



CHILLIAD

by

Simon Otius

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op. 2²

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¹ Pronounced as if with a k, meaning 1000, or reign of 1000 years

² The second completed work of a projected three

Day One
1450-1839

being the first book

of

The Vouchsafe Decalogy³

³ Set of ten works

no...

To avoid giving the impression, – most particularly here at the very gatehouse of this, for the most part, linear narrating of what is believed a remarkable enough history, one that may, — making its slow but inexorable way to credit, — challenge the very tenets of traditional biography, – that words, – generally believed good-fellows, merry men nearly all, – are already right eager, – by building a labyrinth of intricate mystery, – to confound the unwary reader at the very onset : it will prove very useful if a few, simple, but important facts, concerning the family Troke, and their seat, are first supplied.

With the average age at death but 46 years, and with the 110 marriages covered by this history supplying an average of only three offspring, – of which males constitute fractionally less than half this number, – it may appear, with the application of only a little thought, that in the course of their final 17 generations, – averaging each almost 30 years, – Trokes have proven a people neither long-lived nor overly fertile; indeed, when it is further learned that since 1450, – such as happened before this date, — not regarded or accounted of but at such times as Trokes did suffer them, — requiring here no rescue by record, – there have occurred, in this devoted, for the most part happy, extraordinarily talented, close-knit family, 38 parricides⁴, 12 suicides, 31 deaths by accident, and at the very least 17 assassinations, – these by an enemy, known futurely, — because a defining instance : italicised, — as the *Inimicus*, — which means personal enemy, foe, or opponent, — who periodically sought, perhaps seek still, by thwarting their *quest*, — later to be explained, — to deny Trokes their purposed passage, – then it may come as something of a surprise to learn that in the 500 years preceding this time that is right here and now, there have lived, in whole, 325 persons, – this includes the 40 persons living, legitimately surstylized⁵ Troke, – every one of whom, – even characters enclitic⁶, – shall shortly be placed under the optic of words, – which it would do well to not forget suffer, as they

⁴ murders of near relatives

⁵ surnamed

⁶ not important, but performing a structural function

see pat⁷, from both micropsia⁸ and macropsia⁹, – for inspection.

But before this history properly commences,

first meeting illustrious Troke forebear Lemuel, then by swiftly enough following his solitary tenuous branch, – for 181 years represented by a succession of single transmitters, – coming to 1770, when with fortune and family numbers at last a little grown, the hitherto landless Trokes found relative safety within the walls of *Troke Manor*, – wherefrom will unroll 230 years of comfortable, at times even idyllic, but nevertheless statocratic¹⁰ residency, – and then less hastily to 1835, when incident will become sufficiently marvellous to deserve, — if with an ever decreasing degree of tellability, — a far closer accounting, – and so on to now,

a few word will be employed to describe the stately seat wherefrom this narrative has its source, wherein the main thrusts of events are centred, and wherewith lies the mainest matter with which words will have greatly to do : the family quest.

Though Troke Manor, – an excellent example of well-building satisfying the three principal conditions of years ago : convenience, firmness, and delite[✓], – may now appear a little untrimmed, unpainted, unpolished, and, if still in very excellent repair, a bit overall of an eye-sorrow, – also so large and hushed, as has no doubt been noted, as to appear utterly unpeopled, – it will be timely to supply a few, – condensed, edited, and, — to relieve the need for a yard of footnote to supply an inch of text, — therefore much edited, – extracts from a late diary of antecedent Samuel Mortimer Troke, (fl.¹¹ 1794-1864) a man to whom Nature, – concerning which it is to the present point to note the following : as there may later come to seem some discrepancy of meaning regarding certain words, — due to a lexicographical confusion suffered by the final *Vouchsafe* in 1943, as may or may not be one day

⁷ suited to the occasion

⁸ affection of the eye in which objects appear less than their real size

⁹ affection of the eye in which objects appear very large

¹⁰ government by the enemy

¹¹ *floruit*: he flourished

less far exactly explained, — the precaution of an occasional parenthetical clarification, such as this, will not be amiss : Nature, — believed by many imbued with a sense of consciousness, will, intelligence, awareness, and intent, in any amount one likes, — is here always taken to mean the immense assemblage of beings, various matter, — the properties of which were once believed to be : extent, divisibility, impenetrability, figure, and mobility, — infinite combinations, and diversified motions, that man about him beholds, — hath gifted the most shining endowments, but alas, — because, after all, she does not place perfection in her works without some bounds and restrictions, — not absolutely purely, not completely without alloy; as much in the immensity of existence, as in the far greater of his imagination, Samuel believed that man shined only in speech, and because, as he further believed : to speak truth was the same as to see it, truth, — so rare as to be always pleasant to come upon, — even in its ugliest mask, could only be made far less hideous when properly detained in written words.

Whilst it will soon become evident that this very history suffers faults, probably many, — such as split constructions¹², split infinitives¹³, dangling modifiers¹⁴, shifts of tense, person, number, voice, mood, and point of view, a too profuse use of the *not un-*formation, — which Orwell wisheth to see laughed out of existence, — and the disjunctive conjunction : *though*, &c, — the faults committed by Samuel were of far broader sweep, particularly when it is learned that in aspiring always for figurative richness, for splendid harmonies, — for all his life, writing as if with both hands, he sought that beautiful style through which, he believed, alone should life, — taken to mean the total of functions which resist death in all its five kingdoms : monera, protista, fungi, plantae, and animalia, — be suffered to find expression, — he was utterly unaware, pumping his inkhorn dry, that he drizzled out sentences full of unnecessary prepositions, — once and for all time defined as : a positioning word, such as *at, by, for, into, off, on, out, over, to, under, up, with*, &c, — and adverbs, — once, similarly : a word that modifies something other than a noun,

¹² needless separation of verbs from the subjects of a sentence, or their complements

¹³ an infinitive verb form with an element, usually an adverb, interposed between *to* and the verb form, as in: to boldly go

¹⁴ phrases or clauses that either modify no words in the sentence, or refer to the wrong words

yes, such as may indicate number : *once, twice, thrice*, or order : *firstly, secondly, thirdly*, or place or direction : *where, whence, elsewhere*, or time : *ever, immediately, now*, or quantity : *much, little, enough*, or manner or quality : *little, enough, some*, or doubt : *perhaps, possibly, peradventure*, or affirmation : *verily, yea, truly*, or negation : *nay, no, not*, or interrogation : *how, why, when*, or comparison : *more, most, better*, or degree : *very, almost, nearly*, or manner, such as : *thus...*

– and Addisonian terminations¹⁵, Saxon infinitives, adnouns¹⁶, kenning¹⁷, &c.

Were all this all, there were almost no too great hurt in it, for it is thought well for language, – taken here to mean an apparatus of symbols, — believed to be the limit, the very restraint, of thought, — for the conveyance of, for the expression of, feeling, – that there be those who, complexionally propense to wild innovation, are much disposed unto imagination, – which after all is believed far nearer to the substance of the soul,

a substance of so an unknown nature, so simple, so indivisible, so deprived of both limit and extent, so invisible, so impossible to be discovered by even the greatest minds, that its parts cannot be separated, even by abstraction of thought,

than the senses, – but his overuse of elision¹⁸, of prosopopeia¹⁹, and, – too monstrously, – of those symbols once used to represent a restful pause, – but to Samuel meaning : *read on*, – known then as a dog's bollocks²⁰, as well use annoyingly of !?, to express exasperation, and of !!!, to express emphasis, as well

¹⁵ constructions which close sentences with prepositions

¹⁶ adjectives used as nouns, such as the lame, the halt

¹⁷ device in which a common noun is replaced by a more colourful compound, such as *jewel of the heavens* for sun

¹⁸ cutting off of a vowel or syllable for the sake of euphony, as o'er for over

¹⁹ figure of speech whereby inanimate things, deceased or absent persons, are introduced as speaking

²⁰ :—

everywhere for brevity avoiding the indefinite²¹ and definite²² article, &c, – or, in other, calmer words, simpler words : employing overmuch the still instead of the simple pot, – caused his writings, – which, were never insincere, nor ever actually rhapsodic of incoherence, – to appear so hideously uneven, – suffering in one place to be far too arduous²³, in the near next far too lustless²⁴, – that such a style could not but cause pain to those in the family who firmly believed that not only was English,

coming mainly from two sources : the Saxon, – of nerve, vigour, honesty, manliness, and toil, – through Saxon invaders, and the Latin, – either directly, or through French, supplying vehicles of abstract thought, and science, – through Norman invaders,

the strongest, the richest, the most elegant, of all the languages of the world, but the most susceptible of sublime imagery, for surely : *nihil est tam incredibile quod non dicendo fiat probabile*²⁵.

So, beginning often calmly enough, but soon falling in the way of his creative passions, which, rolling over him in ecstatic waves, caused him, he Samuel, – by flowing under so full a sail of words, leaving his sense fast aground, – to commence capitalizing nouns, verbs, and adverbs, then to twist, as well out of his own engine, conceits out of the Latin and French tongue, then, with his fancy so wildly stirred, commencing to rebelieve oh two very great delusions, – defined as the sustaining of false beliefs despite clear evidence to the contrary, – the first : that by the help alone of language,

the primary function of which, as Hobbes saith, is to help man remember his own experiences,

man could communicate *all* that passed in his mind, the second : that it was outright

²¹ a or an

²² the

²³ possessed of ardour

²⁴ possessed of indifference

²⁵ there is nothing so incredible that it may not by the power of language be made probable

dangerous to entertain as merely a fanciful suspicion that man has far more affinity to language than to Nature, to reality, – taken not only to mean the quality possessed by something that is real, but by all experiences that determine how things *appear* to be real, – his style was soon such that, giving to his words a loose far more extravagant than to the affairs described, – as if to teach his mother tongue such lusty gambols as to make the gallantest French, Italian, or Spanish to blush for shame, – it became like the dreams of a sick man : varied all shapes, mixed all extremes.

In the deeper particulars it surely concerns not this history to learn that many of the family, – not only during the 70 long years of his lifetime, but in the eternity of his journals, – believed it unnatural, base, obscenely so, that he who, – seeming at such times to fail utterly to realise that the proper connection between words and ideas was to give to the former a just application, to the latter an adequate expression, – was sometimes graceful and easy of conversation in the private circle, occasionally fluent and agreeable of delivery in the lectures of his early years, – provided one unfailingly appropriated his spectacle, or his dry notes, for whenever he went up to the pulpit to speak orations to the family, he made that nothing escaped his mouth, but that he had considered of it before deeply whether it would serve the purpose of his matter he treated on, or serve not, – entertainingly informative in the family circle, and in reading aloud, ready and natural of utterance, and rarely a plagiarist, – for by refusing the opportunity of purloining or disfiguring the thoughts of others, he often delivered very handsomely his very own sentiments, – he could never, – not even briefly, neither here nor there, not even once a year, no, not for the life of him!, – show a pure simple style in his written compositions!, which, – despite in all matters else of politeness, — taken to mean freedom from all indelicacy, awkwardness, and roughness, — good breeding, — taken to mean a respectful carriage toward others, accompanied with ease and courtesy, — &c, – were publicly announced to the house as soon as he had writ as many pages as his latest wildness of fancy would permit, for never a man threw up his pen under stronger temptations to employ it far longer.

So, with firm, very necessary touches of the blue pencil²⁶, with excisions indicated by the loud suspension points²⁷, – whose other duty it is to bring scattered passages into juxtaposition, – and all other faults, – such as came for instance of Samuel his delighting to ignore the recency of the virtue that spelling should be uniform, – quietly corrected : coming a none too brief periegesis²⁸ : a too rhapsodic celebration of the county, its long eventful history, its climatal reliability, including descriptions various of its scenery, – all in such manner as to maketh a man to wonder if anything surpasseth in wearisomeness, – and with numerous asides to fustigate²⁹ the quality of the roads, the government, the neighbours, and most particularly the failings of the everso✓ many servants, continuing with all the affectations of archaic spelling, – yet here dispensing with all unnecessary capitalising, and with his underlinings italicised, or rather deitalicised : – Samuel at last states :

Although Troke Manor, – because often-own'd & often-nam'd, known locally & fimply as Y^e Hall, – was rear'd between y^e y^{rs} An^o 1589 & 1591 by a mā vnrecorded, ... it is neverthelefs clear y^t y^e architect, (yet by no means dociled vnder y^e phanfy of their avthority), greatly admir'd y^e Smythfons, Rob. (1536-1614), defigner of Longleat jn Wiltfhire, Woolaton Hall jn y^e fhire of Nottingham, & Wootton Lodge jn Staffordfhire, & his son Joh. (1567-1634), defigner of eccentric Bolfover Caftle jn Derbyfhire...

Seventeen pages further into his Imperial 8vo³⁰ journal, – and, quite in accordance with current scholarly editorial procedures, dispensing with firstly the f : the long, or medial, or descending s, — which to his credit he never used improperly : at the end of a word, before an apostrophe, after the letter f, nor before b and mostly k,

though it is true : husband was first hufband, and skin was first fkin,

and not to be confused of course, this long s, with ∫ : the integral symbol used in

²⁶ used once to edit, cut, and correct manuscripts

²⁷ dots indicating words have been deleted

²⁸ description of a place or region

²⁹ criticise severely

³⁰ eleven inches by seven and a half

calculus, nor with the glyph called an esh used in the *International Phonetic Alphabet*, in which it represents the voiceless postalveolar fricative, nor with the abbreviation used to denote shilling, where *f* evolved into a forward-leaning slash, — near vanishing from typography by 1820, — and lastly : expanding the brevigraph, — which is a single symbol that represents two or more letters in a word, or an abbreviation comprising a special symbol or mark, — & to and, — once used in printing to better facilitate the right-justification of text, — Samuel goes on to say :

Whout appearing castellar, yet by clearly reflecting both y^e Jacobean & Artisan Mannerism p:iods³¹ of architectvry, almost eagerly anticipating y^e works of Inigo Jones, (1573-1652), Troke Manor, approach'd of covrse frō dve east, whence cometh y^e svn frō his chambers, immediatly p'rsenting y^e eye wth a large, solid & oblongly covntenance, w^{ch} looking not too asqvint vpō a stranger, stands as strong, as defensible, as little svbject to concvssion, or combvstion, as might be... by employing a contemplative inspection... 'tis soon clear y^t there is a distinct sense of provd yet qvietly classical gravitas³² jn y^e way jn w^{ch} y^s sizeable astylar³³ three-storey strvctvre stands provd vpō its rvsticated³⁴ fovndations... closer still y^e feeling of grandevr, particvlarly jn y^e scrvtinant light of early 8ber³⁵, gently svplant'd by a sense of serenitvde & secvrity, confirms indeed y^t he y^t bvilds a fair hovse,... bvt vpō an ill seat,... committeth hissself to... prison... Vpō entering y^e main hallway, standing for bvt a mom^t to admire y^e elliptically & intricately carv'd panell'd ceiling..., &c.

Dispensing next with the interchangeability of *i* and *j*, and *u* and *v*,

commonly *i* was used for a vowel, *j* for a consonant, *v* at the start of a word, *u* medially, or else to denote the vowel, as *v* denotes a consonant,

Samuel later states :

³¹ periods

³² weight, seriousness, dignity, importance

³³ without columns

³⁴ comprising massive blocks, sometimes with roughened surfaces, and separated by deeply cut joints

³⁵ October

Its posture³⁶ goodly, its seat far frō y^e foggy noisomeness³⁷ of fens & marshes, this, o^r³⁸ home, neither indigest'd for want of sun, nor unexercis'd for want of wind, is set far frō malign influences, w^{ch} w^d, viz^t³⁹, give rise to earthquakes, contagions, prodigious births, plagues, swarms of hurtful creatures, scarcity, tempest, inundations, portentive comets,

otherwise of sound grammar, – or the art of rightly expressing, – even a respectable enough punctuist, – here quickly noting it was almost never in them, — Trokes with themselves, far more rarely with their yearly garden-party guests, — to argue a point of punctuation, — for with their vast experience, their constant work-outs with language, to do so with such twerps would be as a scoundrel retreated mewling to his last refuge, – Samuel here commits what is believed the fault of omitting the connective : *and*,

diverse other things, Troke Manor stands furthest frō both great neighbours & y^e unruly barracking of y^e volge⁴⁰... overall its design is kindly : all stone is frō y^e same quarry, all timber frō y^e same forest... every room is spacious & high-roofed, particularly y^e library, where one can fatten his muse upon y^e rich common of y^e ancients..., y^e staircases are well belight'd against adventure⁴¹..., y^e windows, which large & many, y^e better to welcome y^e infant beams of morning before they are of strength to do harm, offer vast, indefinite, & medley views...

Dispensing next with the two methods of abbreviation, – not be confused with acronyms or initialisms⁴², – once used also in printing to better facilitate right-justification of text : firstly, contractions, – which, supplied by superscript, indicate the omission of medial letters, – and lastly, suspensions, – which, supplied by the tilde,

³⁶ situation

³⁷ unhealthiness

³⁸ our

³⁹ for example

⁴⁰ mob

⁴¹ accident

⁴² abbreviations with unpronounceable combinations of letters, such as *MRI*

or other sign, placed above vowels, indicate the omission of say the nasal consonants *m* or *n*, — the omission of terminal letters, as in replacing the *i* after *t* or *c* in *-tion* or *-cion* endings, or in words ending in *-ment*, such as was once spelt *gouvernem^t*, — these shall be silently corrected : so that, — this a hard sentence to hold onto, — with the superscript lowered, the contractions expanded, and the missing letters supplied, together with the fossil thorn replaced by *th*, Samuel, — at last rendered half-readable, — of the immediate grounds, writeth on this wise :

Acknowledging of course that description cannot possibly represent such things with the same pleasure and advantage as they are seen upon the place..., despite its artifice giving easy opportunity for retirement and contemplation..., conducing to the obtaining of cheerful tranquillity of mind and to the preservation of a temper of body sufficient to bear up under the crosses and disappointments, the vexations and troubles, which do necessarily attend all conditions of life..., the magic of the bowery garden, — which, with here art chiefly engaging admiration, here Nature with all her subtlety stealing the whole eye, and here Nature and art contending handfast for applause, — by contriving to elevate menfolk to that agreeable pitch of melancholy so conducive to enlasting hope to an assurance, and in women to that faintishness sufficient to encourage love catch hold of all their inward parts..., cometh all of a delicate balance 'tween naturalness and spontaneity, and whilst richly feeding the eyes, neither starves taste nor smell, nor hearing nor touch.

There then following, in magniloquous⁴³ style, a description of the chief elevation of the manor : the belvedere, which is a tower or loggia for enjoying view, also called a campanile, or a bell- or clock-tower,

which might well have occasioned opportunity to explain briefly : *y^e*, *y^t*, *y^s*, *y^{rs}*, &c : that in the earliest days of English typesetting, — with the type, even the typesetters, coming from all over Europe where the letter *y* was not yet in their

⁴³ pompous or lofty language

lettercases, – to best address the handwritten manuscripts of the day, the thorn, – *Þ*, and *þ*, — capital and lowercase, — predecessor to the modern digraph, the unvoiced fricative : *th*, – was used as looking most like,

but alas, by still not arriving even at a semi-diplomatic transcription⁴⁴, this for the present shall be quite enough.

Addressing next two concerns which, if not already risen, may arise : firstly that the sentences here are too multi-layered, and, – perhaps annoyingly, – too full of subordinate clauses, digressions, and parenthetical-like asides,

of which it has been wrongly said nothing affords a clearer demonstration of the incapacity of an author to embody thoughts in intelligible language,

this brief response : such simply must be forborn, for as futile as objection to a cast of features is objection to the cast of language; lastly to the concern for that which, to some, renders a work difficult, trying, and therewithall favourless to perseverance, to understanding, – perhaps even summoning in a too nice nostril a savour of mannerism, – the use here of archaic, rare, obsolete, provincial, colloquial, slang, cant, foreign, obscene, lately coined words, Latin phrases, even, it may be, gratuitous hippopotomonstrosesquipedalia⁴⁵, but footnoted all, this brief response : while it is never here the intent that *every* common word be supplanted by a rare, every short by a long, every modern by an ancient, every known by an unknown, every useful by a useless, nor every living by a corpse, – or if so : then only each once, – it must be understood that the very vital matter of telling a marvellous tale full out, without it stumble any, requires a daring logopandocie⁴⁶, and whereas an average English word is four letters and a half in length, – as Mark Twain saith in 1907, – the average is here raised, or will be so raised, barely at all : to words five letters in length.

⁴⁴ made in the interests of clarity and readability

⁴⁵ the use of very long words

⁴⁶ readiness to admit words of all kinds

Next, before wading any further deeper, a note of warning must be given : if a happy and, despite its promised remarkableness, a simple tale is anticipated, then it would be best to begear⁴⁷ for disappointment, perhaps even of a most grievous sort, for when an ordinary oblite⁴⁸ man, such as Lemuel Troke, – a man who in another, untouched world, with no single action to merit any remembrance, would be destined either for perfect obscurity, or, at best, brief local renown as an example of luckless humanity from which all should beware to take no sad infection, – suddenly in late life, elevated to an unequalled but secret celebrity, is ordained to firmly set all his hopes⁴⁹ upon a long path of sure straight but dangerous route, of unknown outcome, then it cannot otherwise be than certain sure that the journey, as well advancement and fortune, – exemplified in the production of at least three genii⁵⁰, taken to mean, and wrongly : individuals in whom the inheritance of the whole human race is vested, – will suffer setback and disaster, as will be exemplified in the feast of misrule by a Vouchsafe called Ursula, of whom, in all this work, none will be baselier reported of.

Now, as the commencement of any considerable undertaking, – at least until the road ceases winding, the traces slacken, – can sometimes prove a hectic, wayward, even tiring affair, – for as much as the end, it is said, the beginning of a work is so notoriously difficult to handle successfully, it can make it or break it, – it would not be unwise to ask eyes and mind exercise that strength of patience for which in man they are occasionally renowned, – particularly should here or there a dull passage be encountered, or more particularly one requiring closer than casual scansion⁵¹, – for if judgement will but hold itself in suspense till it has run through some of the rest that ensue, what may seem dark at the first will afterward be found far more plain; also : it is believed that a good gentle reader, – if that kind being still breathes, and is not yet too overtaken by those matters that so absorb contemporary literary theory : data oriented parsing⁵², referential illusion, intertextual production, the equivocal nature of meaning, &c, – will find this *saga*, – though this word is now in an advanced stage of

⁴⁷ prepare

⁴⁸ indistinct; obscure

⁴⁹ heirs

⁵⁰ plural genius

⁵¹ the act of scanning; reading with care

⁵² or DOP: the assumption that language comprehension and production works with representations of concrete past language experiences, rather than with abstract grammatical rules

corruption, it is here taken to mean a full tale of adventure and heroic deeds, incorporating all the supposedly seven plot types, — rags to riches, comedy, tragedy, rebirth, quest, voyage and return, and overcoming the monster, — as well probably all the requisite symbols, all the archetypes, — mighty paying for the trouble of the closest possible reading.

Two further points, or rather three : in first place the first : considering long process of time doth utterly obscure the truth of matters done in former times, it is so hard a trouble to come to the perfect knowledge of the truth of ancient things by only monuments and ruins and by the writings of historiographers and historiasters⁵³, and because theory and fiction, — the weapons respectively of reason and imagination, — battle constantly over the faded deeds to the human past, the perfect historian, it is said, — of which human history has produced not an one, — to make up for any shortfall of that vividness, — which, if not presence, then a fuller supply of facts would so easily help to remedy, — must possess an ingenuity sufficiently powerful to ensure the narrative, — introducing nothing superfluous, save that from which a little can be scraped off to relieve dearth, — be affecting, and the actors, — omitting none necessary, — be picturesque; that this qualification in no manner applies to the present history shall prove no impossible claim when it is hereupon avouched, — and upon request can be proven, — that every fact, almost every word, can be authenticated, not alone by abounding testimony, but by evidence ample enough for belief, for here, — unlike narrators of old, who, ashamed to bring in anything below prodigy and miracle, stuffed their farces with gorgons and enchanted islands, — by setting only down things seen as seen, heard as heard, done as done, shall be found only truth : not that which is *judged* to have happened, but which *did* happen, was *seen* very precisely to happen.

In second place the second point : whereas the dramatist, seduced from truth by imagination, — taken to mean that faculty by which, of non-actual possibilities, man acquires knowledge, — gathers up from out his mind, — taken for convenience to mean that which encompasses all aspects of rationality, —

⁵³ petty or contemptible historians

such as : understanding, intellect, conception, abstraction, and reasoning, as well the cognitive skills of perception and insight, for it is alas still believed that though the vegetative comprises plants, animals, and man, and the sensitive comprises animals and man, the rational comprises only man alone,

such wonders of colour and light as his fancy can throw out, and for which manifold other fancies delight to fiercely hunger, the historian, in handling with unpretending clearness and succinctness, and disposing by skilful selection, only truth, runs the risk, – should his style be of the utmost affectedness of precision of a gazette, – of producing a monochroic⁵⁴ work of unremitting dryness, the which to overcome, – because after all the acts or events of true history cannot have *all* that magnitude with which to satisfy the mind of *all* man, – use is made of poesy to feign acts, events, and to paint characters greater, more heroical; however, due to the sensational nature of the Troke material, – as well as the necessity of giving to such words and expressions as long retired have been driven from every last corner of literature, the earned right to occupy one last place, one *final* fastness, – xerosis⁵⁵ cannot surely be the condition or the fate of the present history.

In third and final place this third and final point : though it was once said by one that went for wise that an honest tale speeds best when plainly told,

without the unnaturalness of big words, fustian phrases, jingling terms, foppish tropes, strong lines, strains of wit, brave heats, braver eulogies, hyperbolical embellishments, effeminate elegancies...

it is believed, by employing patience, – the while anticipating of course that a call may occasionally be made for more punctual narration⁵⁶, and then later, perhaps, with even greater volume, for some blessed commatism⁵⁷!, oh less stain!, less

⁵⁴ one colour

⁵⁵ abnormal dryness of body parts

⁵⁶ minuter points of detail

⁵⁷ conciseness in writing

enamel!, – that this history will slowly create the taste by which, – if not long before, then surely by its end, – it is to be relished; aye, it is not impossible to imagine, – nothing is this!, – that should this work, – impossible!, yet somehow, – reach unto the public, unto publication, a not too unfavourable opinion might, in time, slowly, present, not of course to he : the common penny-a-line reviewer of fiction used to handing books of the hour as casually as is deserved,

the reading of which, as with any books bringing but a vain and unprofitable pleasure, is justly disliked by wise and grave men, as saith Amyot,

giving only of the plot, the price, the publisher, nor to he : perhaps in an obscure article of no marvel of learning or penetration, of no brilliancy, but, – as if repaying say an uncongenial intimacy with the author, – rather of malevolence, by seeking corruptions, misinterpreting the text, sticks at no falsehood, no absurdity which in its worse whoredom an angry pen will readily consent to trace upon paper, nor he : perhaps a man once said of promise, of vast energy, of vigorous intelligence, but alas of unripe judgement, therefore faulty scholarship : in the hope of telling truth, in the belief of talking sense, tells many falsehoods, talks much nonsense, as Housman complaineth, but rather he : he : a true lover of words, of literature, – perhaps a renowned scholar possessed not only of a long, just, learned perception, and of experience won by deep study, but also of rare mother wit, – who, – perhaps even in a book-length study, – by strict, piecemeal dissection, by careful analytical evaluation, by employing terms, – deplorably intellectual, perhaps, but believed the crown and summit of literary scholarship, – so necessary in in-depth textual criticism⁵⁸, labouring long, even for months, employing uncommon exactness and sobriety, the most arresting ingenuity and penetration, in summation will pronounce fairly,

fairly meaning here : not of appearance, nor neatly, nor respectfully, nor fitly, and not distinctly, not completely, and not passably, but by lawful, legitimate, not by foully, means,

⁵⁸ the science and art of bringing to light errors in texts

upon what, for all its faults, was an effort of merit, that, aye : the writing was overall worthy the exertion, the reading worthy at least of the time.

Before commencing, one small point more regarding grammar,

the laws of which, in the pursuit of a higher objective, are often more honoured in their breach than in their observance, for why alone poets?, why should not writers of prose be also waywardly carried by the sheer intellectual engagement that style can offer,

syntax, and spelling : whilst in places an error might be construed, but whereafter a superscript tick denotes no error, but intention, historical precedence, any errors that *may* seem apparent, whether contradictory of fact or of chronology, or smaller of grammar or of syntax, or even tiny of spelling or definition, – all of which can sometimes arise of that oversight occasioned by urgency, or by the pressure of time, or by excitement, or by fatigue, – it would be appreciated if these were immediately brought to notice.

One tiny point more : unless clearly not, of course : by *he* is meant also *she*, by him her, by man woman, by men women, as much the masculine women as for the muscleless men, and if Words should dare here to maketh protest, let this answer then come : why, why at the dying of an agelong convention that the masculine included the feminine, have words always thwarted man his coining of an epicene⁵⁹ pronoun?, such as say the singular : *ou*, as Marshall recorded in 1789; one further very quick note : it has been said that by its style alone will posterity judge of a work, for with facts, scientific discoveries, indeed with information of its every kind available and seizable by all, – save of course, even vaguely, who and what is he that seizes, – no author, – how writerly soever, – can have anything truly of his own to say : now, however true this may be in the main, – actually, this is almost wholly true, – this cannot be true of the work about to be commenced, for here, – with aid assured of

⁵⁹ belonging to both sexes

figurative construction⁶⁰, – shall be found new truths, new discoveries : information formerly beyond all human handhold.

Two very final advises better here than later, than nowhere : regarding what might soon be viewed as very oddly literary or linguistic affectations, – a subject which occasion may elsewhere present, perhaps at the end, to enter into more fully, – such as, very briefly, spelling certain words in a certain way, for examples : foetus fetus, – for which there is anyway no etymological basis : the origin of the word lays in the Latin *fetus*, – spatial spacial, font fount, spelling trouser in the true singular, and seeming to pluralise the already plural : sheeps and cattles, &c : such is all simply habit, conformation to the in-house style, to family tradition, for which, with none necessary, no apology is offered; secondly : *most* importantly : regarding *lapses*, or the abrupt discontinuity of manuscript transmission, – the causes whereof will be broached in good time, – which with increasing frequency will, alas, unavoidably occur in the relating of this saga : due to the impossibility of predicting such lapses, – for if the unforeseen could be foreseen, it would not be unforeseen, – rather than offering an apology,

as is practised with the television, when, the program suddenly halting, appears a message stating that due to unforeseen difficulties normal services will resume as soon as possible, supplying then for the tired eyes a piece of sunset, seascape, landscape pleasantry, for the tired ears music tranquillising,

another, hopefully not unrelated, not unconnected, writing, – a very varied plethora of which have been laid aside for exactly such eventualities, – will, without caveat, be substituted, – this principally to discourage Words, — helpless to do otherwise than in madly manner mediate the systematicity of everything everywhere, — too uncircumspectly continuing what preceded, – such as a deeply researched monograph, – which is a treatise on a single object, or class of objects, – or a short

⁶⁰ the departing from speech in its common practice to utilise expressions and construction different, but resembling

story published to acclaim by a family member, or a quote from a journal or diary, &c, the which, it is to be hoped, if passing not unnoticed, will not result in that horror of too great unevenness of quality which all art, to maintain itself true and pure, endeavours to preserve itself exempt; very well.

1450

It would be expected, indeed proper, here at *incipit diem primus*⁶¹ embarking upon this 500 year history, to begin with the midnight vision of Troke forefather Lemuel, aye, but it will be rather his birth and his late marriage which will serve as a brief introduct, a leading in; so : in March 1450, – the year it is said, — awrongly, — that a gem-cutter and engraver, one John Gansfleisch, or Johannes Gensfleisch zur Laden zum Gutenberg, in the German city of Mainz, launched upon the art of printing with movable type, – in a land called England, Lemuel Troke became *anecius*⁶² to the sturdy new wife, Elowen, of a poor shoemaker, Awen, in the small settlement of Bicknoller, from the village of Watchet distanced three miles, is situated toward the north coast of what is now the south-west county of Somerset,

located between on the east Wiltshire, on the south Dorsetshire, on the west Devonshire, on the north partly by Gloucestershire, partly by the sea of the Bristol Channel, which north-eastward if fed by the river Severn,

wherefrom on a clear day, to any who raised their eyes from toil, the south coast of *Britannia Secunda*⁶³ was sometimes aspectable⁶⁴.

As his childhood was no more mean, nor more miserable, than was common for the time then present, nor than was expected any more eventful in shaping his dour nature, Words need not waste theirself[✓] on rendering his character otherways than

⁶¹ the beginning of day one

⁶² first-born

⁶³ Wales

⁶⁴ visible

moderately shallow-drawn, for if the strict confines of time and space are not to be breached, – for as this history aims at a complete, but not at an exhaustive, representation, no attention, or none unnecessary, will be given to individual shape, make, and features, – the historian must far overtop the portraitist in rendering, even the very roundest of personalities, somewhat flatly⁶⁵; to this honest boy soonest working beside his father at their little premises, – for name-son⁶⁶ Lemuel of course inherited the art of gentle-craft⁶⁷, – brothers and sisters arrived at nearly yearly intervals; in 1478 it fell upon eldest Lemuel the burden of supporting a family comprising at that time his starblind⁶⁸ father, whom to even felth⁶⁹ had begun to fail, his aildy⁷⁰ mother, his younger brothers, of which three were then surviving, and his unmarried sisters, three also in number; in 1489 at the age of 39 bachelor Lemuel took upon himself the trouble and cost of the simple funeral of his father, and two years later similarly that of his mother.

If in the year of gracelessness 1497, at age 47, it was a time of uncertainty for Lemuel, – for he had commenced to be no longer absolutely sure that he would, one day, somehow, father a son, exactly as Trokes always before, for they must, early or late, it was inevitable, – it is certainly not so for the historian of him : oh the very idea that a Troke could die sonless, oh the very suggestion that a sole begetter, if he were sterile, would not live forever, nay! : so fear not for Lemuel, he will indeed, he must, he shall, inevitably, one day, – for it has been the way always with Trokes, – even late, death late, be made to know that henceforth, completed, he may die if he wishes, for due to recent action goodly taken, to latest report lieless received, a woman, whether wife or another, will soon enough birth his hale son.

Now it came to pass that this lonely man, occasional noctivagator⁷¹, coming by the moonlit wayside upon a perfricate⁷² young woman named Ann Cotterel, – thrust out

⁶⁵ flatly; plainly

⁶⁶ son bearing the same name as the father

⁶⁷ shoemaking

⁶⁸ blind without perceptible ocular injury

⁶⁹ power of feeling in the fingers

⁷⁰ ailing

⁷¹ one who walks by night

⁷² shivering with cold

of door because dishonored by a member of the simplest most primitive trade of life, a shepherd, who, hearing some fellow had got up her belly, was absconded with his flock unseasonably away, – Lemuel kindly offered her the shelter of his cottage in which he now lived alone, and she, – poor and proud : she had nothing, accepted nothing, but nothing having, nothing could lose, – shyly accepted; come a week more, growing more sympathetic toward this honest young woman whom Nature had neglected to use all her skill in forming, understanding that her bastard would be needful soon of a father, offering then to marry her, Ann was too beholden to refuse.

After first glowering at them over his tiny double eyeglasses, – Lemuel standing not at her right side, but Ann at his left, – the minister, – of name Hector Gofirst,

whom his anger he called professional zeal, his pride the dignity due to his office, and his passions sins merely of weakness,

of thin spare habits of body,

a man who believed that to even slightly indulge the most basic human appetites was to risk becoming a glutton, a drunkard, or a voluptuary,

of a raw, vain, uncertain, very wary inclination, and whilst without a friend upon earth famed in his sermons upon account of the disagreeable manner in which they were delivered, for he allowed often a good word to pass unregarded, and, from the contrary reason, insisted often an indifferent be applauded, – raising his eyes⁷³ both and his long thin nose⁷³ to the age-blackened rafters of the old Saxon church, – the better not to see so large a balloon of belly almost up to her mouth, – in mumbling, quite incomprehensible Low Latin, called also Medieval or Middle Latin, hurried his service along; his long white hands, first gowpen⁷⁴, as if offering yespen⁷⁵ forgiveness, – for pardon, too, is condemnation, – became then dactilion⁷⁶, as if this much would

⁷³ nose

⁷⁴ placed together so as to form a bowl

⁷⁵ as much as can be taken up in both hands joined

⁷⁶ union of fingers with each

far better suffice, – for his eyes had not quite yet administered all the admonition that was in them, – but then, in thinking he could do far worse than again reduce his still too generous offer, laying his hands almost flat to eche[✓], bestowed instead as if a mere nieveful⁷⁷ of forgiving grace; after a few words more bringing another end, as daily dictated by his god,

whereas the Sun is deserving of capitalising, as well the Moon, be it here at once stated : no apology, no excuse, will ever be offered for absolutely refusing, – save in quotations, – to cyriologically⁷⁸ qualify so thingless a word!,

to that abomination, *copula carnalis fornicatoria*⁷⁹ : the hedgerow posies limp in their damp hands, and forty farthings the poorer, man & wife walked the two miles slowly silently back to their poor wattle-and-daub cottage.

Now, not even three steps over the threshold, – her sinless mind now permitting her body to know it swollen to full term, – suddenly taking faint, waving away all aid, clambering whimpering onto the workbench, laying herself down upon the wet-board⁸⁰, hitching up her numerous skirts, with unspeakable groanings, writhing full amid the clutter,

comprising unfinished chawcers⁸¹, bend-leather⁸², sparrowbils⁸³, foot-prods⁸⁴, bobbins of lingle⁸⁵, pliers, hammers, lasts, elsens⁸⁶, &c,

right before horrified eyes, after much water, gore, and screaming, Ann brought forth a dead child over which she wept most horribly[✓]; no more dumbstruck grabbing his ragged wolfskin cloak,

⁷⁷ as much as a closed hand will contain

⁷⁸ pertaining to capital letters

⁷⁹ sexual congress with a harlot

⁸⁰ cutting-out board of a shoemaker

⁸¹ shoes

⁸² sole-leather

⁸³ small, headless nails

⁸⁴ large nails fixed to the bottoms of shoes to prevent slipping

⁸⁵ shoemaker's thread

⁸⁶ awls

which, festooned with sterna⁸⁷, he had inherited from his grandfather who as a youth had taken it of a man who had died of cold in a field,

performing the simplest, the nearest, duty, which is often the best of all things that a simple small-learned soul can do : flee, Lemuel fled away to the poorest of taverns where, gulping many potels⁸⁸ of appalling ale, drank himself into a state wherein neither on Earth nor in all the superior globe⁸⁹, even when beaten all together, existed so darkened, so stinking, so barely human a little thing; with all his coppers, some of his fear, and most of his horridity drunk away, – and once the clear cold night-air catharised his red face, nearly all his wits also, – so slowly staggered this our hero home; on that his wedding-night, crawling by right into her small bed, after a long sigh turning, raising himself upon an elbow, leaning over the pale, teared face, opening his mouth, – he wished firstly sincerely to ask after her health, — taken to mean the harmonious, efficient working of the entire person, — lastly to apologise for the terrible narrowness of his humanity, – he instead copiously vomited, fell into himself, passed away into sleep, yet knew it all not, but amorne⁹⁰ and forever after knew it surely, soon his every neighbour too.

When her sturdy health was full returned, formally permitting Lemuel his bedrite⁹¹, his first mounting was as clouterly⁹² as her responses algid⁹³, yet little by little warming as he gently moiled, Ann of her vanished shepherd sweetly inclining her mind, until all of a sudden loudly spending, collapsing limp atop her, immediately commencing upon snoring sleep, her bucolic⁹⁴ dream shattered, in now a new fret, Ann pight⁹⁵ his small weight away, and standing up, grumbling, dripping, looked sideling⁹⁶ down at

⁸⁷ wolf-tails

⁸⁸ two quarts

⁸⁹ heavens

⁹⁰ in the morning

⁹¹ privilege of the marriage bed

⁹² clumsy

⁹³ cold

⁹⁴ pastoral, rustic

⁹⁵ pitched

⁹⁶ obliquely, sidelong

his sleeping weazen⁹⁷ form, particularly at his already slimpsey⁹⁸ duddle⁹⁹, – for her dear shepherd had never displayed a lobcock¹⁰⁰ in all the days she knew him!, – (but Ann, — from whose body the whole Troke lineage would descend, — knew not of course that from this not altogether diminutive willie,

for in truth she had been a trifle spoilt, meaning injured in character by excessive indulgence, lenience, or deference : for Lemuel was not *really* small : small perhaps in respect of that which some others have, but yet of somewhat more than he who hath most would be well content to lose,

226 posteriors¹⁰¹ would eventually be extraught¹⁰²), – curst[✓] him out of sight with that level and deadly violence inherited from her fishwife step-mother : his snores, his every organ, all of him; with frostwork¹⁰³ gaining upon the sole window-pane, there crouching in the grey fireplace lighting a wee-bit fire of punk¹⁰⁴, she clattered together a meagre supper for herself of stale bread, of warmed stew comprising putredinous¹⁰⁵ heels of a sheeps and vinewed¹⁰⁶ barley.

So, as a time went of weeks, then of months, a year, with the cobbler nervously cobbling between his hunched shoulders, the mother midnight¹⁰⁷ at his back delivered his wife of a daughter, Mary, and lo!, all was changed, for if a living babe turned Ann, – a mean chapless¹⁰⁸ woman given daily to jobation¹⁰⁹, – into a quiet contented wife and mother, and, aye, newly fond of smockage¹¹⁰!, Lemuel was now the tonguepad¹¹¹, for as he older grew he remembered again what his father had once said, – his voice

⁹⁷ wizened

⁹⁸ hanging limp or drooping

⁹⁹ penis of a child

¹⁰⁰ relaxed penis

¹⁰¹ those following in time

¹⁰² extracted

¹⁰³ pattern of frost on windows

¹⁰⁴ dry, decayed wood

¹⁰⁵ stinking

¹⁰⁶ mouldy

¹⁰⁷ midwife

¹⁰⁸ having little flesh around the mouth

¹⁰⁹ tedious scolding

¹¹⁰ sexual intercourse

¹¹¹ scold

all harmony, his words all sense, – as possibly his father his father biforn[✓] him similarly, far off in the myriad-marted city of Augusta, alate called London,

a great, high-vised¹¹², unwieldy, overgrown town of one continued hurry of depravity and pleasure,

in his murky snobber¹¹³ premises a mere hail from what in the eleventh century was called Gropecunt Lane, – to this effect :

— We Trokes to misfortune has always been confated¹¹⁴, aye!, and despite our hardiness we be neither long-lived nor immune to the normally undistinguishing pencil of ill-luck which somehow delighteth to aggest¹¹⁵ calamity upon the head of anyone with our hard and rare name, for then, with the head away, as good the members all in sunder. But whereas all attempts to dilute our fate, – sometime bringing us to madness, many times near killing us quite out, – causes it to superabound, one only means of hope, one sole spark, lays to us : the production of sons, for as man need not to guard him against blessings, calamities require many hands to avert them, for life is not only full of darkness, it flies : aye, no sooner is dawn singing at the door, than with the morning waning, it is afternoon, then it is evening.

Thus well-spake a father to his five surviving sons, of which four were now dead : childless Alfred struck by lightning ten years before whilst sheltering beneath a costard¹¹⁶ he was pruning, childless Cornall, a respected quarryman¹¹⁷, fourteen years ago died in agony beneath a collapsed lewis¹¹⁸, and childless Elwin pressed to death¹¹⁹ in Truro at age 19, in 1471; as a continuing bachelor Lemuel had believed, indeed insisted, that the survival of their line, their name, must fall to his sole

¹¹² enormously wicked

¹¹³ shoemaker

¹¹⁴ fated together

¹¹⁵ heap up

¹¹⁶ apple tree

¹¹⁷ stonecutter

¹¹⁸ contrivance for raising stones

¹¹⁹ killed by being forced into naval service

surviving brother, handsome, lusty, newlywedded Cedric, a man of whom it was said, – if often of a cross, suspicious, inquisitive, murmuring nature, – a luckier, a bolder fisher, a carefuller in peril, did not breathe, but lately learning that this last, undescended brother had drowned¹²⁰ after in a storm falling from an otherwise well-favoured fishing boat, Lemuel now knew himself the sole being in existence with the unmistakable Troke blood, for of his three surviving sisters : Tamsyn with her babe perished in first childbed, Lowenna, heavy with a first child, died directly of the overmuch heat of her husbandman¹²⁰ husband which put him far wide from temper, and the last, Cryda, five years before, in company with her lovely family of three boys, died of the *English Sweat*¹²¹.

Much heartened by an order from a local landowner for 13 pairs of dew-beaters¹²², all upright shoes¹²³, – a harvest home¹²⁴ gift for his labourers, – and a pair of lovely satin slippers, – a gift for his mistress, the new May-Queen¹²⁵, – but with his eyes too much upon the broad buttocks of his wife, and his mind too narrowed upon the need for a son, – for it is natural for a man to wish he beget his own like, – his but¹²⁶ suddenly slipping, and via a cloven thumb knocking over his glue pot in its little brazier setting the table ablaze, before Lemuel could grab a bucket, even before he could properly curse St Crispin¹²⁷ for allowing fortune and fate to yet again interleague to be his foes, the thatch catcht afire, and in no time their poor dwelling was burned to the ground, his few St Hugh's-bones¹²⁸, his cherished lapstone¹²⁹ inherited from his besayle¹³⁰, all were consumed, and worst of all : his every meagre coin of silver and copper, the savings of a whole life, – meaning the ordered manifoldnesses of the proliferation of cells, rather than the incarnation of a preformed soul, – molt away to a lump of black nothing; Ann carrying child, Lemuel their few surviving possessions hurriedly

¹²⁰ farmer

¹²¹ unidentified illness, resembling influenza, scarlet fever, and plague, in which the victim, perspiring profusely from head to foot, suffers pain generally

¹²² coarse oiled shoes that resist the dew

¹²³ of the same shape for either foot

¹²⁴ song of reapers accompanying last load

¹²⁵ Queen of the May

¹²⁶ knife of a shoemaker

¹²⁷ patron saint of shoemakers

¹²⁸ tools of a shoemaker

¹²⁹ stone held in the lap of a cobbler

¹³⁰ great-grandfather

faggoted up together, after a day of rainy roage¹³¹ finding at last a ruined hovel at the edge of a gloomy woods, there in one damp, mildewed, but soon kempt little room they dwelt.

For want of tools no more able to turn himself to his old craft, Lemuel found work as a journeyman, – meaning then day-labourer, – giving away his hands and back to farms anear and far for mere pennies, as well what beet or greens, fearing to be turned off at the gallows, he could toss unobserved into a ditch, which, in deepest night, his dogskin bag on his shoulder, – whether in sleet, or in a rain that went in at the neck and out at the heels, or in snow, or in that freezing fog creating such a pitchy blackness that a man might not see a burning brand stretched forth his arm's length before him, – he cautiously retrieving, – for the truly hungry do not, as do the fatted, look upon a morsel with first a faulting eye, – returned then home to his poor hearth, whereupon, despite exhaustion, his passion for an heir male, which by now had assumed an esurient¹³² appetite, whilst given immediate and desperate vent, alas his eager old genitories¹³³ availed him not.

After some workless wet weeks growing passing sickly with scours come of such fare as a mean garden afforded : the constant mallows¹³⁴, the nettle and haulm¹³⁵ soups, which to an active carnivore are mighty spindling eating;

acreophagists¹³⁶, recall Shelley, even ovo-lacto vegetarians¹³⁷, because Nature simply cannot provide the best table to those who, eating nothing that once a face possessed, – yet they little know, less can believe, rice too has a face, looked at right, – have forsworn all meat, are oh such fools!, for such as wander from the way of truth, from the open path of wholesome understanding, from wisdom, full fall into diverse blindnesses of the mind, foolish sensuality, and unlawful delectations of the body;

¹³¹ wander, tramp

¹³² hungry, greedy

¹³³ male sexual parts

¹³⁴ coarse greens

¹³⁵ stalks and stems of cultivated cereals, beans, peas, &c

¹³⁶ those who abstain from eating flesh and fleshmeats

¹³⁷ those who eat dairy but no meat

on the very day he at last, since a child, snared his first cony, or rabbit, holding it high racing proud flushed dancing home, he was met at the door by his weeping wife who told him their long-sickly daughter Mary had just that hour died, aye, her little life took end ere herself could well look over and discern it.

As Lemuel stretched the cunin¹³⁸ on the chestnut frame for later tannage in gallnuts¹³⁹, then over the front door, next to a wreath¹⁴⁰ he had found, nailed the fud¹⁴¹,

as a testimonial to his hunting prowess, and as a symbol apotropaic¹⁴², – which was a wasted gesture, for misfortune could hardly be mollified by an autocoprophage¹⁴³, – as well because it was pretty,

the hulked¹⁴⁴ carcass went quartered into the old stew pot for at least a decent noonmeat¹⁴⁵, eating which, lugent¹⁴⁶ over their beechwood bowls, they quietly eagerly agreed that such goodly food, as tough as it was, – for the rabbit was an old urinous male, – was sorry blessing indeed after so much defailance¹⁴⁷ and infortune; as they sorrowfully chewed with all the teeth remaining to them, – 16 in total, – to keep their hearts alive they forced into employment further words, aye, they agreed, rat, fox, and other chanced upon morkin¹⁴⁸ of the countryside, were simply not to be compared with a good cony; by their bereavement then Lemuel & Ann grew a little placent¹⁴⁹, so that by now, neither a shrow¹⁵⁰, both listeth¹⁵¹ much to reconjoin¹⁵², and Ann grew again birthful.

¹³⁸ rabbit skin

¹³⁹ small tumours on oak trees produced by the gallfly

¹⁴⁰ tail of a boar

¹⁴¹ tail of a hare or rabbit

¹⁴² resisting ill-luck

¹⁴³ an animal which habitually eats its freshly passed faeces

¹⁴⁴ disembowelled

¹⁴⁵ midday meal

¹⁴⁶ weeping; mourning

¹⁴⁷ failure

¹⁴⁸ wild beasts dead through sickness or mischance

¹⁴⁹ pleasing, agreeable

¹⁵⁰ shrew

¹⁵¹ inclined

¹⁵² to join anew

1500

This saga now tells, as the new year approached, how thus it was as the new year approached : one acold¹⁵³ night, – at a time that had not yet attained tomorrow, yet had not lost all yesterday, – in what he believed to be sometime in late December of the year one thousand nine hundred ninety and nine, Troke eldfather¹⁵⁴ Lemuel, aged now nearly 50, awoke from black sleep to behold, – old eyesight permitting, – a vision, a wondrous image if not at once of intelligibility, certainly of most resplendent brightness!, as if of an angel, the which, with only the preamble of a pause sufficient for fear to abate, demanded his compliance in instituting a wondrous quest, (to which nearly every Troke for full five centuries, knowingly or otherwise, would dedicate him or herself, indeed this was a crusade of such import as to ensure Trokes, – in numbers growing by succession, instead of perhaps dying out in one brood, for such, if not by a Troke conceivable, was by the world of daily expectancy, – would become who, where, and precisely what they are today); without waking his snoring, gaenggang¹⁵⁵ wife, Lemuel commenced learning, by repetition, the 100 words, – of which the half he comprehended, he scarce believed the quarter, – which his vision eventually succeeding in lodging in his thick ears; finally let to know that as writing has the far longer continuance,

that far greater certainty of assurance by how much that which stands on record has in pre-eminence above that which passes from those that have no pens but their tongues, no books but their ears,

he must his new memory decant to paper, the vision vanished.

In darkness dressing, murmuring over and over the 100 words, Lemuel half-walked half-ran through coldest rain for to seek a scribe, nowhere to be found but at a monastery six miles far, of which it may be of interest to learn the following: in the

¹⁵³ very cold

¹⁵⁴ ancestor

¹⁵⁵ pregnant

twelfth century, Cleeve Abbey, (today, thanks to *English Heritage*¹⁵⁶, still standing), was renowned, even in Rome, for the marvellous quality of its anthropodermic bibliopegy¹⁵⁷,

for human skin, largest organ of the human body, weighing about 20 per cent of body weight when wet, about six pounds when tanned, is of 20 square feet area,

and when the then prior, whose name, – believed one of those matters many, which lying so far hidden in the dark ages of antiquity, the mortal tracing of it out is a thing impossible, – Ean de Reixach, lay upon his deathbed in 1226, requesting his favourite madrigals in himself be bound, so was the seven-volume work created, (now in the Troke library) : volumes one and two his arms, volumes three and four his legs, volumes five and six his torso, and volume seven, – with his face beautifully centring the cover, – his head.

At a little before the second hour Lemuel at last roused the young circator¹⁵⁸, one Brother Adolphus, – birthname Matthew Trevorrow, – from an ebriant¹⁵⁹ brown study¹⁶⁰, for only that evening, partly in whispers, partly in senyes¹⁶¹, the monk had this of a bright scullery boy,

who from hiding had overheard the chatter of two visiting novices who had been told by an Abbot, – or rather by his secretary and favourite bardash¹⁶², of name Supersax, – lately returned from Rheims, where he had heard same from the mouth of a bishop of his old acquaintance who from memory was quoting from a second copy of a letter written from London by Desiderius Erasmus Roterodamus to his sister:

¹⁵⁶ officially : the *Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England*, an executive non-departmental public body of the British Government, sponsored by the *Department for Culture, Media and Sport* (DCMS)

¹⁵⁷ the binding of books in human skin

¹⁵⁸ one whose duty is to tour the monastery and its buildings each night with a bright lamp to ensure all was well

¹⁵⁹ drunken

¹⁶⁰ deep reverie

¹⁶¹ signs, a system monks used to talk with their fingers

¹⁶² boy kept for improper purposes

to love is the same with[✓] to hate oneself, which, on merely the face of it, greatly confounded the monk, particularly as he had always half believed that he who loveth chasteneth, that love was simply consciousness in search of itself.

Whilst it is not requisite to know why Brother Adolphus delayed so in answering the hammering at the stout door, – true : the pounding was muted by storm and distance, true also : he hoped another would rouse, for, despite his duty of nightwatching, he who is the sole awake is no more the doorward¹⁶³ than he who is awoken, – it may nevertheless be of interest to learn why his mind was wholly taken up by what the scullery boy had said, and whereas indulgence in so mere a detail cannot be expected to often recur, – for there is so far yet to go, – let this matter be treated of at once so as to have it well behind what *far* more importantly will follow.

Was he to believe what the scullery boy said, what the novices said, what the secretary said, what the Abbot said, what the Bishop said Erasmus said?, aye, was he not perhaps a fool to trust for its length so stretched a chain of unsubstantiated reportage : what the scullery boy said he overheard, what he said the novices said, what they said the secretary was told by the Abbot, what the Abbot recalled the Bishop recall of what Erasmus wrote in a twice-copied letter?, for after all : even if what the scullery boy said the novices said the secretary said the Abbot said the Bishop said Erasmus said : Erasmus actually said, this may not have been exactly what Erasmus intended to say, nor even what he meant, or only to his sister, – within a context unestablished, – in confidence, only for her eyes, and what the Bishop read, – a man growing purblind, so it was said, – from a copy of a copy of the original letter, then recalled to memory, may not have been what Erasmus, nor either copyist, may have written.

Further : what the Bishop recalled to memory and quoted may not have been misread, but rather misrecalled, therefore misquoted, first by he the Abbot to his secretary, then by those who came after, for what if the Abbot, – for was he not a

¹⁶³ door-keeper

little deaf?, – misheard the Bishop, or what if, even leaning in closely, hearing perfectly the Bishop, the Abbot, – for was he also not a little old?, – by remembering imperfectly, alas reported imperfectly, – for exaggeration can occasion as much under the effects of shame, as under the effects of lust, as under the effects of joy, – to his bent-over catamite¹⁶⁴, and what if this secretary, – if not out of spitefulness, then simple human error, or if not out of mishearing, then out or hearing perfectly, but in addressing his pains, — come not of lust, nor of joy, but rather of shame, — vengefully misreporting, – heard perfectly by both novices, these in turn, conferring, agreeing, reported imperfectly, – for in matters of truth, of scholarship, they were renowned deceitfully rivalrous, – so that what the old Bishop said the old Abbot heard the secretary heard the novices heard the scullery boy heard Brother Adolphus heard, bore not anywhere of truth a grain, for what proof did he, brother Adolphus, have that his own hearing was entirely perfect?, for clearly, surely : in the matter of reading, of saying, of hearing, of overhearing, even of understanding, – as with believing, – there is dangerously much room for misreading, missaying, mishearing, misoverhearing, and most particularly misunderstanding; what *is* that clamour, is ours a hammering place for every beggar in the county?

Regarding the fragile matter of proofs : with Erasmus in far Paris, the Bishop long on road to Colchester, the Abbot, with his secretary, undisturbably in his quarters, – rumoured sumptuous, – with the novices last morn gone on with their pilgrimage, and with only the scullery boy, – a bright but illiterate, mischievous, grubby, sneaking creature, – remaining whom to ask to say again what he from hiding heard, even if he repeated exactly what he four hours before whispered and signed, would this ease his mind, would it not rather rue it more by inviting only further doubt and disquiet?; ah, thought Brother Adolphus, in this age so rare of literacy, without pen and ink memory immediately to bind, reportage was very prone to the vicissitudes of enlargement and diminution, particularly when, between each of so many links, – letter, copy, copy, reading, recalling, quoting, hearing, telling, hearing, telling, overhearing, telling, hearing, and now recalling, – there was not alone many steps of spaces, but inevitable many reaches of times sufficient to permit a subtle altering at

¹⁶⁴ boy kept for unnatural purposes

each iteration, for even nine words, in one iteration, can suffer decay, or amendment, or both, and yet! : in the matter of believing, not believing, particularly privately, secretly, truly one could believe what one listeth, especially that which made very comforting good sense!; here note : very remarkably there was no misreading, nor missaying, nor mishearing, nor misoverhearing, nor even anywhere, – at least up to now, – misunderstanding.

Cheerlessly rousing to the unremitting clamour at the wicket¹⁶⁵, the frate¹⁶⁶ there giving ear through the Judas hole¹⁶⁷ to a frantic direly requiring the services of a man who knew how to mark paper, so, in his warm cell, with pauses to quietly smile at what dripping Lemuel so seriously, so passionately, – and with a remarkable absence of those mistakes which even the most superior understanding is apt to fall into, – related of the perhaps angelophany¹⁶⁸, the monk, upon a *bargueño* desk¹⁶⁹, carefully transcribed same to a small sheet of stiff old parchment, – which is sheepskin or goatskin, in this case the former, – first in English, – called by scholars the language of the street, not of scholarship, – common to that time and place, – and without stretching this comment to a yard, — which, nothing simpler, yet nothing less necessary, — suffice it understood that all this was at a time when, — with ideas, life-furniture, whole workings, and ways very different for men to work out their life-wrestle, — spoken English stretcheth no farther than this land, nay, not even there over all, and written English reacheth barely beyond cloister and palace, – then beneath this into a Latin which frequent flogging had made him wise enough to learn both and retain; seeing as he had so enjoyed the sport of it, and thereafter would enjoy praying for forgiveness for the pleasure he always derived from the fooleries of his fellow-man, – all of which, because as why[✓] his eyes were so wide, his mind so narrowed, Lemuel did not discern, – the monk charged only three farthings for his work.

Hesitantly asked of a further much larger favour the monk would have simply

¹⁶⁵ small door within a larger

¹⁶⁶ monk

¹⁶⁷ small trap or peephole in a door

¹⁶⁸ the appearance of an angel to man

¹⁶⁹ resembling the top half of a fall front desk, but plain, undecorated

refused, outright, flatly, without a smile, – for monastery life was of a lazy, delicate sort, in which, by reason of their safe solitude, some were not of very sound brain, and some were of so little, afraid they should lose it all, – but suddenly realising in his desray¹⁷⁰ what was now the date, he instead sat up, thought a spell, – and if it is true there be three parts to a man : king, warrior, and farmer, then every thought, by anyone anywhere thunk, is one third warrior-thought, – leaned forth, looked very anew upon the sodden figure crouching over the little brazier : a man shivering not now with cold but with the exhaustion of knowing he had at last carried out the first order of his supposed vision, – perhaps a satanophany¹⁷¹, – a man of simplicity, clearly, but no longer wholly hopelessly an utter¹⁷² man, – or of such as are members of that sometimes even innocent folk who see in their actions so little cause for commentary, discussion, reflection, or even rationality, who, indifferent to the suffering of others, are very prepared to hurt them for personal benefit, to use and humiliate them for personal delight, such as, obeying only the laws of Nature, — for the laws of Nature *are* the laws of god, so it is said, — manufactor vastly of childs, — or to use an eccentric plural : children, — hale till 30, but at 40 sometimes even 50 dead, – yet perhaps, for all that, in his way, this poor Lemuel was a good man enough, – for is not the opposite of simplicity falseness?, – in short : a man deserving of mercy.

Experiencing a sudden resurgence, – not purely of compassion, — which is specific, which has respect, the spirit in it, — nor purely of pity, — which is abstract yet measuring, which has contempt, superiority, self-satisfaction, the body in it, — but rather of those excellencies once widely promulgated by his order, particularly amongst those suffering the infinite misfortunes of wickedness, — required to be forgiven, — and ignorance, — required to be excused, or better yet : remedied, — of generosity, — pity for the weak, — of clemency, — pity for the guilty, — and of humanity, — pity for all life, — so rarely opportunous to one so encloistered, – brother Adolphus then agreed, yes : he would teach, or try to, Lemuel the alphabet, numbers too, – even unto stretching his brain in the showing of a few of its simple,

¹⁷⁰ confusion

¹⁷¹ the appearing, or visible manifestation, of satan

¹⁷² outward

more pleasant mechanical performances, – but for the far greater difficulties expected from the nature of this undertaking, the monk, – one of those who, — for the good of man separated from the world in its eternal cycle of peace-plenty-pride-quarrel-war-spoil-poverty-patience-peace, — believe they have a right to be furnished with the necessaries, conveniences, and moderate enjoyments of life, – asked he be compensated by that which brought upon him a very pleasant *accidie*¹⁷³, – the which, by suggesting sloth, was considered by monks only one of the lesser seven deadly sins, – a barrel, of 24 gallons capacity, of *metheglin*¹⁷⁴, – for after all : is not every man in debt for his being?, – an agreement which would of course be kept strictly between themselves.

That same afternoon, with the date right properly January the first 1500, (not then properly the first day of the year, for this was 25 March), – the very year, — as six years before : the semicolon, — Albert Manutius was to release Venetian letters¹⁷⁵ upon the world, – after a brief sleep *sobrietate perfecta*¹⁷⁶, with a diligence not altogether wanting, putting a piece of local chalk, picked up from a path, to an old piece of slate, lately fallen from the roof, the monk began to teach sleepless Lemuel, – almost stank¹⁷⁷ from dragging on an oaken sled the 300 pound barrel seven miles, – that *a is for apple, b is for barrel*; as the monk committed his evening to meditation, – this time to a statement reputed also made by Erasmus, that marriage should be regarded as a *remedium peccati*¹⁷⁸, as a hospital for the sick, – Lemuel hurried home holding before his panting chest his slate whereon, facing outward, were the five strange marks he had that day half-learned.

The next day, with barely sleep enough, his feet bleeding into his clogs, returning to the monk, – confounded now by a statement, later to be misascribed to Blake, that one portion of being was the prolific, the other the devouring, – in the intervals

¹⁷³ depression; torpid state; a lacking of interest in anything

¹⁷⁴ drink made from fermented honey

¹⁷⁵ italics

¹⁷⁶ with complete sobriety

¹⁷⁷ exhausted

¹⁷⁸ cure for sin

between matins¹⁷⁹, lauds¹⁸⁰, prime¹⁸¹, tierce¹⁸², sext¹⁸³, nones¹⁸⁴, vespers¹⁸⁵, and compline¹⁸⁶, – as well the listening to two masses at dinner and supper, – as Lemuel before a bright fire of pine-cones counted aloud on his fingers, — *this is one, and this is twey*, the while writing the figures on his slate, the monk at his side, patiently nodding, looked forward to the evening when, – nearly but not quite in the full knowledge that a distinction without a difference cannot sustain itself, – he would commit himself to once again deeply pondering the beautiful and fine distinctions made by St Athanasius, – as confusedly as Peter Lombard!, – between father, son, and holy ghost, in that the first was neither made nor begotten, the second not made but begotten, and the last neither made nor begotten, but proceeding.

In time, then, Lemuel learned to slowly write, to more slowly read an incomplete ragged old hymnal antwhile¹⁸⁷ translated from the Medieval Latin, which the monk sold to him for the kind price of a silver shilling and a barrel of ale; by odorous slush lamp, sipping, smiling, patiently listening, correcting his student as he falteringly recited this prayer, that hymn, the monk, – (much later in life after becoming manciple¹⁸⁸, hordarian¹⁸⁹, cartulary¹⁹⁰, rising to archimandrite¹⁹¹, whereupon, in 1537 the monastery disestablishing, in the light of a smoky absconce¹⁹², he ended his days laying grounds and storing up arguments for the antichrist against he comes), – privately considered and deliberated well of many learned strong matters, – such as : how all-powerful is a god who cannot make it so that what was ill-done did not happen?, – even, to his credit, pondering what Heraclitus was reputed to have said, that religion was a disease, but a noble disease.

¹⁷⁹ prayers at 2-3 AM winter, 1-2 AM summer

¹⁸⁰ at 6-7 AM winter, 4-5 AM summer

¹⁸¹ 7-8 AM winter, 5-6 AM summer

¹⁸² 9-10 AM winter, 7-8 AM summer

¹⁸³ 12-1 PM winter, 11 AM-12 PM summer

¹⁸⁴ 1-2 PM winter, 2-3 PM summer

¹⁸⁵ 4-5 PM winter, 6-7 PM summer

¹⁸⁶ 6:15-6:30 PM winter, 8:15-8:30 PM summer

¹⁸⁷ some time ago

¹⁸⁸ officer who purchases provisions for a college, inn or court, monastery &c

¹⁸⁹ treasurer of a monastery

¹⁹⁰ keeper of monastic records

¹⁹¹ head of a monastery or convent

¹⁹² dark lantern used in monasteries

Late in this year of 1500 when a son was at last to Lemuel yborn¹⁹³, ynempned¹⁹⁴ John, though considered then by many a man shot in years, it seemed as if our hero was made again young, for after tripping triumphant to the tavern to celebrate, but from which, modestly thinking himself something of a scholar, he departed not long after, joyly but sober, – for he had thought it eminently sensible to become a something of a naphalist¹⁹⁵, – sitting in the chimney-corner as the baby suckled at the nearly three pints of milk which the breasts of his smiling wife daily produced, murmuring his well-remembered lessons, he smiled too, for was he not at last as the vision demanded, a literate, productive ancestor?; placing in John his little hand the chalk, and with a patience, yet an impatience, but a gentle impatency, – for transferring the quest to his sole son must needs be a slow steady business, – urging John to be as soon as possible as newly learned as was he, coming a day when John could write his first name if not yet his last, count stares¹⁹⁶ if not yet stars, so, the years passing, the fine bright boy quickly youthed.

Now John had a friend, a girl of his own age named Blisse, whom with one day playing, their hands further exploring, their eyes growing large, their breathing urgent, so in the perfumy hay of summer, ceasing as children, in gentle wonder learnt they from either other what properly was a plum-tree¹⁹⁷, what a flap-doodle¹⁹⁸; long since again an able respected cordiner¹⁹⁹, – but wheezing, ailing of the chest, suffering much from time which daily shrunk him, bowed his body over, ever more down, – one midnight it was, hearing the portentous hooting of a winged cat²⁰⁰, then the ganning²⁰¹ of a fox, looking up from his sole book Lemuel wondered now aloud where his son could be; an hour later coming the son hurt home bloodied of a fight with the outraged brother of the girl, growing soon feverish, despite cataplasm²⁰², despite a physic to draw the humour to itself, – so that when it was all gathered

¹⁹³ born

¹⁹⁴ named

¹⁹⁵ abstainer from intoxicating liquors

¹⁹⁶ starlings

¹⁹⁷ female pudendum; literally: that which is shameful

¹⁹⁸ penis

¹⁹⁹ shoemaker

²⁰⁰ owl

²⁰¹ barking

²⁰² poultice

together, it would carry the aflunter²⁰³ away, – despite even witchery, late on St Gregory's Day²⁰⁴, – old enough to consent to marriage, choose his guardian, make a will, – John at 14 was dead, with but a small cut over his eye for cause.

Following the raging, the smashing of much furniture, – for everything is unfair, except death, – almost broke by this disaster, this surely enormity, which means extreme evil, – less for the crushing weight fully of the entire future of a family lying upon him, than for being an old man deficient of all collateral issue, – poor Lemuel, in the twilight of his troubled fancy, taking to his bed, set himself to die, – for it is natural for the body to die, which if no man kill it, must yet needs die, – but his good noble wife, to try mitigate the grief, – defined as the complex emotional, mental, social, and physical response to the death of a loved one, – by which he far more but not alone was so transport, coaxed him, cooed, then, on the fifth attempt on the fifth day, laboured gently above him until full surreined²⁰⁵ he spat out his seed as much from simple exhaustion, sorrow, pity, as from newly his great disdain at very existence; gently cupping and lifting herself, rolling onto her back, placing the dusty cradle made from an old runlet²⁰⁶ beneath her broad podex²⁰⁷ to keep the operose²⁰⁸ seed deep and safe, wondrous soon Ann was full again of child, and Lemuel made again new, or as newly hale as his age, aye!, even the whole universe!, could not prevent him seeming, and lo!, came again a son; but despite every effort of the skilled midwife, in spite of all the odd favours that earth and heaven could unite to shower down, came this son at the cost of his dear wife Ann who somehow burst inwith-side : in a moment she was all bloodless and dead at 41, the old straw bed a red swamp quite.

Knowing the babe would soon be a burdalone²⁰⁹, – but from whom, in tract of time accumulating, multiplying, an empire must, — nay, would!, — form itself, – by pitching gain against loss Lemuel begged the midwife take the infant, – sole bud on

²⁰³ state of disorder

²⁰⁴ March the twelfth

²⁰⁵ ridden too hard

²⁰⁶ barrel of about 15 gallons capacity

²⁰⁷ fundament, rump

²⁰⁸ achieved with much labour

²⁰⁹ last surviving member of a family

a tree stubbed, disleaved, worm-eaten, full of millipedes, – to her own, for he was now but a widower, a knurned²¹⁰ old man, and no milk had he, nor any more real gentleness, nor any much skill left to his ruined old hands,

— Please, he said, — do not let the little mite die and my vision come to noht²¹¹!

the midwife, one Josephine Land, a lonely yeld²¹¹ widow, – to one Gerhard Pfefferkorn, from Poppelsdorf, a man once in the service of the Bishop of Gurk, but perhaps this is too far by the way, – who knew the Trokes as always a queer, unlucky, yet in their way not entirely an unblessed lot, without giving her excitement utterance, agreed to take the child, whereupon Lemuel, weeping his gratitude, firmly entreated her to be sure John learnt writing, reading, and numbers, to which Josephine nodded her honest word; with the slate, the hymnal, and of course the valuable document, – sewn into a hardy goatskin wallet, (all still surviving), – with a face, which customarily sedate and elderish, now elate, with new life warm in her arms, Josephine went her way swiftly home north-west six miles to Williton.

With her sheeps and geat²¹² providing more milk than enough, with her ever-reviviscent²¹³ love and guidance imparted with so firm a gentleness allowing the boy no untoward waywardness, a sturdiness with an often smile came to the again-named John; not far, in an old farmhouse, – for beating a little knowledge into weary brains, every child a farthing and a log every day, possibly a jug of ale now and again, some grain once the harvest was in, may happen some good store of ashwood firing, or firewood, for the winter to isolate, and at the end even a little gratitude, – from a patient beldam²¹⁴ named Mary Manypenny, John received schooling the most summary, particularly of saying over his four-and-twenty letters²¹⁵, for he was a good boy : everyone said so; in time John Troke came to love and

²¹⁰ gnarled

²¹¹ barren

²¹² goats

²¹³ reviving

²¹⁴ ugly old woman

²¹⁵ the letters j, called i consonant, and v, called u consonant, were not generally used until 1630

respect that stranger his mother, for had she not paid the ultimate price for his existence?, to esteem too that other stranger his father, in 1517 found in a wood three days dead with the years heavily on his back 67.

When he was 12 Josephine offered John Troke her surname if he should want it, but this he respectfully declined, as he also her vague beliefs in both a Christian and a pagan god, but nothing so a lean stray dog he called Spike, later a cat he called Box, and these with other gifts in the run of years he cherished; as Josephine Land was one of the most respected midwives in that corner of rustic Somerset, as well, like her mother and grandmother before her, modestly owing to a reputation as a skilled herbalist, she was therefore, in a small way, a woman of means, sufficient not only for necessity, conveniency, and decentness, but for occasional delight and pleasure, even to superfluity; knowing well all the cuntré^v lanes, all the fields bordered by trees, by hedges, in stretches of miles, in all seasons, – for the Sun, — it had been explained to him, — in a compass a little overthwart making an oblique circle, by this variety of approaching and departing, preserveth all things and keepeth the world in good temperature, – gathering this thing or that, – sufficient to bring ease to suffering, sleep to weariness, and when pressed by need or reason or coin enough, even pain, to another, even healthlessness, and, aye, very well, even death, – so in his first youth John accompanied his foster-mother in combing the heaths, woods, meadows, moors, in sunshine, in rain, and in snow.

Though it is believed that Words, – of whose government and peace it is said there should be none end, – be not able to speak for themselves a single word, – for it is said also by the greatest possible many that language, that great mystery, has no life of its own, – with now this formal introduction coming this formal asking : tell briefly of what herbs John Troke and Josephine Land went in search, thereby prove, show, the whole world wrong:

yes, thankyou, whilst John learned what was wild poppy, called thereabouts chasse, elsewhere copper-rose, cuprose, cusk, head-ache, bledewort, he learned also to recognise what was dog's fennel called mawth, what was

monkshood called turk's cap, soldier's caps, pope's ode, what was the herb sauce-alone or Jack-by-the-hedge so pleasant in salads, also wild pellitory called sneezewort and goosetongue, an excellent snuff, heihow known as alehoof, louse-wort known as red-rattle, ratsbane known as resalgar, good for ridding rats, dog's mercury a fine poison for anyone deserving of it, the pot-herb robert also called stork's-bill with the leaves good cookt[✓] or raw, smerewort called also all-good, evenlesten, and Good-King-Henry, coltsfoot, called also coughwort, foal's-foot, horse-hoof, and bull's-foot, which when applied to the tuell²¹⁶ doth heal the cleft thereof...

Now whilst Trokes have ever been godless, – but not to the degree of those who, so antigod, so perfectly godproofed, foolishly believe that the springs and movements of an old watch are put together with far more artful niceness than those of the mere universe, – a few, over the generations, have condescended to accede that the practice of religion,

which not many enough in the world have called illusion in hopeless pursuit of substance, of knowledge, and as diverse wise judges have prescribed and cautioned : a mere commixture of a few notions that occur at hand, and ever a wandering and indigested thing, which unlike reason is ever far out of square,

sometimes permitted not alone a perspicience²¹⁷ into abstract truths,

some not by all means, – nay, many not by any means, – to be believed, of course, for there is nothing in religion but that fiction full-trusted to render every unevidenced conclusion a doubtful,

but a respecting, even a high honouring, of tradition, as well an appreciation of the intrinsic excellence of virginity, a deep contemplation upon the miraculous, also one or two of the motives underlying sainthood, the idea of sanctity, its possibility, its

²¹⁶ fundament

²¹⁷ act of looking sharply; keen or clear perception; insight

heights, the avails²¹⁸ of penance and mortification &c.

Without exception, Trokes, – in name and blood both : blood Trokes, – were athiests ever, (or in modern parlance : were missing, – rather not missing, nor wanting, nor in need, — though not long prior to this time this cost them not unseldom a life, — what has been, rather fancifully, as well inaccurately, called, the god gene, – as well, by the way, as the genes alcoholic, homosexual, political, violent, &c, which might cause many to consider a Troke oh a very incomplete creature), – for, really, they reasoned, what earthly chance has that which, looked at straight, was but a practice founded entirely upon an implausible nonsense which insisted that the maker of existence, the maker and preserver of all things, visible and invisible, was eternal, without body, without parts, – as stated in the Augsburg Confession²¹⁹, – of infinite power, wisdom, goodness, and goodlyhood, (concerning which baloney, – which closes so many avenues to the exercise of physical and cerebral distinction, – more later will be stated).

So, despite his heart utterly unattracted by a god of any sort, but simply for the love of singing, sole Troke John diligently attended the Medieval Norman church in West Quantoxhead, two miles west of Williton, as a most courteous sidesman²²⁰, then, coming his later youth, – whilst conducting a fine seven-voice quire[✓] comprising the children of rough farmers, – he was made precentor²²¹ by the succentor²²² minister, then, so very young, some said, – yet because so big and strong a boy, readily accepted as an ostiary²²³, – he was made, after a sort, church warden²²⁴; the while John came to befriend a sweet girl named Anne Marsh, who, despite her wind-burned face, enormous bonnet, – called then a fascinators, – bequeathed to her by her grandmother, even when dressed in the enormous untanned leggings and boots discarded by her grandfather, was certainly a remarkably pretty girl, (for the homely

²¹⁸ profits, or proceeds

²¹⁹ document drawn up in 1555 to defend the Catholicity of Lutheran doctrine and to justify innovations in Lutheran practice

²²⁰ person who finds seats for the church congregation

²²¹ leader of a church choir

²²² leading bass in choir

²²³ one with authority to keep unworthy persons out of church

²²⁴ guardian or keeper of a church

Trokes have ever been loved by attractive women); after the Sunday service, upon a seat in the church porch out of the bitter winter wind, without guile John and Anne spoke freely, happily, of the world as they knew it,

for the world produces in man both the very thoughts that judge it, and the feeble voice that attempts to tell its story,

and of their narrow futures.

In the appropriate seasons they assisted farmers gather neet²²⁵ to the evening fold, at the haysel²²⁶ thrashed grain and wingled²²⁷, – Anne always at his side, for she yloved John without question, – and at Christmas, at Easter, on the celebration of their birth days they exchanged simple gifts made with their own honest hands, together with the reaffirmed promises that one day they would be wed; yet a little while John becoming beadle²²⁸ of the tiny church, and when occasion required both a latiner²²⁹ and an hermeneut²³⁰, and for all these services, which included upkeep of the dazzling church-garden,

planted with *des fleurs de cure*²³¹ : lilies, rose-mallows, immortelles, and rose-pinks,

also the trim graveyard, the grounds of the thacked²³² cottage of the minister, John received as remuneration, nothing, (in modern parlance, the better to emphasise the ingratitude : zippo, zilch, nada), but only the blessing of a god in the existence of which, – even taken to mean destiny, or necessity somehow personified, – if it were in the least possible, he would have been delighted to find some honest reason to believe, or to surmise and opine upon, or to tolerate, or to reject, openly, rather than

²²⁵ cattles

²²⁶ hay season

²²⁷ cleaned hemp

²²⁸ official in relief of the poor, also keeper of order

²²⁹ one who interprets Latin

²³⁰ interpreter for foreign worshippers

²³¹ parsonage flowers

²³² thatched

silently, painfully, to question, secretly to denounce; with a congregation at best of 25, and at worst, with the snow closing all tracks, – whereat no marvel, – none at all save the clergyman, and John himself, – thank[✓] to snow-shoon²³³ of his own invention, never failing to appear, – one sung lustily with tother, then tother praught²³⁴ lustily to the one; the cleric, – of name Bules Crider, a man of very little vain pride, of a mind pure, but ardently run into heavenly objects, – by refusing to hear unanswered any fault found in his beliefs, or a diffidence, or a mistrust declared of his own revelations, – which he much fearing, lest they come of the illusions of that which no proof thereof is proof thereof : the devil, turned him the diligentest preacher in all the realm, – so were often elicited some very intense, but never too unpleasant dialogues.

When Anne and John thought themselves old enough, to the great satisfaction of everyone in the vicinage²³⁵, they wedding, the little cottage, – gifted to them by Josephine Land, – bedecked with golden mell-sylvester²³⁶ forbidding much the too warm Sun his entry, seemed a dream come to life; within the year, then every year for nine years after, – which surprised and delighted all who knew or ever saw her, for she was but 55 inches tall, – Anne was delivered of a healthy, ample babe; the first was named Arthur, but alas, though the mother cared for him with all a mother's care : before his little soul, all fresh from the making, could make itself to home, he suddenly ailing died, then came another Arthur, who, in his first year, after turning white, died suddenly, alone, in his cradle, in the night, then came a girl Cora, who at the beginning of her second year of life, on her very first attempt at walking, – in front of a lovely warm fire, with at both sides a kneeling, smiling parent to support her, briefly first one, then the other, letting softly go her tiny hands to give her confidence, the giggling child, dribbling, shrieking with joy, taking one step, then another, – alas fell flop down gruf²³⁷, stone dead; came then another Arthur, – for they held dear that royal name for an extraordinary reason, which of itself, in its way, making a story of extraordinary telling, will not be told, for one is enough : one story at a time, – but he

²³³ shoes

²³⁴ preached

²³⁵ vicinity

²³⁶ honeysuckle

²³⁷ flat on the face

also died, rigid and purple,

rather mauve, for whilst purple, particularly when deep, is a colour almost a sound, an emotion, mauve is a more moderate, quieter, a lighter bluish-purple,

one stormy night; coming also another girl Cora, who lived to be all of 12, – old enough to consent to marriage, – but then, meeting with luck, died of a fall from an apple tree; came also Elsie, who died on her ninth birthday of the chickingpox[✓], with just beyond the not to be crossed doorway all her friends, their rustic presents ungiven.

Came then in January 1542 Bethany who, with Josephine, the old woman she took to be her grandmother, teaching her all she knew, – such as : anger is seated in the heart, lust in the liver, so herewith their herbal remedies, – became a respected midwife; no doubt some interest could be kindled regarding this Bethany, for at 19 bright and forward, after meeting and marrying a gentle blacksmith John Treague, between them begetting first dead girl twins, then a man-child who lived only long enough to be named John after his grandfather, then another John who living almost into barnhed²³⁸ was taken by flood following a storm, then coming three stillbirths, came finally of her heart the sudden death of Bethany herself at age 57; but for reasons shortly to be made out[✓] clear, it is contrary to the aim of this history to too closely pursue any female branch of the Troke tree.

In 1543 and 1544 there came to John Troke and hardy Anne Marsh their eighth and ninth children : Richard and Curteis, the first, alas a sickly child pale and meagry, grew into a sickly, forever restless young man, roaming often for days the countryside in which, accosted by footpad²³⁹, he was whipt[✓] for his empty scrip²⁴⁰, his rotten boots, and by squire, by gamewatcher²⁴¹, – than their victims far more inclined

²³⁸ childhood

²³⁹ highwayman on foot

²⁴⁰ small bag or wallet

²⁴¹ gamekeeper

to rogue and malice[✓], – beaten and cursed for walking where it illy betokened a sensible man to walk if he looked to the continued safekeeping of his unperforated hinderparts, yet on, on he walked, staying away a day, a week, a month, living upon fruit such as he might get, upon berries, or whatever he could beg or feebly work for, and by enduring many sharp showers that ever ran wild from place to place, his mother believed surely he wandered but to balm the pains that are said to be suffered in a place called hell,

the only swear-word, – neither sexual, despite of four letters, nor scatological, nor bearing an one of those so apparently very satisfying plosives : a, b, c, d, p, or t, nor fricatives : f, s, or sh, – that is believed that location where the everywhere fire is said to be hot, the terror great, the pain extreme, and the duration everlasting;

though he possessed a nature much turned in upon itself, poor at school, but knowing his letters, Richard placed great faith in the family quest, where in his deeps, – in which he so much dwelled, but as in a land poor of soil, fickle of weathers, – he felt far more dearly the responsibility than his younger brother Curteis, of a far lighter heart; as one of only two remaining of his precarious line, he knew a wife would need to be not only far more than hale in health, breath, and vigorous temper, to accept such sickliness as was his for husband, but also to possess a *furor uterinus*²⁴².

Then one day in the year a thousand five hundred sixty and four, outside the stout gates of Bristol gaol, where before the gallowses gathered a croud[✓] to watch a large family of arsonites suddenly checked in their career by means of a certain quality inherent in preparations of hemp, – an activity which it was clear all but he were very pleased to like, – in espying a buxom, coming wench, mistaking plumpness for health, as well, naturally, for it often follows, fertility, Richard commenced courting Jenny Norton; for smallest silver tutoring the sons of the more welfaring²⁴³ tradesmen

²⁴² furious womb; nymphomany

²⁴³ prosperous; thriving

and merchants with his fine English, what little Latin, what less Greek he knew, with near three pounds current money of England saved, now a year older, short tale to make, married they were, Richard to his plump fancy, yet Jenny proved a stay-child²⁴⁴, but knowing it not, blaming Richard, one day ran away to be elsewhere, some said everywhither, barren, until, broken her heart and spirit by ill-using, ill-conduct, ill-usage, in four years returning to him mighty sorry, but also mighty full of that which, – for even in the chief time of virtues, vice layeth await, – had long time feared her from the ways of vice : the pox, the following month died in his bed at age 23.

Now 26 taking again to highway and byway, after many an adventure and calamity, Richard coming by chance to the helping out of a carriage from mire, meeting its occupants, one Mistress Ickle, and her daughter Alicia, who in this year of 1570 was one-and-twenty, and at this first meeting, – despite the terrible, indeed almost forever withering, — for she could hardly imagine a worse!, — embarrassment of first dropping the bourdaloue²⁴⁵ of which she was about to make use, then to cover her shame, — for which she had liked to have died, — needing badly to go backward²⁴⁶, making a thorough cough²⁴⁷, – allowing again his eye to guide his heart, – and it is difficult to determine by what particular avenue this sublimity reached this organ, – committing the error of too quickly exalting hope into passion, within a week solemnly engaging his faith to her, within a month became she his wife; though she was as plain and skinny as he, – yet sometimes casting a faint lustre, as he a sort of sprightly glare, – within nine months nighly to their wedding-night, – after much fainting, sickness, longing for all that was out of season and reason, with much spewing, five minute pissings, farting, and indiscriminate s—tting, – she begat Jonah who in the village of Wiveliscombe, in the county still of Somersetshire, grew to be a mute morose boy who, when he was ten years old, gulping an offered ale, suddenly laughing as never before (for Trokes were ever gleemen, dancers too!), stepping with such elegance, grandeur, and delicacy as to cause a little crowd to gather, suddenly dived head first to death down the village well.

²⁴⁴ one who cannot procreate

²⁴⁵ portable and concealable chamber pot, small enough to fit in a lady's muff

²⁴⁶ defecate

²⁴⁷ coughing and breaking wind at the same time

In 1572, meanwhile, to Richard & Alicia coming a son whom they named Cuthbert, a sweet if rather poorly boy, travelling to a distant fair which for five years his father promised they would together one day go to see, taking a feverous shudder aboard their faithful old horse, the boy died right there on the saddle-blanket; lastly in 1573 came Leonard, a strong child considering his by now tired, prematurely ageing father, but a fool too, for when plied with a drink, his hand adjusting his moth-eaten codpiece, he would boast a high degree of intimacy with people with whom not one would ever speak twice to him in their lives; plied with a drink more, taken next by fighting, he one day in a brawl knocked his head on a milestone, was made bedaft, and after a further six-month, – for these were roughling times, – was found beyond a far back lane,

where lately happening a fearful tempest of thunder, and flashing lightning withal, from the north, and rain, and, being full of ditches, and hollow places, meadows straight all drowned over and filled, and many running streams ran overthwart all neighbouring fields,

beaten, stripped, thrown into a flooded ditch,

this which : if only some person had chance come up, not everyone, not a many, not anyone, but someone!, such destruction may have prevented,

naked and dead at 14; the following year, 1588, Richard Troke died of lithiasis²⁴⁸ at age 45, then of a broken heart his wife Alicia at only 40, and so died this short line.

This saga now preposterous²⁴⁹ tells of the last child of John & little Anne, born in 1544, named Curteis, another strangely quiet child who kept to himself, stared often at the sky, and spoke only to ask questions which afearing every ear and eye, no mouth dared answer; pressed first by his mother, then by his father, both from their

²⁴⁸ the disease of stone

²⁴⁹ hind-part before; backward

deathbeds in 1560, to swear to the quest his allegiance,

which as it cannot be forfeited, cancelled, or altered, by any change of time,
place, motive, means, person, deed, or manner, is but rather than asked
taken from all Trokes immediately upon their birth,

Curteis so swore, but declining to give this matter his meagre faith, by failing to keep it safe in the belly of his mind, it soon escaped him, for there is nothing, absolutely nothing, that a man cannot forget, except his unalterable character; in 1593 when he was 50, Curteis, – the latest sole last of the Troke line, a celibate chaste man devoted to his teaching in a small school in the town of Bath, once called Cair Bledud, called Caerbadon, – awaking to his loins in evenlight²⁵⁰, married his young, quiet, reserved housemaid Emily Rance, who at the altar, with the service safely over, turning to the small congregation, announcing,

— I am Mistress Troke now, and gentry, so there!,

if not at that instant then at a slightly later one, as the slow realisation crept like a cold worm through all his brain, Curteis quake²⁵¹ : he had made himself undone by marrying the fifteenth daughter of a decayed tripemonger.

Soon a fine madam²⁵², growing daily more froward²⁵³, Emily quickly became[✓] something of a barge-arso²⁵⁴, and with that too eager ungraceful pliancy of peoples new to cultivation, dressing far above herself, – which might have been excusable if she was not also a dawks²⁵⁵, – without realising that the aim of wit is to throw light,

for its province is words and ideas, its method surprise, its audience the
intelligent,

²⁵⁰ twilight

²⁵¹ trembled

²⁵² woman above her station

²⁵³ haughty

²⁵⁴ with rotund behind

²⁵⁵ woman who wears fine clothes badly

this woman Rance proved very fond of saying facetely²⁵⁶ what to everyone else was coarse, asinary, or callous; next, becoming unwittingly of malapropisms²⁵⁷ an enamourite, – oh the errors and obscurity, the mistakes, the confusion, the annoyance!, that was suffered by Curteis in her ill use of words, – with her new voice, – alas retaining too many vestiges of its old, which at its heat, truth to say, was that of the nethermost²⁵⁸ gutter-slush²⁵⁹, – she removed as much colour from the face of her husband, as was given to those of their ever more rare visitors and hosts; on every seventh night, at exactly nine of the clock, far more out of duty than desire, entering knockless her black-dark bedchamber, seeking her centre with his own, plunging until he roared, at nine-twenty Curteis departed for his own bed; then one day in 1601, – in the forty-third year of the reign of sovereign Lady Elizabeth, Queen of England, France, and Ireland, defender of the faith &c, – Emily admitted, with a forced blush, that she was in a special condition.

Following 41 hours of labour came out a son, whom they called Matthew, who, if owing to the nose of his father, by owing too to the common waywardness of his mother, was at age ten run away to London, – called by Bede : *Lundonia*, – to see new motions, but wherefrom too he was soon gone : via a court, via that finisher of the law the carnifex²⁶⁰, then via a gallus²⁶¹ ending his life dancing upon nothing²⁶², thrown into the unmarked earth of a potter's field²⁶³, all for stealing two stale buns; but when this Matthew was but two years old, in 1603, came the news, – so unexpected because the loins of Curteis did all but again sloom²⁶⁴, – Emily was again gone with child, and their second son Mark, born with but an hour of struggle, far from exhausting the mother so properly consumed the father, with an affliction the physics obscurely called then *corpus debile*²⁶⁵ permitting him, tucking his loins safely away

²⁵⁶ wittily

²⁵⁷ ludicrous misuse of words

²⁵⁸ lowest

²⁵⁹ ill-behaved, coarse, vulgar, dirty woman

²⁶⁰ hangman

²⁶¹ gallows

²⁶² hanging

²⁶³ ground set aside as a burial place for criminals, paupers and unknown or friendless persons

²⁶⁴ sleep heavily and soundly

²⁶⁵ a weakened body

into everlasting desuetude²⁶⁶, to go no more again out into the world, he retired permanently to his bedchamber well prepare his heart for a not uncomfortable strae-death²⁶⁷, (which occurred in his sixtieth year in 1604); one early evening, as this decaying husband lay abed writing morbid iambic²⁶⁸ poetry,

lame always in the hinder leg, in monotonous common meter²⁶⁹, of constant catalectic foot²⁷⁰, for Curteis gave to certain words, from certain other words took away, meaning not there intended, meaning not there to spare, – pertaining either to his welcome demise or to a brief and final rescue by his Muse, – every page of which, (now in the archive), like himself, would within the year go all to the Earth,

his sloy²⁷¹ of a wife, with almost their every valuable, took herself away to far Cardiff, where with urgency and not a modicum of reserve freely gave herself away, – to many men some said, for she was alas of a sudden nympholeptic²⁷², – yet she received nothing in return, neither coin nor child, rarely even thankings.

Upon the abrupt flight of the mother, the young, distraught, inexperienced maid, Mary, conjuring²⁷³ her own mother to come from home to help her care for the two deserted children, explaining that this be Matthew Troke, and this be Mark Troke, when her mother with palpitating heart ponderously squatted between the children, and as baby Mark sweetly smiled at her, two-year-old Matthew said, *Be you our new mama?*, the woman wept; the name of this worthy good woman, – trembling with both fear and excitement in the belief that mothering may after all be no longer far behind her, – at this time of 48 summers, – whereof for the last three she had ceased to be after the manner of women²⁷⁴, – was Vesta Yorn, a poor costermonger,

²⁶⁶ state of disuse

²⁶⁷ natural death, as in a straw bed

²⁶⁸ foot consisting of two syllables, first short and second long, or first unaccented and second accented

²⁶⁹ of four lines alternately eight and six syllables to the line

²⁷⁰ wanting a syllable

²⁷¹ slatternly woman

²⁷² nymphomaniacal

²⁷³ beseeching

²⁷⁴ become menopausal

a long-lonely widow who found the two young children a godsend, a joyance in the placid emptiness of her cottage life; for nearly seven years her large bright vegetable-garden resounded with the playful painful yells of her adoptees, until, as stated, Matthew one day ran away, whereupon Mark aged nearly nine first cried with the very greatest hostility, left off his food, and moped long in silence, but when the bruises given him by his vicious brother were defaded almost to nothing, he smiled, for *in futuro*²⁷⁵ he considered himself unigenital²⁷⁶.

As nour²⁷⁷ Mark helped pull the old cart of his foster-mother, in village after village with soprano voice yelling abroad of their fresh, colourful provender, so wearing the days into years, one day a kempt²⁷⁸ roadster²⁷⁹ it was that stood patiently between the shafts of a now gaily painted covered wagon; as Vesta served her customers, listened to gossip, to scandals of a humorous or dangerous turn, Mark, now a big strong man of full barytone[✓] voice, after attending all day to their large vegetable-garden, in the evenings gave himself up to his few books,

which, as not absolutely dead things, – (as Milton would one soon day claim),
– have been called cold but sure friends, prompt, steady, faithfast,

and, as always before his sleep, to pondering the Lemuel Document, notably the mysterious reference to something called a fochesafe or vouchsafe, as well the prediction that Trokes would have no easy way of it, (the which prophecy, when persecution and vehement trouble one far day came upon them, would be seen tragically verified in the enemyful Inimicus, in the troublous person of the tyrant-murderess Ursula, as well as in Malcolm, such an arrant fool-monger as could liveth not again).

One day, when Mark was 20, saying he had a young lady for her to meet, and with

²⁷⁵ henceforth

²⁷⁶ only begotten

²⁷⁷ foster-child

²⁷⁸ combed

²⁷⁹ horse for riding, or driving, on the road

her benison²⁸⁰ they would be wed, when with that surplus of pleasure over pain Vesta had wept sufficiently for his happiness, she went to the garden to meet Marjory, at 18 the sole child of one Isaac Jenkins, occasional weaver of fine cloth, member of the Guild, and lately well-to-do for this reason : one night, beholding a dream of fire, come morningtide, when time hath wound up the wheels of his day-watch, providently sold off a property which later unsuspectingly burned down; at first gently, Marjory urged her father to expedite²⁸¹ the pressing matter of her marriage, which, due to additional pressures of business, deep in his correspondence, half-listening to her dissembling pleading, he postponed day upon day, until she chantpleure²⁸² confessed she was with child, whereupon with an exclaim of dismay, turning as pale as pearl, right there in his smoky cramped paper-strewn office on Market Place in the town of Wells, listening now to silence with all his ears, Isaac set a date anon-rightes²⁸³.

With the winter of 1623 a bitter winter, by reason believed of wetting her legs crossing a too warped foot-brig²⁸⁴, Marjory catching a chill of the chest,

with rheumatic head spoiling stomach with distillations, with distempered stomach filling head with raw vapours,

following the interpretation of her urines, one of the doctors, – boasting that his judgement in piss commeth little behind the skilfullest in that profession, – shaking his head, as the other, – overcrowding that he hath recovered sundry out of far more desperate forlorn extremities, – nodding, yet Marjory disbelieving both,

for her intuition inferred to her that if such men had been set up and promoted with great zeal in times past, in these coming ages of far more light, far more knowledge, such enervative methods as bleeding, blistering, and starving, – proving long of doubtful efficacy even to the healthy frame, yet outright dangerous to persons of even slightly inferior vitality, – must be disclaimed

²⁸⁰ blessing

²⁸¹ expedite

²⁸² singing and weeping at the same time

²⁸³ right quickly

²⁸⁴ plank across a brook

and thrown out,

sending the fools away, giving herself to Nature, who best knoweth how to work, by gathering herself up because of the child growing in her, Marjory, soon no more sadly bad²⁸⁵, was well enough to be at her sewing, and, narrowly eyeing the calendar, smiling at the kicks and the nevils²⁸⁶ in her belly.

With but a week remaining to the wedding, the clergyman suddenly took bad with a ague, so as not to disappoint this old friend of the family by finding another, poor Marjory was forced to wait a week, then two weeks, then with her water not distant far from breaking, the still unwell man of god, manually forced to it, solemnly but hurriedly, – yet properly, – gave sanction to the union of Mark & Marjory; as the minister by his curate was hasted[✓] back to his warm bed at fireside, – where waited his devoted housemaid Choad with blankets and a flagon of flip²⁸⁷, – Isaac and John by galloping carriage rushed Marjory home, where with the aid of two waiting doctors delivered of a female child which seeming at first vigorous, in a few days pining to nothing, died; on the top floor of her family house, whereto the young couple removed, four more births followed, two of full term, two of living babes, and two males, but with her milk so thin, even from so robustuous a bosom, what with the air from the street so unfresh, and with the times generally still so mortal, no gitt²⁸⁸ lived more than a few short months; then in 1629 poor Marjory herself was taken at age 24, by, of all things, the infection of a prolapsed²⁸⁹ uterus.

With the death earlier that same year of his *socer*²⁹⁰ Isaac, newly a moderately well-to-do widower, young Mark Troke, – a man of mind of firmness, of depth, but heart-broke, dearn²⁹¹, therefore far too trusting, – was all at once set upon by old colleagues of his father-in-law, pleading for loans, or demanding retribution²⁹² of

²⁸⁵ very ill

²⁸⁶ blows with the fist

²⁸⁷ mixture of beer, spirits, sugar, heated with a red-hot poker

²⁸⁸ offspring

²⁸⁹ fallen down, slipped out of place

²⁹⁰ wife's father

²⁹¹ lonely

²⁹² repayment

unevidenced debts, or calling twice for their money, &c, in short : um-be-set²⁹³, um-be-lapped²⁹⁴, gypped, soon fleeced of scarce less than the house he lived in, John grew of a sudden closed of heart, answered not his own door, and in deepest night pensively wandered the far by-lanes; one night, walking until cold dawn, finding himself deep in a different countryside, come a month more was far away, (for given reason enough Trokes were ever pelasgic²⁹⁵); dressed now in sorry drab, but with eyes, now a little flinted, a little lifted from the ground, actively seeking that experience which would give spirit enough to invigorate a nature which had so shrunk his wealth and station, one day at a public fête in Plymouth, Mark met a young lady, who, because of his travel-worn appearance, his sad brown eyes, offering him a fresh half loaf of bread and a flagon of thick milk, still warm from the oven, the cow, would have been shyly off to offer her charity to the next poor wretch, were it not for his gentle surprised manner, his offer of a silver shilling, and at her refusal his smiling malacophonous²⁹⁶ gratitude; thus speaking a little more he told her his name, she told him hers, which was Leonora Wells, (destined to become the first Vouchsafe), whereupon bowing to her he, she to him smiling curtseying, – for they were a well-bred gentleman and lady, – her mother appearing, Mark invited Leonora, – with her mother to chaperone of course, – to visit him at his house in Wells so closed up desolate, and after a full week of conferring they accepted of his invitement.

Not to linger : Mark and Leonora in this year of 1630 wedding, upon her own clever young head, by applying herself wholesomely to their accounts, – legitimate creditors going away far less sour, smiling faces of debtors so falling apart when the grieve²⁹⁷ called upon them, thenceforth settling, or going to the rogue-house²⁹⁸, or vanishing, – soon no arrearage²⁹⁹ remaining, so by these acts teaching her husband new wits and the strong use of them, in time, – by also advising he buy up this small business, sell that small holding, – they were soon far more hale in wealth than ever a Troke

²⁹³ beset on every side

²⁹⁴ wrapped around

²⁹⁵ nomadic

²⁹⁶ soft-voiced

²⁹⁷ bailiff

²⁹⁸ prison

²⁹⁹ that which remains unpaid

before; the while children came, of course, for they must, with first the twins (for Trokes were ever gemelliparous³⁰⁰, yet always dizygotic³⁰¹ : identical twins result from one fertilised ova splitting into two separate embryos, fraternal twins from the fertilization of multiple ova), Ann and David in 1631, in the following year a laughing son Paul, in 1634 another, a gifted son Emil who at first a crink³⁰², was soon no more so : four of the healthiest, happiest Troke offspring seen for many generations; ah!, but one day, in 1646, in Taunton, on the river Tone, wherebesides was their new house, proud and resplendent, they were all flung from their little sailing boat by a sudden violent squall, and, – the water deep, the little ones knowing not the motion of swimming, – all but the parents were carried away adronque³⁰³; when grief had run some its course, and they again to their loins, came their second twins Victor & Samuel, whom cosseted were, kepted[✓] well out of storms, far from water.

When Victor, – who was quiet, dark-eyed, – and Samuel, – who was fair, laughing, ferly³⁰⁴, but in manywise beautiful, – were nine years old, and in the safe keeping of a cook and nurse, the parents, twinners³⁰⁵ Mark & Leonora, on the outskirts of Canterbury, – not on a pilgrimage, but simply to see the cathedral, – contracting a mysterious wasting disease of perhaps tropical origin, (utterly unidentifiable, even at this day), were laid up feverous in a comfortable herberwe³⁰⁶, but alas without even the strength to go tabid³⁰⁷ to the window to look at least once upon that most magnificent example then extant of religious architecture at its most carnivorous; after a week, when Mark succumbed to that promise life must always keep, and when two months later the sale of her last possessions could no longer defray the cost of her keeping, placed in the care of the church, – for as the couple were carrying no sufficiently personal papers, despite exhaustive inquiries, neither their full identity nor the whereabouts of any relations could ever be established, – in a state of perpetual weakness and amnesia, there widow Leonora remained for 43 years; (in 1689, when

³⁰⁰ bearing twins

³⁰¹ non-identical

³⁰² very small shrunken child

³⁰³ drowned

³⁰⁴ strange

³⁰⁵ breeders of twins

³⁰⁶ inn

³⁰⁷ wasting, declining

son Victor aged 41 married Jane Young, Leonora at 84 promptly passed away,

this would have been at 11:37 on the nineteenth of October 1689, when
Leonora Troke, born Wells, had lived 84 years, seven months, three days,
reigning as the first Vouchsafe for 58 years, five or so months,

for it was her Vouchsafe gift alone which had kept her alive, so that it could be passed on to her successor).

In 1658, – at about the time coffee was introducing into England, coffee-houses set up, – well!, from seeming nowhere, – dressed improbably in a tight lake³⁰⁸ gown with a very low *encolure*³⁰⁹ beset by a giant purple breast-knot³¹⁰, – a woman appeared at the home of the orphan twins Samuel & Victor aged ten, claiming to be their grandmother Emily Rance, – by now a wily, lately disprisoned, fubsy³¹¹ baggage of 83, – and with her voluble cacology³¹², a dog-eared paper or two, thus as sole relative of the grandsons proving to all her exclusive right if not quite yet of inheritance then of occupancy of the residence, before an astonished populace this horrid woman proceeded almost at once to allow the lovely house people itself with a numerous company of low-lived ne'er-do-wells of the vulgar and criminal class, some lately dwelling in Alsatia³¹³,

such as a natty-lad³¹⁴, a swell-mobsman³¹⁵, a drawlatch³¹⁶, a common fingerer³¹⁷,
a bid-stand³¹⁸, a cadator³¹⁹, a bayn³²⁰, and a scape-gallows³²¹,

³⁰⁸ deep crimson

³⁰⁹ opening at neck

³¹⁰ knot of ribbons worn on the breast

³¹¹ fat, squat

³¹² improper selection of words; bad pronunciation

³¹³ district in Whitefriars between Fleet Street and the Thames, a sanctuary for debtors and criminals until 1697

³¹⁴ young pickpocket

³¹⁵ pickpocket who assumes guise of respectable people

³¹⁶ house-breaker

³¹⁷ thief

³¹⁸ highwayman

³¹⁹ beggar pretending to be a decayed gentleman

³²⁰ murderer

³²¹ one who has narrowly escaped hanging

as well smugglers, and all manner of demented, depraved ruffians, so that the handsome dwelling quickly acquired the reputation of a flash-house³²², and oh, if they were all not yet gallows-ripe, these panderly³²³, sixpenny rascals, then once certain³²⁴ it is : they were deserving, every last one of them, of rods in piss³²⁵!

What with first their guardian, then their housekeeper, then their aged tutor, fleeing, despite the constant revel-coyle³²⁶, the neglected twins, managing one way or other to shift for themselves, after three months were awoken one night in their bedchamber by a withered figure in stature of the highest size of men, a lately excommunicated cleric who, – because diverse doctrines through ways contrarious doth many minds, — especially if their manners unstable are and frail, — distract and sore encumber, – by clammerscull³²⁷ hard-taken, wielding an immense mahogany marlin-spike, in a resonant bass voice, booming,

— *Domandum est corpus!*³²⁸, the two boys leaping shrieking nightgowned up, first one was pursued through the house, and loudly questioned, — *Loquerisne linguam Latinam?*³²⁹, then the other, — *none Latine loquitur?*³³⁰, then again the first, — *vos operor non narro Latin?*³³¹,

– all this before any amount of laughing from the comrogues³³², – then out the open front door down the street ran the two terrified boys, in their ears the near whistle of his weapon, one glance whereof would have let out their harnes³³³; aye!, three silent but panting figures fleeing elseward through the sleeping town *pari pasu*³³⁴, until the

³²² house frequented by thieves; where stolen goods are received

³²³ having the quality of a pimp or bawd

³²⁴ absolutely certain

³²⁵ urine-steeped rods administered as a punishment

³²⁶ noisy merriment

³²⁷ heady drink that clambers up to the skull

³²⁸ the body must be tamed!

³²⁹ do you speak Latin?

³³⁰ does he not speak Latin?

³³¹ you do not speak Latin?

³³² fellow rogues

³³³ brains

³³⁴ at an equal rate of progress

mad cleric, – of name Jame Lucid, – eventually slowed, stopped, collapsed prone, and gasped,

— *Estoy in mis trece!*³³⁵, *deus, volo non valeo!*³³⁶, then rising to his kneen³³⁷ wept with exceeding sore weeping, — *O deus, non sum qualis eram!*³³⁷

As small as was then the town, the brothers soon became lost from each other, Samuel the more so because his dyscrasia³³⁸ enjoyed to deny him the last two of those five wits³³⁹ thought sufficient for survival; despite seeming half the time a one deficient in sense, Samuel was nevertheless a beautiful child, not only to the eyes but indeed to the heart, which like the liver, – lately usurped from the seat of violent or romancical feelings, – is now reputed naught but an essential organ; though it is said a strong man must labour, – for no man strong or mighty to labour should be idle, – a valiant man fight, a wise man show himself : because a fair and beautiful person seemingly doth all with ease, Samuel, without any painstaking, learning to live by such wits as he had, or the half rather, – for at best his head never did contain any great amount of brains, – wheretoever he wandered, whilst men soon smiled, hiddenly cranking their temples with horizontal index, women smiling gave him alms, jill³⁴⁰ and younghede³⁴¹ lough³⁴² and gave coin for his clever if somewhat ribald quatrains, and children ran about to see him, wondering at him, smiling, viewing him round; when he was more grown it astonished³⁴³ everyone to learn that because of a certain pintulary³⁴⁴ disformity, – actually his paraphimotic³⁴⁵, almost mucronated³⁴⁶ sexual member was said to be, — indeed near was!, — in bigness in like to that of a German sausage of largest sort, – there awakened even in the most fastidious of

³³⁵ I have not changed my mind!

³³⁶ god, I am willing but unable!

³³⁷ O god, I am not what I once was!

³³⁸ malfunction, imbalance in blood

³³⁹ common wit, imagination, fantasy, estimation, and memory

³⁴⁰ young woman

³⁴¹ youth

³⁴² laughed

³⁴³ astonished

³⁴⁴ relating to the penis

³⁴⁵ permanently retracted of prepuce

³⁴⁶ narrowed to a sharp point

women, – unwelcomely occasionally in some men too, – the haptic urge³⁴⁷.

Wishing to tarry no longer[✓] space, particularly with a Troke male who furthered the quest nothing,

though there deserves one very brief remark in this place : despite his wondersly[✓] maim, his tarriwags³⁴⁸ were of very average size,

following intimacies unseemly, scandalous, almost fatal,

yet truly : Samuel was not so giant that in an occasional women he could not find a comfortable, even commodious, cellarage, for in literature, as much as in life, it seems ever the unfair case that the large man is envied, the large woman not, and yet as there is no man who would not have a woman smaller, so is there not a woman who would not have a man larger,

beside abortments, called then castlings, there came also births, but as if to despite his own beauty, only one of his babes was beautiful, aye, one child only was not an unformed stillbirth, or born at six months an hispidulous³⁴⁹ monster, all wretched twisted of organ and blood, or at nine months an angel all smiles and virtue on its two faces, its taloned hands imploring, its little hooves kicking, (for there was ever the monster in Trokes, producing up to this time such abnormalities as dwarfism, triple dentition, double uvula, – which is that ovopyriform³⁵⁰ ball hanging in the throat, – and a fleshy or bony tail appended to the coccygeal³⁵¹ region, but let this not forth withal be taken for common examples).

Then in 1677 it one day came to pass that Samuel 29, – in Exeter this was, he giddy, certainly, beautiful still, ever foolhappy³⁵², and not an inch less hugeous, – a very new

³⁴⁷ the need to touch

³⁴⁸ testicles

³⁴⁹ rough with stiff hairs

³⁵⁰ shaped between a pear and an egg

³⁵¹ of the small triangular bone at the base of the vertebral column

³⁵² lucky without contrivance or judgement

feeling coming over him very strong, climbing a high wall, laying down in a beautiful garden-bed given wholly to the fig-marigold, and midday arriving : opening all the flowers, – which are said to know nothing of the blights, the distortions, which beset the human being, – he sighed, and, very quietly, very calmly, short while after, died; for leagues or hours around, when after flew the words that Silly Sam was dead, buried naked³⁵³, his ingenuous smile, his peculiarities also, – a subject which, given chance, mirth would be pleased to linger longer upon, – of course his beauty, and everywhere his wonderfully allantoid³⁵⁴ member, all were lost : these be heavy news.

His sole surviving offspring, – a strange one enough as might be expected, – was a girl called Rachel; now because so much, for want of language, plain namelessness, cannot be made to re-enter this mortal reality, many events, for want simply of the words, must be overpassed in this narrative, – moments of magic, of pathos, of other things, – the end of Rachel need not be, even be she doubly disqualified from inclusion in this history : not only a female, but born out of wedlock, a bastardess, for as one of the ten lines of the Lemuel Document states :

Troke bloud shalbe naught impure, nor of offspring wedlocke out;

but it must be upon the clearest understanding that if this history now indulges itself in the remembrance of so lovely a girl fated to so tragic an end, such cannot become a habit?, very well.

Now as much for her person as for her parts Rachel was all comely, all sweet, her radiant skin of olivaster³⁵⁵, her looks feline, in nature she was lovely, but alas given to daydreamt visions, which caused her own rustic people simply out of fear to shun her; one day at harvest-time, during fourings³⁵⁶, standing up in her long smock, with no clouds for full a many league round, without wily beguiles or hysteria, slowly, painfully slowly to witness, raising her slender brown arm, pointing exactly skyward,

³⁵³ unable to meet the expense of a woollen shroud stipulated in the Burying in Woollen Act, passed in 1660 and reinforced in 1678

³⁵⁴ shaped like a sausage

³⁵⁵ olive colour, brown

³⁵⁶ afternoon meal taken at four o'clock in harvest time

she saw there a vision remarkable at least for its utterly incomprehensibility, (but in a far future day, in these, almost the after ages of the world, unworthy even of a glance), calling it a silver chariot from the stars, first she was mocked, as was usual, then, standing there still pointing, admonished, asked to recant, yet still pointing, she was jostled, slapped, then chased angrily from the field.

Following a wittenage-mote³⁵⁷ held that evening in which she was formally expelled the village, Rachel departing, sleeping the night in a far ruined barn with only an ailing goat for company, in the days to come eating berries, grass, leaves, sleeping sometimes in a wanwood³⁵⁸, or a hedge, or a ditch, none of which offered truly overmuch in shelter, yet sometimes, when she was lucky, burrowing deep into the warm snug of a haystack, research has since shown that her thoughtless wanders were as remarkable for their strangely pattern as for their thoroughness, for she successively crossed every single morgen³⁵⁹ of a quintant³⁶⁰, every point thereof was her home, to which she dearly longed to return; but at each of her five approaches, – bearing a gift of a bunch of wild flowers and of five-leaf clovers she was always finding, – sighted, villagers gathering, cruel words and gestures hurled, a warning arrow, stones thrown, turnips, even copper coins, so each kept this lonely, innocent, beautiful, yet too feared young girl at a distance in his or her own fashion.

Thereupon, her forlornness acknowledged unanswerable, setting a straight course to nowhere in particular but eastward, with winter so toward coming then a sudden bad turn of weather, with bitter cold, days whole of sleet and gale, near to freezing utterly lost in country far away, Rachel came through the mists upon a minchery³⁶¹ situate in a deep wood, – itself part of a forest, which in these times meant[✓] an area of unenclosed countryside consisting of a variable mixture of lands : woodland, heathland, scrub, and agricultural,

whereat, (even to this day, though the wood is gone), hale, bright, yet foolish

³⁵⁷ meeting of wise men

³⁵⁸ pale, gloomy woods

³⁵⁹ amount of land a man can plough in a morning, about two acres

³⁶⁰ fifth part of a circle

³⁶¹ nunnery

women, praying almost round the clock, hide away from many features of their species, the better to commit that heresy of allowing a too new mind deny their ancient biology its wise rightful voice, thus making them enemies to their own happiness, their own species;

at the stout gate, her strength so feeble waxing passing faint, she knocked long, pleaded with a sky, – which at times seemed exclusively her own to answerably look upon, – not to let her yet die, but none came to her aid until, during a brief hiatus in the thunder, at last heard, coming the diverse women, some stately, others hurrying, others again fearful, others yet again tearful, taking in the perished³⁶² girl, stripping her of her frozen rags, giving her rich soup in an *écuelle*³⁶³, whilst embathing her in a large wooden tub, bundling her up in soft chalons³⁶⁴ wove by their own clever hands, continuing to press food upon her from their impressive board³⁶⁵, she was placed in a warm bed in a vacant dortor³⁶⁶.

With her health springing forth speedily, by patiently heeding all directives, both docile and clamorous, hardy Rachel proved not only a boon to the garden, but an example to all if not exactly of piousness then of perfect obedience, and though she believed only with her eyes, – great eyes of blue depths, blue, darkly, deeply, beautifully blue, – she was now wise enough to say nothing of what she occasionally observed in the sky, the manner of which, – or *how* she saw, – there was nothing sufficiently uncommon in it, not worth the setting down, the details of which, – *what* she saw, – inexpressibly uninteresting, shall be for all time omitted; but when spring was standing conqueror, with winter at her feet, childed seemed she, but impossibly, for the plain indisputable fact was that she had never formed a criminal, – nor come to that even a tender, – connection with any man, for when accosted on the by-ways, or in the small lazar house³⁶⁷ adjoining their retreat, with merely a look of her remarkable eyes, a shake of her head, or if necessary with bloodied nails and

³⁶² starved with cold or hunger

³⁶³ two-handled soup or porridge bowl

³⁶⁴ blankets

³⁶⁵ table

³⁶⁶ sleeping room, bed chamber

³⁶⁷ leprosarium

bruises, she always fleetest away, for the sum is this : Rachel remained to the end of her days intact; wind she called it, later water, yet powerful purgatives, – called then a *flagellum medicorum*³⁶⁸, – flayed but purged her not.

Those who believed her innocent whispered that her condition was surely come by one of the barns or haystacks wherein she had told them she had slept, wherein, or so they had heard, resided still fresh and warm that seed of famed resilience : by the lonely sons of farmers manually spilt, quickly, often, copiously; others, remembering the sickly goat, wondered if this animal had known her in her sleep, for if so then it was surely a creature of incomparable delicacy, gentleness, not to say precision; meanwhile, as others fancied more darkly, – some so fantastically that, cooling toward her, whispering turned away at her approach, when before they turned toward, the better to welcome and smile, – so did a malice, – born of those usual ingredients : fear, — which is nearly always good thoughts warping reality, not bad thoughts making real, — envy, and ignorance, – grow daily stronger; recalling vaguely a passage read to her long ago from the bible book, – the very useful purpose of which, she was told, was to give shelter and rest to such terrors and horrors as keep in check that multitude of man which is ever fickle, full of lawless desires, unreasoning angers, violent passions, – thinking that her condition, by coming of some magical origin, had rendered her divinely parthenoparous³⁶⁹, she found herself not alone with this thought, for one day summoned before the never met hegumene³⁷⁰, a very elderly abbess, in the accusatory converse, – because there was not anything in these allegations, a longer disputation about so plain a case shall not need, – the devil, – said at that day, in a thousand several shapes, after diverse fashions, with several engines, illusions, and by several names, in several places and countries, was sent abroad to bull³⁷¹ the habitators³⁷² of the Earth, – did not long remain unmentioned.

There now enters this story a sadistic ecclesiastic, who because he was a fanatical

³⁶⁸ physician's lash

³⁶⁹ bearing offspring without fertilisation

³⁷⁰ head of a nunnery

³⁷¹ deceive

³⁷² inhabitants

believer in the measures adopted by the inquisitor Thomas de Torquemada, dead less than a century, was so troublous to his church there was an anathema preparing against him³⁷³, but which, because of his mobility was not yet presented into his hands; learning his skills in recognising witches from *Malleus Maleficarum* by Jacob Sprenger, as well from the writings of the witch-finder general, Matthew Hopkins, dead then 41 years, he looked wrathful close at the hands of the girl, then into her bluest eyes peered, into her mouth filled with whitest teeth, into her tiny ears, then stripping off her coarse habit, after careful, inchmeal examination, finding upon her ilium³⁷⁴ precisely what he was looking for : a supernumerary nipple, – which five per cent of all women can own to, – finally with bloodied fingers gleefully announcing her parthenos³⁷⁵, this he believed was fully in keeping with her diabolic seeding.

After fastidiously washing his hands in three waters, with manifest satisfaction drying them, then with repugnance straight throwing the towel from him out the window, he promised the elderly abbess that what the girl brought forth would not be human, nay!, but would bear in all probability horns, a tail, and powers diabolic to their sweet world; in an arthrology³⁷⁶ of his own invention demanding then to[✓] his surdimutist³⁷⁷ adjuvant³⁷⁸,

a hunchback of name Hobbet, who, ringing a brass hand-bell to announce his outgrossing passage, like so many deformed persons, was extreme bold and sharp, for he could read and write Latin, Greek, French, German, and Spanish,

that he prepare a stake with faggots, ignoring the now outraged pleadings of the abbess that such was fell, – which means cruel, – illegal, even evil, Nathaniel Crawshay, – for this was the name of this hilding³⁷⁹, – went unmindful to the window to take in of his god an air which would shortly be far less impure and tainted.

³⁷³ formal ecclesiastical excommunication

³⁷⁴ upper part of the hip-bone

³⁷⁵ virgin

³⁷⁶ deaf and dumb language

³⁷⁷ deaf and dumb

³⁷⁸ assistant

³⁷⁹ base wretch

Following all this came further twists and turns to the brief tableau that was the end of the short sad life of sweet Rachel Troke, – for instance : an attempted rescue, an imperfect poisoning of the mad ecclesiastic, – but these shall not be elaborated upon, forasmuch as all this, – however interesting, and however they might prove even further to be, – is, as stated, immaterial to this saga, so mention will only be made of the decease of both victim and felon, firstly she : following disfiguring torture, confession of any and every crime or evil, tied broken to a stake, (like an hundred thousand others during the three centuries to 1750), to be burnt whilst alive, the anemophilous³⁸⁰ girl upturned her angelic face to a sky where final perfect visions awaited to console and embrace her, whereas of other vitality showed she almost none; as the flames engulfed her, it was first to the annoyance of the ecclesiastic that she cried not out like all that at the stake have the fire set to them, then to his extreme miscomfort, his too slight discredit, that he and many saw through the flames a flawless male child burst forth from her belly, tumble into the conflagration of faggots, and there, writhing, blackening, like its mother, *convicta et combusta*³⁸¹, hissing, crackling, at last became quiet : all very horrible, no doubt, but as this was the world then and how it goeth, no more need be said.

Lastly he : the fate of the felon was in two years and three innocent deaths more to be taken by the King's men, imprisoned, and, begging for a mercy which he believed his god,

fancied the supreme disposer of all, against whose inscrutable counsels, – sanctioning banishment, torture, drowning, stoning, hanging, burning, strangling, and detruncation³⁸² of the head, – he believed it was vain as well as impious to murmur,

did not permit him to receive,

³⁸⁰ fertilised by the wind

³⁸¹ convicted and burnt

³⁸² lopping or cutting off

not from some unworthiness in his person, neither some inordinateness in his desire, nor some unfitness or unseasonableness in the thing desired, nor for a defect of love, nor something or other not right on his part, no, but from simply that inattention common to the inexistent,

surrounded by ghosts with purple collars, ghosts with robes of fire, he died screaming without even time or thought enough to say yours sincerely goodbye to Assumption, Lent, and Epiphany.

Meanwhile Victor, twin brother to Samuel : wandering far and wide, after numerous adventures finding himself one day in full manhood in the far wild mountains tolerably high of snowy Wales where dwelt with incredible uncouthness that jealously guarded ignorance of the montigenous³⁸³, he was employed as a shepherd by a family called Hardimore, and from morn to eve with his crummock³⁸⁴ he tended their fleecy properties,

which he quickly found so insufferably stupid he called them, – as did Aristotle, — a keeper of slaves, — and please pardon the ancient expression, – f—king sheeps, for so it clearly seemed to this man, whom no one would ever have considered a s—t-fire³⁸⁵, that these two words, – which to Victor answered to each other well enough etymologically, – would be forever melded into that excerebrose³⁸⁶ singleton³⁸⁷ : sheeps;

fled from a famined Ireland toward hope, survivors of the family Hardimore had found it surely, for, prospering well, came there eight healthy children, one of whom was named Elizabeth; after objection and approval, travail and encouragement, – for the large family was divided over the worthiness of the outlander, – she and Victor were permitted to wed in the small village of Y Graig, (now vanished), whereafter in 1681 they brought to this Earth three healthy boys with but ten months between, their

³⁸³ those born amidst mountains

³⁸⁴ crook

³⁸⁵ one who loses his temper easily

³⁸⁶ brainless

³⁸⁷ single thing

names : Thomas, Seamus, and Glynn, who, brazed³⁸⁸ by that neglect come of placing survival of sheeps above nurturing, and commerce above simple love, these three brothers, much given to wildness, soon to hardness, then to cruelty, when caught at wrongdoing their modicum of remorse immediately faded to nothing when the punishment, often quite severe, which of course left them corsesder³⁸⁹, was concluded.

One day, out of no more than simple boredom, after pouring upon a sleeping vagrom³⁹⁰, a jugful of tallow, – stolen for the very purpose, – setting fire on him, after mowing³⁹¹ and laughing as he ran screaming aflame, falling, rolling, moaning, smouldering, and groaning, suddenly no more amusing, what little life remained in him kicked they with all their six heavy boots out, – hard to believe them be Trokes!, – whereupon they decided to go fishing; lounging on the bank of a rushing stream, the hooks of their light tender fishing rods of hazel baited with dew-worms³⁹², they leuch³⁹³ as they endlessly mimicked their poor victim, – for they that horrid joy enjoyed which made all others mourn, – then after roasting and eating two fair fish went home to their supper; their poor mother, sensing new mischief, rated³⁹⁴, then with an oven pyle³⁹⁵ beat her worthless sons until with if not pride then with what she thought far worse, indifference, they confessing all, poor Elizabeth, who had simply had enough, fleeing to her bed, died a few months later at age 30 of what was then called softening of the brain³⁹⁶; directly after the funeral of his wife, whereat the distraught Victor was almost sole mourner, for the shame of it all, the grief, the guilt, – by means of no map acquainted with the good ways and the bad, the safe passes and the dangerous, and the proper situations for encampment, – first walking, then running, he forthfared away.

With the disappearance of their father, Thomas, Seamus, and Glynn were passed

³⁸⁸ hardened

³⁸⁹ the worse off

³⁹⁰ tramp

³⁹¹ grimacing and making faces

³⁹² earthworms

³⁹³ laughed

³⁹⁴ severely reprovved

³⁹⁵ long-handled wooden shovel for removing loaves from oven

³⁹⁶ apoplexy

from home to home until, desperate glad to be rid of them, they were sent in 1695 aged 14, 13, and 12, to a sort of orphanage in Cardiff, whereupon came almost immediately the triple violation of one Sarah Trepanier, a teacher of English, who, – if a fallen woman, was certainly a repentant, and if not high-born then a very decent lady overall, – as an unfortunate consequence of acknowledging only once her priapic³⁹⁷ heat conceiving, then in imperfect privacy begetting a daughter who as well as withered was soon blessed dead, in contrition of her sole shame she to this far land in mitigation coming, so almost straight to her second and last calamity at the hands of three young brutes; unable now to face any life at all, she wrote,

at length too, for she was afraid that by withholding even the very smallest detail, she would not sufficiently mitigate her guilt to earn that refrigerium³⁹⁸, – of which Origen speaketh, – which ensured her burning in hell would not be forever,

of her two violations,

(and truly in so effigurative³⁹⁹ a style, – though never in one strain for two paragraphs together, yet without any unnecessary ornament, tricks, or displays of lighting, – this offensive, vulgar, yet immensely crafted, entirely honest document, as a wondrous celebrated example of *facetiae*⁴⁰⁰, – before its retrieval to the Troke archive, – in 1863 found a choice place in one of the more private wings of the Vatican library),

whereupon she took poison; upon hearing of her death and confession, the three brothers, pursued by an incensed mob, to save themselves harmless, ran clean away with all the haste they could make.

Thomas, adventuring the next year to sea, died with[✓] a snakebite in Rabat in

³⁹⁷ sexual

³⁹⁸ respite granted to the souls of the damned

³⁹⁹ elaborate, detailed description of an object or event

⁴⁰⁰ pornography

Morocco at age 19, directly after raping a young Arab girl, Seamus, becoming first a sort of Abraham Man⁴⁰¹, then a pilliard⁴⁰², died at age 26 in 1708 of his heart in a fresh-scythed field in Burgundy, and Glynn, – despite in Tunis, for stealing an antique solleret⁴⁰³, surviving apellous⁴⁰⁴ 1000 lashes, administered *seriatim*⁴⁰⁵, – contracted lung sickness⁴⁰⁶, and utterly alone on the porch of a pretty cottage in the downs of Yorkshire, in a chestnut rocker made with his own hands, in late May of 1709, as the day wore to evening staring in godless wonder at a sunset, the light disporting in ever mingling dyes of screaming colour, after a short life, but of so many perilous hurts, with a gulp and a cough of blood, took to the sky at age 26.

As these three brothers were denied one living descendant, legitimate or otherwise, the Troke line might again have died out were it not that their father Victor, one day ceasing running from the shame of his murderous sons, near the town of Whitland, where it chanced him to make a journey into : reading fascinated *A Booke of Sundry Draughtes* by Walter Gedde published in 1613, after patiently serving his time becoming a verrer⁴⁰⁷, at age 41 met and married a rather quiet woman of 31, Jane Reading Young, who, upon the very day of their wedding began to suffer strange, not to say supraliminal⁴⁰⁸, experiences, for she as little knew, as her husband similarly, – despite cryptic mention made in the Lemuel Document, in its wallet, around his neck, – that she was now the second Vouchsafe, as stated above; during the seven years of their marriage, for Victor died in 1696 of his stomach, Jane bore him only one son Harold, after which, suffering the constancy of strange vague assaults upon all her senses, her health ruined out, – for the stirrings in her mind, — great because never brought out to the distinct consciousness of words, therefore never investigated, — undermined and rotted her system, – Jane lived as an invalid until 1718; due then to his mother too sam-hale⁴⁰⁹ to raise him, placed in the keeping

⁴⁰¹ vagrant beggar pretending to be lunatic

⁴⁰² beggar with artificial sores

⁴⁰³ shoe made of steel plates as part of a suit of armour

⁴⁰⁴ without a skin

⁴⁰⁵ with pauses for nursing back to a lacerable state

⁴⁰⁶ tuberculosis

⁴⁰⁷ glazier

⁴⁰⁸ above the threshold of conscious knowledge

⁴⁰⁹ poor healthed

of his sole relations, his Welsh grandparents, thus Harold, as each day packed its load of strength into his frame, grew up healthily in the snow-capped mountains of Wales amid sheeps and sheepdogs, within hail of wild deer, within sight of wild pigs, within sound of an occasional last bear.

When he was 15, with the adopted daughter of a scholarly shepherd, – with whom whilst discussing matters philosophical, he nightly played chess, – Victor having intimacy, – her sweet nature mirroring her sweet name, which was Gwendoline Longton, (who at 25, when Jane the second Vouchsafe died at age 60, would become the third Vouchsafe), – though barely 12, – only that very month experiencing her menarche⁴¹⁰, – she became at 13 first a child-wife, – small, boyish, prone to occasional lowerings⁴¹¹, – then a child-mother more healthy than seemed possible, of a daughter, bonny and beautiful, yet she at first cried much, whom they named Gwyneth, – which in Welsh means happiness, – and then, two years later in September came a son Anthony, then shortly thereafter fist evidence of a third child; but one day whilst in the treeline chopping firewood, Harold, aged then 19, cut his ankle✓ so very deep, he walked, tired, stopped, walked, hopped, stopped, sat, lay back, fainted, and so bled to death ere reaching his home, a crude but comfortable stone farmhouse halfway up a mountain; during the funeral, daughter Gwyneth, left in the safe care of her grandmother, died when their beloved cat, whom they called Pig, silently smothered her during an afternoon nap.

Because her husband, showing her the original document, had carefully explained the Troke quest in all its wondrous details, – because a quest, particularly evolutionary, structures very thought, very character, – now realising that the future of a great family could hardly be built from the savage living and easy misfortune which come of sheeps, with her sole son Anthony, – already unusually quickly forward for a child not out two years' time✓, – Gwendoline journeyed with their spartan luggage to Cardigan where was bought passage to Portsmouth; on May fourth aboard *Sea Lady*, – with sails hoised looking a seaworthy vessel enough, yet

⁴¹⁰ first menstrual period

⁴¹¹ depressions

thought of mariners an unwholesome ship : drawing little water, and long, – filled with sheeps, manned by a motley crew not too greatly practised to the sea, in the face very of flaws⁴¹², set parlous⁴¹³ sail.

In sudden winds which had the power, working so high, so great, to move even the Earth, in waters so contrary, with so violent a send, it drave the vessel, into even rougher seas, to meet there ever more difficult blastments, then, winds turning them about, blown up the coast, cliffs above them and rocks beside, escaping, but becoming then sanded⁴¹⁴, with live sheeps lightening the boat which otherwise was impossible to live in so infuriate a sea every minute of every hour almost upon casting them all away, so did the vessel mount and plummet, so was she altogether so run and folden in and so shroudly shaken, despite every sailor doing the best they could, that the sea eat them not up.

Was then a rock split upon by this ship?, were they cast all away and splitted to fitters⁴¹⁵?, nay : on May tenth of the year 1710, after escaping further troubles with cross-tacks, veerings, cloudless calm suddenly ensuing, with splinted mast, patched sail, winds turning agreeably about, having a passing good blow of wind in the poop of the ship, turning not back but setting themselves again to forward their voyage southward, so was the sea traversed, so was the ragged vessel landed safe at Portsmouth, and so disembarked seven months teem⁴¹⁶ Gwendoline, with her son Anthony, the fifth generation since Lemuel, and, (until the birth of his brother Thomas), sole heir-male to the Troke line.

There!, if these first pages have displayed a work of clarity, simplicity, elegance, vigour, and variety, then what will follow,

continuing to be neither overfine, nor yet over-careless,

⁴¹² sudden gusts or violent attacks of bad weather

⁴¹³ perilous, dangerous

⁴¹⁴ driven onto a sand-bank

⁴¹⁵ fragments, pieces

⁴¹⁶ pregnant

will surely comprise only as good writing, – after all a relative matter, – in which nothing will be either too unclear or too complicated, nor inelegant, nor lacklustre, nor too monotonous.