grey suit, wearing a pair of head-phones, the free flex of which was slung carelessly over his shoulder.

After a minute of vague half-remembering, the realisation of where he had seen that figure previously struck Rostof like a blow.

He was looking at himself!

After a shock such as Rostof had passed through, and coming up against an impossibility like this, a normal man might be excused for becoming a little deranged mentally. Through his mind there flashed wild conjectures, of which the chief seemed to be that he was either dreaming or mad—or perhaps he was dead. I think myself that only his scientific training saved his reason. For while his brain rocked with bewilderment, it still mechanically observed and noted. An underlying curiosity drove him on, though his conscious mind was still too dazed with shock to function properly.

The figure in grey when he first noticed it, was walking—backwards. It jerked back, like a film run in reverse, towards the door, passed through it; and Rostof followed like a dream-walker. His other self turned sharply to the right into the narrow cupboard of a radio-room, walked—still backwards—to the chair and sat down in it. Then he pushed the phone leads into their sockets and appeared to be listening.

Rostof approached the figure slowly and touched it gingerly on the shoulder, then took hold of it more firmly and shook it—or tried to. For in spite of his strongest efforts he could make not the slightest impression on the sitting figure. It was like touching an image of granite, save that this one undoubtedly lived. Even the cloth of the coat had no resiliency, was as hard and unyielding to the touch as adamant.

He tugged vainly, he spoke, shouted in the man's ear. No response. Rostof

studied the face of the man in the chair; it was without a doubt his own face, just as if he were looking into a mirror. With that thought came a wild fear that in some incredible manner he had been transported into some stranger's body in an exchange of personalities. In sudden, unreasoning terror he ran to the small mirror that hung on the wall, dreading to see an unknown face reflected there.

What he saw came with the terrific shock of utter unexpectedness. *There was no reflection at all.*

THE PROBLEM

He could see the opposite wall, part of the room, everything in the normal range of view, but no face looked out at him. It was an uncanny, shaking experience. Crane and stretch as he liked, he could see not a scrap of his own body in the mirror.

He looked down. There was his body, indubitably. He held his hand before his eyes, crooked the fingers; they were there all right, he could swear. He slapped his thigh, felt the sting of his palm, saw the red mark grow on his skin.

In that moment Rostof was like a small child, bewildered by events totally out of its normal experience, scared and lost. Everything in the world seemed to have gone suddenly and horribly wrong, and he wanted badly to find something right and normal which he could use as an anchor for his tottering reason. He wanted to talk with friends, to see human beings acting sanely again.

He ran back into the main laboratory. Schouten and Matheson were at one of the work-benches. He went up to Schouten and spoke to him, tugged at his sleeve, and a thrill of horror shot through him as he realised that the same dreadful, granite-like hardness had taken possession of his friend. He could make no more impression on Schouten than on a moving statue.

He turned quickly to Matheson, and the history-master was in the same condition. Rostof frantically punched him in the ribs, and yelped with pain, for his knuckles were barked and skinned as though he had struck a brick wall. A sickening sense of impotency, of being nothing more substantial than a ghost, swept over him.

As he watched his friends, another thing struck him. All their movements were in reverse. Matheson was filing up an angle and he drew his file *back* across the metal at each stroke, while the forward stroke was made through the air. Queerest of all, Schouten was cutting through a metal strip with a hack-

saw, and here again his strokes seemed all wrong; but the amazing thing was that the cut, instead of growing deeper into the metal, *was growing smaller* and shrinking towards the top.

He watched in fascination until at last the saw-blade reached the top and was withdrawn, leaving virgin, untouched metal behind. Suddenly Schouten stepped backwards and cannoned into Rostof; but he did not falter or deviate in his stride the least fraction of an inch. It was Rostof who, feeling as if he had been struck by a steam-engine, went staggering aside to sprawl on the floor.

He got up and watched his friend stalk solemnly backward to the tool-rack and hang the hack-saw up. Telling me afterwards, Rostof said:

"I think I went a little crazy then. I stood in the middle of the floor and screamed, shouted at the top of my voice at them. I cursed and raved, pleaded and prayed, waved my arms to heaven. I begged them to quit fooling and be sane, though goodness only knows what joke I could have thought they were playing. I believe that for a bit I blubbered like a kid. . . ."

As I have said before, the inborn scientist in him probably saved his reason. After a while, when he had quietened down, his mind fastened on the problem before him. The problem; that was it! If he could only keep calm and watch and think, perhaps some explanation would offer itself. At least he was still alive (though he was not perfectly sure about that), and he could still reason and use his wits, apparently.

At this juncture Matheson left the bench and walked from the room, again backwards. Rostof followed him into the little kitchen where they had a fire and a wash-bowl and prepared an occasional late meal. Matheson made toward the towel which hung on a roller beside the bowl, turned round, and appeared to be going through the motions of drying his hands. As the other watched, a gurgling sound from the basin attracted his attention.

A flood of soapy, dirty-looking water was welling up from the drain outlet and rapidly filling the basin. Rostof, absorbed in this phenomenon, had barely time to skip aside as Matheson moved to the basin, inserted the plug, took the soap from the dish and proceeded to wash his hands.

When he had finished, Rostof's eyes again widened in surprise, for the water was perfectly clean and clear, while Matheson's hands were grimy, but apparently quite dry; and as he made an adjustment to the tap, the water suddenly began to flow *upwards* in a narrow pillar through the tap.

Rostof let Matheson go back to the lab unattended while he watched this amazing phenomenon of water spurting up through the tap. A miniature waterspout, with a few queer splashed about its base, quivered up straight and true

through the orifice; the level in the basin rapidly dropped, and only an inch or so remained in the bottom when Matheson returned. As the last few drops shot up into the tap, he twisted the handle, and there was left only an empty, perfectly dry basin.

Matheson made backwards for the lab door, and Rostof was following when he happened to glance casually at the clock. He noted the time mechanically, and was continuing after the other when a sudden thought froze him in his tracks.

He looked again at the clock. There was no mistake; the hands showed seventeen minutes past six. Yet when he had come out of the radio room and glanced up at the clock in passing, it had been *half*-past six.

BACKWARDS IN TIME

He stood as if petrified, gazing at the clock. It was in that moment that the first flicker of the nerve-shaking idea licked through his mind. It was a possible, but crazy explanation of the whole, ridiculous affair. He slumped into a chair and tried to think coherently.

Was it possible that when that puzzling flare of light had come, his Time-sense had in some way been reversed—turned back to front, as it were? Or to put it another way, had he been plunged into a Time Stream which flowed in exactly the opposite direction to the normal one?

You understand, of course, that at that time Rostof had not the vaguest notion of what had happened as he stood by the gap, save a suspicion that some form of electrical discharge had taken place. But the more he thought, the more it seemed possible that only some such incredible reversal of Time could explain the phenomena which so puzzled him.

If he were steadily progressing backwards in Time, then the surprising topsy-turviness of external actions became more understandable. His friends walking backwards, for instance; the water that flowed upwards; his ability to see himself. He was simply witnessing the Past, like seeing a film run in reverse. But more than witnessing—he was *living* through the Past, every second taking him deeper and deeper into it.

He looked at the clock again. He was already separated from the world of normal Time by three-quarters of an hour. He began to sweat as the horror of the situation took hold of him. Three-quarters of an hour is not long in every-

day life, but to him it was as good as eternity. It seemed he was doomed never again to converse with his friends or any human being, never to see again a sane, understandable world.

Try to picture him as he sat there, naked, defenceless, fighting to keep calm and grapple intelligently with a situation that should have sent him mad. Imagine his incredible loneliness; one small human, plunging towards a vague and misty future which lay in the Past, while with each second everything that stood for friendship, safety and comfort, was hurtling farther away in the opposite direction. . . .

Grimly, he dragged his mind from the image and concentrated it on the scientific side of the problem. For a while he could not understand the impenetrable hardness of external objects which he had experienced; it seemed they ought rather to be of intangible transiency, much as a dream, since he was reviewing the Past. But a moment's thought gave him the logical answer.

The Past is definite, shaped, unalterable, as nothing else in Creation is. Therefore, to argue that he could make the slightest impression on it, that he could move or alter an object here, was to argue that he could change the whole history of the world or cosmos. Everything he saw about him had happened, and could not be changed in any way. On the other hand, he was fluid, movable, alterable, since *his* future still lay before him, even if it had been reversed; he was the intruder, the anomaly. In any clash between himself and the Past, then, the Past would prove irresistible every time.

No wonder they could not hear him shout; no wonder they could not feel a punch. He was no more than a chimera.

He sat gnawing his lip and frowning at the clock for almost an hour. There would be all sorts of queer effects. He would have to keep dodging out of people's way or run the risk of being brained; if he happened to get into the path of a fly or a bee going at speed, it would bore through him more surely than any bullet. The Sun, for him, would sink in the east and rise in the west. He would see trees and plants growing downward until they shrank into the ground and turned to seed; the seed would leap through the air or be carried by birds to the parent tree, would change to flowers, to buds, back through all the endless cycle. . . .

At last he roused himself and made his way to the outer door. Fortunately for him, it was ajar, and he managed to squeeze through; he had no desire to be shut in when Shouten left at three o'clock.

The district where the laboratory was situated was not a busy one, and before long he realised that it would be best for him to avoid all busy thoroughfares. Never until now had he realised how much the world depended on

forward movement, how rare in normal life is retrogression. It was a startling experience to see motor-cars suddenly whizz round corners, travelling backwards; to see pigeons take off from the ground stern first in a flurry of wings; to see a black feather which had fallen from a crow's wing in the Past float up into the air and neatly fix itself into the bird's sable plumage as it flew solemnly backwards.

He found it almost impossible to pre-judge people's movements; all his instinctive mental calculations were upset. A man looking into a shop window would without warning slip into reverse and come striding at Rostof, who would leap wildly aside; a ball lying in the roadway would suddenly start into life, come rolling and bouncing along, then fly past his head into the hand of the urchin who had once thrown it. After a time he learned to keep a wary eye on any movable object near-by, but the process of learning was a painful business and involved many bruises and shakings.

DOOMED . . .

All through Thursday, as the afternoon drew on to morning and the Sun rose to the south and began to arch downward into the east, Rostof wandered at random, his plight almost forgotten in the unparalleled novelty of his surroundings, which appealed to the scientist in him. There seemed no reason to hope that the condition in which he found himself would ever revert to normal, though the prospect of spending the rest of his life as a helpless ghost among the scenes of an iron-bound Past was not pleasant.

But by the middle of the morning, the thought of a prolonged existence in this state ceased to bother him. For he realised what he should have done before, that unless a miracle happened, in a few days he would be dead of starvation and thirst.

Not until the pangs of hunger drove him to try to sample some sandwiches from a coffee-stall was the realisation brought home to him. Tug and strain as he might, he could not lift the smallest crumb. He tried bending his head to bite a piece from a sandwich, but it was like trying to bite a concrete slab. He tried to lift a cup of coffee, but it was immobile as a rock. In a sudden panic he dipped his fingers into the cup, trying to scoop up a little of the liquid. He could not even ripple the surface; it was like scratching at a block of brown glass.

He stood there in dismay. It was only to be expected, of course. In any

case, even if he had been able to contrive any crumb of food down his throat he could not have digested it; and if he moved away it would simply rip a hole in him, since it would inevitably stay fixed in its own position.

Strangely enough, the knowledge that he was a doomed man did not utterly unnerve him. In spite of the jokes that were levelled at him, I think there was the stuff of a truly great character in that insignificant little schoolteacher. His Odyssey is a more bizarre one than any Ulysses ever dreamed of, yet the hunger for knowledge, the intellectual interest of a pioneer in a mighty experiment, transcended for him the fear of a slow and lonely death.

He even smiled wryly as a workman stepped backwards up to the stall, turned, picked up an empty cup, lifted it to his lips, and after a moment set down a steaming full cup of coffee. The man made munching motions with his jaws, and presently took from his mouth a morsel of sandwich; more followed, until in a few minutes a complete and untouched ham sandwich lay on the plate before him. Then he took a coin from the proprietor of the stall and put it away in his pocket as he backed briskly away.

Rostof lingered for a second or two longer, fascinated by the sight of steam appearing out of thin air and gushing into the spout of the big coffee-urn, then he, too, went on his way.

When at length the dusk of early morning fell, he began to think of finding somewhere to sleep, but there was to be little sleep for him that night. There was no chance, he soon discovered, of finding anything soft on which to lie. A heap of hay in a stable-yard tempted him, but it was like lying on sharp, hair-thin wire without the slightest yield to it.

For the greater part of the Wednesday night he wandered disconsolately through the empty streets, until fatigue forced him to sit on a door-step and rest his back against the door. If it was hard, it was at least smooth. He dared not let himself sleep for fear he should be sleeping when anyone came in or out of the door, but towards Wednesday evening he dropped into a troubled slumber for an hour.

With the chiming of ten o'clock from the church tower he awoke, and rose wearily to move on. The Wednesday night crowds were still about, and he felt it would not be safe to sleep longer. He rubbed a hand over his stubbled chin as he went.

You will note that the metabolism of his body still continued normally. His hair still grew, his body became fatigued and needed food, blood circulated steadily in his veins, his heart thumped in regulation time. Which explains why he was able to remember the whole train of events from Tuesday

to Thursday, and back again to Tuesday; as far as his physical self was concerned it was one unbroken period of time.

Throughout the Wednesday he worked more and more out towards the countryside, avoiding the busier thoroughfares. He was feeling faint with hunger and exhaustion and his reflexes were slower in responding to danger signals, as was proved by one or two narrow escapes.

Once he came upon a cat walking gravely backwards towards a low wall, and unthinkingly tried to cut in between cat and wall. As he drew level, however, the cat crouched and suddenly sprang tail first through the air towards the top of the wall. Rostof was not quite quick enough in dodging, and she caught him a glancing blow on the shoulder that sent him spinning a dozen yards and left a raw gash that dripped blood along his arm. After that he roused himself to walk more warily; but despite his care, he was almost caught in the morning.

WAITING FOR DEATH

The Wednesday morning was dull, with low grey clouds overhead. About eleven o'clock, he noticed a curious dampness which spread in patches over the roads. As time passed this dampness ran together and increased, until by nine o'clock something like a thin sheet of ice or glass covered the paths, and brown water was gushing up from the drains and culverts.

Rostof was surprisingly slow to grasp the meaning of this, until he saw something like a streak of silver shoot up from the road, and another odd one here and there; then the explanation and the thrill of imminent danger shot through his mind, and he leaped for a providential near-by passageway.

Inside five minutes he was gazing out at the strangest rain shower he had ever seen, a shower in which the drops, like deadly silver bullets, shot up at lightning speed from the ground and vanished into the sky. Pools in the road split up into a myriad tiny streams that spread away in all directions and finally dissipated themselves in drops which hurled themselves at the clouds above. Had he been caught out in that queer rainstorm his body would have been slashed to ribbons in a matter of seconds.

After about twenty minutes the shower abated, and presently he could see dry patches between the spots. Then the dry patches joined up and became bigger, while the spots of rain became fewer, until at length the last one had flashed upward out of sight and a bone-dry road was left behind.

Rostof was hampered a good deal in the outlying roads and lanes by grass borders which kept him to the roadway. Where the grass was clipped close it was possible to walk on it, even though it felt like treading on close-packed nails; but where it grew long it would have lacerated his feet like thin slivers of glass.

As Tuesday night drew on, therefore, he was undecided whether to return to the town to find an unfrequented corner to sleep in, or whether to push on farther in the hope of finding a farm. But, seeing a large house standing among trees in its own grounds, he decided to try there, for he was feeling wretchedly weary.

He turned up the winding drive and hunted about for a smooth spot in which to lie down. Passing an open window, a weird cacophony of noise startled him, and he could not think what it was until, looking through the window, he saw a gramophone on the table. It was the first time he had heard a tune played backwards, and try as he might he could not place the melody.

Sounds, of course, were still audible to him, but like all other things they were heard in reverse, and were often totally unrecognisable. Speech came from the lips of the people about him as mere gibberish, while the song of birds was changed to disjointed notes; even the hooting of cars was different. Only sounds without change of note, such as an engine whistle or the clatter of horses' hooves, seemed familiar.

He spent the night lying on the top of a flat porch over the main entrance of the house though sleep did not come until the Tuesday evening. He ached in every bone and the roof-top seemed terribly hard, though fortunately he was not cold. Throughout his experiences he felt no change of temperature.

He awoke when the Sun was already climbing back into the sky, and lay for a long time reluctant to move. For the first time, utter hopelessness swept over him in a dark flood. He had not eaten for two days and nights, his shoulder was stiff and throbbed unceasingly. He had had nothing with which to staunch the flow of blood from the gash, and loss of blood coupled with hunger and fatigue made him feel sickly and faint.

There seemed no point in rousing himself to continue his wanderings, for sooner or later death would come and bring surcease from the dull gnawing of pain. He wondered vaguely if in death his body would revert to a normal state, or whether it would still be borne on into the vast mausoleum of the Past . . . ?

In the late afternoon he clambered stiffly and slowly down from the porch, and for a time wandered around the house. At the back the kitchen door was open, and the sight of a plate of newly-baked cakes on the table drove him to try to abstract one. It was useless, of course, and after skinning

his knuckles in an endeavour to make an impression on them, he went outside again to avoid the sight of them.

He made his way round to the front of the house with the intention of taking to the road again, and was skirting the main lawn when something attracted his attention. A small brown bird was flying backwards across the lawn, about five feet from the ground; but it was not this which seemed so strange. It was the fact that the bird was flying far more slowly than any natural bird ever does.

Previously, all movements about him, although in reverse, had been invariably at normal speeds. But this bird was like something in a slow-motion film; it was simply drifting backwards, and he could count each wing-beat. He watched it with interest, and when it was almost in the centre of the lawn his eyes widened in surprise. For it had stopped in mid-air!

In a moment he was across to it. There, five feet above the ground, the small brown bird hung as if suspended by invisible wires, frozen into an exquisitely carved, tiny statue. He passed his hand all around it, below and above, and finally took hold of it. It was brittle hard and utterly immovable, exactly as all other objects were in this alien Time Stream.

BACK TO NORMAL

He suddenly realised, with a faint thrill of fear, that the whole world seemed to have become noticeably silent. A vast quiet was all about him; not the faintest twitter of a bird, not a rustle of a branch, not a click or tap sounded anywhere. He stood stock-still as if afraid to stir lest some other nightmare was about to beset him.

As he slowly turned his head, he discovered that all motion, too, seemed to have ceased. A gardener who had been bent over a border was grotesquely crouched, one hand half-stretched out. The slight dip and sway of the branches in the breeze had stopped, a film of smoke from a chimney balanced in the air like a spray of blue glass. The whole Earth seemed to be holding its breath.

Then a second of unutterable tension tugged at his body and a shock of reeling nausea struck him. His body seemed to be riven into a million pieces, yet he could not stir or cry. There was a brief flash of all-enveloping darkness. Then the tension snapped like a released rubber band, and he was staggering slightly, wild-eyed.

The small brown bird was flashing off toward the bushes—flying *for-wards*! The gardener stood gazing at him with a ludicrous look of amazement on his face. Rostof realised, with a sudden wild thrill of hope, that the man could *see* him. He ran forward, babbling incoherently.

The next instant he was shaking the hand of the astounded Mr. Curle, laughing and weeping at the same time. . . .

Well, there you have Rostof's own story, and the main facts of the case. But there are one or two more facts which you can call evidence or coinci-dence, whichever way your inclinations lean.

Rostof said that on the Wednesday night he had been attracted by the crowd to the Elite cinema at Highgate. He was on the outskirts of the crowd, and did not have a very good view; but he at least saw the firemen break in by the second floor balcony, and the clouds of dense black smoke which rolled away on the night breeze. His story appeared in the Wednesday morning pa-pers, and that same evening at six o'clock the Elite caught fire and the fire brigade was called out.

Rostof, of course, wasn't there. He was in hospital, sleeping peacefully. But it is a coincidence that he should have guessed—or dreamed—that a fire would occur on that identical night.

Again, what can you make of this? Schouten and Matheson went to visit Rostof in hospital, naturally. They were carrying on with the experimental routine at the laboratory, and let him know how the work was progressing. On Thursday evening, they were both working in the main room when a freak thunderstorm came up from the south; unusual for the time of year, but not unprecedented.

There were one or two desultory flashes of lightning, then at 6:31 p.m. precisely a vivid flash struck the roof and passed by the giant copper discharge gap to earth. The gap had been partly charged, and was due for breakdown at seven o'clock. The upper cone was badly melted, the ground plate buckled and fused, and much of the adjacent apparatus was fused or burnt.

Unaccountably, immediately after the flash they found a complete suit of grey cloth, underwear, boots and socks, badly singed and burnt, beside the gap, together with a twisted object which at first was unrecognisable. Later, however, they judged it to be the remains of a pair of headphones, though how either they or the suit got there was more than the two men could say.

In my own mind I feel convinced that Rostof actually went on from Tues-day to Thursday in the first place, conducting his classes and behaving in every way as a normal person should. Then, on that Thursday evening, he was

twisted into a reversed Time Stream and started to come back on his own tracks, as it were. Thus, he would see himself in his former existence, a helpless spectator of his own past.

But when the process slowed down and stopped, and he was released into the normal Time Stream on Tuesday at 3 p.m., an apparent anomaly appears at once. There would be two Rostofs existing at the same time! Would have been, that is, except for the inflexible law which states that a man cannot exist in two separate places during the same period of time.

But the instant that he came back into the normal Time Stream, and appeared on Mrs. Van der Rorvik's lawn, his former Tuesday-to-Thursday existence was automatically cancelled, obliterated, washed out as if it had never been. Which explains his startling disappearance from the Grammar School. He had to start the Tuesday-to-Thursday Time journey anew—but this time in a hospital ward. Yet since his metabolism and physical processes were unchanged throughout the adventure, he could still *remember* his former existence, even if it no longer existed in the minds of other people.

Of the mechanism of his transition I can say little, since, as I remarked before, I am no physicist. It seems possible that the lightning flash struck him, or the main force was diverted through the headphones, with the result that Rostof was twisted out of the normal Time Stream. Whether the presence of the discharge gap had any effect or not, it is hard to say; certainly, the freakish effects of lightning have long proved difficult to explain.

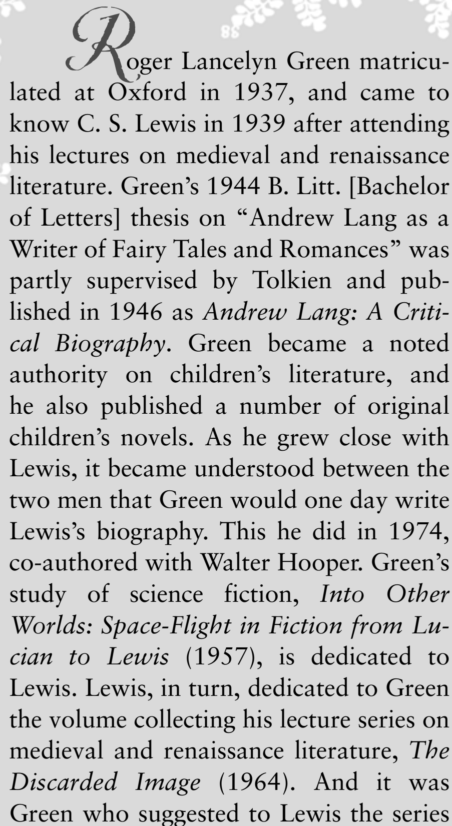
It is a curious case, but I am inclined to think it is not unique. In the past there have been many unexplained disappearances; there are also several authenticated instances of naked men who have suddenly appeared, apparently from nowhere, and been unable to give a coherent account of where they came from or who they were.

Anyway, you have heard Rostof's story, and may form your own opinion as to the most probable explanation of the whole strange affair. Though you may be inclined to ask: what does Rostof himself think about it all?

I can only tell you this. Nicolai Rostof has changed his name to Norman Robinson, has grown a moustache and wears horn-rimmed spectacles. He has gone to work in a certain industrial town whose name I have promised not to reveal, and where he is not known. Rostof is trying to forget.

The Wood That Time Forgot: The Enchanted Wood

by Roger Lancelyn Green



Roger Lancelyn Green matriculated at Oxford in 1937, and came to know C. S. Lewis in 1939 after attending his lectures on medieval and renaissance literature. Green's 1944 B. Litt. [Bachelor of Letters] thesis on "Andrew Lang as a Writer of Fairy Tales and Romances" was partly supervised by Tolkien and published in 1946 as *Andrew Lang: A Critical Biography*. Green became a noted authority on children's literature, and he also published a number of original children's novels. As he grew close with Lewis, it became understood between the two men that Green would one day write Lewis's biography. This he did in 1974, co-authored with Walter Hooper. Green's study of science fiction, *Into Other Worlds: Space-Flight in Fiction from Lucian to Lewis* (1957), is dedicated to Lewis. Lewis, in turn, dedicated to Green the volume collecting his lecture series on medieval and renaissance literature, *The Discarded Image* (1964). And it was Green who suggested to Lewis the series

title *The Chronicles of Narnia* for his children's books, following on Andrew Lang's *The Chronicles of Pantouflia*.

From 1945 to 1950 (when he moved away from Oxford), Green worked as the deputy librarian of Merton College, Oxford, and during these years he attended many of the pub meetings of the Inklings, though he apparently did not attend the famous evening meetings at Lewis's college rooms. Green was the model for the character Wilfrid Trewin Jeremy in Tolkien's unfinished fantasy "The Notion Club Papers," written around 1946 and based on the Inklings.

In 1945, Green shared with Lewis the manuscript of his unpublished children's novel called *The Wood That Time Forgot*. Lewis was enthusiastic, and suggested a number of revisions. Green reworked the book in 1949, but was unable to secure a publisher; then, after Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia* began to appear, Green felt that his book would seem too derivative of his friend's works. In fact, upon the publication of one of Green's other children's books, *The Land of the Lord High Tiger* (1958), one critic on *The Times Literary Supplement* went so far as to suggest that Green's book derived from Lewis's, and Lewis himself was compelled to write in and say that this was not so and chronologically impossible, for Green's book predated his own.

In 1962, Green proposed to Lewis that they collaborate and rewrite *The Wood That Time Forgot,* but Lewis felt that work was too personal for Green and that he should rewrite it himself, though he never did. Around 1972–73, Lin Carter planned to publish the book in a series of

juvenile fantasies, to be called *The Magic Kingdom,* as a companion to the acclaimed Ballantine Adult Fantasy series for which Carter was the primary editorial consultant. Unfortunately, the series never materialized, and Green's novel has remained unpublished.

"The Enchanted Wood" is the second chapter of Green's novel *The Wood That Time Forgot*. It shows the setup for the story, in which some children find their way into a lost world. In a later chapter, there is a scene where a raspberry cordial is used by an apparently kindly creature at a house in the wood to turn one of the children against the others. This scene anticipates the similar temptation of Edmund by the White Witch with her Turkish Delight in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. Yet despite a few obvious points of influence, *The Wood That Time Forgot* remains distinctly Green's vision, and fascinating on its own account, whatever its association with Lewis and the origins of Narnia.

When Diana came, neither Joanna nor Barbara seemed at all anxious to tell her about their last night's adventure in the Wood. Indeed they had hardly mentioned it to each other since they got up that morning, each thinking it had probably been a dream of her own.

But when early tea was finished, and with four clear hours before them they set out into the Wood. Joanna led the way without any consultation straight towards the end of the Waingunga valley.

Diana wanted to stop on the way and explore the two dark tracts of fir trees which they had named Wolf Wood and Witch Wood, "because," she said,

"we ought to be able to make up a very exciting story about them, now that we have given them such thrilling names. Then one of us can be the witch, and live in the darkest centre of it all, and catch the wandering Princesses when the cruel wolves chase them into it." But neither Joanna nor Barbara seemed at all impressed by this idea, and hardly stopped even to say, both in one breath: "Don't let's play that today!"

"Where are we going to?" asked Diana presently in a slightly cross voice. "It's so dull just going along these main paths—and I thought we decided last time that we should start a game-story today and really make the Wood exciting."

"We've thought of a much more thrilling idea," said Joanna. "The Waingunga must go under that strange, thorny embankment, and perhaps we can look right along the tunnel, or whatever it runs through, and see out at the other side."

"I don't suppose there is anything to see beyond it," said Diana, who was still a little bit annoyed. "It will be either a dull bit of wood, or else an even duller bank of grass. Anyhow, it may go through twisty pipes so that we can't see through at all!"

But neither Joanna nor Barbara were at all disposed to argue, and the conversation lapsed until they had passed the clearing where the young rhododendrons and azaleas grow before they are big enough to be planted out by the woodmen.

"Let's go down the narrow path between the larch trees in Light Wood," then suggested Diana, "so that we can cross the Waingunga by the fallen tree, and go up through the Grove of Darkness to the bank with the big trees where the primroses grow."

"Don't you think it would be fun," said Joanna diplomatically, "if we just went to look at where the Waingunga disappears, now that we are so near the place. Then we could mark it all in properly on our map."

"Oh, you're a bother and a nuisance!" exclaimed Diana, but she followed them without any other protest as they made their way through the tall green bracken towards the big oak tree which marked what seemed the only way down the steep bank into the dark valley where the stream reached the embankment.

It was very quiet that afternoon down there, cool and shady and far away from the bright sunshine up in the main wood.

Joanna and Barbara found themselves walking on tiptoe and speaking in

whispers as they drew nearer to the end of the valley. Even Diana, who had no conscious reason for it, seemed to be in awe of something, for she too walked quietly, and presently remarked in a subdued voice:

"I don't like this place at all: it makes me feel all creepy. I think this must be the part of the Wood where the ghost is."

This was a new idea, for neither of the others had thought about the ghost on the previous night . . .

"Ghosts don't sing, do they?" asked Barbara in an uncertain sort of voice.

"No, of course not," said Diana—far too indignantly to be quite certain. "They just groan and moan and clank chains—and talk sometimes in deep, ghastly tones."

By this time they had reached the line of bushes at which they had stopped on the previous night.

Joanna paused in front of them for a moment, and then, almost by an effort, pushed past and out into the little valley beyond. After a few steps she stopped to look round her, while Diana, who had no special reason for interest, sat down to rest with her back against a tree.

The narrow valley opened out here into a little green glade with banks that became almost like cliffs by reason of their steepness, and were fringed with trees and trailed across with brambles and ivy. The big trees higher up the gentle slope, which began when the steep banks had risen about twelve or fifteen feet, arched over the glade, leaving only a narrow strip of blue sky above the little stream which tinkled gaily out of sight among the bushes and ferns in front of them. Immediately behind these the steep embankment rose up, all grown over with brambles and thorn bushes, with great trees rising thickly near the top—a slope so steep and lofty that only its straightness and its regularity supported the children's conviction that it was indeed an embankment and not merely an outlying spur of the hill.

"Come along!" said Joanna suddenly, and without waiting for the other two she walked quickly across the little open patch of grass, and disappeared among the bushes at the upper end.

"What's all the mystery?" asked Diana, getting up slowly. "I'm sure you two are up to something you haven't told me. All this business about coming here and nowhere else, and then you not saying anything for such a long time—I do think you might tell me."

"Well," answered Barbara slowly, "last night Jo and I came here late in

the evening, and we thought we heard someone singing down by the place where the stream disappears under the embankment."

"Why didn't you look and see who it was?" asked Diana.

"Somehow we just couldn't."

"Couldn't? Why not?"

"It was just sort of mysterious and ghostly. No, not ghostly exactly—I can't explain what it felt like," said Barbara, trying her hardest. "You know you felt as if there was a ghost about just when we came through those bushes a few minutes ago."

Diana was rather impressed, but decided not to seem too ready to believe such an improbable story.

"I expect it was only a bird singing," she said, "or else someone away on the road. What did it sound like?"

"It was definitely a person," said Barbara, "because the song had words to it. And, anyhow, there isn't a road within miles! It began far away, and then became so near that it must have been only just over the bushes—right out here on this open bit of grass in fact."

"Why ever didn't you look over the bushes and see who was there?" was Diana's very natural question. But Barbara was quite unable to answer, and fortunately at that moment they heard Joanna calling them.

"Barbara! Diana!" she shouted in a breathless, excited voice. "Come here! There *is* a way under the bank! Quite a big, long tunnel, with the stream running through it. And there's a lovely wood beyond it on the other side. Do come quickly!"

Eagerly they ran forward, pushed through the last few bushes, and found themselves standing on the very edge of the steam and in front of a low stone archway grown all over with creeper and jasmine. The stream here was about eight feet wide, and the top of the arch four or five feet above the water. Joanna was standing on a stone in the middle of the stream, balancing insecurely, and waving her arms to them in great excitement.

"I'm *sure* we can get through!" she exclaimed breathlessly as they came to the edge of the water. "It's not very deep, and all of the bottom I can see is flat and pebbly."

"Let's take off our shoes and stockings and wade through," Diana suggested, forgetting all about her grievances; and there and then she sat down and began removing her shoes.

Joanna scrambled back, only putting one foot in the water as she did so,

and began following Diana's example. Barbara, however, had other plans. She had retreated a little way up the bank, and was busily engaged in cutting herself a stick from a bunch of willow saplings that grew there. When she had done this, and not before, she followed the example of the other two, pushing her socks into her shoes and tying the laces of these together, which done she slung them triumphantly from the fork which she had left at the top of her stick, and followed them down into the water.

It was not at all deep—seldom up to their knees, indeed—and the bed of the stream was made of such firm gravelly sand that walking was extremely easy. This was fortunate, for in spite of the sunshine outside either end of the tunnel, it seemed absolutely dark before even they reached the middle, being indeed almost a quarter of a mile in length.

"This *is* exciting!" remarked Barbara, and her voice boomed eerily along the stone arch. "We always wished that we could find a cave in the wood."

"What a pity it doesn't turn a few corners," said Joanna, "then it would be quite dark, and much more exciting. Then we could make a little boat and go sailing away down the underground river—into the Unknown, just like in Allan Quatermain."

"There is one like that which runs under part of Oxford," said Diana. "I was taken through it years ago. It's much smaller than this, only a great deal longer, and all twisty and windy—you have to go through it in a canoe, because a punt won't fit round the corners."

"I wish we had a canoe here—we could go right up the Waingunga for miles and miles, and down the other way to the place quite near the lake, where the stream goes under those willow trees," said Joanna.

"What's going to happen now when we get to the other side?" asked Diana. "Is there another wood, or what?"

"I don't know at all," said Joanna. "We've been along the road beyond the Wood—but that's miles and miles away, and the Wood comes down to it in a steep slope, and there's a thorn hedge about twenty feet high and so thick that you can't see anything through it at all—even in the winter."

"We must look at it on the Ordnance Map when we get in," suggested Barbara.

"That's no good," said Joanna. "I've looked, and it just says 'Wood Arnold Park' all over!"

"Look here," suggested Diana, "if it's such an unknown wood, couldn't we make a map of our own, and fill in each bit as we explore it?"

"That's a good idea," agreed Joanna, "only if no one has been in it before, there won't be any paths, which means there'll be nothing to put on the map except the stream and the edge of the wood."

By this time they were getting near to the other side of the bank, and a feeling of excitement began to grow on each of them, silencing all conversation. A few more steps, and they were out of the tunnel and in the sunshine again, standing in a shallow stream with low banks grown closely to the edge with willow and elder. The channel stretched in front of them for a little way under its green arch of leaves, and then disappeared round a slight bend fifty yards or so ahead of them. They came out under a stone archway exactly like that on the other side of the embankment, and as on the other side the thick thorn bushes and brambles came right down to the edge of it.

Barbara, by virtue of her stick, was leading the way: "There's no sign of a path up the bank," she said in a hushed voice that was almost a whisper, "and I don't think we could get through that undergrowth even if we tried; so I think the right way must be straight along the stream." And without waiting for a reply, on she went, walking quite fast, for the water was as clear as ever and the bottom as flat and as pleasant to walk on.

"At least we can't get lost if we follow the stream," said Diana, "but don't you think it would be more exciting if we got out and pushed through the bushes?"

"Let's keep on a bit longer," suggested Barbara. "I'm sure we shall find a path or something in a minute. I mean—the person we heard singing must have come some proper way, and would never have pushed through all that undergrowth."

Diana said nothing, but she looked as if she wanted to say a great deal: only, somehow, there was just the slightest feeling about this new Wood as if it were a little strange and out of the ordinary—as Joanna remarked a little later, it felt as if one could believe anything while one was in that Wood.

Round the bend in the stream went Barbara, and then stopped suddenly—so suddenly that Diana bumped into her.

"What's the matter?" asked Joanna splashing quickly up to them.

"Look!" whispered Barbara.

There before them was an open glade sloping gently down to the very edge of the stream. Two old stone steps led up out of the water, and from them ran a little path winding away up the bank. The branches of tall trees laced thinly overhead, and all the glade was bright, though still shady.

Barbara led the way up the steps and along the path, the others follow-

ing her in complete silence. Up the bank it went, twisting and turning between the trunks of trees, occasionally between the moss-covered mounds where great trees had once been.

Presently Barbara stopped at a place where the path went between two trees about three feet apart. She stepped off to one side, and sat down with her back against one of the trees, while she put on her socks and shoes again. The other two followed her example, and when this was done, Diana said in a low voice:

"What shall we do now?"

"Follow the path?" suggested Joanna: "we might get lost if we just wandered off—it's such a big wood. Look over there, can you see how far it goes?"

They were a little way up a slope, and there was hardly any undergrowth below them, so it was possible to see for quite a long way up the stream. The wood extended as far as they could see along the bank, sloping gradually away into the distance; the trees were tall and fairly far apart, and round about them grew high green ferns and bracken, with little bare patches of grass or moss, covered with marsh marigolds and bluebells.

"Look!" exclaimed Barbara suddenly and excitedly. She had been sitting against the tree, and had turned so that it was beside her rather than behind her. Now she was pointing to something carved on the bark at about two feet above the ground. The others crowded round.

"It's quite freshly carved!" said Diana.

"Yes, but whatever does it mean?" asked Joanna. "Those must be letters, but they're not English ones, surely?"

"They're not Greek, either!" said Diana in a tone of rather self-conscious superiority. Neither of the others contradicted her. But Barbara hauled a notebook out of her pocket, found a pencil, after another struggle, and settled herself carefully to copy down the mysterious letters. And this is what she wrote, with some difficulty and a lot of rubbing out:

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"It *can't* be the person we heard singing!" exclaimed Joanna suddenly.

"Why not?" asked Diana.

"Because the words of the song were in perfectly good English." Barbara nodded slowly: not that she could remember a single one of those words (nor could Joanna, for that matter), but she was equally certain that she had understood the song perfectly.

"It's all very mysterious!" said Diana, shaking her head wisely.

"Come on!" exclaimed Barbara, jumping up suddenly. "It must be getting late already. Let's go up this path as quickly as possible and see if we can find where it goes!"

She pushed the notebook back into her pocket, seized her stick, and set off along the path up the gentle slope behind them, the others following her willingly enough.

The path curved up the hill and through the trees, but it did not seem to lead anywhere in particular.

"We must be going parallel to the stream," remarked Barbara after a while.

"Of course we aren't!" exclaimed Diana. "We are going directly away from it, up the hill and over the top!"

"The stream is over there!" said Joanna, pointing.

"Nonsense!" said Barbara. "The embankment is in that direction."

"What embankment?" asked Diana blankly. "The one we came under is exactly behind us!"

Nobody felt inclined to argue, because each was so certain that she was right, that it didn't seem worth it.

"We'd better go back," Joanna said at last. "There's something funny about this Wood."

No one said anything to this, but they followed Joanna back along the path quite willingly.

It was getting dark now, rather quickly and unpleasantly.

"There's going to be a thunderstorm!" said Diana. "Hurry up, Jo, and we shall reach the tunnel in time to shelter there."

Almost running, they came round a corner of the path and found themselves at the top of the glade by the steam where they had found the mysterious writing on the tree.

"I told you it was this direction!" cried Joanna triumphantly.

"You said nothing of the sort!" exclaimed Barbara indignantly. "You said it was right over there—the way we've just come."

But before more argument or mystification could ensue the first big drops of rain came pattering through the leaves, and the three children raced down to the stone steps by the stream edge, pulled shoes and socks hastily off, and stepping into the water waded down to the tunnel arch as fast as they could, reaching it just as the storm burst over them with a deluge of rain.

There was hardly any thunder, but the rain fell heavily for a long time, though gradually the sky became lighter and lighter.

The three children said very little as they stood there in the stream a foot or two down the tunnel.

"It's going to stop," said Diana at last. "There's a bright patch in the tiny bit of sky I can see from here. You see! the sun is shining right up the stream—oh my gracious, look!"

They followed the direction of her hand, and gazed down the green archway of the stream. As the sunbeam grew and spread it lit up the bank which they could see exactly opposite them, where the stream curved out of sight.

"There's someone there!" whispered Diana.

Slowly as the bright beam grew, shining straight down through the branches, a figure seemed to grow into being with it, a figure hardly distinguishable from the silver-grey of the tall willow stems on the bank.

For a moment, when the sunbeam was at its brightest, they all saw, or seemed to see, a tall and lovely girl standing there quite still. She wore a long dress that was either grey or light green, with the skirt gathered up over her arm, showing her feet and legs, which seemed to be encased in tight-fitting brown chamois leather boots. Around her waist was a broad brown belt, studded with gold or silver, and even at that distance everyone could see that a knife hung from it. Her hair, which was thick, and of a golden-brown colour, fell to her shoulders, and was held back from her face by a narrow brown band, from the centre of which something flashed brightly. Her face was turned three parts towards them, and the sunbeam shone full upon it, yet none of the three who saw her could quite describe that face. It was very calm, a little sad, and yet the lips smiled pleasantly, and the eyes shone with a frank openness that suggested a happy, eager disposition. But deep in them (though the watchers never knew how they could see all this at such a distance) dwelt a suggestion of mystery, of knowledge such as no one so young in seeming could have possessed, a haunting memory of a long grief that had yet, through all the years, never quite swallowed up the hope that was to end it. In spite of this, however, she seemed very young, eighteen or twenty perhaps, but hardly any more.

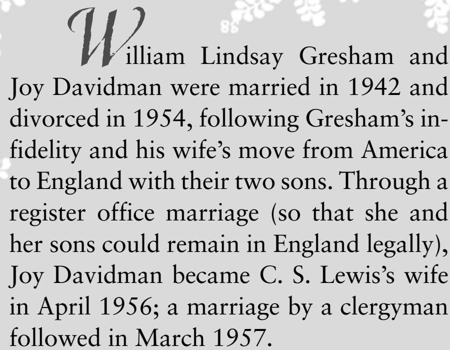
For a long, breathless moment they saw her standing there absolutely motionless; then as the sunbeam faded, so she seemed to fade, merging into the background of light grey stem and silvery-green leaves, fading into it and yet never moving at all, until all was grey again, and she had gone absolutely.

A moment passed, and then the sun shone out suddenly and brightly down the embankment over the tunnel entrance, the clouds began to roll back and melt away, and soon all they could see of the stream was lit by the clear golden light of the evening sun. But of the girl on the bank there was no sign, though they had never for a moment taken their eyes from the place where she had stood only a few minutes before.

Silently they went back through the tunnel, and with scarcely a word put on their shoes again and hastened along the well-known paths to the house.

The Dream Dust Factory

by William Lindsay Gresham



William Lindsay Gresham and Joy Davidman were married in 1942 and divorced in 1954, following Gresham's infidelity and his wife's move from America to England with their two sons. Through a register office marriage (so that she and her sons could remain in England legally), Joy Davidman became C. S. Lewis's wife in April 1956; a marriage by a clergyman followed in March 1957.

Lewis is known to have exchanged some letters with his wife's ex-husband, and after her death in 1960, Gresham went to England to see Lewis and his sons. Gresham brought as a gift a recently published book by his friend Martin Gardner, *The Annotated Alice,* and asked Lewis on behalf of Gardner whether he had ever read any of the Oz books by L. Frank Baum. (Lewis had not.)

Gresham was well known for his first novel, *Nightmare Alley* (1946), which was made into a film the following year. He published several other books and a number of essays and short stories. "The

Dream Dust Factory" was originally published in *The Atlantic Monthly* for October 1947. It was reprinted in the December 1953 issue of *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction,* a magazine Lewis read and to which, beginning in 1956, he contributed poems and short stories. (We know that Lewis read the December 1953 issue in particular because in "Unreal Estates"—a transcription of a discussion among Lewis, Kingsley Amis, and Brian Aldiss—Lewis described without naming a story by Zenna Henderson, "Food to All Flesh," which at that time had only been published in that specific issue.) The style of Gresham's tale is very different from anything by Lewis, but the content, the dream-flight of a prisoner, is more Lewisian, and the book that the main character had read so often provides a surprising sympathetic connection with Lewis.

Gresham had one further unexpected association with a member of the Inklings: When Charles Williams's novels were being published for the first time in the United States, Gresham contributed the introduction to *The Greater Trumps* (New York: Pellegrini & Cudahy, 1950).

I don't know if you ever tried to crawl through a drainpipe sixteen inches square but if you never did, don't try it. Unless you're built slim like me. I had to take the chance because that pipe was the only way out of Coulterville Pen, and you see I had to get out or beat my brains against the bars like a bluejay I caught when I was a kid.

I started a tunnel under the floor of the paint shack and it took me six months before I got down twelve feet to the main pipe of the old prison building. I broke into it with a piece of iron sawed from a cot. Then I waited for a rainy day. If you're thinking about a crush-out, you want to wait for fog but rain will do. After the noon mess I started. With luck they wouldn't miss me before the count at quitting time.

There was some two hundred feet of pipe between me and Ross Creek and I wasn't sure there wouldn't be a grating over the pipe mouth. I had to take that chance.

In the dark I inched my way along, rapping the metal bar against the clammy sides of the pipe to scare any water snakes that might have holed up in there. Once something wriggled out from under my hand and I started to laugh and the laughter came booming and shrieking back at me in a sort of echo.

Then I got to something I didn't know about—an elbow in the pipe. I stopped dragging myself along and began to cry. You see, there was no way back and if I got stuck I didn't think Warden Duffy would rip up half the prison yard just to keep me from starving to death in there. I figured he would just fill in the tunnel, when he found it, and fix up the books somehow to account for another inmate being dead.

Lying there, half inside the elbow, I could feel the muck squash under my chest. My eyes were burning with the slime, and the tears washed them clean and that was one on my side. You get to be grateful for little things like that.

I began to cuss my old man and think about my mother. He was my stepfather and I guess he meant all right but he had a high temper. It came back to me like a picture on a movie screen—Ma was in bed with a headache. She always had to have the blinds pulled down because the light hurt her. I was sitting in the kitchen reading. I was a big kid, going on seventeen. I'd done my chores so the old man hadn't no real kick coming; he just come in feeling mean.

The book I was reading was one of Ma's, called *Phantastes*, by a fellow named MacDonald. It was an old book with a green cover and the name in gold letters with a lot of curlicues. The back was pretty near off it, Ma and me had read it so much.

First thing I knew the book was snatched away from me and I saw the old man standing there. He was breathing hard through his nose. He didn't say a word, just took the book and with his other hand grabbed for the stove plate lifter.

I got burned some, reaching into the stove before he yanked me out and began giving me the open hand, first one side of my face and then the other. I

was built light and I couldn't budge him. He cut my lip. It didn't amount to nothing but I knew right then and there what I was going to do.

That night late Ma came into my room, not making any noise. I made believe I was asleep. She bent down and kissed me and then she smoothed back my hair and I wanted to jump up and grab a hold of her but I didn't. I was planning to cut out of there, you see, and I knew if she talked to me I would never make it.

I waited until both of them were asleep and then I didn't leave no note or anything. I had a valentine some girl from school had stuck in our mailbox and I left it under my pillow where Ma would find it in the morning and then I was off. The sky had never seemed so full of stars and them so far away.

I heard a freight whistle up the line and I headed for it, cutting across fields in the dark and snagging my pants on barbed wire plenty but I didn't care. I had been on the go ever since—until I landed in Coulterville Pen.

When I stopped dreaming and had got some of my wind back I reached ahead of me in the dark and felt around as far as I could and then I found a ridge where the elbow fitted on to the pipe. I grabbed that little rim with my fingers and somehow, by digging with my toes to push from behind, I managed to worm my way through the elbow. And there, ahead of me, was a little gray spot of light.

I had to hurry because I knew one of the screws or a fink would find that tunnel under the paint shack and they'd have the prison siren blowing its brains out in no time. I inched along, the spot of light getting bigger all the time and my ears stopped ringing because the air was getting better, the closer I got to the pipe mouth.

Finally I reached out and grabbed the edges and pulled myself right out into the creek. It was muddy and roaring with the spring rains. I lay there in the shallows for a minute, letting the icy water wash the muck off me. Then somebody spoke from the bank over my head.

"Don't try to swim for it. We've got a launch out there waiting to pick you up." It was Warden Duffy's voice. "Wash that slime off you and then turn and face me. Drop that iron bar."

And that was that. I was so tired I hardly cared. There had been an old blueprint kicking around the prison population of that stir for years. It had been stolen from the record room probably before I was born. Nobody had ever tried a crush-out through that drain, though, and now nobody would ever get another chance. That was all I thought about while they were taking me back.

I was marched down into the "hole" under the old prison and thrown into a cell. For a long time nobody showed up at all. No food and no water. The floor was studded with rivets and I couldn't sleep more than a few minutes at a time.

When they finally came for me it was Duffy and a couple of big screws who worked in the solitary block. Duffy started trying to find out where I had learned the layout of the drains and I had kind of a hard time not telling him. In the end they locked me up again and went away.

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I began trying to dope out another way of beating the stir but I couldn't put my mind to it. My mouth was dry and I kept slipping into all kinds of crazy dreams for a while. It felt like they had turned on the heat down there and then suddenly it was ice-cold and I was shivering so I could hear my teeth rattle. Every now and then I would get a flash of memory—things that had happened to me long ago—and one kept coming back and back as if it was trying to tell me something.

It was the picture of a little valley I had discovered when I was a kid, a couple of ridges beyond our farm. I called it Happy Valley because when I first found it, it was the spring of the year with the trees all slow green and the crocuses coming up golden under them where there had once been a garden. It seemed like nobody could ever be anything but happy there.

It was a great place to run off to when things got kind of steamed up at home. I went back to it year after year. In winter you would think the whole world had been shut out, like as if a big cold frame had been dropped over the valley, when the sky was pressing down gray and close with more snow coming and it was so still you could hear your own heart working. Once I flushed a partridge there and the boom it made, shooting up out of the snow, sounded as loud as a cannon.

Well, a picture of this valley began coming back to me and I tried to hold on to it. After a while I didn't feel the rivets any more. "This is pretty good," I said to myself. "I'll just camp here for a while in the valley." And it worked fine for what I judged was a night and part of the next day.

Sometimes it was winter in the valley and sometimes it was summer. Then I let the year roll over it, quiet and slow, and watched the leaves come

out and the grass get high and then the sky got a deeper blue and the leaves turned and the valley was all gold and red with the fall of the year.

As I watched it, the first snow came and then more until it was all soft white and nothing breathing or moving except maybe an owl, out hunting when the night was settling down.

The next time they came for me and started asking questions about that drainpipe layout I was ready for them. I was determined to hang on to the valley as long as I could. They started to work me over and I hung on tight to the valley. I got so I could crawl right out of my skin and slide into one grass blade, standing there in the early summer light. I don't know how to tell it any better than that, what I did.

I could feel the strap fetch me a lick across my shoulders and I could feel something go off in the back of my head like a firecracker but there I was, safe and sound, inside the grass blade. It always had to be something little.

Once I slipped out of the grass and then it was tough for a while; I lost the valley and had nothing but the table top. When I lifted my head I saw that my lip had been bleeding in a little puddle. I had bit it without knowing.

I hoped they'd get tired soon and put me back into the cell because I didn't want to rat on the fellow who had given me that blueprint.

When they did get tired and I was safe back in the cell I just curled up and fell asleep. After that I got so I could shift in my sleep and give the rivets a fresh place to work on without waking up much.

The warden threatened to keep me down in the hole for the rest of my life but I stayed clammed up and in the end they took me out and gave me a hot shower and a shave and issued me clothes and I was taken over to Cell Block 9 which is the solitary block where they keep all the hard cases—the guys that get caught with shivs in their shoes and the guys that start fights. This was all right with me because I wasn't in any shape to work then any how and I didn't mind not having mail privileges—Ma was dead a few years back; nobody ever wrote to me except a couple of girls I had met in lunchrooms and that kind always get married and quit writing anyhow.

3

The valley kept me busy a long time. But at last it sort of wore out and I began to get scared again until I thought of a pet bluejay I used to have. Not the one

that beat his brains out but another one. This fellow I caught when he was young and had fallen out of his nest. I kept him out in the barn and used to feed him scraps. He tamed up nice and would ride around on my shoulder and I called him Smarty because he was an awful sassy customer and used to talk back to me a lot while I petted him. In the end a cat caught him. She come bringing him into the house, proud as could be. But Ma took Smarty away from her and the two of us buried him out under an apple tree. Ma said, "He'll always be here, son. He's part of the tree, now. When the blossoms come out next spring you come out here and listen and I'll bet you'll hear him scolding away as the wind goes by." And that's the way it was, too.

So now I began to think about Smarty and it was just like the cat hadn't got him at all. I could sit on my bunk and make believe I had him with me, perched on my shoulder, and then I would send the make-believe down into my fingers until I could feel the soft feathers of his back. I recalled the way he'd stretch out one wing and fix his feathers with his beak and then hop down and look at me, first with one eye and then with the other. The way I saw him now his feathers were brighter blue than they had been for real. He would hop all around the cell and flutter between the bars and I could lean against them and see him flying back and forth and roosting on the bars of the windows across the cell block. Then I'd whistle real soft and he'd come back to me.

About that time Dreamy O'Donnell, an old trusty, was given a job helping out in the office where they keep the records of fellows that go stir-simple. One day the doctor sent for me and the screws took me to the office and the doc asked me a lot of questions. I wasn't sassy or anything but I kept thinking about the bluejay and smiling to myself because I could see him sitting on my shoulder, giving little soft pecks at my ear, and they couldn't.

Once when the doc was called to the phone the old man whispered to me, "Nice going, kid. You rode out the storm in fine shape. You're regular."

I just smiled at him. It seemed a long time ago—that business with the pipe and me getting the shellacking. It was O'Donnell that gave me the blueprint, you see—he was too old and worn out to use it himself. But I hadn't ratted on him.

The old man was still whispering out of the side of his mouth, " . . . says you're over the line. But I told him any kid that could go through that pipe was a long way from being stir bugs."

"I've got a bluejay," I told him, out of the side of my mouth. "He rides on my shoulder. Nobody can see him excepting me."

O'Donnell's face lit up. "No kidding! Say, kid, you've found it all by yourself—the only real way out of this stir. I gave up the crush-out ideas years ago. What you've been working is what cons call the Dream Dust Factory. Ain't nothing you can't have in stir, son, if you want it bad enough. You build it out of Dream Dust, inside your head. Only there's one thing you mustn't never make out of it . . ."

The doc came hustling back right then and I didn't learn what the old man was going to tell me only I didn't care much. I wanted to get back to my cell.

Outside of the windows across the cell block the summer days were getting shorter. The light on the wall across the courtyard looked different and the cell block smelled like autumn—fresh-painted steampipes.

In Cell Block 9 they didn't allow us magazines or papers but I didn't need any. I could see all the pictures I wanted right inside my head—built out of Dream Dust, like the old guy said.

After a while I got tired of the bluejay; he was always around and always pestering me to pet him. He would wake me up in the morning, pecking gently at the blanket over my face, and I would push him away and he would fly up to the cell bars and scold me for not getting up. I decided to fade him out but it took a long time until he was really gone.

4

Before I knew it the winter was over and the air coming through the windows across the block smelled like spring. That's the toughest time in stir—when you can smell the spring. I began remembering girls I'd met on the road; not real road sisters, because they are pretty tough, but girls on farms where I had dinged the back door for a meal, and girls in hash joints. There was one girl I'd been so stuck on I got a job washing dishes for a couple of weeks but she started going out with a fellow who had a car.

But remembering her was what really started me working the Dream Dust Factory for fair. I wondered then why I had never thought of this one before. Maybe it was because I was scared of it—scared it wouldn't work and then I would be up the creek with nothing to hang on to.

I began building out of Dream Dust, over and over, shaping it up inside my head and trying to see what I had made. It got clearer and brighter and I could see it fine with my eyes shut but when I opened them it faded away. I

didn't really think it could happen to me and to work the Dream Dust Factory you've got to believe it can't fail.

Nights were the noisiest time in Cell Block 9 because that part of the prison population are restless sleepers, always having dreams and cussing or waking up yelling and bringing the night shift screw down to tell them to shut up.

But one night I was lying there in the dark, listening to the fellow in the next cell coughing. I was just dropping off when I heard a voice, clear as could be. It was a girl's voice, right down close to me, speaking low. I couldn't make out the words very clear, just part of one sentence: " . . . come to you. Don't worry." And with that I waited to see if there was any more. There wasn't but I turned over and went to sleep happy.

The first time I saw her was at night. There's something about night that makes it easier. She was just a shadow—that first time—between me and the bars of the cell front. I saw her first with my eyes shut and then when I opened them, real, real slow, I could see her shadow. She seemed to be wearing a pair of old denim pants, just like prison pants, but she had them rolled up above her knees and she had on a man's shirt that was too big for her, with the sleeves rolled up, and there in the dark I could only see her shadow but I thought her bare arms, as she stood with her hands in her pockets, were about the sweetest sight I ever saw in my life. Her hair was long; it hung to her shoulders, and even though I couldn't make out her face I knew she wasn't smiling. The tears started slipping out and down my face. She had come to me at last.

The next time I opened my eyes she was fading; I could see the bars through her. I knew that the Dream Dust takes a lot of time, but time was something I had. I had all the time in the world.

It's funny, in stir, how the days crawl by so slow and yet the months seem to go sailing over your head if you don't count them. I gave up thinking about the seasons outside. Where I was now it was mostly summer and out of Dream Dust I made trees—big ones, growing close, with their leaves meeting overhead; and in the dim light there was a little creek flowing over stones and in the willows were blackbirds nesting—there and in the rushes.

Sitting beside the stream on a smooth flat rock, I brought her back. I could hear the water over the stones, chuckling to itself. The wind came through, stirring the willows, and there, with my eyes wide open, I found the one I waited for. She parted the branches and stepped out on the rock and I saw her face, just as clear as could be.

She had a wide mouth that was red without having a lot of paint on it and her eyes were brown, under the golden hair. She looked at me, smiling to herself, waiting for me to speak to her. I reached up and took her by the hand and drew her down on the rock beside me; her hand was warm and sweet and I held it in mine. Then I leaned over and her lips were firm and real. She had a modest way of kissing that went through me so I wanted to cry, and yet she didn't draw away from me, either.

"What's your name?" I whispered to her and she put her lips close to my ear and whispered back, "Vida."

It wasn't like I had given her a name. She told it to me all by herself, and I knew that this was the Dream Dust all the way. I had a little Mex girl once down in El Paso who taught me some Spanish but all I remembered of it now was that "Vida" means "life."

Sometimes we sat on the rock under the willows, and sometimes it was a wide, white beach with the sun beating down and a cool wind sliding over us. Vida lay with her head on my arm, her eyes closed, feeling the sun warm us when the wind quit blowing every now and then. Her bathing suit was made of some kind of cloth I had never seen for real—the colors in it shifted and changed like in a sunset. She would turn and lean over me and let her hair fall down on each side of my face and it was like a little room with the light coming through it as she kissed me.

Whenever something would pull at me and bring me back to the cell in Block 9 I kept my temper and waited until I could get back to her and as time went on, getting back to her got easier and easier.

When the lights in the block went out at night she was always there; she would slip under the blankets and put her arms around me; feeling her hands on my back and shoulders was like satisfying a great hunger, somehow. And when I would wake up during the night she was still there, breathing slow and deep as she slept, and kissing her took a little while to wake her but then she would kiss back and maybe whisper something to me and it was all in the cell. But it was fine.

I could see the bars, dim in the light that filtered in from the windows across the way; I could feel the blankets that covered us, but Vida was there with me and I didn't ask for any more. She was life and I had found her and I never doubted that she would stick by me.

Sometimes when we couldn't sleep I'd change the cell with Dream Dust and it would be a boat out alone in the middle of a big river, all quiet under a

million stars, and the new moon riding along with us, and a soft wind over the water. It was always warm on the river and we would drop over the side and swim a little ways, Vida's hair darkening in the starlight when it was wet. I would swim after her and she would turn, treading water until I got close. Then we would be together and let the water close over our heads and we would kiss in the darkness, with the water all around us, until we had to let go and swim up for air.

In the boat were towels and dry clothes and Vida would press the water from her hair and tie one of the little towels around her head like a turban and we would drift again with the same blanket around us, warm and close and feeling the touch of the night wind cool on our lips after we had kissed and Vida's eyes were big and dark in the light of the new moon and all the summer stars. We would fall asleep in the boat, and when morning came I would hear the guard's whistle and kiss Vida and she would step out of the bunk and stand there, making a face toward the end of the block where the screw had sounded his whistle, and then she would blow me a kiss and walk past the head of the bunk. When I turned she would be gone. Then I pulled on my clothes, made up the bunk, and waited for the first formation and breakfast.

Once the fellow who marched on my right in the file came down sick and there was a blank file beside me as we marched to the mess hall. But halfway to it I felt someone next to me and there she was. She had on prison denims that were cut to fit her and her hair was caught up under her cap. She slid her hand into mine and I closed mine on her fingers, holding my hand so nobody would notice anything. That morning she sat beside me at the table and whispered to me all during breakfast, mostly little jokes about the screws up on the balcony of the mess hall. I couldn't keep from laughing a couple of times, quietly, to myself.

5

And then, in the middle of all this—when I had everything a man could want in this world—I get sent for one morning to come to the warden's office. I thought he was still after that blueprint of the drains and I smiled to myself because if they took me down into the tank and worked me over I knew Vida

would be there, holding my face between her hands while I got my licking, and I knew it would be all right.

The warden started to say something but I didn't pay much attention. I had better things to think about and I just smiled a little and then suddenly his voice cut through to me:—

" . . . this other fellow was picked up, pulling a gas station heist with the same *modus operandi* used in the case for which you were convicted. The resemblance is one of the most uncanny things I have ever seen . . ."

It didn't seem very important to me and I tried not to listen but he put two cards in front of me and I saw that they both had pictures of me. Only the fingerprints were different.

The room cleared and I picked up the cards and looked at them again. The warden went on, " . . . you'll probably sue the state for false arrest and imprisonment. If you're smart, you won't hold any grudges toward this institution or its administration. Let bygones be bygones. You'll get a good job out of it; I'll see to that. You're a bright lad. You'll be okay. No hard feelings, eh?"

I couldn't quite figure it. They gave me a suit and shoes and a full outfit, even a tie and an overcoat. It was spring and still cold in the evenings. The screws chipped in and gave me some dough and the warden doubled it. But it was all sour. Guys went about asking me questions and in the office of the prison psychiatrist the doc filled out a lot of forms, with Dreamy O'Donnell grinning over his shoulder at me. Then I was on the platform of a railroad station, holding a ticket. I didn't want to be there. I began to cry.

A train came along and I got on it and the screw told me it didn't go where this ticket said I was going which was the town where the job was. Only the screw wasn't a screw, he was the conductor.

I got off again and while I was waiting I walked out of the station and saw a bus and I got on it and paid the driver. But I didn't know where it was going. I wanted Vida to hurry back and tell me where we were, but she didn't come.

I got off the bus again and we were in a town and I saw a hotel and went in and they wanted me to pay in advance. It was all right by me. The clerk came running after me and handed me some change; I stuck it into my coat pocket without bothering to count it, I was in such a hurry to get to the room and be by myself. I started up the stairs, only the kid who had the key said we'd better take the elevator.

I wanted to be by myself and find Vida and then everything would be swell.

When I got in the room I drew down the shades so it would be nice and dark and peeled off my clothes and got into the bed, pulling up the sheet with blankets over it until it covered my face. Then I whispered to her, "Vida, Vida. Come on, darling." But nothing happened. I waited, listening to a big clock somewhere knock off the hours.

I stayed there in the bed until it was dark outside and then I got dressed and went out, looking at the lights in the stores. Once I thought I saw her but it was just one of these figures of girls they have in store windows, wearing a playsuit something like one I'd seen on Vida once. It wasn't Vida, even though I stood and stared at it, trying to throw enough Dream Dust around it to make it come alive. I knew if she came alive she could slip through the glass and come to me. Only I couldn't work it at all this time. I thought maybe it was because I was hungry.

I had coffee with cream and lots of sugar and then I had some more and the girl behind the counter kidded with me a little but I answered her with only half my mind. The rest was worrying about Vida and how I would find my way back to her.

6

I had this money they had given me and I lived on it until it was gone and then I found myself walking toward the freight yards. A string of empties was pulling out and I found a refrigerator car. My arms were weak, so weak I could hardly make the top. It wasn't sealed and I crawled down inside, hoping Vida might be in there. But she wasn't. After a lot of backing and jolting we were some place else and I climbed out and cut down a country road and hit a back door for a meal. I don't know what it was I ate or who gave it to me or whether I even thanked them for it.

But I looked around while I was heading toward the highway and I thought it looked familiar. It wasn't far from the old place—maybe fifty miles. Then I knew where I might find her—in Happy Valley. I started thumbing but nobody picked me up. And I couldn't walk much because my feet were soft and the shoes had begun to gall me.

There was a car parked in a side road; whoever left it there had forgotten to take the keys. I just wanted it for the short trip and I knew the state cops

would find it as soon as I left it. I didn't think whoever had left it needed it as much as I did right then. It was the first time in my life I'd ever swiped anything and I wasn't going to sell it, you see. I just needed it to get to Happy Valley and Vida.

I let the clutch out too fast and nearly piled it up against a telephone pole but I got it going at last and then I rammed my foot down on the gas and let her fly. I knew what I had to do and that was to get to Happy Valley before dark and wait there for the light to fade. Then, I kept telling myself, she would come to me. I prayed to her to come to me when the daylight was going and the valley shading over.

I stopped the car on the old timber road nearest the valley and set off straight up the side of the ridge, stopping to rest and get my breath every little while. I went as fast as I could, which wasn't very fast because I was out of condition. Finally I got to the top of the ridge.

The valley was gone.

That is, the Happy Valley I knew. It had been logged over; was nothing but stumps and spindly second growth. It looked dead and naked and I just stared at it for a long time. This was the end of the road, all right, because Vida would never come to me now, not in any place as empty and wide and ugly as this. I lay down and just about died. Only I didn't die. I just wanted to.

I went back to the car. The light was fading. But the night wasn't friendly any more. There was no place.

I thought I might as well take the car back again because I hadn't found Vida and it didn't matter now where I went once I took the car back, so I drove slow. There was a weight pressing on my shoulders and I felt like something was mashing me to death. I would start up and realize that I had driven a couple of miles in a dream, not remembering anything I had passed. I would find myself on the left-hand side of the road sometimes and wrench her over with a start.

I was almost there when I heard a siren behind me and I fed her the gas to try to get back in time—the state cops had spotted the license of the car and I wanted to get away from them. But they slid up alongside me. Then I saw the side road where the car had been and I turned left into it. Or I started to. That's all I remember.

There was a hospital and I was handcuffed to the bed. I heard talk—it seemed one of the cops who had been chasing me was dead in the same crash that knocked me out but I was too miserable to listen any more.

The jail wasn't like Coulterville. Besides, I had a broken collarbone. It

kept aching under the cast and then itching and I couldn't fix my mind on anything.

The court didn't seem real, or the lawyers, or the judge—nothing seemed real. The train trip was all a dream. Until I saw the big gate of Coulterville Pen and I felt better because this was the place I had found her first and I could remember better here even if I couldn't ever find her again.

I was mugged and printed all over again and this time I got a new number.

In the shower I slid my hand up the concrete wall and it felt old and familiar and I began to slip back into life again, only the old things were gone from inside me and it was just a stir now and dead-looking everywhere I turned.

I pulled on the denims and jacket and a screw took me into the office of the prison psychiatrist. There I sat, waiting on a bench. There was a clock on the wall and I watched its hand jerk in little jumps for the minutes, thinking about Vida and wanting her again, and I shut my eyes because I felt tears coming.

Something touched my hand. I didn't want to open my eyes and have them see me crying right there. But the next thing I knew was the soft touch of her hair. Then her lips on mine. She whispered, "Cry now, before they come back," her arms going around me and pulling my head over to her breast. She was kneeling on the bench, holding me, when I heard the door rattle. Vida stepped down and just stood there with her arm around me.

I didn't care any more if they saw me holding on to her, I needed her so.

It was the old trusty, Dreamy O'Donnell. I gave Vida a little hug with the old man looking square at us. Or at me.

His face was sharp and sad, in spite of the little smile that was always stamped around his mouth. He came over and put his hand on my shoulder and said out of the side of his mouth, "Cold winter coming outside, kid. Eh? Don't you worry, kid. Stir ain't the worst place in the world. Not for us. Eh, kid?"

I just smiled at him again and Vida reached up and kissed my ear. I kept my arm around her, not caring right then if the old man saw me or if the doctor saw me or if anybody saw me do it. I had her back again; that was the big thing.

O'Donnell watched me with his sad old eyes. Finally he said, "I tried to tip you off, kid. There's one thing you shouldn't never make out of Dream Dust—or you'll spend your life in stir."

The door was rattling again and I knew this time it would be the doctor

so I took my arm from around Vida and she strolled over to the window to wait for me.

O'Donnell stood looking at me for a moment and then he whispered out of the side of his mouth, "Well, kid, you're over the line now. I only hope she treats you right."

AUTHOR NOTES AND RECOMMENDED READING

As per the distinctions outlined in the introduction, these notes for further reading are centered on modern fantasy literature. They are also merely an introductory guide, rather than a thorough consideration of Lewis's reading in the genre. Many of Lewis's best comments about fantasy and science fiction can be found in Of This and Other Worlds *(1982), edited by Walter Hooper. Other valuable resources on this subject include the three volumes of his* Collected Letters *(2000–06),* Selected Literary Essays *(1969),* An Experiment in Criticism *(1961), and* Surprised by Joy: The Shape of My Early Life *(1956).*

Andersen, Hans Christian (1805–75)

Danish writer, best known for his fairy tales, originally published in four collections. There are many modern translations.

Anstey, F. (1856–1934) [pseudonym of Thomas Anstey Guthrie]

British writer. Lewis is known to have enjoyed his *Vice Versa: or, A Lesson to Fathers* (1882), *The Brass Bottle* (1900), and *In Brief Authority* (1915). In *Vice Versa,* a Mr. Bultitude is transformed into his son and vice versa. Lewis used the name Mr. Bultitude for the bear in *That Hideous Strength.*

Barfield, Owen (1898–1997)

British writer and solicitor. Barfield was one of Lewis's closest and lifelong friends. His output of fiction is small, but includes the fairy tale *The Silver Trumpet* (1925), and the humorous and philosophic depiction of a literary man's everyday life in a lawyer's office, *This Ever Diverse Pair* (1950). Some short stories are included in *A Barfield Sampler* (1993), edited by Jeanne Clayton Hunter and Thomas Kranidas. Lewis read the

manuscript of *The Silver Trumpet* in 1923, noting that in it Barfield "squirts out the most suggestive ideas, the loveliest pictures, and the raciest new coined words in wonderful succession. Nothing in its kind can be better imagined."

Blackwood, Algernon (1869–51)

British writer of mystical stories and novels. Lewis wrote favorably of *John Silence: Physician Extraordinary* (1908), *Jimbo: A Fantasy* (1909), *The Education of Uncle Paul* (1909), and *A Prisoner of Fairyland* (1913). He was disappointed in Blackwood's later books, noting that the author was turning from a "good romancer into a bad mystic."

Brandel, Marc (1919–94)

British-born novelist, and prolific writer for American television from the 1950s through the 1970s. Lewis commented favorably on his short story "Cast the First Shadow," published in *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction* for April 1955.

Buchan, John (1875–1940)

Scottish writer and politician. Lewis is known to have enjoyed Buchan's thriller *The Three Hostages* (1924), and around 1937 he wrote a fan letter to Buchan describing *Witch Wood* (1927) as a favorite.

Carroll, Lewis (1832–98) [pseudonym of Charles Lutwidge Dodgson]

British writer and mathematician, author of the children's classics *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and its sequel *Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There* (1871). Besides these, Lewis is known to have read (and to have quoted from) *The Hunting of the Snark* (1867) and *Sylvie and Bruno* (1889).

Chesterton, G[ilbert]. K[eith]. (1874–1936)

British writer and critic. Chesterton was a strikingly prolific writer of nonfiction, including many apologetic works. His novels with elements of fantasy include *The Napoleon of Notting Hill* (1904), *The Man Who Was Thursday* (1908), *The Ball and the Cross* (1909), and *Manalive* (1912). Of his fiction, for which Lewis recorded a general liking, some

parts of *The Ball and the Cross* clearly foreshadow the Objective Room in *That Hideous Strength*.

Clarke, Sir Arthur C[harles]. (b. 1917)

British writer. Lewis's correspondence and friendship with Clarke is documented in *From Narnia to a Space Odyssey: The War of Ideas Between Arthur C. Clarke and C. S. Lewis* (2003), edited by Ryder W. Miller. On Joy Davidman Gresham's recommendation, Lewis read *Childhood's End* (1953) and was "thoroughly bowled over. It is quite out of the range of the common space-and-time writers; away up near Lindsay's *Voyage to Arcturus* and Wells's *First Men in the Moon*."

Dickens, Charles (1812–70)

British writer and editor. Dickens played a major role in establishing the tradition of the Christmas ghost story, of which his novella *A Christmas Carol* (1843) is the most famous. In a 1954 letter, Lewis said, "the best Dickens seems to me to be the one I have read last! But in a cool hour I put *Bleak House* top for its sheer prodigality of invention." Of Dickens's many mainstream novels, Lewis is known to have read—in addition to *Bleak House* (1852–53)—*The Personal History of David Copperfield* (1849–50), *Great Expectations* (1861), *Little Dorrit* (1855–57), *The Life and Adventures of Martin Chuzzlewit* (1843–44), *The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby* (1838–39), *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1841), and *Our Mutual Friend* (1864–65). Lewis often made reference to Dickens in his letters.

Dunsany, Lord (1878–1957)

Anglo-Irish writer, dramatist, and poet. Several of Dunsany's earliest collections of short stories contain some of the very best fantasy stories in the English language. These collections include *The Gods of Pegana* (1905), *Time and the Gods* (1906), *The Sword of Welleran and Other Stories* (1908), *A Dreamer's Tales and Other Stories* (1910), *The Book of Wonder* (1912), *Fifty-one Tales* (1915), *Tales of Wonder* (1916; U.S. title *The Last Book of Wonder*), and *Tales of Three Hemispheres* (1919). Of Dunsany's novels, the best are *The King of Elfland's Daughter* (1924), *The Charwoman's Shadow* (1926), *The Blessing of Pan* (1927), and *The Curse of the Wise Woman* (1933). As early as 1916, Lewis expressed in-

terest in Dunsany's writings, particularly *Tales of Wonder.* In a letter from 1954 he noted that "Dunsany is a glorious writer in prose: try *The Charwoman's Shadow.*"

Eddison, E[ric]. R[ücker]. (1882–1945)

British writer and civil servant. Lewis encountered Eddison's first novel, *The Worm Ouroboros* (1922), in 1942, and soon wrote Eddison a letter of appreciation. Eddison replied and sent Lewis a copy of *Mistress of Mistresses* (1935). A correspondence developed, and Lewis hosted Eddison at a dinner party in Oxford on February 17, 1943. There Eddison met Tolkien, Charles Williams, and Lewis's brother, Warnie. Eddison read aloud the chapter "Seven Against the King" from *A Fish Dinner in Memison* (1941), then published only in the United States. He returned for a second gathering of the Inklings on June 8, 1944, reading a chapter from his work in progress *The Mezentian Gate,* which was eventually published posthumously in 1958, with a paragraph by Lewis in tribute to Eddison printed on the dust jacket.

Fouqué, Friedrich de la Motte (1777–1843)

German writer and cavalry officer. Fouqué was probably the most widely read of all Romantic authors in the nineteenth century. The international popularity of his historical novels was eclipsed only by the Waverley novels of Sir Walter Scott. Besides his classic *Undine* (1811), Lewis also read *Sintram and His Companions* (1815). Fouqué's other works include *Aslauga's Knight* (1810), the long novel *The Magic Ring* (1812), and *Thiodolf the Icelander* (1815).

Grahame, Kenneth (1859–1932)

British writer and banker. Besides his classic children's book *The Wind in the Willows* (1908), Grahame also wrote two classics of Edwardian childhood, *The Golden Age* (1895) and *Dream Days* (1898). The latter includes Grahame's famous fairy story "The Reluctant Dragon."

Green, Roger Lancelyn (1918–87)

British writer and prolific authority on children's books. Green wrote or edited a number of significant works on children's literature and various writers, including *Tellers of Tales* (1946), *Andrew Lang: A Critical Biog-*

raphy (1946), *The Story of Lewis Carroll* (1949), and *Fifty Years of Peter Pan* (1954). Green's own children's novels include *The Wonderful Stranger* (1950), *The Luck of the Lynns* (1952), *The Secret of Rusticoker* (1953), *The Theft of the Golden Cat* (1955), *Mystery at Mycenae* (1957), *The Land of the Lord High Tiger* (1958), and *The Luck of Troy* (1961). His retellings of traditional myths and legends were perhaps his most successful works. These include *King Arthur and His Knights of the Round Table* (1953), *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1956), *The Saga of Asgard* (1960; later retitled *Myths of the Norsemen*), and *Heroes of Greece and Troy* (1960). His short adult fantasy novel *From the World's End* (1946) was reprinted in 1971 in the Ballantine Adult Fantasy series, combined with a short novel by Edmund Cooper, under the collective title *Double Phoenix*.

Gresham, William Lindsay (1909–62)

American writer. Gresham is mostly known for his first novel, *Nightmare Alley* (1946). He was a frequent contributor to *Blue Book Magazine,* and his fantasy stories appeared in *Fantastic, The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction,* and *Satellite Science Fiction.*

Haggard, H[enry]. Rider (1856–1925)

British writer and civil servant. Though Haggard was a very prolific novelist, only his first two became world famous: *King Solomon's Mines* (1885) and *She: A History of Adventure* (1886), both of which have been filmed a number of times. Lewis's comments on Haggard can be found in his review of Morton N. Cohen's *Rider Haggard: His Life and Works* (1960), published in *Time and Tide,* September 3, 1960, and collected in *Of This and Other Worlds*. Lewis felt that Haggard had two major flaws: poor writing and intellectual defects. On the other hand, he also found Haggard an irresistible creator of myth: "Haggard is the text-book case of the mythopoeic gift pure and simple, isolated, as if for inspection, from nearly all those more specifically literary powers with which it so fortunately co-exists in, say, *The Ancient Mariner, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde,* or *The Lord of the Rings.*" In his letters, Lewis referred to many of Haggard's novels, but his praise for the myth of *She* in particular stands out. Some aspects of Ayesha's ambitions in *She* are found reflected in Jadis in *The Magician's Nephew.*

Hall, Charles F.

British writer. Nothing is known about Hall, save for the fact that in 1938 he contributed two promising stories to the magazine *Tales of Wonder,* and then disappeared.

Hodgson, William Hope (1877–1918)

British writer. Lewis read Hodgson's *The Night Land* (1912) probably around 1940; he enjoyed "the unforgettable sombre splendour of the images it presents" but found it was "disfigured by a sentimental and irrelevant erotic interest and by a foolish, and flat archaism of style." Lewis had one other book by Hodgson in his library, *The Luck of the Strong* (1916), a collection of sea stories, most of which are unexceptional. It seems that he never encountered Hodgson's masterpiece, *The House on the Borderland* (1908).

Kipling, Rudyard (1865–1936)

British writer and poet. Kipling's fantasies for children, including *The Jungle Book* (1894), *The Second Jungle Book* (1896), and *Just So Stories for Little Children* (1902), are rightly acclaimed as classics. Additional works of fiction by Kipling that Lewis is known to have read include *Plain Tales from the Hills* (1890), *The Light That Failed* (1890), *Kim* (1901), *Puck of Pook's Hill* (1906), *Rewards and Fairies* (1910), *Debits and Credits* (1926), and *Limits and Renewals* (1932). Lewis's love–hate relationship with Kipling's writings is discussed in his essay on Kipling, read to the English Association in the 1940s, and collected in *Selected Literary Essays*.

Knight, Damon (1922–2002)

American writer, editor and critic. Knight's story "To Serve Man," first published in the November 1950 issue of *Galaxy Science Fiction* and collected in *Far Out* (1961), provided a plot-point in chapter nine of *The Silver Chair*. "To Serve Man" was also televised in the series *The Twilight Zone*.

Lang, Andrew (1844–1912)

Scottish writer and editor. Lang is best remembered for editing (with significant assistance from his wife) twelve volumes of color fairy-tale books, ranging from *The Blue Fairy Book* (1889) through *The Lilac Fairy Book*

(1910). The series was immensely popular. Lang's own original fairy stories include *Prince Prigio* (1889) and *Prince Ricardo of Pantouflia* (1893), which make up *The Chronicles of Pantouflia*. Lewis thought these books "only fairly good." Lang was a special favorite of Lewis's friend Roger Lancelyn Green.

Lindsay, David (1876–1945)

British writer. Lewis read Lindsay's most imaginative work, *A Voyage to Arcturus* (1920), around 1936, on his friend Arthur Greeves's recommendation, calling it a "shattering, intolerable, and irresistible work." He later described it as "the real father of my planet books"—more so than the works of H. G. Wells—and said that "it was Lindsay who first gave me the idea that the 'scientifiction' appeal could be combined with the 'supernatural' appeal." Elements of Lindsay's novel can be seen in *Out of the Silent Planet*, *Perelandra,* and the fragment "The Dark Tower." Lewis himself noted that the idea of spiritual cannibalism in *The Screwtape Letters* "probably owes something to the horrible scenes of 'absorbing' in David Lindsay's neglected *Voyage to Arcturus*."

Some Lewis readers have found the Manichean elements of Lindsay's novel repellent and succumbing to Lewis's idea of the personal heresy, assumed the author to be equally unpleasant. Lindsay's novels, however, were philosophical explorations rather than tracts, and Lewis's readers would likely find other novels by Lindsay (which share a number of similarities with the novels of Charles Williams) more to their taste—particularly *The Haunted Woman* (1922) or *The Violet Apple,* published posthumously in 1976.

MacDonald, George (1824–1905)

Scottish writer and minister. MacDonald was a very prolific writer of fiction and nonfiction. His fantasies include his first novel *Phantastes: A Faerie Romance for Men and Women* (1858), *The Portent: A Story of the Inner Vision* (1864), and *Lilith* (1895), his last novel. His children's books include *At the Back of the North Wind* (1870), *The Princess and the Goblin* (1872), and its sequel, *The Princess and Curdie* (1883). MacDonald also wrote a large number of fairy stories that appeared in various collections. In 1947, Lewis edited *George MacDonald: An Anthology*, a volume of favorite passages culled from many of MacDonald's books, particularly from the three volumes of *Unspoken Sermons* (1867, 1886,

and 1889) and various novels including *Phantastes*, *Alec Forbes* (1882), *Annals of a Quiet Neighborhood* (1967), *Wilfrid Cumbermede* (1872), *Thomas Wingfold, Curate* (1876), *Sir Gibbie* (1879), *What's Mine's Mine* (1886), and *Lilith*.

Macgowan, John (1726–80)

Scottish writer and Particular Baptist minister. His *Infernal Conference: or, Dialogues of Devils* (1772) is a precursor to Lewis's *Screwtape Letters*.

Morris, William (1834–96)

British writer, artist, and poet. Morris is perhaps best remembered for his association with the Pre-Raphaelite movement and for the textiles, furniture, and wallpaper he designed. He was also especially interested in medieval literature, translating *Beowulf* and various Icelandic sagas. Though he wrote some fantasy short stories when young, he returned to fantasy in the last decade of his life, writing seven prose romances with medieval settings: *A Tale of the House of the Wolfings* (1889), *The Roots of the Mountain* (1890), *The Story of the Glittering Plain* (1891), *The Wood Beyond the World* (1894), *The Well at the World's End* (1896), *The Water of the Wondrous Isles* (1897), and *The Sundering Flood* (1897). Some of these were printed in gorgeous editions at Morris's own Kelmscott Press. Lewis was particularly fond of Morris and of the late prose romances. Lewis prized the twenty-four-volume set, edited by Morris's daughter May Morris, of *The Collected Works of William Morris* (1910–15) that he purchased in 1930. His essay on Morris, read to the Martlet Society in 1937, is collected in *Selected Literary Essays*.

Nesbit, E[dith]. (1858–1924)

British writer. Nesbit was an extremely popular author for children. Lewis wrote fondly of her first fantasy novel *The Five Children and It* (1902), which concerns a "Psammead" or sand-fairy, and its two sequels, *The Phoenix and the Carpet* (1904) and *The Story of the Amulet* (1906); and her stories about the Bastable children, *The Story of the Treasure Seekers* (1899), *The Wouldbegoods* (1902), and *The New Treasure Seekers* (1904). He considered his *Chronicles of Narnia* to have been written in the tradition of E. Nesbit. He even mentions the Bastables directly at the very beginning of *The Magician's Nephew,* setting it "long ago when

your grandfather was a child . . . and the Bastables were looking for treasure in the Lewisham Road."

Oliphant, Mrs. Margaret (1828–97)

British writer. Her supernatural tales are mostly collected in a series of *Stories of the Seen and the Unseen* (1889, enlarged 1902). One story, "The Land of Suspense," published in *Blackwood's Magazine* in January 1897, has been suggested as an influence on *The Great Divorce*.

Orwell, George (1903–50) [pseudonym of Eric Blair]

British writer. Lewis called his *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) "merely a flawed, interesting book" but felt that *Animal Farm: A Fairy Tale* (1945) was "a work of genius."

Peake, Mervyn (1911–68)

British writer, born in China. Lewis discovered Peake's novels *Titus Groan* (1946) and *Gormenghast* (1950) in early 1958, and wrote to the author expressing his pleasure. A related volume, *Titus Alone,* came out in 1959.

Potter, Beatrix (1866–1943)

British writer and illustrator. As a boy, Lewis "loved all" her books, particularly *The Tale of Squirrel Nutkin* (1903); this interest let him to create his own childhood world, which he called Animal-Land.

Scott, Sir Walter (1777–1832)

Scottish writer. Lewis was a lifelong reader of Scott. In a 1948 letter to the fifteen-year-old son of his friend, Lewis wrote: "What an excellent thing to have read nearly all of the Waverley novels. At your age I had only read the medieval ones (*Ivanhoe, Q. Durward, The Talisman* etc.) and didn't discover the more modern ones (*Waverley, G. Mannering, Antiquary* etc.) till I was at Oxford. I now like those in the second list better than those in the first, but I think both lots very good and never get tired of them. What I like is that Scott doesn't skimp things, but tells you how everyone was dressed and what they ate and drank and what sort of houses they lived in, and the weather." *Waverley, or 'Tis Sixty Years Since* (1814) was Scott's first novel, followed by what became known as the Waverley Novels, including *Guy Mannering, or The Astrologer* (1815), *The Antiquary* (1816), and others. His historical novels include *Ivanhoe*

(1820), *Quentin Durward* (1823), and *The Talisman* (1825). He wrote relatively few short stories, but his "Wandering Willie's Tale" from the novel *Redgauntlet* (1824) is a notable horror story. Lewis's 1956 paper on Scott is collected in his *Selected Literary Essays*.

Stapledon, Olaf (1888–1950)

British writer and philosopher. Lewis called Stapledon "a corking good writer" and read at least his first novel, *Last and First Men* (1930), and *Star Maker* (1937), though he regretted what his friend Roger Lancelyn Green called the " 'ghastly materialistic' tenacity of Stapledon's humans."

Stephens, James (1882–1950)

Irish writer. Stephens is primarily remembered for *The Crock of Gold* (1912), about an Old Philosopher and his problems with leprechauns and Irish gods. Lewis called it "a perfect flower," with "a beautiful sense of nature and open air" and "homely, Irish beauty."

Stevenson, Robert Louis (1850–94)

Scottish writer, author of the classic *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), which Lewis recommended as a catharsis. Lewis also enjoyed *The New Arabian Nights* (1882) and *Travels with a Donkey* (1879), which he called "a glorious book if you could omit the Modestine parts." He considered *The Lay Morals and Other Papers* (1911) "not only the best (non-fiction) book of his, but one of the best books by anyone I've ever read."

Thisted, Valdemar [Adolph] (1815–87)

Danish priest and writer. His only work of relevance to Lewis is *Breve fra Helvede* (1866), published under the pseudonym M. Rowel. The first English translation also appeared in 1866, followed by an edited German version in 1883. This modified German version was in turn translated into English (the translation is credited to "L.W.J.S.") and issued with a preface by George MacDonald in 1884. Titled *Letters from Hell* and with no author name given, this is the version Lewis read.

Tolkien, J[ohn]. R[onald]. R[euel]. (1892–1973)

British writer and academic. Lewis found great pleasure in Tolkien's writings, particularly *The Hobbit* (1937) and *The Lord of the Rings*

(1954–55), but he also read (or heard read aloud) many manuscripts by Tolkien that were only published posthumously. Of particular interest to Lewis readers are the long narrative poems in *The Lays of Beleriand* (1985) and the future history of an Inklings-type literary group, "The Notion Club Papers," published in *Sauron Defeated* (1992).

Wells, H[erbert]. G[eorge]. (1866–1946)

British writer. Lewis discovered Wells's scientific romances in his schoolboy days, including *The Time Machine* (1895), *The War of the Worlds* (1898), and *The First Men in the Moon* (1901). The latter is often considered an influence on *Out of the Silent Planet*. Some critics believe that the character Jules in *That Hideous Strength* is meant to be a caricature of Wells, but Lewis's friend Roger Lancelyn Green disputed the idea based on his own knowledge that Lewis felt no animosity toward Wells.

White, T[erence]. H[anbury]. (1906–64)

British writer, born in India. Lewis found *Mistress Masham's Repose* (1946) "excellent," noting that "the vulgarity wh[ich] spoiled *The Sword & the Stone* [1938] (like a pencil moustache scribbled on the lip of a great statue) seems to have disappeared."

Williams, Charles (1886–1945)

British writer. Williams wrote much nonfiction and poetry that Lewis would also have known, but his seven novels are *War in Heaven* (1930), *Many Dimensions* (1931), *The Place of the Lion* (1931), *The Greater Trumps* (1932), *Shadows of Ecstasy* (1933), *Descent into Hell* (1937), and *All Hallow's Eve* (1945). Of Williams's novels, Lewis wrote in 1936: "in the rare genre of 'theological shocker' which Chesterton (I think) invented, these are superb. On the first level they are exciting stories: beyond that, the philosophical implications are extremely interesting."