

1768

With twin sons of Odette, Louis & Marcel, and 40 miles away, the three sons of Virginie, Claude, Jean, and Harold, all continuing ganty¹, their now wholly bedrede² grandmother suffered both her tumour and the horror of her imminent extinguishing with the fortitude of one who has been proud to make of a life something not nothing; because Gwendoline was but the third Vouchsafe, and could only wordlessly sense, and to a small degree see, a great deal more than ordinary mortals, and in full awareness of so much more to witness, so very much more to discover daily more new, both inside herself and out, she grieved, (as would Vouchsafes all, even the last), that such gifts, wherever they came from, came to her so slowly, so vaguely.

As Gwendoline modestly thought herself the very first Vouchsafe rather than the third, (for it was the fifth of this line who properly established and dated the lineage), it will be presumed necessary to remind the reader, – whose tenacity of memory is fully unknowable, as perhaps much else, – that the Vouchsafe ancestresses were as follow : first Leonora (1605-1689) who came into her Vouchsafedom about 1631, 138 years before, but whose talents, so embryo, indeed so almost unperceived, – acknowledging of course that it was said in these times that a woman who heeds her mind over her heart falls readily into error, – caused her to think herself simply a woman nervously astucious³, and by interpreting her often disconcerting flashes of knowledge, even prescience, as merely a somewhat pronounced womanly intuition and instinct, and by never wondering beyond a frown, she seemed scarcely to warrant the title; second Vouchsafe Jane (1658-1718), also ignorant of her station, – for as the Vouchsafe gift was then still scarcely more than infantile, so in a sense

¹ in good health

² bed-ridden

³ of keen perception; of astute and penetrating discernment

was the mind attempting to undergrope⁴, therefore embrace so feckful⁵ a visitation, – was so stricken with her far less few talents that she took to her bed for the last 18 years of her life.

But it was third Vouchsafe Gwendoline who was truly the first to be entitled to the addition⁶, the very first to knowledge that her skills, however confusing and frightening, were not innate but gifted; quietly suffering the dreadful pain she felt, first in her chest, later in her stomach, then eachwhere⁷, Gwendoline found distraction from the horror of her caducity⁸ in fully allowing herself to become transfixed, sometimes almost stupefied, by her almost daily improving abilities, sometimes mumbling a few words which for the most part were simply superlatives; (it will soon be seen that the Vouchsafe gift, for not dissimilar reasons, was as crippling in the beginning as it was at the end for the last two, or perhaps three, or even four, Vouchsafes).

When came the time of her gentle death, – with husband Edmund, son Anthony 60 and his wife Hortense 54, their son Lemuel 34, again daughter-in-law Odette 32, — for she had been carefully cajoled into a second ceremony, — and her twin sons Louis & Marcel 11, plus a selection of heart-faithful servants, all sitting and standing around her bed, many weeping, – holding the dying hand, Odette uttering a sharp cry,

this was at 14 :39 on the twenty-second of March 1768, and Gwendoline Troke, born Longton, lived 75 years, two months, 22 days, reigning as the third Vouchsafe for 49 years, ten months, two days,

turning deadly pale, falling into a chair, felt herself suddenly occupied by much that

⁴ conceive or understand

⁵ powerful

⁶ title

⁷ everywhere

⁸ perishableness, transitoriness

was neither of her owning nor of her making, for with everything indefinably enhanced to her startled eyes, her panicked mind, the concerned voices from all quarters seemed newly to confess but a half, nay!, a quarter of their freight; as she leapt up and rushed distraught pursued from the room, only Lemuel held all his ground, for he was the first to know that his own dear wife was now the new Vouchsafe, (who in turn, at her death, without either choice or the knowledge of whom the accipient⁹ was to be, passed on her gifts to another legitimate Troke wife, for this is the way with this otherwise almost unselecting phenomenon; but alas by much of her life fighting her gift, thus preventing their proper development, – and this is only partly suppositive, – fourth Vouchsafe Odette would cause the travails of her successors to be even further overfraught).

The funeral, held on a day, not remarkably for late March, balmy and languid, – and so well-attended, the family was abayst¹⁰ at the large number of friends Gwendoline had acquired, – following the exequies¹¹, as two groups of boys, – the five young sons of the latest generation, – looked sadly each at the others from across the descended shell¹², widower Edmund, now 79, still slender, unbent, – (but because the woman he loved simply too severed him from his being, come a twelvemonth would be content to join his wife in the sky,

convenient metaphor for oblivion, for nothingness), –

spoke calmly, movingly, but not at too great length, of his dear wife, and whilst this was an occasion in which was natural there be dreeriment¹³, – for even Trokes a little contrived it on occasion, – the tears were strangely few, as if tearlessness was a greater tribute, a greater truer sorwe¹⁴, and when Lemuel delivered of his own very

⁹ recipient

¹⁰ amazed

¹¹ funeral rites

¹² coffin

¹³ sadness

¹⁴ sorrow

moving *éloge*¹⁵, his words neither were sufficient to cause more eyes to drop down many tears; as the gravediggers shovelled, Lemuel spoke privately with Virginie, his still lovely but quondam¹⁶ wife, first thanking her for accepting of his invite, then after voicing his admiration of her boys aged ten, nine, and eight, introduced her to his wife Odette.

The better to permit mourners impart the sincerity of their condolences, Trokes spent muchwhat¹⁷ two hours in the small, green and trim graveyard within sight of the *château*, until forswunk¹⁸ by the ordeal,

for given the opportunity the dead can drain far more energy than the living,

all retired into the house; whilst sipping his tea, meditatively admiring of his grandmother, one or other of his twin sons Louis & Marcel, loath to infract¹⁹ his reverie but nevertheless doing so, asking Lemuel, Papa, who were those boys at the funeral?, and Lemuel answering that they were children of one of the many friends of their excellent great-grandmother, hereupon the boys looked at him so askance,

meaning here and everywhere, as in *Mort D'Arthur* : a look sidewise, a side glance, obliquely, askew, asquint, with a side or indirect meaning, such as doubt,

he asked if they would like Claude, Jean, and Harold to come visit them, and with Louis & Marcel gleefully agreeing, so an invitation was sent, to which Virginie promptly dispatched an affirmative reply.

With Virginie and her sons making their call the very next week, with all five boys

¹⁵ funeral oration

¹⁶ former

¹⁷ nearly

¹⁸ exhausted

¹⁹ infringe upon

delighting as well to talk as to play *ball in the decker*²⁰, she and Lemuel promenaded the huge²¹, heavily scented, almost cloyingly colourful garden discussing the to-comyng²² of their sons, for as he explained : lately becoming very aware of the dangerous revolutionary situation then in that country so threatening as to render them all unsure if they would have the pleasure of the society of their head on the morrow, he and his family would shortly be departing France for England, the land of his birth; this was all goodnear²³ true, for it was Odette, only the previous evening, turning suddenly pale, who said, in a cowthring²⁴ voice, that all of a sudden she sensed very strongly a great massacre of the wealthy, the titled,

those who have most power, as the poor most misery,

was now come into the air, as if awaiting somewhere to gather up, then somewhen to settle; doubting not a syllable of this intelligence, Lemuel immediately of this revelation informed his step-father Edmund, who,

unlike a divine : not intolerant of contradiction, not repudiating therefore all improvement in itself, not disdaining aught arising either from the heart or from the intellect,

not a mite less doubting, at once set in motion the liquidation of many of his holdings and assets; when after breakfast Lemuel to his wife broached the matter of their relocation, whilst expressing apprehension at such an upheaval, sons Louis & Marcel, thoroughly tutored in that language called English,

delighting to children, puzzling of foreigners, perplexing of poets, confounding

²⁰ in which a row of caps are placed by a wall and a ball thrown by one and landing in a cap the owner flees till caught and then he throws

²¹ vast

²² future

²³ very near

²⁴ shaking, trembling

of grammarians,

were inservient to²⁵ at least an extended visit; all this Lemuel explained to Odette there in the Preterite garden, glorious of multiplied scenes.

Now, as Virginie loved Lemuel,

she the energiser, love the energy, he the subject,

but without as they say actually being *in love* with him, – whatever that means, for interpreting what is love doth in many parts evacuate and dissolve it, – she next asking him what, if any, were his plans regarding herself and their sons : very grateful for her question, Lemuel replied with no small warmth that provided Claude, Jean, and Harold continued to receive the best of everything, and were occasionally accessible to him, he was not averse from Virginie pursuing any course she desired, including of course remarrying and having further children, but he and his wife would be delighted, honoured, – for they had discussed this, – if she and their sons would accompany his family to England, at least for a visit, and to this rejoinder Virginie was silent; by the end of dinner, – a rather crowded affair, for many who had come for the funeral were still lodged at the *château*,

of which, beside friends as genuine as friends can be, many were trenchermen²⁶, others fops, others princelings, &c, –

Virginie and Odette, – not only coaevus²⁷ but congener²⁸, becoming quickly friends, – retired to discuss their demigration²⁹; during the cold November of 1769, – most of his estate disposed of, delighted at the hourly intelligence concerning a pair of

²⁵ conducive to

²⁶ hangers-on

²⁷ of like age or duration

²⁸ members of the same class

²⁹ emigration

acquisititious counts madly outbidding each other over the purchase of his *château*, – at a dinner voicing his confidence that his good son³⁰ Lemuel would do much to further enlarge their fortune, the sitting pale down, so it was that Edmund Preterite, – surviving his health, his sight, and in the happiness of hoary hairs, in no calamity of half-senses, – one day in November taking to his bed, quietly, one could almost say happily, departed this Earth.

1770

In the glorious late May of 1770 the whole family, accompanied only by three armed servants, in a calm sea on an affreighted³¹ ship of good yorage³², but manned by a surly too dishonest crew, journeyed to England; the voyage was slow, yet steady, for the orlop³³ was ballasted not alone by 384 matching standards³⁴ containing household goods and furniture, the Preterite collections of priceless art, musical instruments, and firearms, and the remarkable 11,000 volume library begun long before the growth of printing, but also ballasted by 100 identical iron-bound chests containing 18 tons of meracious³⁵ massy gold, of which it alas could not be said that it was *divitias nulla fraude quaesitas*³⁶.

Whilst his two families remained in London, Lemuel, in company with a newly employed *valet*, – an English-born Italian of name Egon Nobodi, – visited a number of elegant, large, stateful³⁷ residences which the owners gave to believe they would part with if the price was sufficiently handsome, but in seeking a house of a very particular stamp, yet unable either to clearly visualise, therefore vocalise his vision, causing his efforts to prove so unfruitful, it was only after a long month of searching,

³⁰ son-in-law

³¹ hired for the transportation of goods or freight

³² manageability, said of a ship at sea

³³ lowest deck of a ship

³⁴ large chests, often for packing furniture

³⁵ pure; unmixed

³⁶ wealth acquired without fraud

³⁷ stately

– when Lemuel was beginning to wonder him if he should not rather purchase good land and thereon raise a dwelling of his own design, – that in the far county of Somerset,

where the people, – with those also of Wiltshire, and Hampshire, – were once called Belgians,

down in the warmer south-west of the country,

where the air, – healthy, temperate, sweet, and pure, – gave long life to the inhabitants,

Lemuel at last found what he was looking for : but for a tutor³⁸ unoccupied seven years, acentre a land much forgrown³⁹ toward the boundaries : a large secluded manor, built from local granite and a hard sandstone well cemented with silica, all proved for a wonder in very excellent repair; past the unassuming gatehouse, – meaning a house built over, or, in this case, adjacent to a gate, – trotting through the heavy ortive⁴⁰ gates,

fashioned not by Jean Tijou, as was long thought, but by a gifted apprentice,

the three-storey Manor, – not at the first to be seen owing to a slow rise in the mile-long drive flanked by an overreaching colonnade of elms, each⁴¹, and maples, – at the half-way rising at last into view, did so with such delightful suddenness, halting his horse, Lemuel realised at once that Trokes may have found their new home.

As he, or rather his blonket⁴² horse, trotted onward, the proportionably disposed

³⁸ caretaker

³⁹ overgrown

⁴⁰ eastern

⁴¹ oaks

⁴² grey

windows, predominantly mullion⁴³ and lattice⁴⁴, – which the window tax, — first imposed in 1691, abolished 1851, — or tax on light and air, — for the house was thought made of an overmuch of glass, — on its over 400 windows at yearly eight shillings per, rendered a costly indulgence, – seemed at once to denote order and smartness, aye, almost to pledge a future as much of security as of mild abandon, so also the terraced lawns, linked by gravelled paths and stone steps, so also the far woods which, all in concert, seemed to promise a celebrative future; there were not, as was perhaps more usual, two sweeps of staircase meeting in a stone terrace before the principal doors, but rather a long, wide, yet narrowing gentle approach of steps leading straight up to two heavy oak front doors set deep within an anticum⁴⁵, beneath a very handsome nodding arch⁴⁶ supported on the left by a caryatid⁴⁷, on the right by a telamon⁴⁸, the smartness of which seemed to imply that beyond this portal mystery and ingenuity mought⁴⁹ comfortably, safely abide; right above the front doors, most catching to the optical sensorium, was a remarkable wheel window⁵⁰ with intricate plate-tracery⁵¹, of fully ten feet diameter, which when lighted by the small room behind, (destined to become the phrontistery⁵² for four of the six future Vouchsafes), created a most beautiful effect to any at evening promenade; exploring the whole house, from the attic, loudly excited over the *camera obscura*, – for the joying over the details of which ample opportunity will be found as this narrative proceeds, – through 39 bedchambers, – most of the adjoining rooms containing abandoned husslements⁵³, just as the enormous library a few hundred worthless books, the two ballrooms musical instruments, clothing, &c, – down to a

⁴³ vertically divided

⁴⁴ with small diamond-shaped panes set in leadwork

⁴⁵ porch attached to the front of a building

⁴⁶ arch which bends forward at the apex, away from the wall

⁴⁷ female figure supporting an entablature

⁴⁸ male figure supporting an entablature

⁴⁹ might

⁵⁰ rose window

⁵¹ tracery consisting of apertures apparently punched in masonry

⁵² place for thinking or studying

⁵³ householdments, minor household goods of little value

small sunken chapel once serviced by a trencher-chaplain⁵⁴.

Accompanying Lemuel on his broad and unhurried tour of the land about, the old caretaker, of name Anson Utterson,

a cranky man who believed, his wife too, that if his brigose⁵⁵ humour be not let regularly out, festering straight, it would prove to an apostume⁵⁶,

explained that the rolling benty⁵⁷ fields on all sides of the estate, as the deeds would confirm, were all part of the property, as to the north was the short foreland⁵⁸ and pelagic⁵⁹ sweep of high cliffs, over which there were no rights of way⁶⁰; walking across a vast expanse of wild lawn they came to a wooden staircase, old and dangerous, leading down to a fine coved beach of sand, – and save for a peppering of sea-coal, very clean, – very rare on that length of coastline; whilst to the west was a vista of neglected orchards and bosky⁶¹ woods, with thereafter the sea; to the rearside of the house were well-kept stables, a dairy equipped with all the implements necessary for the making of cheese,

in which thin lymphatic particles, forced to separate themselves, slide away from the more unctious,

and butter.

Not far was a pump-house containing a water-commanding engine, – made by Thomas Savery in 1712 intended for pumping water from a Cornwall tin mine, – a

⁵⁴ domestic chaplain

⁵⁵ contentious

⁵⁶ abscess

⁵⁷ overgrown with long coarse grass

⁵⁸ point of land projecting into the sea

⁵⁹ open sea

⁶⁰ liberty of passing over land to go to church, to market, or the like

⁶¹ covered with bushes, full of thickets

stonebuilt bocherie⁶² lined with white marble,

a term used by non-geologists to denote any stone which can be polished, but actually a metamorphic crystalline rock⁶³, naturally composed predominantly of crystalline grains of calcite⁶⁴, dolomite⁶⁵, or serpentine⁶⁶,

and a distillery with a cellar of long vaultage⁶⁷ perfect for the storing of wine; most remarkably : to most of the north wall of the manor was affixed, like a giant half-bell-jar, an enormous ramshackle hothouse, or conservatory, all of two floors high, wherein a strange tropical, almost impenetrable luxury ran wild; the immediate garden contained some dozens of horrid statues (soon to vanish), three wells of sweet water, two of which serviced fountains, and at the end of an overgrown ambulatory⁶⁸, very interestingly : a jungled maze,

whereas in this work these terms shall be used interchangeably : actually a labyrinth, for note : whereupon strictly : a maze offers a choice of pathways, a labyrinth offers only one,

at this period measuring about 70 feet to a side, or of some 600 square yards, yet soon to be revived, (and in years to come enlarged on four occasions).

The highest point on the property, a pillared two-storey rotunda, – which, by lying directly in line with the front doors and circuline window, awarded the house a very pleasing symmetry, – comprised in its lower story an open terrace delightful of cool breezes and views during the summer taking of tea, and in the upper windowless

⁶² shambles, or slaughter-house

⁶³ altered in appearance, density, crystalline structure, and in some cases, mineral composition, by high temperature, or intense pressure, or both

⁶⁴ mineral consisting of crystallized calcium carbonate, a major constituent of limestone.

⁶⁵ mineral consisting of calcium magnesium carbonate

⁶⁶ hydrous magnesium silicate material; generally dark green, with markings of white, light green, or black

⁶⁷ arched cellar

⁶⁸ place to walk in

storey of this tholus⁶⁹, accessible by trap-door and retractable ladder, resided a dusty *camera obscura* comprising a scioptric ball⁷⁰ of most excellent grind,

made in 1761 by a man then unknown, (but known now to be one Edward Scarlett of London, then optician to King George the Second),

a revolving turret, which permitted the lens to project an image, firstly onto a plane mirror set at 45 degrees, then, to correct the renverse⁷¹ picture, via a biconvex lens, onto the viewing surface : a circular table of flawless white Italian marble of diameter ten feet, of thickness three inches, so that by any who would glad themselves to stand around a table and in darkness, from upright, look down, ranging views of the whole grounds could be enjoyed; by attaching from its oaken case the small but sharp telescope, stars too could be displayed, and with paper laid down their slow travels plotted.

(Aye, one day a genius named Henry, – of whose person, wisdom, and virtue, it is intended to give a true account in a seasonable place, – would spend a good portion of his youth in this blackened tower observing sunspots and the surface of the Moon, the while undertaking certain improvements which would permit of much exacuated⁷² imagery, and with the additament⁷³ of a somewhat involuted⁷⁴, sometimes temperamental machine, – comprising a system of punched brass plates, along the lines of a Jacquard loom, – would allow the collimator⁷⁵ of a powerful Alvan Clark⁷⁶ telescope to be quickly and accurately aligned upon certain features of the vast launce-skip⁷⁷, such as, of the more

⁶⁹ circular building

⁷⁰ a compound lens in a swivel mount

⁷¹ inverted

⁷² sharpened

⁷³ addition

⁷⁴ entangled or involved

⁷⁵ small telescope attached to a larger for sighting

⁷⁶ then thought the best telescope-maker in the world

⁷⁷ landscape

immediate landmarks : the odeum⁷⁸, wherein children would be clearly observed arguing over a game of say *hyssy-pyssy*⁷⁹, or the maze, – or even into the old summerhouse, before it was pulled down and rebuilt, wherein, when taken by their luddokkes⁸⁰, couples could be observed indulging, if not in swodgle⁸¹, then in games Maxwell would one day crudely call *stink-finger* and *hunt-the-salami*, – and, with a periscope attached, – also of Henry his inventing, – through the dense foliage of the trees through the main gates, westward : the market square in the village of Watchet, and even, due east : the church spires of the far city of Wells; but this is all far too futurely).

After sitting a spell down in the empty place, actually the library, coming a peaceable and quiet resting, – for there is poor comfort in sitting down in a place which, if it will, soon sayeth, nay!, arise!, this is not your rest, this place is not appointed thee, – as well, – with the good chance of making a pleasant connection, or an engagement in strange adventure, – for the pure love of sitting down in a strange place, Lemuel immediately agreed to purchase the excellent property from the latest owner,

a portreeve⁸² of name Felix Woide, who, making suddenly his fortune from gambling, had settled down, married, grown twily⁸³, returned to the tables, lost the better part of his capital, therefore his wife, and, else he bangle⁸⁴, become creditor-crazed⁸⁵, was forced to sell,

who was very pleased to part with the house, which including lands, messuages tenements⁸⁶, and rents, totalled 3472 acres, – for a very fair price; when his luggage

⁷⁸ building for musical performances

⁷⁹ a Devon and Somerset game in which into a hole of some extent on uneven ground marbles are aimed at some object beyond the hole without letting them fall in; also called hynny-pynny

⁸⁰ loins

⁸¹ sexual intercourse

⁸² chief magistrate of a port

⁸³ restless

⁸⁴ waste an estate little by little

⁸⁵ bankrupt

⁸⁶ cottage and cottage-like houses

arrived, Lemuel was already overseeing local craftsmen undertake repairs, here numerous to the wall which surrounded the estate, there to the Betersden marble⁸⁷ floor in the squelery⁸⁸, here to the eaves troughs⁸⁹, there again to the walls of the ancient stables, here to re-glassing the giant conservatory, there to the wooden steps leading down to the beach, &c.

So it was : on the first day of September 1770, three women, – delighting at the enormous house, but amazed more that the tastes of a man could sometimes coincide so with their own, – two men, and five children,

these comprising the two families which would forever after, – or so long as life was pleased to continue them together, – be one family,

came to live at the Troke homestall⁹⁰, Troke Manor, thereafter called, – (which would continue to home the family for the next 230 years); as it is here at Troke Manor in that year of 1770, with its ten new habitants, –

comprising Vouchsafe Odette 33, Virginie 32, their five sons aged between ten and 13, Lemuel 36, and his parents Anthony 62 & Hortense 56, excluding servants of course,

that the Troke saga properly commences, it is with avowry⁹¹ therefore that this history piece⁹² henceforth travel with far less rape⁹³ to its momentous conclusion, (which is now so very few days away); though there will at first, here and there, pass years producing nothing worthy of sufficient notice, years from which it will be something of a task, if not quite outright impossible, to excerpt incidents of sufficient

⁸⁷ dark bluish-grey

⁸⁸ scullery

⁸⁹ gutter immediately beneath the eaves

⁹⁰ homestead

⁹¹ justification

⁹² artistic pictorial representation of any historical event

⁹³ haste

interest, – particularly as the etypical⁹⁴ enchantments and eccentricities of Trokedom were at first slow and artful in coming to appearance, – at least some of the more interesting tales will be told, and the more fascinating examples of this multanimous⁹⁵ family far less shallow-drawn than hitherunto.

With wagons arriving bearing their luggage, much newly purchased furniture, until new staff arrived, the women and their three French servants bustled very productively adding what was essentially feminine⁹⁶, but yet indispensable to a home if it is to safely harbrow⁹⁷ happiness and health; with the cliffs, the beach, the woods, and particularly the maze, the five children were almost taken with a parerethesis⁹⁸, for never before had the game of *all-hid*⁹⁹, – a game played in all centuries by Trokes : a tradition, – taken on such inconceptible possibilities; with the problem of servants,

according to the principal newspapers of the time, – the *General Evening Post*, the *London Evening Post*, the *Morning Chronicle*, and the *Public Ledger*, – the greatest problem then facing the upper strata,

eventually settled to the satisfaction of all, even the servants, it was decided at a family meeting that a party, arranged for early September, would not only as if bless the house but formally introduce Trokes to the local gentry : surrounding farmers, companions in landscape¹⁰⁰, as many of the local inhabitants as might wish to cement the ties of good neighbourhood.

As a consequence of this rather open invitation, – due to the many sparks struck out : succeeding in subtracting something from the prejudices expected of such a mixture of classes, – a large, lively, very variable crowd appeared, representing

⁹⁴ unconformable to type

⁹⁵ many-sided

⁹⁶ female qualities

⁹⁷ harbour

⁹⁸ abnormal excitement

⁹⁹ hide and seek

¹⁰⁰ landship

nearly all the local small businesses and industries, such as,

smallwares¹⁰¹, wet coopers¹⁰², white coopers¹⁰³, whisket weavers¹⁰⁴, cheese and bacon factors, dyers, ropemakers, saddlers and harness makers, coursers¹⁰⁵, a stay maker, a barrow-bunter¹⁰⁶, a straw bonnet maker, employees from the small iron foundry and two flour mills, withy cutters, a local organ-builder, a skeppist¹⁰⁷, a watch-motion-maker, a retired forensal¹⁰⁸ perruquier¹⁰⁹...

and of course clerics in plenty,

come also of course to take a feast of fat things, of wines, of fat things full of marrow!,

from almost every Christian mispersuasion, all hoping the new tenants of *The Hall*, surely more easily than the plain country people,

of whom, as Herbert saith in *A Priest to the Temple*, of 1632,

are thick, and heavy, and hard to raise to a poynt of Zeal, and fervency, and need a mountaine of fire to kindle them,

would take up their own particular denomination, (in later years these clerics would wonder and remark on the general, almost contagious, falling in faith, – taken to mean : that which was unassailable by criticism, – about the lands contiguous to

¹⁰¹ haberdashery

¹⁰² makers of casks that could hold liquids

¹⁰³ makers of casks for transporting dry goods such as apples or corn

¹⁰⁴ basketmakers

¹⁰⁵ horse-dealers

¹⁰⁶ female costermonger

¹⁰⁷ maker of skeps, or beehives of straw

¹⁰⁸ forensic

¹⁰⁹ wigmaker

Troke Manor), and thus save their souls by buying a family box-pew, perhaps occasionally even filling it : all of which was of course oh a hope the most forlorn.

A brief interposure : over the ensuing 161 years, a small number of clerics were invited, – or else self-invited, for gods of their generals readily permit of much imposture, – to the annual Troke garden-party to mix freely with their betters, and, as servantry borrows always a little light from the served, and from so great a master as was a cleric's, – of whom it is said : there is none in this world more elevate, none in existence more exalt, – suppose a great light, a light blinding : provided this light were kept sufficiently muted they were permitted, these servants of devout observance, near all their enjoyment, aye, but if amidst gaiety, sometimes wildness, these men in their glummy vestments proved such as, – all holily mortified to the world, esteeming nothing that favoureth not of theology, – spoke too loudly after their mad calling, or, worse, soberly or otherwise, dared in their great flights to preach with unequivocacy that, for instance : only true believers in their own creed deserved to enjoy such leisures, or, for another instance : only to sincere observers of their own devout form of faith could such conspicuously wasteful spectacles prove not only a means to grace, but compoundly enhance the spotless reputation of their first and only master, – then such men,

men who as frowned upon joyous displays as upon others of equal extreme who eat say of fish, or live upon herbs, or go barefoot, or wear sandals instead of shoes, or wear only linen garments, or only wool, some in black, some in white, or who shave their heads either broad or narrow as cause is, or go girded, or go loose, many of whom, times apast, the law ordered to be stoned with stones, till they die,

would certainly suffer badly to meet with such as say Lemuel, or upcoming Samuel, (or more futurely Keith, or Michael, certainly modern Jeffrey, – considered the meanest reasoner against fatuous aerologies¹¹⁰, – a man who, because he found the

¹¹⁰ doctrines of the air

pleasure of sin far far greater than the remorse of conscience, – indeed, thinking no harm in that which he did, would not be persuaded but that he doth well, – liked only one thing better than finding a fop to roast, and that was to put a parson in a passion, but whom see soon below), who at that period was considered the person very best to ruffle that raven plumage used too long to a far greater latitude than was ever allowed by that far more severe inquisition of reason, which it was believed unnecessary for such people to study : if he could not be reasoned out of his misbeliefs, or his vanities, perhaps he could be ridiculed out of them, – a far better sport, the family believed, – for then, for all to gathering see, and hear, right there on the sunny lawn of their home comfortable : a religious man without intelligence and a very red face receiving a thorough drubbing from an intelligent man without religion, but with a countenance sunny, friendly, (or, more latterly, – when it was at last acknowledged that, without cheating, the case was oh *quite* hopeless, – a light Vouchsafe *touch* administering, a fool in black suffered a sudden bronchos¹¹¹, or a very odd amnesic episode), and henceforth, upsettingly proselytising¹¹², would saunter the Troke garden never again.

In sum then, nearly everyone who was anyone at all within a ten mile semidiameter attended the first annual Troke garden-party, (of which, – peopled by the most genial and intelligent, down to those who, with their feeble heads and great ignorance, consorting with impure hearts, narrow sensibilities, little knew that they, the vulgar, were let into a great many pleasures that men of a polite imagination, — many of whom, — surely the most malignant and scurrilously hostile, — believing pleasure creaturising¹¹³, — are incapable of receiving, – there would be 145 in all before the event was discontinued in 1932); despite the local gentry suffering something of an affront at mixing it not only with those destined in a low degenerate fashion of mind to travel the more obscure walks of moilsome¹¹⁴ life, – men and women who, possessing no other birthright than their own hands, had never in their lives opened

¹¹¹ temporary loss of voice

¹¹² attempting to convert to another faith or religion

¹¹³ lowering; making like an animal

¹¹⁴ laborious

a book, such as,

farmers, oporopolists¹¹⁵, a hacker¹¹⁶, a kedger¹¹⁷, a jagger¹¹⁸ once of Wales named Evan Evan Evans, a brother thatcher and hillyer¹¹⁹, common hedgers and ditchers, a whitewings¹²⁰,...

all speaking in rugged earnest, laying about them as briskly as their remotest progenitors, growing hot in using words rough, free, and irregular, which happenchance allowed a faster hold to things, yet at the same time using words as sinewy, as powerful, as elsewhere graceful, neat, luxuriant, and yet as pertinent as elsewhere gracious, delicate, and copious, – but those of outright zanyship, not only such as Old Woman Melyar,

who, till she grew old and fell upon the parish, was a bluttering¹²¹ sowlibber¹²², hog-ringer¹²³, pig-sticker¹²⁴, an unlettered old slut who had seen much of the rough side of the world, a little fume of a woman as elegant for her starched white cornette¹²⁵ as for her unusual cleanliness, yet of nature and inclination one of that upsetting kind who never missed an opportunity to vie and ostentate with the finer sort, the better to speak contemptuously, of the gentry, – with a vocabulary of 300 words enough, – yet overall as good a woman as ever pissed,

not only such as two brothers from London visiting their local aunt : Unitt and Artist

¹¹⁵ fruit-sellers

¹¹⁶ hoe-maker

¹¹⁷ fisherman

¹¹⁸ peddler or hawker of fish

¹¹⁹ one who roofs with slate or tile

¹²⁰ street-sweepers

¹²¹ gabbling

¹²² sow gelder

¹²³ one who puts rings in the noses of swines

¹²⁴ one who slaughters pigs or hogs

¹²⁵ type of wimple consisting of a large starched piece of white cloth folded upward in such a way as to create the resemblance of horns

Criel, a dancing master and a hairdresser,

in the eighteenth century stock figures one and two in the hierarchy of contemptibility, true, but by calling themselves merely low abettors of the vanities of the privileged, were everywhere very in demand, rather well-to-do, for the reason, – besides of course a very serviceably oiliness and obsequiousness which permitted their harshness be critical only of hair and gait, – that both possessed skills each were very willing to disdain credit or deserve for having,

but both clever men poor and the blockheadly rich, – of which the plurality of both was extreme, – found Squire Troke and his family overall a decent upright people enough, who, despite their batrachivorous¹²⁶ connections, – for it should be here enoted that the *Seven Years War* had only been concluded seven years, – whilst seeming devoid of all that Frenchery not otherwise passport to confidence and popularity, appeared to follow all the English arts and rules the more prudent of the world walk by.

Michael Overslaugh, whom this history now formally introduces, was a man destined to supplate¹²⁷ very highly in the after-course¹²⁸ of the Troke family, for one day he simply ventured up the long drive, knocked at the front door, and asked if the children, which he could clearly hear playing and laughing, required a tutor; Michael, as he insisted everyone call him, even the five children he was contracted immediately to teach, was at 27 a great merry bear of a man who bore an easy laugh, often a serene countenance, and a sense of the bizarre which, until one came to know and love him, much dissettled and mystified, (characteristics which remained immutate¹²⁹, even unto his retirement and departition¹³⁰ from Troke Manor

¹²⁶ frog-eating

¹²⁷ reckon

¹²⁸ future course

¹²⁹ unchanged

¹³⁰ departure

56 years later); the marked influence Overslaugh was to effect upon the family bore principally upon one central matter : the wonders of words, for here was a man whose eloquence, – of which it has been said depends far more upon their instruments, mind and voice, than upon the ears that listen, – was superior, whose enunciation was just and harmonious, whose periods were well turned, whose every word was the most expressive, the very best that could be used in that place, for as saith Ben Jonson in *Timber : or Discoveries* of 1640 :

The congruent, and harmonious fitting of parts in a sentence hath almost the fastening, and force of knitting and connection; as in stones well squared, which will rise strong a great way without mortar.

Much, even crowing mention will be made in this history of eloquence,

for as ordinarily it is as difficult a matter to repair with words what is threadbare, grace what is unfashionable, light what is obscure, probabilise what is doubtful, as it is to simply novelise what is old, and authorise what is new, there is no subject so rude, so barbarous, that eloquence cannot ornament and polish, nothing so incredible that cannot be made probable by the rightly manner of its putting,

for such is the effect thereof, such sometimes the power, (perhaps, perhaps not, herein, here and there, exempld), that almost there is nothing so humble which it cannot haunce¹³¹,

nor anything so obscure which it cannot clarify, nothing so scattered which it cannot gather, nothing so condensed which it cannot amplify, and nothing so daily which such fluency cannot pageant;

even at this stage of their growth, the family was not entirely unaware, of course, of

¹³¹ raise, exalt

the bounties of language, nor certainly of the satisfaction of ordering thoughts or committing them to paper, aye!, for neither to intellect nor science does the heart unlock its treasures, nor either to ears or eyes, but rather, simply, and almost only, to paper.

Trokes were nearly all of them, even dead languages aside, at least bilingual, had brought from France a vast library, many of the volumes unique, – meaning : one and no other; single, sole, solitary, – many more even than very rare indeed, and in the main would have considered themselves very fond of literature, of language, but for this reason : blooded Trokes were atheists all, which their recent coming into a fortune, as well back into England, allowed them to affirm at leisure, without fear; neither heathens, – or worshippers of idols who do not acknowledge the Christian god, – nor infidels, – or those who professes to believe what they do not believe, – nor even indifferently atheist, – or those who hold it better that death should consume them unto nothing than a god receive them unto eternal punishment, – all but Virginie were firmly and faithfully antitheist, defined as one who claims god is unproved, not disproved, for there is a great difference, a very great, between believing there is no god and not believing there is a god; because it is said that an atheist cannot deny the existence of a god because atheist means simply : one without god, it is important to make it clear that Trokes were predominantly positive or dogmatic atheists, – those who assert that there are *no* such beings as gods, – with negative atheists, – those who are simply not believers in gods, – feathering away to the odd agnostic, which, though meaning simply : one without knowledge of gods, is taken in its common acceptation : doubtful about, questioning, the existence of, gods, be they of either sort : impotent : wanting to abolish evil, but unable, or wicked : able to abolish evil, but refusing.

Save futurely to the far more tolerant *outsiders*, – for an explanation of this term : see below, – the literature up to that day,

with the exceptions of course of Boccaccio, Cervantes, Walton, Shakespeare, Molière, Margaret Cavendish, Dean Swift, Fielding, Sterne, and others, all of

whom only *omitted* the subject,

similarly the philosophy,

believed by some mere homesickness, by others the study of happiness, by others again the path to naught else but loneliness, by others yet again a means of overcoming the fear of living in uncertainty,

quite incapable of excluding the nonsense of theism from their texts, proved in the reading very trying to an atheist sensibility; aye, authors such as Langland, Chaucer, More, Bacon, Donne, Hobbes, Browne, &c,

or rather : *and others*, for as a neuter plural, &c should not be applied to a list of persons,

included so much god in their works, in too harmful part, as to render their works veritably religious tracts, mere manuals for the promotion of nonsense; as forbearing as the noble Trokes were, – the nobler the man, the profounder, more insatiate his consciousness, – a diet so beslobbered¹³² with the wholly indigestible turned them oh very anenterous¹³³.

Regarding outsiders : as a man can no more (without Vouchsafe assistance) alter his own peculiar individuality, his moral character, his intellectual capacity, or his temperament, than his stature : until an adjustment of character and psyche were effected, – some quickly, some slowly, some never, – those who in marrying a Troke dwelt with the family, – save for one exception, exclusively women, – were by most of the *bloods*, – a term herein used to denote Trokes born and bred, – called, – without offensiveness, but rarely to their faces, and only until full adjustment came, –

¹³² bespattered, as with ordure

¹³³ lacking intestine or stomach

either *outsiders*, or the plural pronoun, third person¹³⁴, the objective case of *they*¹³⁵, or the plural of *that*¹³⁶.

Else it be thought witherwise¹³⁷ than true, it shall be the burden of this paragraph to state, as distinctly as language can do so, that whereas Trokes were not antitheist out of tradition, out of habit, nor out of a different brainwashing, – for bibles were anywhere read,

not in search of those four things said to be abundantly there, but never and nowhere found : precepts for life, doctrines for knowledge, examples for illustration, and promises for comfort,

as essential to an historic understanding of literature, – nor did they base their disbelief alone upon cold logic, – that severe examiner, capable of greatest audacity, – nor upon common sense, – which, — whilst the only repository of knowledge which common sense, itself assures is irrefutable, — is applicable to everything but matters of faith and revelation, – nor even upon plain instinct, – often enjoying advantages which relegate human industry to the second rank, – nor upon the writings of Augustine, Chrysostom, Ambrose, Gelasius, Jerome, Theodoret, and Origen,

as well as fare far too fine even for the best men to feed on every day after another, all of them, in wanting of the audacity to apply simple logic, displaying that certain sign of an ill disputer : Alicensis, Basilides, Cerinibus, Corpocrates, Ebion, Epiphanius, Heracleo, Lombard, Lucian, Luther, Marcosius Colorbasius, Menander, Nominalls, Occham, Pigbius, Ruffinus, Saturninus, Scotus, Severus, Simon Magus, Theophilus, Thomas, Valentinus Secundus, and Zuingliuslook...

but rather upon a careful appraisalment of the evidence, of witnesses, of

¹³⁴ they

¹³⁵ them

¹³⁶ those

¹³⁷ otherwise

commentary; as it does not require an individual or a family to be lifted very far above the ordinaries of day and generation for atheistic doubts to be acquired : when all fear is laid aside, the doors of understanding, – ignoring, for now, — as useful, even as indispensable as it may be, — that understanding can be the meanest faculty in the human mind, the most to be distrusted, – are set wide to the wall, and the most reasonable methods, pithy of logic, – said to be reason in military dress, – plausible of rhetoric, – said to be reason in court dress, – and pure of grammar, – admittedly : often arbitrary and irrelevant, for it has never provided a good explanation for its many inconsistencies, – are patiently applied to the whole sphere of theism, then every feature of what proves to want even the decency and comprehensibility of an idea!, by the light of cool reason,

called by theologues a fancied being, a dark lantern, an erroneous vapour, a false medium to lead men into their own destruction,

is easily explained as sheer nonsense all; to progress from savagery to monotheism, as Comte saith, then via abstract forms and entities to the far more important matters of believing in honest biology, then, cautiously, in science, so on, it may perhaps be necessary for the evolving human mind, – superb at inventing meaning where knowledge is lacking, – to spend a small spell believing in gods, if for no other reason than to comprehend the sheer want of survival value inherent in such dogma as the bible and like works supply : that man is immortal, that the giving of identity to enemies warrants their removal, that evidencelessness and stupidity are virtues, oh and heaps else!; but alas, for the vast most of mankind, by persisting in such silly beliefs, so is his mental evolution much thwarted, so is man trapped in teachings which in sum, – the most admirably adapted to the perpetuation of a slave society, – are the embodiment of self-deception, submission, inertia, and the denial of life.

Michael Overslaugh will have to bide, for without waiting for the place predetermined for the elucidation of this matter of gods, with blood now sufficiently up, let this saga fall now to examples : herewith the first of three, or rather four, simple cases of the polyatheist Trokes defending their disbelief, particularly when it was attacked by

those who, – in the self-insufficiency of their halfness believing living by a code of pretty nonsense was a far less futile occupation than by a code of ugly truths, – effrontuously¹³⁸ claimed that atheism, – which Noah Webster, a jumped-up Yankee, a fool, described as :

...a ferocious system, that leaves nothing above us to excite awe, nor around us, to awaken tenderness. –

maketh a man futilitarian¹³⁹, which in their terreity¹⁴⁰, Trokes considered true only if hereout¹⁴¹ the good and zealful sensile¹⁴² was unable to ingreat¹⁴³ his manpower¹⁴⁴.

However, concerning those guests who, in regards to believing in their god,

believed the ultimate universal, believed the form of forms, the fountain of all symmetry, of all good, all truth, believed a real thing, believed a something hidden, believed far outside of human experience, believed the sole reality out of which all other universal truths or realities sprang, believed so great, so real, it did not even need to exist!, &c,

made them disbelievers in, discreditors of, human reason, e.g. those with a very great will to believe,

a will of such brass, boiler-iron, and granite, upon which disquieting facts, contrary lines of reasoning, and argument, could make no impression,

¹³⁸ with effrontery

¹³⁹ one who believes that everything in life is futile

¹⁴⁰ earthiness

¹⁴¹ out of this

¹⁴² one capable of sensation; sentient

¹⁴³ make great

¹⁴⁴ normal rate at which a man is able to work, equal to one-tenth of a horsepower, this which is estimated by the work of a brewery horse lifting 330 pounds, carrying it 100 feet in one minute, and repeating same for 8 hours

or those of an imagination so diseased as to prove immune to any offering of contrary proof, particularly when it was proffered by a people with the temerity to believe that if philosophic knowledge was attainable, it was such as could only be yielded by a study of the real world and its various sciences.

Concerning these, then : quite obviously, little, then no, attempt was made to undeceive them, not by a people, of whom, even their least members,

those outsiders, poor *émigrés*, once used to carrying upon the Sunday a euchology¹⁴⁵, to whom nothing could be more horrible than the murder of a beautiful theory by a brutal gang of facts,

for they were themselves undergoing enlightenment; aye, even devoutest outsiders, – (in the preceding three centuries, true, there were in all a handful who, too succumbed to years of childhood indoctrination and interrogation, years of adult brainwashing refined over two millennia, were beyond rescue), – were near enough sure to one day find themselves beginning to be persuaded that on another day soon it might possibly be preferable to doubt rather than rashly defend what their numerous new kin had always known for a certain[✓], – arrival of the first fair gram of real evidence to the contrary notwithstanding, – to be all simply all nonsense nonexistent.

There are no two people more incapable of understanding each other, – as full of intelligence and goodwill as both may be, – than of a god a believer and a disbeliever, for the believer, – insisting that a truth should be so, to any assurance that it *is* so, let alone not so, – consulting ancient texts, – containing words which for very simplicity of structure, unflinching concreteness of diction, could easily without loss against¹⁴⁶ literal translation back into the original Hebrew, – with painstaking care searching for the exact statement of a supposed fact beyond reach of any

¹⁴⁵ prayer-book

¹⁴⁶ withstand

abstraction, draws always wholly from second hand, whereas the disbeliever, first and last consulting at first hand the self, the world, supplying text of his own, employs words of subtler shades and shadows of feeling, or at the least such as stand best chance of honestly ordering those complicated webs of thoughts which grow from the great tangled efforts to personally reason out the cold universe and its treacherous soothingings; as much as in these four examples as nearly all possibly others : because they wished far more to clear their own way than to make a way for others, sadly, – save here and there when a mind briefly actually took up what, until then, it had never before contained, when was seen that much prized expression of surprise, shock, even speechless amaze, all lasting but a mere few moments together, perhaps, but what a delight to come upon a guest who could be made actually afraid that what was advancing might turn out, daring upon a closer, a private examination, to actually carry at least a portion of that weight which the Troke all believed, – Troke enlightenment was not much contagious.

So, to the first example : Samuel, lifelong bachelor, in 1862 to his friend Violet Cutbirth, – by widowhood raised so greatly above mere want, having nothing other to do with her time than to render herself agreeable, – after her return from a lovely Sunday church service in the attractive Norman church, in the nearby village of Stogursey,

— Acknowledging it irrational to view the irrational interests of another as my own, for that person is not myself, let me yet open by saying this : holding the belief we return to life, – as well possibly all other beliefs for which man renounce his liberty and humanity, – is simply the gaming of a mind which, – by the prejudices of infancy, the errors of education, the habits of life, made too porous, too penetrated by pious sentiments, – mortally fearing that without continuity via reïmbodiment, life would be an absurdity, a grotesque farce without meaning, which, as everyone deepest wiseest knows, so it is. Whereas I make often leisure enough to admire this world, – its endless forms all most beautiful and most wonderful, – I do so only on the understanding that in passing fleet through this world but once, I will pass never this way again : the

which opinion, until your supposedly godded world adduces a better, I will retain forever, or until mine forever extinguishing, whichever comes first. Because in its crazed, blind, and ever-accelerative growing, the mind delights to rejoice in the power of inventing even immortality, – particularly with the use of apagogical demonstration¹⁴⁷, which maketh a sensible man to first smart then agonise at every pore, – so the mind gives out to believe it appropriates even death. Though there are alas in the world many as would scorn as a chimera without frame or bone the perhaps worthiest belief of all a man can have : that possession of life obligates one toward the finding out of its real truth, – said by these same foolish not to be the blessing of reason, nor the crown of wisdom, nor even the grace of wit, the beauty of valour, the brightness of honour, the magnificence of wealth, &c, but rather the glory of prayer, the joy of faith, the light of piety, – we Trokes believe this oh a very great folly, to give it no worse name. Creating great truths but false from confusion, hope, fear, loneliness, from one alone ancient book, – which requires no ordinary measure of infatuation to carry one so deeply into, – rather than seeking out small truths, such is a pursuit no one with any self-respect could ever engage in, particularly a people in whom there is an hereditary compulsion to crawl on when others have met their limits.

But to return again, as you move, – with all that clearness of style which for many beyond these walls serves as a very satisfactory substitute for the clearness of its ideas, – to the subject of reincarnation, leaving transmigration for another time : for the short season of this present life believing we return to it, – that one part lives and dies in this world, and one part lives again, forever, in another, – yet without memory, as pretty as it sounds, – even to those not yet anciented, – and whilst for man a very desirous fancy, – for in regard to oblivion, — called forever rest, repose, tranquillity, and so on, — wherewith it is immediately accompanied, death is often far more to be desired than life, – is

¹⁴⁷ showing the absurdity or impossibility of the contrary

purely a theoretic moonshine of such absurdity as to make my wits almost to fail, my tongue almost to fold, for such, as I say, is coinage purely of the parasite mind, which, – and it would concern the suscept¹⁴⁸ man to take of this good account, – can never stand up even to the gentlest winds and weathers of coldest facts, of colder experience. For man, as for all living else, existence begins and ends here in this transitory, seductive, illusory, paltry, broad prison of the world, and for the merest of its pure moment, he is ennobled by never suffering the fret and expectation of return; yet, – and this also man should well know of, for it is worthy his whole, his most serious attention, – because truth her cold colour worketh always such a dislike in man, – as a consequence becoming daily more adulterated, more sophisticated with arguments, with such diverse far-fetched discourses truth hath almost lost her proper, constant, universal visage, her beauty, – truth, – at least in this small parenthesis in eternity, – has become variable and peculiar to every man, think what he think will : for at bottom what really matters the truth, provided faith in the momentaneousness of self be kept!, for he who doth not believe in himself always lieth.

Now whereas it will be admitted that certain people, – men and women of great calling as else, – seem unwittingly lived over again, – as if life was doing again the deed done, – what proof is there anywhere of continuity of identity, of a forebeing?, and whereas, also, as it was said by Leighton, that there is, of necessity, a complete, permanent, and satisfying good intended for man, but as no such good is to be found in the earth or earthly things, man must, proceeding further, looking for it elsewhere, conclude that he is not extinguished at death but removed to another place where awaits this supposed good, and whereas, further, as life is an isolation, death a return, it is already a wretched enough thing to be alive in this world, – for if neither sickness blast us in the bud, nor the rude assault of a violence crop us off, then the slow decay of age will soon enough drive us witless earthward, – everything

¹⁴⁸ host of a parasite

is nevertheless wonderfully mysterious, particularly the unknown, – which if it can merit interest, even intrigue, it cannot reverence, which, — particularly in these days, — even the known merits not, – and chance, – that is : the blind fortuitous concourse of causes void of all reason, – more so even than your providence, of which, by the by, there is none, and no transcendent justice.

By ridding himself of all the clogs of gods, – particularly those which, forcing man to abide by such strictly conditions that such great numbers of them would be sure to go wrong, man inherits a curse as his principal birthright, – and then, – because life *is* after all a very troublesome journey, a painful dream in which the body, — some believing it nothing more than a blood-spring, merely a garment, some a lodging-house, — is in truth the will objectified, for the final objective of will is power over the self, — is a prison, and the Earth simply a place of exile, – rather than believing in reincarnation, – taken to mean the rebirth of the spiritual part of man, — as opposed to the physical, which, fashioned out of a filthy sperm, is conceived in the itch of the flesh, in the heat of desire, in the fetidness of lust, as Innocent III speaketh, — called also the soul, the very supposed existence of which to sane reason is a matter of enormous and crippling cumber, – man would far better benefit from the knowledge that existence, rather than purposeful, even meaningful, is merely a chanced sum, almost a purely mathematical thing.

Though it is but for a moment that man alights, lonely and confused, on one of the many greasy misted stair-treads of endless time, yet, there, before losing his footing, falling, vanishing forever, without glimpse certainly of stairhead but neither even of a raiser¹⁴⁹, he commences his profligate cowardness by proclaiming, – as if belief alone were an epidemial¹⁵⁰ truth, when surely prudence is but one of the requisites of belief, – that the steps are well within number, that they there began, there will end, that the carpenter is of this very

¹⁴⁹ vertical surface of a step

¹⁵⁰ able to spread or multiply quickly

precise yet impossible metal, and the delivery of man to salvation his sole purpose. The debate, the battle, between the world's nonsense, and, – it may be, – our own, is one which we Trokes, with isosthenia¹⁵¹ impossible, do not at all joy to take up, for by historically and individually suffering for our own very personal reasons, we need not retain the least knowledge of any the smallest god in our knowledge, neither needing that biting mite of identity gained by believing what comes out of an old book, – a palimpsest¹⁵², a montage, copyedited¹⁵³, — for what of Nicodemus?, what of Polycarp?, — yet believed unerrored, – nor by fretting that death is life pared back to the irreducible, and thus it is that we Trokes need start at no shadows.

Nay!, so far we would not strive if so be men[✓] were nice and scrupulous in this behalf, – for if minds were peopled and governed as they ought, there would not be anywhere men should attack men, – for it forces Trokes to mount as if a podium to swamp opponency near to drowning in a tide of, – as well as ingenious vocables, profound utterances, and brilliant tongue-fence, – such clear and simple logic, as to prevent, in this instance you, my dear Mrs Cutbirth, – though sincerely I grieve in avowing such a sentiment : as excellent a talker as Coleridge as you are, provided, as also of Coleridge, one allows that, in matters of faith, — ha!, that supposed quality which, despite all its disguises and shadowings, all its fetches and arts of sophistry, — when truly it need not strain so far to convince, — permitting its adherents supply no evidence, save of feeling, none even of reasoning, of what they believe, nor why, enables them to take as true what is not only untrue, but of no possible probability, — the start will be from no proven premise, the end contain no even reasonable conclusion, – from taking the floor, and contributing your own portion to a world already overfull of the clap-trapped etcetera of gods, – particularly such gods, bent on rule and ruin, whose lust is law, – souls, and damnation, and thereby

¹⁵¹ equality of strength of the two opposing arguments

¹⁵² manuscript, often written on papyrus or parchment, on which more than one text has been written with the earlier writing erased yet still visible; strictly : twice prepared for writing

¹⁵³ edited and corrected

encouraging our familywide theomicrism¹⁵⁴.

Whereas it is not required we here concern ourselves about matters tens of centuries in dispute among pedagogues, the question still asks : what sort of fool is it, – even such as has a simplicity in him, a love to the truth, the way thereof, and would walk in it, did he know how and where, but is yet kept in blindness and darkness by his gods, – who does not ask himself : what manner of evil madness, other than by a mad animal called man produced, – the most formidable of all the beasts of prey, a species as much inclined to kill everything, as to believe in every nonsense, – is a doctrine of eternal punishment?, – with which, after freely permitting his archenemy the devil to slowly sow and reap evil, your god then punishes his victims, – in which, rendering mortals already very unhappy in this beneath world, your god, – of whom it is said, ordaining after unfathomable counsels, punishes *citra condignum*¹⁵⁵, – will render them still more unhappy in another far deeper where await greater penalties, infinite in violence, infinite in duration. Admit then, that because existence cannot even rudely, even in one's own words to oneself, even in thoughts without words, – a difficult process, but which eventually reward, – be expressed, – spake we hesternally¹⁵⁶ of this : because words are insufficient if their power is bounded solely by their meaning, speech often stifles, suspends the higher thought, – it were best, – after conceding that, yes, belief in the supernatural and other subjugated knowledges¹⁵⁷, — even substituting acceptance for belief, — reflects a failure of the imagination, and by stepping a step back, placing one's very individual imagination, possessed even by a nupson¹⁵⁸, in the far better employment of applying itself to the admittedly very odd privilege of existence, – to abandon the words also of all others, – particularly as ask assent unto things in human reason impossible —

¹⁵⁴ mockery of gods and divinity

¹⁵⁵ less than is deserved

¹⁵⁶ relating to yesterday

¹⁵⁷ those disqualified as inadequate to their task, insufficiently elaborated, naïve, or beneath cognition or scientificity

¹⁵⁸ fool, simpleton

never clear, never sound, but always clouded by prejudice, ruffled by passions, impaired by disease or intemperance, — such as believing that the duty of life is simply the sacrifice of self : renouncing the little ego that the mighty ego may be freed, or such as not believing that finality is the greatest evil which can befall a world of movement, — and simply feel, wordlessly feel, my dear Mrs Cutbirth, be patient, wait, listen, watch, and above all, be silent, for when running the grave risk of taking the ridiculous for the sublime, this manner of action is of a stronger, less vulgar, less foolish, and a far less dangerous sort, for, from the mere fact alone of its uniformity, particularly to those who seeking loudly to fly, loudly crash, silence cannot be overly disdained.

Here raising her cane, shaking it at the sky, Violet cried out,

— *Semper ego auditor tantum!*¹⁵⁹, Sir, split me, but you are very impertinent! Pray remember what o'clock it is with you and me! Coleridge?, he who unless he could have all the talk, would have none?. But soft you now!, ah how you enthusiastical atheists attack us whispering Christians!, — many of whom, it is true, believe that one can never do more injury to truth than by discovering too much of it, — for do you really believe that as your business is simply to learn how to live briefly in this world, ours is to learn only how to be eternally unburning out of it? Pray, let us end our today talking of god like those, — looking upon the subject as one of the highest airs of distinction the self-admiring wit can give himself in public company, — who make it a practice never to think, or to trouble their head with study or consideration : if there be nothing in the matter, as I have so often before said, there will be no harm in being thus deceived, but if there be the slightest anything, — for though the idea of a god innate and coexistent with the mind itself is believed a truth so very obvious that it is discovered by the very first exertion of reason, even in persons of the most ordinary capacities, even by a child, — why, surely even a vague idea can be formed by simply adding infinite to every perfection of which man has

¹⁵⁹ must I always be listener only!

knowledge, — and whoso is stirred for to not believe, let him not believe, — it will be fatal not to have believed to the full. This, millions believing, — aye : cast all into blindfolded awe, if you like, — allow what degree of weight you please; I know not whether I do expound and declare myself well or no, but weigh all this I have said, you, in the golden balance of your misbeliefs the most dangerous, absurd, and abstruse!

The second example : Keith 19, commander of the Troke militia, at the 1886 garden-party, to a strikingly buxom young lady, — who, though proudly principled in body and mind, was yet a great latitudinarian in point of morals and honesty, — named Mary Exmewe; with the line straight from the crown of his well-lifted head, — his throat lengthened to full extent, — through the point of his shoulder, the point of his hip, — with the muscles of the thigh strong in front, — to the weight on the balls of his feet, heels near together, toes slightly apart, — a posture overall light, active, buoyant, and with hands in pockets very reposeful, — Keith delivered as follow,

— Certainly, as a means of discovering say a basis of morality, — whereto every regard paid is a denial of the world, of the self, and a subtraction¹⁶⁰, — or of what ethics, or the science of freedom, can be, or how better to accept our humanity with far less of what could, and easily, be called cognitive dissonance, — choose you whether, — then, certainly, beliefs, of what wild unnatural order soever, — provided of course these dictates, particularly of superstition, — sympathy with the invisible, or excess of religion, — legend, and folklore, which is to say : *storytelling*, do not too further imbeciliate¹⁶¹ their character, for the fact must not be forgot that in proportion to the strength or weakness, soundness or rottenness, of the one and the other, diseases operate as differently but as effectively upon the body as upon the eleven¹⁶² passions of the mind, — sometimes serve, — or I am mistaken, — some useful purposes,

¹⁶⁰ withdrawing or withholding of some right

¹⁶¹ to render weak or feeble

¹⁶² love, hatred, desire, horror, joy, grief, hope, despair, boldness, fear, and anger

particularly to those attracted by god because repelled by man, or whose little reading, less meditating, and least experience hold ever with hardest obstination to nonsense when it is taken up by a third thing, which connects two things which do not together fit, called credulity. But to aforthen¹⁶³ a mere guide to leader, – particularly your Christ man, — in whose existence you demand the world foreprise¹⁶⁴, when in truth it is you your lot who are obliged to prove him not a bubble, — to which records, sacred or profane, from all histories of that age, now believed in hundreds three, make not even the slightest allusion, neither to any the least of the miraculous incidents ingrafted into his life, – to turn mythology, – which is religion minus faith, – into history, to exchange reality for ideality, to live a whole life under unevidenced beliefs, – for we do not know it for true that everything has a cause, – in short : to render fancy into flesh, oh and in then making it your sayman, severely restricting that freedom which mortality packages anyway small, this, – or I again mistake, – is a very dangerous folly indeed!.

Keith wanted also to say, but did not, – for he was both circumspect and perceptive, – for it was clear to him that Mrs Exmewe, by too much cloaking the defects of her unstudied years with but a crumbling patience, was not only a woman whom clearly time hath already sorely tried, but also not a one to take the counsel of a bashful silence when hurt by a moral rupture, nor was she very patient with an analysis of herself which she considered as civil and polite as could well be found to begin a quarrel with, – that Trokes were in all probability utterly incapable of recognising any authority greater than their own, as much the church as, say, law, – which,

written reason, or perfected reason some would have it, believed of reason the body, the life, the artificial perfection, in all its three parts : declaratory, directory, and remedial,

¹⁶³ promote

¹⁶⁴ take for granted

the world defined as the minimum compartment required before man collectively applies force, – taken to mean anything that can alter the speed or direction of matter in motion, or overcome inertia, – or government say, – in which fools, — of which this our age has been most fertile, — were called the great men, the grave men, the sage men of the land, – no!, according to their make all this was simply inapplicable to a Vouchsafed family who, steering their own motions, would never be borne back even by all the current of the world.

The third example : Michael, at the 1900 garden-party, to one Ormonda Oughtred, a once ravishing belle, then an abundantly daughtered widow, but now, as so often transpires, a *belle laide*¹⁶⁵, a markedly stuggy¹⁶⁶, short-sighted woman, who, the year before, – because overnight made sudden a widow no longer able to place all her felicity in the abundant gratification of every sensual appetite, particularly to horizontal pleasures of the lower belly, – by her grown children forced upon far more closely observing the rituals of their church, now deriving the joys, quite unexpected, of tearfully asking, and always receiving, confitent¹⁶⁷ of her confessor, forgiveness, – not for her actions, but for her mere thoughts, – for she was of the Roman Catholic persuasion,

member of a people who, in their worship, – despite abundant supply of saints for all trades, sicknesses, graces, and virtues, – by turning so much their zeal to the outward of their religion, to ritual, pomp, vestments, thurification¹⁶⁸, &c, – by loving to have glorious objects strike upon and effect their sentiments, believe they are more closed[✓] to god, in receival of a purer grace, &c, – a people who, the better to excite the senses and imagination, turn even to worshipping images, of wood, of stone, cast metals, fired clay, &c, – such indeed that often the less refined, the more abstracted of wits, conceive their god to actually *be* a wooden cross to which through hands and feet, is nailed a man emaciated,

¹⁶⁵ an attractively ugly woman

¹⁶⁶ short and thick-set

¹⁶⁷ one who confesses; a penitent

¹⁶⁸ act of burning incense

wounded, agonied, – a people, further, who believing god can reside in a thin wafer, – not only wholly in the whole wafer, but entirely in every crumb of it, which Burnet believeth the highest of inconceivables, – were called once by Protestants : animals of intolerable pride, of lawless fury, of untractable barbarity, animals so subtle and treacherous by custom and discipline as not to be chained by any law, either of a god or man :

— Yes, but despite, – not only in your god-intoxicated self, but everywhere, – it clearly believed that god, be he only short-winded and vengeful, was always around one, inside and out, speaking it is supposed at least some pidgin tolerably obscure to his supplicants all rejoicing in his heavenly bright, – for we Trokes have heard the fame thereof with our ears, – such is utterly invisible not only to myself, to all my senses, internally, as a verificationist, – for one must be able to know about something if it is to exist, – and externally, as an instrumentalist, – for one must also be able to observe a thing if it is to exist, – but to nearly all we sabbathless Trokes who, – though we never prove our views so well as we fancy we do, for man is slow and cowardly, – suffering gladly all our spiritual or religious aphasias : we call it only as we feel it!

Stopping to listen, but soon enough perceiving her gist, hearing not very perfectly what her details said, – for after all, if she could indeed think and say something new, honestly, provably : conclaves of world minds, prating high of such a new, he soon enough hearing of this such that was new, — for whereas by nature solitary, to news so possibly existence-changing, Michael believed Troke eyes and ears were ever near the ground, — he would already have considered it, and embraced it if true, disproved it if false, – resuming his commandeering, he said,

— Pray madam, pardon my cutting into your commencing to set the better foot of your lame cause foremost with such a load of words, all going to it so by heaps, as if multitudinousness could ever overpower reason, and, – despite my saying, — twice!, — how unnecessary it is to constantly touch me, with one finger, on the forearm, or with four straight fingers, to ensure my continued

listening to what is not only not listenable!, but not sane!, – well may you now writhe your head on one side quaintly, and up with your chin to say what?, – glancing to the left to recall information, finding this unsupplying, glancing to the right to better supply this deficiency with imagination, or hope, in a word : with a lie, – *nisi credideritis, non intelligentis*¹⁶⁹?, aye!, saying then, holding thy beak in the air, what?, *sir, it booteth little to try overcast so clear a light as my god casts upon the world with the vaporous mists of your ambiguity?*, or perhaps, thrusting out a great pair of deriding lips, saying, *sir, why must you try ravish a belief from me so dear?, no? or : why must you attempt to annihilate a belief so consoling, no?*

Now why scowlest thou so, why strokest thou thine own head?, now rub thy face?, sighing with a breath that could, if it wished, be sweeter, as my own, as you have no doubt sensed, could be less sweetened by passage of not so much claret, – as bad as not saying what you feel, this not saying what you look, – and why dost thy face sayest now : *sir, certainly, if you can make no better arguments than these, and have so small judgement as to think mine not of any worth, I have now great reason to decline all further conference?* Wait, wait. Listen : to come up closer to you, just before you turn to flee, and to answer to[✓] your first question : Madam, – nay, nay!, droop not, pleasant be!, – Madam, to your first question let me, please!, open my answer by asking if you think me unaware that all means are as lawful, as warrantable, when error is set so against truth, as when truth is set against error?...

Saying much more of the like, and she nothing decipherable, then, whilst tempted to say many things more, perceiving, – for he had great experience in this matter, – that she was tempted, till she be quite out of breath, to take on a fury, and, worst of all : a theological *fury*, – for to vain and contentious natures, of which weakest minds have generally the greatest share : gods call loudest, – which embarrassingly never prove less than the utter imbecility of its cause, Ormonda Oughtred, – a woman as much

¹⁶⁹ unless ye believe, ye shall not understand

obliged never to speak one least untruth against knowledge, as to always speak out against any who display a lack of it, – here pausing in her unremitting bursts of attempted reply, – not for reason that it was after all Sunday, — she having no intention of exposing for ransom her soul to the hazard of perdition, — but rather for reason of a slight digestive *crise*¹⁷⁰, which required, by muscular means, — teeth and fists assisting, as they always seem to, — she concentrate upon suppressing its expression, – realising she could put herself in a way much more secure by continuing silent, this allowed Michael to continue in this wise, and *notandi sunt tibi mores*¹⁷¹ :

— Though I be not so right nor so discreet as I should be, nor yet so bad neither, as thou perhaps takest me to be, nor so mad, – for gentle am I, and humble in heart, as any of my family will avouch, – I beg thee, be not in such heat, be not so hot in so cold a cause! You who have contended that only ill-humour can be the cause of atheism, cannot but agree that cullibility¹⁷², as well all the authority error derives from custom, – which for the bulk of mankind so strong, passes for reason and sacred truth, – cannot ever be much useful to the human species. Believing, as you do, that your god, – to whom it seemeth to me as much blasphemy as absurdity, the form, the sentiments, and the passions, of man, to impute, particularly the goodness, for nothing permits you to regard goodness as a major attribute of your god, for there is enough suffering in one narrow London lane to prove this conclusively, – hath no right hand nor left hand, that he is neither moved nor quiet, nor uncircumscribed by place, but absolutely infinite, that in him are comprehended all perfections, surely, if your incomprehensible god were to exist, – and by opening now my mind which otherwise opens not for so small a purpose, I may be here committing an assumptious piece of anthropophuism¹⁷³, — I own it!, — for there is no warrantry to try clothe Nature with even one human quality, – there

¹⁷⁰ Fr. crisis

¹⁷¹ note well the manners

¹⁷² gullibility

¹⁷³ ascribing human nature to god

would be good objective proof, as for gravity and oxygen, perceivable to nothing less than the open senses, – the inner of touch and taste, the outer of hearing and sight, – particularly if, without directly implanting faith in minds, this god of yours, – by whom all things are believed made, and without this god of yours was not anything made that was made, believed maker too of so soft and peaceable a creature, born to love, mercy, and meekness, but, supposedly mistakenly, given free will, rather choosing so to rave, to rage like a beast, and run on to his own destruction, – required people to believe, – not that hell was but a scarecrow, and heaven but a wonderclout of some doctrine, but, – in him or her or it, and thus be saved from, – what doth breathe and spire out its malice only manward, – a spiteful damnation, how then!

As the stricken guest, else she be unable any more to keep her composity, turned over her mind, struggling perhaps, – for though much upon this fruitless matter may as well be inserted in this saga as thrown away, what this woman was turning over in her mind was indeed so valueless as shall be quite passed over, – to design ever more strange mysterious reasons why man, never observing his gods or their actions in any clear honest way, yet believes in so sovereignly intelligent a being, – with neither organs nor space, neither point nor contact, – quite unsupportable by any, by every of those proves[✓] which are required to establish all propositions laid down among men, Michael, clearly realising that not alone continued converse, – exactly as so far, exactly as always, – but also continued lecturing, – not quite as always so far, so exactly always, – would reward him neither gain nor advantage, nor even more interest than the half of each moment supplied, and, ah!, most conveniently!, – for there was vacancy sufficient in him to receive instruction by another method, – his eyes, – always the far less unsatisfied with seeing than his ears with hearing, – throughout this exchange, – defined as a transaction by which one loses and the other gains, – hawking for ventry, even as he his latest words spoke : across the lawn a maid with her very rum ogles¹⁷⁴ in an amorous face : in very deed the attendency of a very smart becoming air, – and of lovely name :

¹⁷⁴ fine eyes

Elkenna, – and, as well, particularly amidst so many reeds : a bosom wherewith she was nothing meanly enriched!, by taking this quick notion of her finding at the very first she so pleased his fancy he fell a little in love, – and a little in love is a great deal with which to make much, to make the most, – indeed, he believed it suddenly very true that there was no one then in the world in whose acquaintance and friendship,

(in modern, honest parlance : between whose open and inviting legs, breasts, and arms),

he would have been so happy to see himself firmly established sweetly solacing himself to his great contentation.

Believing himself one of those fortunates who possessed wits enough to fathom the allectives¹⁷⁵ of beauty, – than which, he had heard, nothing so violently makes its way more directly to the soul,

which some the body call the garment thereof, some the house, some the instrument, some the harmony, &c,

and thereafter skill enough to minister to its pleasures, Michael now cast about in his mind by what method he might come at her, and by what further method at such charms as he would delight in rifling, – for his luxive¹⁷⁶ health, strong spirits, and bold confident disposition would surely do naught but forward his predominant inclination, – provided of course this did not make *too* terrible depredations upon her noble faculties, (which alas occurred, for without uttering an indecent word, or showing an indecent gesture, – but urged both to the very limits of decorum, – and without in the least understanding his otherwise perfectly unmistakable suggestions, she replied with so divine a continence as to excind¹⁷⁷ all lascivious hope); gently patting now a shoulder in parting manner,

¹⁷⁵ allurements

¹⁷⁶ voluptuous

¹⁷⁷ cut off

without hard words, involved constructions, awkward metaphors, overloaded epithets, or unmeasured sentences,

Michael advised in excellent good words the following :

— Though it is at least personally true that we Trokes, – because we suffer not that insecurity which in an active person desire he produce himself to the world, – take care a far smaller part of creation comes under our notice and influence than is normal for our class, by nevertheless remaining witted enough to know it undeniable that, – because of the great conformity and participation of minds in like errors, widespread agreement no more makes right than widespread belief truth, – the only sensible policy is to assume, because it is impossible to prove any nonexistence claim, – and an assertion unfounded on observation must, naturally, — for assertions made without evidence can be refuted without the need to supply any refuting evidence, — be rejected, – and with the *onus probandi*¹⁷⁸ clearly upon the believer, that all unprovables are false, at least until such time as they can be proved otherwise. For really, madam!, – and take ye this by the way : you will surely excuse me if I enjoy myself so obviously, for it is so unlike me to use unnecessary proofs in an indisputable point, – admit it as so obviously unreasonable that so handsome, sensible, and, by displaying a brilliancy come of a fortune still too new, too upward in the parts of show, may I say it?, – for this would provide you, — if it were not too much to presume a facility of belief in my audience, — with a small hole to creep out at, – so seeming *real* a woman : in suffering the mind, – which like the body has its very own diseases, – to believe a proposition from which, after two millennia of blood, screams, and death, – here stressing of course that we Trokes are not otherwise a people to deem nothing demonstration if it not be ocular, for we do not suffer the hypocrisy of those who dismiss as chimerical whatever is not palpable, or cannot be seen, tasted, heard, or told, – not a sole gram of

¹⁷⁸ burden of proof

evidence has been borne away, neither that vice is punished, nor that they who seek to climb by privy sin shall fall with open shame, neither that virtue, – defined by some moralists as nothing else but the knowledge of things ensued and followed, or of things eschewed and fled, and divided by other moralists into benevolence, prudence, fortitude, and temperance, – meets reward, nor that the observation of one single, one scornful, one meagre¹⁷⁹, measly, supernatural fact or miracle has ever been put upon if not sworn then at least reasonable record, – for I suddenly recall what Thomas Huxley saith :

Whoso clearly appreciates all that is implied in the falling of a stone can have no difficulty about any doctrine simply on account of its marvellousness. –

then in rosied health you can admit this also, for it shall breed no inconvenience at all : it is as much an absurdity to believe what cannot be seen, – although I admit it as true : the invisible and nonexistent look very much alike, – as to believe the same is hidden. In reply to all that I have said, – and because I trow¹⁸⁰ that thou shalt know better to learn me than I thee, I beg pardon that the need to be both just and honest can be so very disobliging, but good form, — of which, with an understand[✓] so fine as yours, you possess sufficient for us both, — consists, above all things, in keeping silent, – for orthodoxy always has an answer round and ready, – for it will never allow itself worsted, even with its back to the wall, as it is now, but reasons will be suggested, particularly by men who make a profession of devising shifts and evasions to save themselves and their beliefs from the pressure, the outright audacity of truth, – orthodoxy can reply only in this most basic and desperate wise : the starting point of belief cannot come of vain inconstant reason, – for what can be more contrary to reason, than by the use of reason strive to master that which transcends reason?, – but rather simple and pure faith. If accepting an assertion by faith alone is to concede that it cannot be taken on its own merits, I leave to your

¹⁷⁹ selfish or mean

¹⁸⁰ tust

own conscience.

Though we Trokes have mind enough to grandly entertain all manner thoughts without accepting them, we find it only too true that in the presence of gods, of the faithly, real thought halts, for the two are quite opposite. Madam!, as you have failed wholly to realise that it were better, if one must prate of this matter of gods, to be far better furnished with answers to those objections with which we, a profane crew of atheists, always plentifully present to those who of gods, – arguing ridiculously from but one old book, often from but one small passage thereof, the which we do not permit, – make the greatest din, let me advise you the following : learn and study the things that are, how they are ordered and governed, by what means, for what cause, to what end, study also thyself, find what *Nature* bids thee to be, tells thee thou *must* be, and what end your life is like to have, and then, – admittedly this is far less painful to conjecture than to experience, and the process is very simple!, madam, a children's playing!, – acknowledge first that we are a species eternally condemned to kill one other to live, nurture next a newfound ludibry¹⁸¹ for man, – for this is the very beginning of wisdom, – believe next that ripeness in faith is rawness in wit and judgement, and finally, finally!, – and few mathematical demonstrations conclude stronger than this, – for once and all attain to that benerous¹⁸² state of corruption wherein not nonsense but truth is all the eye can see, and thus will you cease to suffer your blindness. Now as these are so far my best thoughts, it is as much a duty for myself as for yourself to go on, and think further, now, madam, I am said.

The fourth, the final example : Jeffrey, storyteller *extraordinaire*, – this would be in 1995, just as he and Maxwell, his bosom friend and fifth cousin twice removed, were intent upon walking to Messrs Peal their bootmaker, talking, laughing, both invigorated, even cleansed, by an establishment catering expensively, unhurriedly, to

¹⁸¹ contempt

¹⁸² blessed

chamber-mirth¹⁸³, or to call a spade by its name : purchased sexual congress from young women of excellent nature and look, — for without beauty to them, without refinement, their merchandise, to these two happily married men, would never have been saleable, — in August summer, – to a quite, – here used in the sense very or rather, rather than in the sense wholly or entirely, – pretty, wastefully pretty, young lady named Joyzelle Inchfawn, – by profession a social worker specialising in victimology¹⁸⁴, but because of a very fragile sense of identity, an unhealthily developed ego, and a loveless childhood, finding religion at a very early age, – with her assorted colleagues, on her days off, canvassing the streets for their god,

called by Jefferson : cruel, vindictive, capricious, and unjust,

with looks of mild imploration steady hustling everybody they see, even stopping people dead to preach their Jesus unto them, not realising the poor girl that it were better preach to an hundred extremist Muslims, a thousand!, other than to such as Jeffrey.

Simply to far less slowly learn what the girl would attempt next to assert, noddingly granting what was currently pleading, – for it was beginning to be his horrid suspicion that what was overall saying would either soon prove far more suited to work upon the unbounded imaginations and passions, than upon bounden reason, or else, the more likely, become one of those mere pieces of common nonsense as could never in its life occasion in a real man the least obligation for acknowledgment, let alone thanksgiving, praise, agreement, or even the listening to, – with raised finger making gentlemanly sign that he had heard exactly enough of her crazed gospelarity to take clearly her point, – yet in ungentlemanly manner also considering simply turning away, — for most stupendous and impenetrable is the art that in this kind such lunatics use to waylay the sane, — for he was not unaware that such a passion to revile that which exists not, made him seem a fool to those who, perhaps even as

¹⁸³ bedroom pleasure

¹⁸⁴ the study of why certain people are victims of crime and how lifestyles affect the chances that a certain person will fall victim to a crime

disbelieving as he, calmly thought nothing of such matters, or who thought sanely, but silently, or who simply laughed at such as was beyond the very meanest contemplating, – and accompanied by as strong and determined an expression as can be conceived, – occasioning a gasp from the girl, – Jeffrey commenced upon this subject, – for what can one do, if not be silent, but to far inferior intelligences lecture, – by first putting some real meat to it :

— Speaking, as I tend always to do, in a frank open way, – for should I be fool enough to present to each man, or woman, only the truth for which they have room, then the matter were soon so thoroughly done only silence would remain, for as you yourself are vastly well aware : to speak openly of things to those who cannot receive them is stupidity, rather than frankness, – but rarely to those who have not wit enough to keep them sweet, nor vitality enough to preserve them from putrefaction, but only to those whom reason can satisfy, let me first say : as to the truth or beauty of those creeds from which your devout observances proceed, I must here assertionate¹⁸⁵ : if beauty is truth, – Miss?, Miss Inchfawn, – then you believe, madam, in nonsense without voucher¹⁸⁶, a proofless nothing monstrous ugly, or else, if proof there be, then perhaps it is as saith Weil : the world, – god's absence his distance, called space, his awaiting called time, – could only be created by withdrawing from it. Nay!, I knowest it dislikes thee, but I cannot unsay a word : truth cannot be unsaid, particularly to one such as yourself who, – though this might be saying amiss, for *ficum voco ficum et ligonem ligonem*¹⁸⁷, I often overshoot the mark of prudence, – has about beauty enough, despite the silly poke-bonnet¹⁸⁸, to raise above dependence even to a duchess.

Now, whilst acknowledging it an error to be in the right oversoon : to such silly misbeliefs as you now with your tragic pamphlets peddle, – containing, — for

¹⁸⁵ avouch

¹⁸⁶ supporting evidence

¹⁸⁷ I call a fig a fig and a spade a spade

¹⁸⁸ such as are worn by female Salvationists, once by American Quakers and Methodists

you clearly consider it no sacrilege to present your heavenly things by our earthly forms, — surely so desirable, such reasonable matter, would we heathens but look aright at what all the *sane* world sees as anciently built from the few scraps of imagination that cluttered frightened thought, or, as D'Holbach saith, and Meslier out of him : constructed from mere suppositions, imagined by ignorance, propagated by enthusiasm or knavery, adopted by timid credulity, and preserved by custom, — that never reasoning witch whose spells cast moral illusion, — and revered solely because not understood, — but in whose amorvolous¹⁸⁹ society you joy, if imperfectly well : it would be best to put out the eyes of a mind incapable of dealing honestly with its own faculties, for then, with a mind that hath altogether renounced the use of unreason, you may peer purged upon a world made real, — if at first appearing waste, vague, and unowned, — that is truly revealed, filled as it may newly be with all the pointless loneliness, pain, danger, and difficulty that accompanies this terrible yet wonderful realisation : that every yesterday has been misunderstood, that it is a moral crime to cherish the misunderstood, that justice, mercy, truth, peace, freedom, comprise only impossibles, and that goodness, righteousness, — the path of which, as you daily with your people preach, — which than the open streets, surely sickness, adversity, and the approach of death are more advantageous seasons for the peddling of, — can only be trodden with the greatest care, for once it is quitted, it is not, without abundance[✓] more trouble, if ever, ever to be regained, — meekness, temperance, and unity comprise only further impossibles.

Remember, if not these words, — which I suspect, by none repaying by their value the disadvantage of novelty, by building one of the most ingenious pieces of reasoning that has ever fallen, or, I fear, will ever fall, under your notice, may cause you to suspect that it is not in language to describe how much I am to be pitied, — nor even myself, then remember forever these living tones, swift looks, and manifold dramatic accompaniments that resort not to hyperbole to appear

¹⁸⁹ marvellously lovely

original, but which, – so witching my words and glances, for by carefully seasoning my sentences, long before they come into my mouth, in a heart which expresses always much but certainly not all that I feel, I observe that these prove so truly affecting, you plainly perceive that, whereas in others, how gently and pausably soever, such words would bear no more than lip-deep sentiments, mine own are at the least heart-deep, – driving you pale backward, – but not ill-wishingly, for I cannot refuse myself the pleasure of inserting here that we unprejudicate¹⁹⁰ Trokes, — comprising a large family, but of which you can never have heard, for it is far more likely that you have never heard of the sky, — do not bear maltalent¹⁹¹ to those whom they persecute, – so simply and yet urgently state that with man as much a part *of* Nature, – meaning wisdom without reflection, – as distinct *from*, – forming therefore an essential element of the great mystery of life, – one need do no more than look deep into oneself, – for who looks deeply makes keen, – for the solution to an existence which one can only reconcile by acknowledging it *meaningless*, – for then, commencing at last to live, – for no adventure would but then wear to the soul its new shape, – will real knowledge come, real hope, and far kindlier symptoms. Well may you let down silent tears, well may your trembling rattle your little box, which, if I knew where exactly its contents ended, I have the means to fill it full, but as I do not hold to your cause, neither can I give, neither out of true charity nor false, the first predicated upon love, which I do not currently feel, the last upon guilt, condescension, pity, which I feel not either. Lady, your servant; gentlemen, yours. Come, Maxwell!

With his travelling bag still unshed from his broad shoulders, it was to open-mouthed Lemuel, right there at the front door, that Michael Overslaugh first began his institution¹⁹² by stating what he firmly believed, – as indeed everyone should, for it is full true, – that the limit of reality, – which after all only signifies strong belief, – is dictated only by the limit of language; thus by this great man was the family firmly,

¹⁹⁰ not prepossessed by settled opinions

¹⁹¹ ill-will

¹⁹² instruction

most properly, forever, launched into the time-honoured practice of pursuing and displaying an inordinate fascination for words; of his oppressed childhood, his strained relationship with his father, – himself a cleric, — and of such pronounced unctuousness, believed one of the pioucest men in the county, — who, as of himself, demanded only the same devoutness in his sole son, – how, if had he not come to see the better light of truth barely in time to avoid a dangerously approaching ordainment, Michael would have certainly become a cleric, an unhappy one, – for not only did his father, himself collated¹⁹³ at the very young age of 24, offer to resign a comfortable living¹⁹⁴ to him, but a visiting prelate,

taking time away from the troubles of his living : ruffling in rents, dancing in dominions, pampering paunches, moiling in gay manors, loitering in lordships, as saith Latimer,

observing that Michael was so fine a scholar, hinted that he might be offered the reversion¹⁹⁵ of a benefice of which he had the advowson¹⁹⁶, should he, – after examination, of course, by men of gravity in the circumstance of his sufficiency, – prove capable, and other related matters : of which, if at all : all in their place.

It might be to the best, (after here taking the tiniest stop to point out that one far future day the final Vouchsafe will be utterly unable to draw even the slightest conclusions from the correspondence of these strange cognomens¹⁹⁷ : Gerund¹⁹⁸, Preterite¹⁹⁹, and Overslaugh²⁰⁰), to simply leap into his history at say age 23 in the

¹⁹³ appointed to a benefice

¹⁹⁴ ecclesiastical benefice

¹⁹⁵ the return of an estate to a donor or grantor or his heirs after the expiry of the grant

¹⁹⁶ the right to present a clergyman for appointment to the bishop of the diocese by one who had the patronage or was guardian of a benefice or an ecclesiastical house

¹⁹⁷ surnames

¹⁹⁸ in Latin : a verbal noun used in all cases but the nominative; in Anglo-Saxon : a dative form of the infinitive, with *to* before it; in English : a verbal noun ending in *-ing*, having all the cases of a noun but retaining certain characteristics of the verb, such as the ability to take an object or an adverbial modifier

¹⁹⁹ in grammar : denoting past action or state; term formerly used to refer to the simple past tense

²⁰⁰ to pass over in disregard by giving another the promotion; the omission of one duty in favour of

wet year of 1766, four days short of his confirmation, when one drizzly dawn he awoke to this clear realisation : insulting science and virtue to make a living, was, oh, too expensive bread!, particularly to one who was suddenly simply unable to any more stomach the cant²⁰¹ delivered by the hour by his theologaster²⁰² teachers, many of whom were not only acedias²⁰³ but pettily consumed by *odium theologicum*²⁰⁴; so Overslaugh reborn arose, dressed himself simply in the donnins²⁰⁵ of a real man, packed his large, single leathern bag, and without a word, – but with a nodding to the lame mute gatekeeper named Rufus Dogg to whom he flicked a six-and-ninepenny piece, – walked out of the theological college into the teeming rain to commence his four years of pilgrimage under the goodly light of religious indifference.

By acknowledging properly, honestly, that he had always deep inside believed that god was naught more than an idea, a hope, a thought, then after years of hard study, confirmed that god was a thought that that made hoked²⁰⁶ all that was straight, never aught but a vain name, and no essential thing, Overslaugh unknowingly became what some of the less understanding of the ecclesia, – those who spent their lives in weaving, unweaving, subtle cobwebs, – thought of as a base criminal, whilst others, lesser blighted, said, no, it is to the glory of religion to have for an enemy a man so scholarly, yet so unreasonable, but what a few undarkened people such as the Trokes thought of as oh a most sane sensible fellow, which is why they immediately employed him; until his tergiversation²⁰⁷, – the news of which was not as many of more fanatical fellow-students described it : a thunder of such might as when heaven and hell should go together, yet it is true he was always thought a touch too

another more pressing; a bar in a river; to hinder or obstruct

²⁰¹ insincere and parrot-like appeal to religious principles the speaker does not himself believe in or act upon or understand

²⁰² pretender to knowledge in divinity

²⁰³ slothful or wickedly lax when it comes to matters spiritual or religious

²⁰⁴ bitter hatred between rival theologians

²⁰⁵ dress; clothes

²⁰⁶ crooked

²⁰⁷ abandoning of religion

leodicean²⁰⁸, – Overslaugh had proved an excellent student : doing always the work faster than they could teach him, bretful²⁰⁹ of such goodness and light as would soon beat him a path to a high benefice, if not to a mitre, very capable in his duty as a junior librarian, and a patient skilled assistant to the infirmarian²¹⁰.

As he strode unseen down the road from the seminary with his worldly all in his commodious satchel, and despite the mugged²¹¹ air, with a very lightness in the step for so large a man intent upon futures utterly unknown, he halted his gay whistling to think briefly of Isiah :

66:15 : For behold, the Lord wil come with fire, and with his charets like a whirlwinde, to render his anger with furie, and his rebuke with flames of fire.
63:3 : I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my furie, and their blood shall be sprinkled vpon my garments, and I will staine all my raiment.
33:12-13 : And the people shalbe as the burnings of lyme: as thornes cut vp shall they be burnt in the fire. Heare yee that are farre off, what I haue done; and yee that are neere, acknowledge my might.

and he shivered in horror at the desperate measures certain long ago terrified lonely men needed to employ to share their madness, their terror; for many months following his exclaustration²¹², newly secularist²¹³ Overslaugh found himself much enjoying his errabund²¹⁴ life, eating his meals at inns and farmhouses, sometimes by a campfire sleeping under the stars, or, – without making it openly known that he was once a man of a god, nor that, if he was anything, he was now a hylotheist²¹⁵, – as a guest of this family and that, he found it no too great matter to join his hands,

²⁰⁸ lacking in religious fervour

²⁰⁹ brimful

²¹⁰ one who has charge of an infirmary and its patients in a religious establishment

²¹¹ drizzled

²¹² act of leaving a religious retreat

²¹³ one who rejects all forms of religious faith and worship

²¹⁴ wandering

²¹⁵ one who holds that the material universe is god

lower his head, say amen; during his four years as pilgrim he was very disinclined to speak of god, for he found at the unresolved often bitter end no profit in this almost wholly fictional matter, but when the man was pressed by one of those troublers of the world who need to know immediately and precisely the colour of the faith of another man, Overslaugh said that he was adiaphoristic²¹⁶, and whereas in company as mixed as possible it was often the case that this answer, because not understood, was the least likely to cause the most offense, when an occasional fool demanded he abjure²¹⁷ his heathen beliefs,

beliefs full of presumption and falsehood, sustained with no truth, enlightened with no wisdom, seasoned with no salt, beliefs vain, rash, heady, pernicious,

Overslaugh merely laughed.

Though similar indulgencies must not be expected of other outsiders by whom Trokes benefitted, it will certainly not be out of place to award space in this saga to this remarkable man Overslaugh, (but it would be well to realise that much of what shall forecome must be umbecast²¹⁸ over the more than half-century of his stay at Troke Manor); on his very first day of tutoring, – undertaken upon not only the day but almost the very hour of his arrivement, – in the soon to be furnished classroom, with the five shy, suspicious, but fresh-faced boys before him, by way of introducing himself, Overslaugh told a moving yet very strange (and still not wholly understood) tale, which went in part as follow :

— In the beginning, before walked man upon this Earth, when there were things only, hugely countless, and no words extant to lament this not yet outrageous nepotation²¹⁹, things were content to know they were things, for

²¹⁶ theologically indifferent

²¹⁷ renounce

²¹⁸ cast about

²¹⁹ extravagance

even when uncouth²²⁰ to other things, things were things still. This most felicitous time was of duration oh almost measureless, stretching from the far distant beginning, or nearly, to very recently : almost the end, when, first slowly, then suddenly, into this world where new things came rarely, and always slowly, amongst came man, a sudden quite new thing, and strange. For a while, with this newness, things lived in smiling enough harmony, but then, when a mind came to man, – and make here no mistake, when it came, it came right suddenly, – things became shy of man, then suspicious, as are you, now, of me. Soon after arriving to man a language to speak his new mind, – a crude thing, as it is even now, but even more so in its beginnings, – things grew fearful, which you of me will never. At first rudimentary, language soon showed itself to be oh very pompous, then sly, then delinquent, for it was not very long before words began to claim, – with barely man born enough to give them utterance, – that before their coming things existed not, things were nothing! Well, aidless to do otherwise, – for things were unfortunately unaware that feelings of guilt, inferiority, and worthlessness can only come following agreement, – many things, for simple want of their words, – from man at least, – fading vanished!

— But dry your eyes children, matters soon changed : in time, becoming soon outraged at their treatment, by secret meeting, by plotting, by turning even vengeable²²¹, in many corners of the world named things, sacrificing themselves to oblivion, vanished, – magic for instance, – for as everyone knows, words thingless, – gods most particularly, – are words only, and not things. Because words were right frightened by this development, after many envoys, much negotiation, an uneasy truce was agreed upon, which is in place to this day : a few clauses of which are : things and words must coexist without enmity, that because, coming first, – for words are as new to existence as things are old, – things must always far outnumber words, that all things known

²²⁰ unknown

²²¹ revengeful

to man may have words, each thing many words, as each word many things, but all words must have things, and no word may ever be thingless.

— Now it would be wise to remember, to never forget, my new young friends, that despite their strength, sometimes their beauty, – for I love them every one, – words are yet still young, opportunist, upstart, therefore not fully to be trusted not to one day break their treaty, which in scattered places has already occurred, the bible a perfect example. When you are older, my children, when with my help and time you know words better, you will observe, not in their deeper, but in their deepest, nature, – and few dare know this, – it is their malevolent intention to entirely oust things, all things, to build a world wholly of their own, a world where, language alone reigning, all would be possible, which is chaos, madness! It is therefore the lonely duty of a man like myself, and in the future perhaps of men like yourselves, to preserve this delicate truce, to keep the perfect balance fair of words and things, to encourage from far oblivions the return of wordless things, that they may be lauded properly with new words; for I am as if come to this world, to this excellent house, to you, fair boys, to recruit a family of guardians to forever delay the coming of a dissolution, to protect this harassed reality, to forevermore maintain the equilibrium of always words enough, always things enough, so that the machine of this world of things shall continue to peacefully coexist within a world of words, so that the crude machine of words may not too unhappily, not too uncomfortably, – in other words : safely, – coexist about this great world of things.

Whereas speech is believed the very image whereby the mind and the soul of the speaker conveys itself into the bosom of him which hears,

according to Mercurius Trismegistus, the god-given gift of mind was of the same virtue, power, and immortality, as that which, – justly or unjustly, profitably or unprofitably, delightfully or offensively, praisefully or disgracefully, honestly or dishonestly, – expresses its inward,

whereas, further, speech, or declarative reason, gives far richer increase to a ground that is turned and watered for knowledge, than bare simple reading, – which it is true to some hearers is no small edifying[✓], – Michael in his didactics²²², – save to confirm or show or prove, – rarely resorted to books; this self-admitted archaist²²³ would every day give his students new words, – meaning : old or forgotten, – hidden amidst his discourse, his lessons, which the first to note, to question, would receive his loos²²⁴ : soon to prove prize enough, and for these new unknown words his students soon eagerly with their ears searching, when found and understood, carried them away to bluster their intrigued parents therewith, forming such sentences as the following :

— The amusive bayard²²⁵ Master Michael Overslaugh, despite an amorphous²²⁶ daedal²²⁷, despite his *bienséance*²²⁸, his comity²²⁹, is gainest²³⁰ to embrangle²³¹ with, even exenterate²³², any cynocephale²³³ who would dare even to acidulate²³⁴ or asperse²³⁵ the minds, or dispart²³⁶ the hearts, of those callants²³⁷ under his aegis²³⁸;

as it followed from this, naturally enough, that the children instructed their equally

²²² art or science of teaching

²²³ one given to, partial to archaism

²²⁴ praise

²²⁵ very highly bred, chivalrous gentleman, of high courage and exquisite manners

²²⁶ shapeless, formless, badly constructed, ill-designed

²²⁷ ingenious, skilfully made, highly elaborated, intricate

²²⁸ fitting and suitable in conduct of morals, decorum, decency

²²⁹ courtesy, friendliness

²³⁰ readiest, most delighted

²³¹ bogus word, from embroil and entangle

²³² disembowel

²³³ of a fabled race of men with dogs' heads

²³⁴ make sour

²³⁵ besmirch

²³⁶ part asunder, split in two

²³⁷ young fellows

²³⁸ protection

pysmatic²³⁹ fathers and mothers by supplying a translation, thus it was, but far more properly, by launching the Troke fascination for words, that futurely, thanks to Overslaugh and his far discoasting from too plain and simple speech-ways, far more Trokes than one would as much write with his tongue as orate with his pen.

Not in any way homiletic²⁴⁰, nor ever once in his life reverting to vapulation²⁴¹, – for memory, any more obedience, cannot be very favourily acted upon through the muscular integuments of the hindward by an appliance of birch-rods, – Overslaugh was by any standards a most excellent teacher, – (indeed after his retiracy in 1826, despite extensive searches, the family never found a teacher, — even from their own numbers among, — half his equal), – principally by employing what is called the Socratic method²⁴², for by constantly pouring oil into the lamp of thought to keep intelligence at its very brightest, he was most particular in taking pains to reveal the breaches in knowledge, the weaknesses, the outright fallacies, whereupon he took no less pain in attempting to close them, to heal them up again, (as his biography *Wordsmith : Michael Overslaugh 1743-1833*, published by The Troke Press in 1941, clearly avouches); inasmuch as he knew, as few before and far fewer since, that knowledge must be heuristically²⁴³ imparted, as much with firm gentleness, as with great ardour, – as if a teacher were he only whom it had been granted to open the trumpet-stop on that great organ of passion, – he believed also that knowledge must maintain its probity,

an old word meaning : moral excellence, integrity, rectitude, uprightness,
conscientiousness, honesty, sincerity,

until it becomes either something more than, or something less than, but never equal to, knowledge, for therein the danger lies : as words are not things, they were as

²³⁹ always asking questions or inquiring

²⁴⁰ preaching

²⁴¹ beating, flogging

²⁴² method of teaching by which questions lead to answers

²⁴³ learning by training gradually to find things out for oneself

good not believe at all, as with any lesser degree of faith believe, that words and things are the same.

Furthermore, because restlessness, even boredom, and hence fatigue in clergy²⁴⁴, were to youth deading, a poison, – oh a fool and blundering method of study is that which, (still enduring), swallowing a whole childhood, kills enthusiasm, – the loresman²⁴⁵, if as true to his craft as to his knowledge, must also be a tutorist²⁴⁶ whose eyes and finger were his fescue or festue²⁴⁷, – locally called a vester, in Cornwall a custis, – which Michael, in an aside, – here exemplifying an idiosyncrasy very typical of him, – warned must not be confused with the ferule, or ferula, which was a cane for punishing children, – for though the rod is not in every instance the most unfit tool to be used in education, — for if it is a nonsense said that *no* boy will ever be brought to good learning who is not allured thereto without stripes²⁴⁸, – a cane is alas also a tool excellent for teaching the ways of surly silence, – nor with the ferrule, with its double r, known also as a verrel and virole, which is a metal cap or collar affixed to the end of stick, to keep it whole, nor with the ferula, which is the plant the giant fennel; nay, a rataplan²⁴⁹ was never a sound heard in *his* classroom, for when excitement proved simply too infectious, when his students seemed suddenly unbitted²⁵⁰, throwing an affronted forehead upon his face, his tonous²⁵¹ voice would sound his loudest voice, his boldest type, Clom!²⁵², he would say, *Bombax!*²⁵³, the which, so effective, amounted to the very uttermost of his severeness.

With his sweet singsong tenor voice ringing through the large classroom, amusedly

²⁴⁴ learning

²⁴⁵ teacher

²⁴⁶ advocate of rigorism in a mild form

²⁴⁷ pointing instruments to direct children in reading

²⁴⁸ blows made with a whip, rod, scourge, or the like, such as usually leaves a mark

²⁴⁹ the iterative sound of beating

²⁵⁰ uncontrollable

²⁵¹ full-sounding

²⁵² be silent!

²⁵³ well, I never!

expounding now upon Shakespeare, or Rabelais, now upon Catullus, or Marco Polo, or Pythagoras, or the *Novo Orbe*²⁵⁴, or Descartes,

he who in investigating the conflict between *pensum*²⁵⁵ and *punctum*²⁵⁶, dared to suggest that insanity was not diabolical in origin, but a legitimate object of philosophical and medical enquiry,

all five boys so quickly became eager *scolae*²⁵⁷, not a one was *indocile*²⁵⁸, nor *inapt*²⁵⁹, nor negligent, nor of dull conceit, for with Michael Overslaugh even the most beamless child became soon *clergial*²⁶⁰; when his always short lessons, which were loved barely less than their teacher, came to an end and *refection*²⁶¹ served, with often the parents, even a servant or two, in interested, even fascinated attendance, or in the conservatory, or, weather permitting, in the garden, – which a score of *ortolans*²⁶² were at last putting to those rights which are right because they are satisfactory, – with all five boys hanging from him, – one from the worn lapels of his clerical coat, one from each arm, one *a-pigga-back*²⁶³, and one *a-pisty-poll*²⁶⁴, – laughing and panting hugely and quoting Cicero, *Omnia mea mecum porto*²⁶⁵, then spinning around, gently shaking them all from him, then, until his breath was regained pretending exhaustion, lying on the warm grass, he might discourse in an *underbreath*²⁶⁶ upon the mysteries sufficient in a godless universe : its great order, which rather than a marvel, is simply the indispensable condition of its existence.

254 New World

255 mind

256 body

257 to attend school

258 unteachable

259 not ready to learn

260 learned

261 refreshment

262 gardeners

263 piggy back

264 carrying a child on the shoulders

265 all my possessions I carry with me

266 subdued voice

On almost any pretext at all, such as paronymy²⁶⁷, or homography²⁶⁸, or to correct paralogy²⁶⁹, Michael would expound grandly, always fascinatingly, upon whatever came to his mind, for the man needed but to close his eyes, or simply look him about to find a subject with which to charge his students with astonishment; for instance : he would say that the raspberries and blackberries the children were eating, so cool and fresh-picked, were acinus fruits, because, as they could see, they comprised clusters of drupels, themselves comprising many drupes, or drupelets, making each fruit therefore?, drupaceous, that to be bat-eyed was to be mentally blind, obtuse, imbecile, missing of the finer shades of thought, feeling, and meaning, that to be babyshed was to be deceived by childish or foolish tales, or baggerment, which was simply flathers or rubbish, that a *giant's-stride* was a gymnastical apparatus consisting of a tall pole with ropes or chains apically²⁷⁰ attached, the ring at the nether end of which by gripping, by running, was carried around and aloft, and with the lofting halp[✓] of the smallest child Harold, – with a grace surprising in a man of such bulk, – demonstrating his words, the children saying excitedly oh they must have one!, so were drawings immediately made, presented to the parents, and the contraption standing high to 40 feet, (still to be seen from the north windows), was constructed from the trunk of a dead cedar, *Juniperus Bermudiana*²⁷¹.

A man unsettlingly veridical²⁷², orotund²⁷³ of voice, but not of writing, – for this then meant pompous, turgid, bombastic, – a man polylogous²⁷⁴, yet never a sciolist²⁷⁵, in no way given to hyperbole, Michael was a delightfully unpredictable, even impulsive, and best of all, very rare : an ever *interesting* man, for he would suddenly upsolve²⁷⁶,

²⁶⁷ words having the same sound, but different meaning and spelling

²⁶⁸ words identical in spelling but different in sound and meaning

²⁶⁹ false reasoning

²⁷⁰ of or at the apex

²⁷¹ pencil cedar, Bermuda cedar, used for ship building, houses, furniture, and fuel

²⁷² truthful, corresponding to facts

²⁷³ full, round, resonant of voice

²⁷⁴ much speaking

²⁷⁵ pretentious, of superficial knowledge

²⁷⁶ explain

apropos²⁷⁷ of nothing save of a something dredged from the midst of a reverie, of which he was particularly fond,

that for instance bubbles in boiling water were once called boilouns, that one such bubble was once called a walme;

he would regularly, often, go to great pains to explain that although there was much magic to be found in words, there was also much legerdemain, – which was illusion, deception, – so it was very important to be able dissever²⁷⁸ between words of a sound constitution and words which were so to speak incocted²⁷⁹, rizzered²⁸⁰, or green²⁸¹, whereupon trotting to the blackboard he would illustrate his point with examples; upon other occasions, concerning for example words nearly identical in sound, he would explain : to feel complacent was to feel self-satisfaction, to be complaisant was to be obliging or polite, one adversed was opposed or standing in diameter with, to be aversed was to be disinclined, to appraise was to value, to apprise to inform, or notify, or place a value upon, to assay was to test, to analyse, or to estimate, to essay was to try or to attempt, biannual meant twice a year, biennial every two years, casual meant happening chancemeal, causal referred to a cause, to insolate meant to expose to the rays of the Sun, insolite meant unusual or wontless²⁸² or strange,

— Like me, perhaps, your beloved teacher, and he would often scowl almost viciously and say, — I hope you are glopping, or sucking in, these wonderful words, my haspats²⁸³, else you grow up gomerals, which, like nine parts of the great big stupid public world, are bird-eyed²⁸⁴, mannerless, loutish, and fools

²⁷⁷ by the way

²⁷⁸ distinguish

²⁷⁹ uncooked

²⁸⁰ half-dried or salted

²⁸¹ unsalted

²⁸² unaccustomed

²⁸³ youths between boys and men

²⁸⁴ staring

because they could so easily be otherwise,

and the haspenalds²⁸⁵ would nod without overcraft²⁸⁶, for they prided in themselves they were evolving into educands²⁸⁷.

Michael would also jactate²⁸⁸ at length upon single words, such as for example, oh, nuncupative, which meant declared by word of mouth, rather than by escript²⁸⁹, as was said of a will made at the point of death, that piscatorial meant of fishers or fishing, that to make the pot with two ears was to stand as their master when a quisquillous²⁹⁰ answer came, with arms akimbo, or with hands on hips, elbows outward bent; often too he railed against shyness, – which maketh a man more afraid of the criticisms of mere acquaintances than of his deepest conscience, – and humility, – which, like mystical, invisible gods that man cannot skill of, so restricts growth, – and to press this point : had he not only insisted at the very outset²⁹¹ that they call him Michael?, for that was natural, it was his name, but use his body and mind as if he was a canvas, to at first slaister²⁹² with great fun, then later when less craftless to limn²⁹³ say a paysage²⁹⁴, with perhaps an effect *sfumato*²⁹⁵, then later still, when the hand and eye faltered less, to transpiciously²⁹⁶ portrait whatever part of the world required it, for to be sure the greater part of man could only scumble²⁹⁷.

It is worthy of no more than a passing note that at in these early years Overslaugh was partial to the conjecturalities of the philosopher Helvétius, a man who, ignoring

285 youths between men and boys

286 deceit

287 persons educated

288 discuss, bandy about

289 a writing

290 of the nature of rubbish or refuse

291 outset

292 paint or colour in a vulgar manner

293 paint

294 country scene, landscape

295 having indistinct, blurred, outlines

296 clearly

297 soften outlines of a painting by adding thin coat of almost dry colour

heredity, claimed that the mind of a *vagitum infantis*²⁹⁸, in a state of omniparity²⁹⁹, was prepared for any kind of discipline and instruction that may be afforded, (but this was a belief one day to suffer slight change when despite his best efforts one or perhaps two of his students turned out to be, – comparatively speaking of course, – dunces); during the intervals between his exciting, but, to ensure *paideia*³⁰⁰, very brief lessons, – often of only 30 dense minutes, – in which the children were free to amuse themselves, Overslaugh would silently wonder at his charges, for though three of them were unrelated to the two Trokes boys, they all shared the same unmistakable bodily lineaments and facial features, which if hitherto scarcely touched upon will be herewith detailed and entreated.

So as to once for all discharges the pen from dealing with this matter further : for his personal qualities, both natural and moral, – for a Troke was no man's copy, – take as uniquely follows : whereas there are of course exceptions not overly numerous, the natural backward thrust of the Troke head in strange company prevented it from ever adopting the inclinations typical of characters devoid of vitality, yet the head in solitude was lowered in proportion to the quantity, – suppose it little, suppose it much, – of intelligence and reflection; beneath a broad high forehead, – which in the males, with the advent of incipient calvities³⁰¹, ascended far farther, – the Troke face, because so animate, so aspectabund³⁰², was prone to early rutidosis³⁰³; the hair was fair, often very fair in the young, very fine, very late to grey, in males often parted on the right, on what has been called the woman's side, and often bearing that double crown which upon a close-shorn head suggested wildness; the eyes were small, – a sign of strength, as large a sign of languor, – blue, sometimes azurine³⁰⁴, and, having to them also a strange cast, were considered by many, especially upon first acquaintance, as small as they were, a touch too full open, meaning perhaps too

²⁹⁸ new-born babe

²⁹⁹ general equality

³⁰⁰ education aimed at forming an enlightened, mature mind

³⁰¹ baldness

³⁰² of face expressive

³⁰³ wrinkling

³⁰⁴ azure; sky-blue

seeing, and yet, despite possessing so little white to them, – which made it sometimes difficult to determine where they were aimed, therefore difficult to immediately trust, – Troke eyes were remarkably expressive of the supposedly eighty-one expressions believed possible of a human face, as was the face itself,

(though it would one day be said that only nine major emotions³⁰⁵, – supposed of Izard in *The Face of Emotion*, 1971, – or only six, – supposed of Ekman in *Expression and the Nature of Emotion*, 1984, – were dispatched to the face³⁰⁶),

as was the body, overall.

The eyebrows,

considered the thermometer of the mind, as the shoulder of passion, the elbow of pride and humility, the thumb of life,

long and thick, adapted themselves with every facility to the various conceptions of a vigorous mind; the nose and lips, appearing often as an atavism³⁰⁷, were often a trifle fleshy and full, even mollitious³⁰⁸, and to a refined yet disfavoured eye even coarse; the mouth was wide, large, with good strong teeth in it, and the voice when relaxed, clear, rich, even in women timbrous³⁰⁹, in song both strong and sweet, but in expressing intensity of passion, even in small, in trivial things, often acute and high; the chin was strengthful, particularly the gnathion³¹⁰, the ears were often large, lobed, spheroid, once denoting talkativeness, and the neck often short and thick; thus the face, which of a man gives out but a superficial knowledge, for it is by his works that his principles and capacities come to be known.

³⁰⁵ interest, enjoyment, surprise, distress, disgust, anger, shame, fear, and contempt

³⁰⁶ surprise, happiness, fear, anger, disgust, and sadness

³⁰⁷ an ancestral but not parental character

³⁰⁸ luxurious; sensuous

³⁰⁹ resonant

³¹⁰ tip of the chin

In regard to a fuller morphology³¹¹ : the body, the central site of meaning, – for it is of great import into what body the mind is bestowed, for as many things arise of the body to sharpen the mind, as arise to dull and rebate it, – this was very often below middle highness, below sometimes even the lowest degree of middle stature, yet symmetrical, mesomorph³¹², often of considerable biacromial width³¹³, cervicose³¹⁴, overall powerfully steeve³¹⁵, and, – if sometimes distinctly simian, – extraordinarily rather³¹⁶, and more often than not, in all its movements, – for the body needs education as much as the mind, – filled with searching grace; whilst most Troke women remained long shapely, when males were given much later in life to a little fat, – evident first at the sternum, and, rarely affecting his slender bitrochanteric width³¹⁷, solider far than normal, – this was backed by a good wall of muscle; the legs were big and thick, particularly at calves and thigh, slightly bowed, heavy but graceful, the ankles slender, the feet, high in the instep,

meaning the arched underside of the foot, not the arched upperside,

not large but strong and fine-looking, the toes often long; the hands, – the cutting edge of the mind, particularly strong minds which go never after the same grain, but each in so particular a way, – were often, especially in the women, very sizeable, – faugh!, as everything is sizeable : take this to mean : of good size, – strengthly, handsome, callused, scarred, capable, and very often of great mystery³¹⁸, (as shall be learned, for a Troke, – of a family whose heart and tongue went both one way, – was ever *centum puer artium*³¹⁹), and despite the short fingers, Troke hands, – a

³¹¹ outward appearance

³¹² of a type of man with a predominance of muscle, bone and connective tissue; often aggressive and self-assertive

³¹³ shoulder-width

³¹⁴ strong-necked

³¹⁵ well-made and active

³¹⁶ quick, swift

³¹⁷ hip-width

³¹⁸ craft

³¹⁹ one who can turn his hand to anything

vital component of family character, – could easily be described as listy³²⁰.

Overall, then, if by the standards of the day (then or now) neither a refined nor pure-bred creature, a Troke,

what he looks he is : in giving free, in asking spare, in promise slow, in performance speedy, in contract circumspect, in amity sincere, in enmity cautious,

was a strong, healthy, clever, handsome, certainly a very hardy representation of his species, full of the hectic of passion, – always hungry, ever rich in want, – full of energy, – the which only thoughtfulness controlled the use of, – and wise too perhaps, for in *Characters of Virtues and Vices* of 1608, Hall, between otherwise saying much rubbish, of the wise man saith this,

There is nothing that he desires not to know; but most and first, himself: and not so much his own strength as his weaknesses. Neither is his knowledge reduced to discourse, but practice... He is seldom overseen with credulity: for, knowing the falseness of the world, he hath learned to trust himself always; others, so far as he may not be damaged by their disappointment. He seeks his quietness in secrecy; and is wont, both to hide himself in retiredness, and his tongue in himself... He loves... to see the world, unseen... His passions are so many good servants, which stand in a diligent attendance, ready to be commanded...

As Michael partook of one of his regular dozes, – content, for the moment, that knowledge and experience were finding place in children lessoned enough to take care never to disgorge what they eat in the same condition it was swallowed, – the boys quietly reviewed what they had just that hour learned, particularly the words, for

³²⁰ opposite of listless; of a glad and eager activity, of an energetic desire or craving, with the wish and the will to be doing at something

than facts, these are less easier of remembrance : the candle-nut is a fruit of a Pacific Island shrub, known also as the candle-berry, which when alit burned with a bright light, a dead wall is a blank wall with no openings of any kind, an entresol is a storey between the ground and the first floor of an extruction³²¹, a fardel is a cumbersome burden, blewits or bluelegs are edible porphyrous³²² mushrooms, a deaf nut is a nut without a cornel³²³, acorns are called Jove's nuts in this place of the world, sifflement is whistling, a grylle is a cricket, a neophite an ignoramus, puissance is power, might, and strength, absonant is ridiculous and contrary to reason, or unmusical, or discordant, &c.

Another gift Overslaugh possessed, (similar to the gift of subtly amplifying, of eloquently explaining, difficult ideas, one day to be possessed by Graham, called *the clarifier*), was condensing unto most delightfully simple that which seemed excruciatingly cryptic, such as the philosophies of Spinoza and Locke, and, conversely, that which was thought the most blazingly obvious he could make far less so by urging his charges look long at a simple something, then describe it exhaustively, so that sometimes whole mornings would be given over to never too tiresomely examining and discussing, say, a wooden cube, or an oak-leaf, or a winged snake³²⁴ Michael held secure and unharmed between his large finger and thumb, and so the demerits³²⁵ and otherwise of micrology³²⁶ were more nearly examined; lying upright³²⁷ in the sweet grass, to any as cared to listen, – with an eloquence which far overmatched those who in parliament, in the pulpit, at the bar, were reputed masters, – he would expound upon say eternity, once believed to stretch only forth,

principally to terrify evil with agony, to glorify good with reward,

³²¹ building

³²² purple

³²³ kernel

³²⁴ bee

³²⁵ merits

³²⁶ attention to small details

³²⁷ flat upon the back

but to reach only back to 4004 B.C.E., to the twenty-seventh of October, a Thursday, to nine o'clock in the morning, or so saith a chronology of the world from its very creation to the dispersion of the Jews in the reign of Vespasian, called *Annales Veteris et Novi Testamenti* of 1654, or so saith a man called James Ussher (1581-1656), titled Archbishop of Armagh, Primate of Ireland, a fool and a pederast.

Also in these almost monologues, Michael would purple³²⁸ the bounties of human existence, of juvenescence³²⁹, – in which he always included himself, or at least as he grew older his ever-active mind, – and in expressing excitement over a mere idea, pursue it unto the far empires of silent doubt, whereupon, emerging from his sweated enthusiasm, as if from a dream, he would often find his audience comprised now of adults, even servants, and until he was accouraged³³⁰ to continue would simper and blush like a girl; sometimes, not often, he would play games with words, of which, with the world far too familiar, no examples need be given, yet sometimes too, growing quiet, almost maudlin, he would explain that some words, because of their shamelessness, their greed, had wantonly meanings manymong³³¹, that one word may be made to look two ways, many ways,

— ... twire, for instance, now abased into obscurity, once bemeaneth to glance slyly, to look askance, to peer, to pry, to wink, also to peep, to peep out, to twinkle, to sparkle, to shine, even to turn around,

and whilst language was not a delicate organism, nor was it even fragile, yet nevertheless of a nature needful of protection from corruption, for by alone simply improprieties, language can infect, decay, degenerate,

(particularly in these, believed the end days of the world : here are six modern

³²⁸ decorate, ornament, embroider

³²⁹ the state of being young, a youth

³³⁰ encouraged

³³¹ of many sorts

examples : hoi polloi originally meant the rabble, but now, via hoity toity, is beginning to mean aristocratic, high-born, titivate originally meant to tidy up, but now, via tits, is trying to be titillate, tickle, to excite agreeably, two, fortuitous originally meant occurring by chance, now, via fortune, means fortunate, three, fulsome originally meant abundant, good, fullsome, now means offensive, nauseous, disgusting, folsome, and soon will mean full, wholesome, five, sad originally meant full, satisfied, also steadfast, constant, but now : causing sorrow, bad, six, dishevelled originally meaning without head-dress, now means unkempt, untidy.)

Hereupon shaking his head almost in despair, lumbering up from the grass, – for until upright Michael was wholly devenustated³³², – saying *otia dant vitia!*³³³, he would suggest a brisk walk, or a game of *Mollish's Land*³³⁴ in which they all battled sadly³³⁵, with much laughter, or perhaps a nameless game of his own peculiar invention which possessed such mysterial³³⁶, such complicated rules the boys often accused him of inventing them as situation arose, – particularly, as ruler of this game, he was judge to reward the best deserver, – at which the ludibund³³⁷ bear would forgab³³⁸ a great indignance, almost a sulk, then in amazed, high tones withsaying³³⁹ the accusal pathetically³⁴⁰, pontificating,

— Unleast³⁴¹ I can be confuted, – which by endeavouring by such silvery discourse as best likes you, I give leave to any of you to attempt, – aye, till this come, I will remain a gentleman of tried honesty!,

³³² deprived of beauty or grace

³³³ idleness tends to vice!

³³⁴ in which one player wards off the rest from a space supposed to hold treasure

³³⁵ heartily

³³⁶ mysterious

³³⁷ playful

³³⁸ mock

³³⁹ denying

³⁴⁰ passionately

³⁴¹ unless

and with the game carefully resurrected in words, so came they to be even more polished of memory, of debate, of reasoning, and of logic.

As the five Troke sons grew daily more bright, resourceful, and strong, – for how could they not?, – so in this tenour³⁴² their early years of residency at Troke Manor passed; Odette overcame her occasional philopatridomania³⁴³ with yearly visits to her relations in France, often in the company of her firm friend Virginie, who confessing herself a widow woman[✓] was believed; to Lemuel, – while becoming an accomplished orchardist and apiarist, continuing his forlorn endeavours as an amateur perfumier, – life at this time appeared to him a fine thing, oh a very fine thing indeed!, and he smiled much, delighted to be maffled³⁴⁴ at the prolificacy³⁴⁵ of a world, – without any hand but time separated first into two firmaments, then into a myriad disparent³⁴⁶ parts, – deservent of great wonder everichon³⁴⁷; in summer, through his nursling fields, into a neighbouring wood, Lemuel regularly led his two women and five boys, with to the rear the silently delighted Michael, and sternmost a servant carrying refreshments, ready to oblige whatever even whimsical need might eventuate, for as Trokes took as well care to be served as of them that did serve, servants were not unaware of their good fortune.

With the air warm, the shadows dappled, with birds darting, singing, gathering the boys about him, his melodious voice made quiet out of respect for the seeming delighted preoccupation of the parents up ahead, Michael explained,

— Somewhere over there is a musical willow warbler ever attempting to find the Lydian mode³⁴⁸, and there, see it?, a goldfinch, which, with its encrimson face, head black and white, and beautiful gold bars in the wings, see?, was known

³⁴² manner of continuity

³⁴³ homesickness

³⁴⁴ perplexed in the extreme

³⁴⁵ fruitfulness

³⁴⁶ varied

³⁴⁷ every one

³⁴⁸ medieval mode whose scale pattern is that of playing F to F on the white keys of a piano

long ago, – when language, still moving, tending to a meridian not yet attained, was Anglo-Norse, – as the chelaundre, then the thistlewarp, more lately as the proud-tailor, and in Cheshire they call him the jack-nicker. Those with the ears for his excellent whistle searching, will find that handsome scholar the bullfinch, *Pyrrhula vulgaris*, with his stocky beak, his glossy black mask and cape, and do you know, – for many names is a sign of love, – in the west he is called the coal-hood, in the east the alpe and the blood-olph, in the north the bud-bird and the tonnihood, whileas elsewhere others do yet maintain otherwise his name, for in Lancashire he is called the black-cap and the thickbill, in Norfolk the olpe, and if in our neighbouring Devon simple folk refer to him as the budpicker, here he is known as the tawny and the red-whoop, and manywhere³⁴⁹ he is called the nope and the redtail. Though we cannot see one, in similar case is the chaffinch, which is called the ribinet, the sheldapple, the spink, the roberd, yet up in the north, – marking of course that while my finger has no monopoly on up, north is an arbitrary polarity, – he is called the bull's-pink, the sheely, the piefinch, in Yorkshire the scoby, whereas here he is called the twink, and yet strange to say the handsome greenfinch is known by little more than the siskin, the grosbeak, and the green-linnet. Yonder crawling down the tree trunk is a nuthatch, and can you hear afar the carrion-crow?, – a bird very smart, – called also the gorcrow and the black-neb, in the north the ket-craw, and despite his raucity³⁵⁰, his dark reputation with farmers³⁵¹, he owns to a large vocabulary when he wishes, and that my gloppen³⁵¹ young man was a rocketeer³⁵²!

All this bloviation³⁵³, diatyposis³⁵⁴, and lamprophony³⁵⁵, – never lethologica³⁵⁶, nor

³⁴⁹ in many places

³⁵⁰ raucous quality or condition

³⁵¹ startled

³⁵² bird that rises straight up when flushed

³⁵³ ornate verbosity

³⁵⁴ vivid presentation by means of exciting language

³⁵⁵ shining, ringing oratory

³⁵⁶ the inability to remember the right word

ever paraphemia³⁵⁷, – delighted everyone present, even the half-literate servant who often moved in closer the better to overhear and so be eased³⁵⁸, if not enlarged by this ever delighting man who rhapsodised upon anything, even butterflies and beetles,

— Look!, a ladybird, which is called the golden-bug, the golden-knop, the fly-golding, by some the cushy-cow-lady, and my favourite which is god-almighty's-cow, and see?, these are billetings, waggying, or scumber, which are the droppings of a fox, and see there of a rabbit which are called sometimes cotying, and these are fostale, which are the tracks of a hare, and see here?, this is a wild orchid called Lady's Slipper;

extolling then upon snails and spyncoppis³⁵⁹, showing them all a bee-bike³⁶⁰ he had lately discovered, – for Overslaugh was not always companioned by his students, – he pointed then to dragon-flies hovering above the rillet³⁶¹ which were called also adder-flies and yedward, adding that within the hyaline³⁶² shallows of that stream there was the possible presence of fish, such as the tench, *Tinca vulgaris*, a good and healthsome fish, of an excellent wholesome meat, the carp of the family *Cyprinidae*, also choicely good, – though Salvianus esteemeth this fish no better than a slimy watery meat, – even the anadromous³⁶³ trout,

— And all about us, Michael said quietly, narrowing his eyes mysteriously, slowly sweeping his arm, — Are animals and birds which only silence, stillness, or chance, – said to be that sole direction one canst no see, – but above all : patience and a faith, will reward with the sight thereof, such as the pine marten, squirrels red and grey, of genus *Sciurus*, and that of or pertaining to squirrels is

³⁵⁷ the employment of wrong words

³⁵⁸ entertained

³⁵⁹ spiders

³⁶⁰ nest of wild bees

³⁶¹ stream

³⁶² resembling glass

³⁶³ migrating upriver from the sea to spawn in fresh water

called therefore?, anyone?, yes, sciurine, and their nests are called dreys, and the hedgehog, *Erinaceus europaeus*, sometimes hight³⁶⁴ an urchin, and the vole of the family *Microtus*, and the badger which has an hundred names in these isles, and his droppings are called werderobe, and his lovely Latin name is *Meles taxus*, and look! blackberries!, which are called by some persons blacebergan and blackspice, and in the north bumblekites, and a huge hug to he who picks the most!,

whereupon the children, even Lemuel, even his women too, with even the servant tempted, rushed loudly toward the brambles, for his warmth of voice, contagious enthusiasm, and occasional mimature³⁶⁵ deeply indeared[✓] him to the whole household.

Stopping to have luncheon beneath an ilex self-planted in 1591, straightway afterward, with his baggie³⁶⁶ full, in a backsunded³⁶⁷ spot profuse of flowers, falling into an immediate smiling doze, yet within a quarter hour, Michael would exuscitate³⁶⁸, and after a good loud stretch, open his large leathern and mysterious satchel unfailingly carried, take out perhaps a wooden flageolet and play a sweet but strange tune, partly of his own devisal, partly taken from an old Druidic manuscript found in the library of his father, or from his pocket extracting a hard ball challenge his charges to a simple game of catch whereat he would attempt to cheat to learn them that honesty goeth never unbacked; oh there were many occasions like this, in truth hundreds, thousands, (indeed until his departure from Troke Manor in 1826, 52 family children, of which 23 were girls, passed through his wonderful hands and mind, and when the children of servants, – until Trokes dispensed with them in 1835, – and rare guests are included, then the total surpasses 100, and when the adults, who often attended his classes, are included, then it could be said that everyone,

³⁶⁴ called, named

³⁶⁵ mimicry

³⁶⁶ belly

³⁶⁷ shady

³⁶⁸ awake out of sleep

everyone passed through his hands).

When the children sometimes asked their beloved tutor that he tell them again about how he chanced upon Troke Manor, Michael would smile, shyly colour, and so tell the story of his life, which if a simple, short, essentially uneventful, but really quite a magical tale, it was never told in the same way, never in the same words, – an unnecessary concession to verisimilitude, perhaps, but as there are no true synonyms, — for just as no man, so no word ever has exactly the same meaning twice, — this is a matter concerning which Words need not scruple to comment, – of how his father, coming from the pulpit of his well-attended church, to the pulpit of his dinner table, – bearing often a baked shoulder of mutton with potatoes under it, – and without adjusting his voice nor his need to disturb, – for he was a sermoncinator³⁶⁹, – would yet again urge his sole son, then aged seven, to turn from the devilry of the classics, toward a direction far more godward; every day boy Michael did indeed obediently turn more his mind, but with his always stout body remaining secretly more askance, for though he knew the bible to contain, – if little wit, no humour, and many doubtful truths, – much fine writing, none, in his unvoiced opinion, full compared to beloved Shakespeare and Donne.

So passed the years until he to a seminary at a miserable 17 was sent with a portmanteau containing as well all the requisite tomes which to his young mind were as dry as dust, hidden beneath his shirts and body linen, the seditious writings of Luther and Paracelsus; so passed an uneasy³⁷⁰ year on what he thought terribly short commons³⁷¹, a year in which he was often disciplined for too much thinking, – a subjective experience of the brain, of brain activity, – for not enough believing, for whereas whilst regarding discourse and behaviour, Overslaugh observed a very right mediocrity between simple timid modesty and blustering forward confidence, it was nevertheless very difficult, particularly in a youth with such a nimble fancy, not to be so curious, so subtle in his struggle to comprehend divine matters, as to fail to hide

³⁶⁹ one who constantly preaches

³⁷⁰ difficult

³⁷¹ provisions or food provided for all members of a group

his discontent at the manner in which a most profound piece of doctrine was stated in only such words as most distinctly transmitted[✓] into the simplest understanding,

for as saith one who was a fool, a nidiot[✓] : Gilbert Burnet, Lord Bishop of Sarum, – (today Salisbury), – in his *Thoughts on Education*, written in 1668 : whilst the learning of logic, – which teacheth youth sophistry, or pedantry at best, – should last a seven days at most, all philosophical discussion, – which maketh youth vainly subtle and contentiously jangling, – must be condemned;

so passed another year as if unnoticed, – for he had learned circumspection, or the art of shutting up, – then a third which brought anger and temptation, then came a fourth which so tried his inherited faith, his patience with it, very dearly, then upon the very imminence of his ordination, as stated, as if in an avision³⁷², as if words themselves were oneiropompist³⁷³!, he was delivered unto the knowledge that it was not in god he believed, and not god which existed, no!, but simply the world and its words, as if like good and evil : both at constant battle; so he wordlessly quit the seminary which he often described as a *domicilium insanorum*³⁷⁴, a Bedlam³⁷⁵.

Knowing he would never make peace with his zealant father, nor even with his mother, who was too weak to be other than as strong as her husband, returning not to home he commenced search for those to whom he could spread the word that it was words that recognise, that acknowledge, hence bringeth this world,

this three-fold world, elementary, celestial, intellectual, which offers to its man no want of anything, if he want not money,

into the open, award it its light, award man the eyes to see it; but, as his travels confirmed : so few dared to believe him, for he was come too late, man saw with

³⁷² a vision, a warning in a dream

³⁷³ a sender of dreams

³⁷⁴ madhouse

³⁷⁵ formerly the Priory of Bethlem, in St Botolph Without, Bishopsgate, from 1675 a hospital for lunatics built near London Wall, in Moorfields

other eyes, false eyes, saw other things, things unreal; after a month, a year, two years, on the road, four years, after many sad but unsorry adventures, beginning to fear of ever finding even a single man who allowed god to occasionally guest in his house, in the best room perhaps, aye!, but be bound still to the laws of that family, particularly hamesucken³⁷⁶, Overslaugh, at age 27, *post varios casus*³⁷⁷, came by the magic of chance upon the newly tenanted Troke Manor, – which he thought should rather be called Troke Palace, – and there, after the long walk up the drive to the front door, came upon two men, Anthony and his son Lemuel, whom he was delighted to discover needed almost no enlightenment, why even bimong³⁷⁸ the women and servants he found god to be almost absent, as was only proper and wise, for as with anything else : that which does not properly, unmysteriously alert of its presence, cannot blame man for any disbelief howsoever felt; in the pure minds of five young boys, – of perceptive and intellective faculties vigorous and alert, of conception quick, of memory retentive, – Overslaugh came quickly to learn what was contentment, happiness in godlessness and knowledge, and so again ended his tale.

Suddenly gain-spurred³⁷⁹, he appealed³⁸⁰ his charges to point to something, anything and he would do only his best, his nature allowed it him not otherwise, – and those who have said : do not always your best, for it is neither wise nor safe for a man to stay stood upon the top of his strength : fools!, – to name it, and so fingers darting out he said to Jean,

— That my decimo-sexto³⁸¹ is the fluffy head of a dandelion when in seed, or a blow-ball, and far too simple a challenge, that, Harold, is a rusting chimbe³⁸²,

³⁷⁶ crime of assaulting a person in their own home

³⁷⁷ after various hindrances

³⁷⁸ among

³⁷⁹ excited at the prospect of gain

³⁸⁰ challenged

³⁸¹ youth

³⁸² rim of a barrel

this my bicrural³⁸³ friends, is a kissing gate³⁸⁴, and that, rude Claude, is the buccula³⁸⁵ of your sitient³⁸⁶ syntax, dominie, or bum brusher³⁸⁷;

but it was in the conservatory one day that Michael was at last bettered in this game which it seemed was always ongoing, for after Louis pointed to a mourdant³⁸⁸, Marcel to galipot³⁸⁹, Claude to a balaustine³⁹⁰, Harold to a bush of the *Ribus* family, with its specific epithet³⁹¹ *rubrum*³⁹², Jean innocently pointed, whereupon Michael stood in silence before a small but not young tree which he simply could not recognise; after the long silent surprise which was experienced by all, following loud and emotive³⁹³ cheering almost out of measure, – not most of all by Jean, for he felt put out that he had not received at least a pat on the head, – because he simply stood there with knitted brows and stared, the Troke literator³⁹⁴, on that instant, seemed to his students to become a great mite more human; (what caused this man to be so all-a-mort³⁹⁵ was excusable, for the tree was a whitebeam, or *Sorbus leyana*, which was not officially recognised and named until 100 years later).

In case examples have not yet been presented enough : pointing one day to a chatter-pie³⁹⁶ Michael explained,

— To see but one is supposedly apotmic³⁹⁷, to see two, as we are now doing, denotes to simple minds merriment, or a marriage, – or in Lancashire for

383 two-legged

384 small gate swinging in a U, allowing one person to pass at a time

385 double chin

386 thirsty

387 schoolmaster

388 tongue of a buckle

389 resinous substance which oozes from fir trees and hardens when dried by the air

390 pomegranate tree

391 second name of the binomial given to a species

392 red currant

393 exaggeratedly emotional

394 teacher of letters; schoolmaster

395 struck dumb, confounded

396 magpie

397 unlucky

reasons doubtful : bad luck, – to see three is *indicium*³⁹⁸ of a successful journey, to see four supposedly means good news, – or again in Lancashire death, – and to see five nannies³⁹⁹ denotes company coming; but all this is merely superstition, which, – despite needing to be looked far more into than it is, – is of service only to those who want to be afraid : their imagination demands it; look, a hare!, a solitary animal of the leporine family, its droppings called crotels, its killing called?, someone?, anyone?, yes leporicide, and a hare-lip, which the poor yoke-fellow⁴⁰⁰ of Ainesmith the undergardener always hides under her hand, is called by a physic a lagostoma. Now whereas the sufferer is spurned unfairly as an afterling⁴⁰¹, he or she is not of course, nothing like, for as the faults in man, – of course in woman too, for woman too is man, – can come only from without, so similarly the agate, or tiny person, nis⁴⁰² to blame, also the anebous, as are you all, meaning unable to grow a beard, for such can only by a fool be mocked, but by none reproached, nor can veterescence, meaning growing old, be ridiculised, for this and death comes eventually to us all; so never forget, he who sees faults innate demonstrates also the shortcomings of his own experiences, as well a distinct want of wellwillingness⁴⁰³ and understanding, and a child of unmarried parents is called a bastard, – facts of life are nothing to blush at, sir!, – and a fatherless child is also called a harecoppe as well as a whorecop, an avetrol, a whiz-bird, as well much silly else, and do you know there is even a word for a bastard son of a bastard father of a bastard grandfather?, no?, the word is uzzard, and they are none of them guilty, save of suffering a narrowness of fortune, and thus is delivered up a surplusage on the subject!

To Lemuel and the misses Odette and Jeanette he then turning, in a different voice,

³⁹⁸ indication

³⁹⁹ magpies

⁴⁰⁰ spouse

⁴⁰¹ inferior

⁴⁰² is not

⁴⁰³ benevolence

– much softened it was, rather formal, yet still warm, for after all it was a servant he was, – he briefly informed them, recently hearing it of a gardener, – who in a tavern whilst sipping of his mahogany⁴⁰⁴ had just had it of a local farmer sipping of a dram of rum, – that the hanger⁴⁰⁵ they were now passing through, as well as the holts⁴⁰⁶ they approached, to which were soon to cease to attach the rights of *nemus ad sepes*⁴⁰⁷, *nemus ad domus*⁴⁰⁸, as well as pasturage⁴⁰⁹, foldage⁴¹⁰, pannage⁴¹¹, and, – though the ground was insuitable[✓], – of turbary⁴¹², as well of the stream piscary⁴¹³, were to be unselved⁴¹⁴ in the coming autumn, the handsome standels⁴¹⁵ to be forever felled during their very office of yearly decidence⁴¹⁶, for the whole was to be rendered as sartage⁴¹⁷, and hereupon sighing, Overslaugh added that it was sad how man gobbled up the Earth as if there were no end to it; with this intelligence that evening discussed by the family elders, the very next day Lemuel commenced upon the purchased of the threatened 457 acres, (and so, in this manner, by the purchase of leases of fee-simples, – rather than again granting them for say twenty-one years and one or two lives, or for 31 years and three lives⁴¹⁸, reverting then to the donor, – by little and little, Troke Manor attained to its present modest size of very near 5000 acres).

Now as Overslaugh was a man azytic⁴¹⁹, – and with well-meaning Odette believing

⁴⁰⁴ Cornish drink made of two parts gin and one of treacle

⁴⁰⁵ wood on a slope

⁴⁰⁶ wooded tops of hills

⁴⁰⁷ wood for fencing

⁴⁰⁸ wood for building or a house generally

⁴⁰⁹ right to graze stock

⁴¹⁰ right to fold or pen sheeps by night

⁴¹¹ right to pasture swines

⁴¹² right to dig peat as fuel

⁴¹³ right to take fish

⁴¹⁴ felled by the axe

⁴¹⁵ trees reserved for growth as timber

⁴¹⁶ falling off or away, as leaves in autumn

⁴¹⁷ the turning of woodland into arable land

⁴¹⁸ the lessee choosing three names, the lease ran for 21 or 31 years, then as long as any of the named lived

⁴¹⁹ unmarried

the anymphic⁴²⁰ condition oh a sad one indeed, much to be mended, – after numerous attempts over the years at finding the man a wife, usually at annual garden-parties, Overslaugh one day bowed to her, led her aside, and with a broad but peculiarly pained smile, the budge⁴²¹ man made it very clear to her that whilst appreciating her efforts, he simply could not be coerced into marrying, for though he no more read the fool book, parts of the bible,

founded whole on fevers, on enthusiastical heats, inspired by the rants and rapt of oracles, sybils, and lunatics, the melancholies of the bereft, the hysterical distempers of the infirm, the reveries of dotards, the boastings of drunkards, the puffings of powermongers, the funnings of fblers, the tattles of talers, &c,

echoed to him still, particularly pertaining to the pure matters of chasteness and celibacy, a condition of which he was particularly fond, and in which he felt perfectly comfortable; in addition, to a rare man such as himself, given to unashamed autolatry⁴²², a wife would turn him malacissant⁴²³, and in a word : marriage would be a setting up in trade without a capital,

— So please, madam, let this ground therefore be laid : never again need this matter be broached, neither by words nor by actions!, for I far prefer the abstemious⁴²⁴ before the conjugal estate, in spite of the inclinations, provocations, stirrings, stingings, buds, branches, dregs, infections, tastes, feelings, scents, and the succulences of womenkind, calmly, – deliciously calmly!, – continuing faintly in me still;

⁴²⁰ without a bride

⁴²¹ brisk; stirring

⁴²² self-worship

⁴²³ soft or tender

⁴²⁴ temperance in indulgence

whereat Odette blushing, samly⁴²⁵ kissing his red cheek, never pressed him more; but it is interesting to note that whereas he was a healthy gynophile⁴²⁶, yet, how to say?, wanting if not a terebra⁴²⁷, then a capacity for its occasional engorgement, and oh how well he knew this truth!, even unto his long-home⁴²⁸ : he was far less disturbed by this aspect of his corporeality than by the fact he could not fly.

It could very easily be said, – all the more so for its great truth, – that these years between 1770 and 1799, – (when the murder of young Joseph first revealed the presence of their Inimicus), – were the idyllic years for Trokes, – the closest the family, — any family in the world, — ever approached to a small, near-perfect, Utopia, – or at least for this larger far more fruitful branch of the biramous⁴²⁹ family, indeed, – for after all this fabled place nowhere existed, – Troke Manor was at this time, – (more in retrospect, of course, than at the time), – a veritable heaven; (in times to come, – for happiness in so sublunary a state can scarcely be felt, but by a comparison with misery, – so various, so changeable, with no time nor age yielding the like precedent, the family never would, neither could, look more for such days as these after this).

In the light, or more properly the dark, of what was soon to forthcome, (for with the disappearance of Joseph preparing the way thereunto, miserable times were soon to come to pass in which life would wax great and troublesome which before seemed so easy and light), it can be said therefore with certainty, or rather, – as certainty, in the sense of feeling sure, does not entail truth, does not guarantee knowledge, – *some* certainty, that Trokes very much required this not too brief Arcadian epoch to both find their strong legs and plant their strong roots, actually their very first roots, for with few brief exceptions Trokes had never before, neither in themselves nor in their ancestors, been other than tenants of another man's soil; Lemuel once saying

⁴²⁵ agreeingly

⁴²⁶ a man fond of women

⁴²⁷ instrument for boring

⁴²⁸ grave

⁴²⁹ two-branched

to his sons,

— Enjoying so the current peace and flourishing estate of our growing kingdom,
 – for we are now in the prime of our world, – we must nevertheless concert and
 adopt such further measures as are necessary for securing the same to future
 generations,

within a few years coming death, calamity, intrigue, – which when superadded to
 villainy almost defied belief, – this would be said : he who would know that persons
 in the greatest affluence of fortune are happier than such as have only a
 competency, knows an untruth.

In process of time coming into a properly settled way, Trokes commenced to believe
 they were actually an empire, their barns all full, the krine⁴³⁰ in warm shelter, the
 larders and the cellars all bounteous, the children laughing, the women not
 mostwhere less forward than the men, everywhere constantly learning, skills, and
 crafts, and words of course, millions of them; with empire cometh change : man
 taketh another step along that road to a mental evolution, – which like the physical,
 orders its life to multiply, variate, live the strongest, die the weakest, – which leadeth
 to grace,

a word of vague meaning perhaps, but by the heart supposedly understood,

but alas slowly, for such progress is so very taken up (even at present) with repairing
 those old damages effected massmeal by that debilitating disease in which a god,

taken in the following very gentle, indeed sheer cogger⁴³¹, acceptance :
 plasmator⁴³² of all, owner, organiser, provider, master, planner, sustainer,
 cherisher, and giver to man of security,

⁴³⁰ cattles

⁴³¹ phoney flattery

⁴³² maker or creator

always centred.

Growing all too quickly into youth, into early manhood, so it was that one day, play finding a new harmonic in quiet, in company, Lemuel, after a silence, asking his five sons if they were happy, they replying, here immediately, there thoughtfully, there echoing, Oh yes, papa!, Lemuel went on to ask if their happiness was in part attributable to their similar age, with all of them as if brothers, all of them friends?, and to this they also agreed; Lemuel had often before told them the history of the family, how at last the Troke tree was beginning to be ramous⁴³³, to put forth its shoots, that every male improcreate⁴³⁴ was a rownsepyk⁴³⁵ ungrown, every death a boische⁴³⁶ lopped, how sons were not only the bloom, but the future fruit and seed, for if they could make this age to blossom, the next could not but greater bear; but because on this day an uncharacteristic seriousness was laid upon their father, – or uncle as he was called by the three youngest, – his latest recital of their history, going all the way back to Lemuel, almost unto his vision, in slow-told, soberly words, causing the children to become too quiet and solempne⁴³⁷, Lemuel suddenly smiling, jumping up, offering a plaudit⁴³⁸ to the one who could take his hat from his head, loudly followed quaquaversal⁴³⁹, he ran out of the library, down the hall, past the hat-stand, from which he snatched a hat, and madly into the garden pursued by youth at its most excited, most joyous; on subsequent telling of their history, again sowing the seed of productivity and fecundity in the variably fertile soils of their minds, the children grasping the urgency of matters less loosely, such was his skill in this matter that come manhood every son, already primed by Overslaugh with intellectual virility, had acquired also an eagerness to see himself impressively fathering an assembly of similarly indowed[✓] sons.

⁴³³ to have branches

⁴³⁴ unbegotten

⁴³⁵ branch

⁴³⁶ branch

⁴³⁷ solemn

⁴³⁸ congratulation

⁴³⁹ turning, running, dipping in all directions

In the second half of the posterior of a day, or early one evening, in the spring of 1777, seven men : twins Louis & Marcel now 20, Claude 19, Jean 18, Harold 17, their father Lemuel now 43, and their grandfather Anthony age 69, were seated in the library, the leather spines all about them, many of them as much shining with recency⁴⁴⁰, as the old with the polish of bees-wax and hands, and each it is to be hoped, – despite the fact they all show their backs, – sapial⁴⁴¹; if one is to believe that wrawful, irascible, disappointed Lord Chesterfield, – in the shadow of whose mighty name his hopeless son trembled, – who saith :

Due attention to the inside of books, and due contempt for the outside, is the proper relation between a man of sense and his books,

then Trokes were not a man of sense, for they were never so occupied in studying the contents as to have no time to service the bindings; seated not exactly around the circular table in the library, – for it was almost too large even to reach into the open centre, – but along one quadrant, Anthony, proud to have within his ken five persons descended of his body, alive together, – whilst in the farms about 20 was not unusual, – was this early evening time quiet and withdrawn, for he lately feeling his years, – three score and near ten, – aware that one end or another was inexorably approaching, was beginning rather to resent the unhealthy tint that infirmity gave to his every thought and deed; for early that morning, rising with the worms to write letters to booksellers from whom he had received catalogues comprising thousands of articles,

C. Heydinger, William Otridge, both of the Strand, Samuel Hayes of Oxford Street, James Lackington of Chiswell Street...

but suddenly, feeling a futility, going forth into the garden, standing at the head of his

⁴⁴⁰ newness

⁴⁴¹ providing wisdom

tracks through the dewy lawn, his brain, rather his mind,

because not spacial, said to be naught but the activity of the brain, – an enormously complex biological system, — wherein reality is not passively recorded, but actively constructed, — consisting of physical, chemical, and neurophysiological entities all engaged in multifarious interactions : the point of interaction between the mind and everything else, as Descartes calleth it, – for as much as character, personality is naught but the style, the manner of such activity,

wondered what Nature had still planned for him that required such long nasal hair wherewith to deal, that necessitated his tragus⁴⁴² develop so marked an ototrichia⁴⁴³; as he looked up to the last-fading stars, then down upon the very leaf-strewn earth he bestrode,

thus in two looks gazing, merely gazing, first upon infinity, or near enough, then upon transience, sure enough,

with a cold shock he suddenly realised he knew now enough about life to acknowledge true what was before impossible : that even one's very own existence, one day, – not yet soon, but not far, – becomes, quite simply, if only for seconds together, almost insufferable.

With solemnity, for the very first time, Anthony spoke of what he believed must have been remarkable : that advision experienced by his fourth great-grandfather Lemuel, then of his marvellous document, the which, pulling from his shirt the goatskin pouch, breaching its waterproof seal, – as six men leaned forward in amaze, – opening, he carefully showing them, explained that not 20 miles distant, 327 years before, was born its author; reading first verbatim the document, then in his own words

⁴⁴² small cartilaginous flap in front of the external opening of the ear

⁴⁴³ excessive growth of hair in or on the ear

explaining, listing the few simple rules of their quest, – the flame of which, — because the great destiny of Trokes must hold as aloof from that of worthies, as from the enormous⁴⁴⁴ and the frivolous, — needs must burn brightly at its post, yet not be seen from afar, – which were entirely unknown to his five grandsons; Lemuel then informed the three younger men, rather nervously it is true, how their grandmother Gwendoline had so cleverly manipulated matters as to ensure that, quite unknown to his dear wife Odette, he was producent not of only two but of five legitimate sons; it has to be said that whilst Claude, Jean, and Harold responded to this amazing news with surprise, there was also a calm graciousness of delight, for which Overslaugh was much responsible.

After a period of digestive silence son Anthony moved the matter onto their duty to meet the demands of the Lemuel Document, of their quest, whereupon these seven men discoursing long, broaching the subject of Vouchsafehood, it was only natural their minds came to a perplexed landing upon womankind, which considering the times, – despite, — save of course for the two elders, — the young men wanting of almost all worldly experience, – was a subject discussed almost without reserve; with their heads well-rinsed with wine, if many flattering, if not altogether true, things were said about the so-called *sexus sequior*⁴⁴⁵, also many things which were and are patently misconceived, and many things which are unsavoury, even unpleasant, but in greater part true, the conclusion arrived at, as the hornèd Moon added its faint shadows to those of the lamps, – and till better obtain, curiosity would still rule, – was that women, – because of porcelain, as men of common earthen ware, – were to be entreated⁴⁴⁶ with that delicacy, if not indeed that reserve, wherewith one deals with any unknown quantity or quality, and that pleasantly seeing women as a separate species, rather than as a counterpart or an equal, was perhaps a not unwise policy; with the appearance of a footman, the Madeira stoppered, so came the exodus to dinner.

444 wicked

445 second sex

446 treated

Between the years 1778, – when youngest male Harold came to be 18, – and 1784, – when the children of Claude, Louis and their wives came of fuller age, – Michael Overslaugh having no one, – except, of course, himself, and everyone, – to teach : far from idle, for the man was never this, he devoted much of his time to deciphering, then translating, – with greatest care, else words be superfluous or either false, – six fifth- and seventh-century Latin glossaries, or word lists, – due to the many interlinear glosses by many glossators, in many languages, of inestimable worth to philology, – long in the Preterite family, as well a score of extraordinary[✓] rare manuscripts, still faintly redolent of oil of cedar⁴⁴⁷, from monastery and cathedral libraries, as well particularly a good amount of documents which removed from Cardiff castle escaped the destruction of the Cromwell soldiery, all of which descended to Overslaugh from his lately deceased father; (as shall later be revealed : when these findings were later added to both earlier and later discoveries, then properly ordered, the resultant document would prove to possess of a very wonderful yet enormously dangerous purport).

1778

In early youth almost identic⁴⁴⁸, Louis & Marcel, the first of this generation to reach the estate of man, were now less so : neither was tall, but both were handsome, strong, scholarly, and a good friend;

there have been diverse that wrote before of twins, that they are endowed with special powers, that their fate is the fate of the communalty⁴⁴⁹, and whereby this was once true enough, it was alas, at this time, almost no longer so;

at a fête in Taunton in this year, these inseparable twins, meeting the individual⁴⁵⁰

⁴⁴⁷ anciently used for preserving manuscripts

⁴⁴⁸ identical

⁴⁴⁹ community

⁴⁵⁰ indivisible

twins Angela and Charlotte, both 20, it was soon clear to Louis that though Charlotte, with whom he was dancing, was a delightful young lady, not only to his eyes and ears but to his gloved finger-tips, he felt far more than a passing fancy for her sister Angela, who, smiling airily, daring barely to return his look, thought her partner Marcel, if a handsome youth, delightful to dance with, (as were all Trokes of blood, at all times, for their very plainest imitation of Nature could carry dance up to any degree of excellence), his brother Louis was surely a finer-looking man; whilst Marcel, smiling sweetly at his dance-partner Angela, believed in his heart that Charlotte was truly more striking than her freare⁴⁵¹, Charlotte was thinking that if Marcel was certainly an attractive light-footed gentleman, his French-tinged word-strain⁴⁵² rather seductive in its way, surely Louis was a more gracious, far more comely young man; following an exchange of visits, in which innervation⁴⁵³ with enervation contended as always for mastery, the result was firstly : the unreciprocated fondness which Louis felt for Angela slipped into an indifferent abeyance, and lastly : having entirely refrained from hoping that Marcel would look more to her own person than to her sister, losing for him the heat in her heart, Charlotte went into a fantod⁴⁵⁴.

One sunny day, as they rowed upon the river Tone,

in fact, not three miles by water from where great-great-great-aunt and uncles Ann, David, Paul, and Emil were all emdeluged⁴⁵⁵,

with, at a discreet distance of course, servants and maids in another boat, – Marcel felt his hopes of winning the favours of Charlotte must be abandoned if he was ever again to find peace in his mind, for he observed how, only an hour before, hanging so on the words of his brother, she now seemed, laying one of her legs over the

451 sister

452 accent

453 vigour

454 crotchety way of acting

455 drowned

other in a very unconcerned posture, so indifferent to them both as to find the shaping of doly⁴⁵⁶ ripples, come of the slow circumfluous⁴⁵⁷ glode⁴⁵⁸ of their boat, by far the more entertaining; in her turn, because Angela felt her unexcited converse was with her own self, for no responses nor laughter forthcame from her company, particularly from Marcel to whom her every word and smile was aimed, she abruptly cooling, sliding deeper into the quissions⁴⁵⁹, looked up right into the Sun dappling the leaves of the trees; approaching then a sasse⁴⁶⁰, and needs must call the lock-keeper from his Sunday dinner, after the lockage⁴⁶¹ coming, after long and not unapprehensive minutes as the two boats slowly rose in the chill dank lock-chamber⁴⁶², the sunshine again, with careful oarage⁴⁶³, gliding out through the head gate⁴⁶⁴, pursuing an anabranh⁴⁶⁵, they soon coming upon a delightful ait⁴⁶⁶, disembarking in the shade of a weeping-willow, opening the large seron⁴⁶⁷, they quietly partook of game, salad, sweet meats, and a French wine reputed to have a good face⁴⁶⁸.

Becoming again light-hearted these four lovers then resuming both the river and their converse, – which again came under the mercy of such emotions as are gerful⁴⁶⁹, – after adjusting his pontius⁴⁷⁰ on the stern thought⁴⁷¹, turning to Angela, – his manner full of new *empressement*⁴⁷², – Marcel spoke cordially of how pleasant all this was,

⁴⁵⁶ melancholy

⁴⁵⁷ surrounded by water

⁴⁵⁸ glide

⁴⁵⁹ cushions

⁴⁶⁰ lock in a river

⁴⁶¹ toll paid for passing the locks of a canal

⁴⁶² the basin of a canal lock

⁴⁶³ motion of oars or rowing

⁴⁶⁴ upstream gate of a canal lock

⁴⁶⁵ branch of a stream that breaks away and later rejoins

⁴⁶⁶ small island in a river

⁴⁶⁷ hamper

⁴⁶⁸ cheek, impudence

⁴⁶⁹ variable; giddy

⁴⁷⁰ small mat tied to fixed seat of boat to prevent blisters

⁴⁷¹ bench on which a rower sits

⁴⁷² animated display of cordiality

how succulent the weather, how sweet the birdsong, and look a kingfisher!; Angela not looking but smiling, nodding daintily, pulling tighter her glove, leaning forward, said to a daydreaming Louis that they really should have brought fishing rods for she had just seen a fish quite distinctly!, to which Louis absently agreed; after a pause, with marked sincerity in his eyes and voice, Louis asked Charlotte what she seemed so thoughtsome about, but she, shaking her dear head, only smiled and sighed; minutes passing, slowly rising from her position of languor, Charlotte then said to Marcel, had he heard?, there were some gipsies down by the village quar⁴⁷³ with the most brightly painted caravans?, but Marcel made only an appropriate noise, for he had been thinking of what he might say to her sister Angela which would be far more absorbing than hitherto, because she seemed hardly to have listened to a word he had said all day!; barely had he taken breath to begin expounding on hopefully a most exhilarating subject when Angela began speaking to Louis about a very singular oddity in the latest style of peplum⁴⁷⁴, to which Louis merely nodded, for knowing nothing at all about blessed flounces, he was anyway trying to formulate a way of informing Charlotte about someone he knew in Bristol who made capital good riding boots, but then recalling she was afearing of horses, she would therefore be even more uninterested in what he had to say; Charlotte was anyway disheartened, for after showing Marcel the fine lace her maid had sewn to the edge of her kerchief, yet he barely glancing at it, – partly for this reason : that a too niceness of detail, particularly of frivols, was mainly to show one superlatively curious, – she lay back beneath her lowered parasol, and, trailing an ungloved hand in the water, stubbornly thought of nothing; ah, when a catenation⁴⁷⁵ is broken in one link it may as well be broken in all.

Later in the afternoon, after Marcel adawed⁴⁷⁶ from a brief doze, sitting up looking anew at Charlotte, at present herself dozing, he thought that even whilst asleep she was certainly the fine-boned lovely young creature he had at the first taken her to be,

⁴⁷³ quarry

⁴⁷⁴ short skirt attached to a bodice or jacket

⁴⁷⁵ chain, or series like links of chain

⁴⁷⁶ awoke

and he truly a fondling⁴⁷⁷ for thinking, because of her slightly greater interest in Louis, she would not come to realise that he himself possessed at least all the fine qualities and looks of his brother; hereupon bringing from his pocket forth a volume by Shakespeare of sonnets, amidst such islands of scanty ground sought one appropriate to expressing his new and sensible feelings; as the boat drifted slowly along with the flow of the river, Louis at the tiller, looking to the meditabund⁴⁷⁸ Angela, thinking her really a remarkably affable young lady, with a fine sense of dress, and a decorum most becoming, gazing patiently upon her, as she intently upon the water, he determined to await an opportunity to renew his suit; Angela was disesid⁴⁷⁹ that she had acted desaly⁴⁸⁰, for exactly as she first intuited, – that Marcel was certainly at least the type of man she would wish to one day marry, – quickly glancing at him at his book, his fine profile, his strong veined hands, she vowed to patiently await upon an occasion to apologise for her stuntness⁴⁸¹; beside her Charlotte was not asleep but troubled also : she now realised that she should simply have trusted to her initial feelings for that wonderful man Louis, yet she had foolishly embayed⁴⁸² her emotions, indeed quite as she must if her doctor was to be obeyed, – an expressly good apothecary physician, or so she had heard, – and her health made a touch more sound, but alas yet again, condemning in her heart what her wits could not gainsay, not behaving as her senses dictated, here making a small moue, – which, noticed, unexpectedly trilled the loins of Marcel, – promised at the very next chance to respond to Louis with a great deal more grace.

But enough of these petty intrigues!, these piddling stirs!, of relating far else than this saga cares to chant; (but here, with feeling, must be said two things : firstly : this silly romancing will leave but short smart upon what is a work of drama, – an adventure perhaps, or a tragedy, – with the coming soon of murders, suicides, a wood mad Vouchsafe, mass infanticide, fire, monsters!, aye, such rhapsodising will seem unto

477 fool

478 absorbed in meditation

479 troubled

480 foolishly

481 foolishness

482 enclosed as in a bay

that sweetness of past irretrievable times of which all man, whether in secret, or in open, dreams; secondly : it is perhaps a requisite of honest biography, whatever the travails, not to drown in blank silence any special thing wherein the providence and effectual working nature of the subjects are to be observed and pondered); suffice it to say they married, as the brothers originally intended, – their love, evidently, more extemporary⁴⁸³ than of the sisters, – Louis to Angela, Marcel to Charlotte.

So it passed these new wives coming to live at the family seat, – for the house at that time was certainly spacious enough, (yet in 1851 Troke Manor was required to be more than doubled in size the better to accommodate the growing family, which in 1869 would swell to a maximum of 77 servantless residents), the grounds tolerably extense⁴⁸⁴, and the resources to finance a life of leisure, of intellectual and personal dreams, certainly not (nor would they ever be) wanting, – to the proud husbands arrived felicific⁴⁸⁵ sons, to the rapturous wives sweet daughters : to Marcel & Charlotte came first Edwina in 1780, then three sons in succession, John in June 1781, – the same month Hortense, wife of Anthony, mother of Lemuel, — truly, a wonderful woman, but, as warned, one of those, perhaps fortunates, by whom words are not inspired to overmuch prate, — peacefully died in her sleep at age 67, – then Frederick in March 1783, finally Alexander in November 1785, and meanwhile to Louis & Angela came first a son, Joseph in August 1780, then two daughters, Gwendoline in 1782, named after the still lamented Vouchsafe, (but who was to die of consumption at age seven), then in 1783 Antonia, then two further sons : Steven in July 1786, and Richard finally in May 1789,

the year, it is said, the period of Enlightenment, or the Age of Reason⁴⁸⁶ came to an end,

⁴⁸³ intuitive

⁴⁸⁴ extensive

⁴⁸⁵ causing of happiness

⁴⁸⁶ 1687-1789, from The Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy by Newton, to the French Revolution

the year also the maze, – which will receive far fuller attention anon, which means in a little while, – was doubled in size to a full quarter of an acre.

In June 1778, – as elphamy⁴⁸⁷ overran the country hedges with its emerald leaves, its luxuriant white flowers, – friends of a distant cousin of his Aunt Odette, as Claude still called her, – she was more properly his once-stepmother, – visited the manor, including a cousin name Giselle, a handsome but not beautiful girl of three-and-twenty, whom not word one of English could speak; if at first an incontrollable[✓], high-wrought passion governed the union between this lass and Claude, – who it nill⁴⁸⁸ yet be forgotten was the firstling⁴⁸⁹ to Virginie by Lemuel, – yet soon realising that lust, particularly when too long depended upon, becoming catakinetic⁴⁹⁰, soon asperates⁴⁹¹ a relationship : they gently subsiding, there budded a respect, which blossomed into a friendliness, then into a sweet smiling affection, and yet halted a bittock⁴⁹² beyond extreme fondness; marrying in January 1779 their children were as follow : Mark, born that year in the month of solgrave⁴⁹³, then Jeanette in 1780, Tristan in October 1781, finally in May 1783 Allan, who at age four, – a fine child indeed, a sweet, a loving, a fair, a witty, of great hope, who, as for his beauty, it maketh no matter if nothing were spoke,

yet Words will a little touch it by the way : Allan was wonderful fair, and of good temperature of body, being a child, a boy, and even at four years a sort of man, marvellous amiable, beloved everywhere he came,

but alas he fell to his death from a top-floor nursery window,

and as flight is possible only if thrust is greater than drag, lift greater than

487 bryony

488 will not

489 first-born

490 destructive of energy

491 makes harsh or uneven

492 little bit

493 February

gravity, because he landed 17 feet out from the wall, it was clear gravity was not the only thrust involved, and the very strongest lift more than the drag of his nightgown,

ah that such an innocent creature should be suffered to drop into nonexistence!, – to inexpressible grief and affliction, dying at four years and three days old only, even at that tender age a prodigy for wit and understanding, for beauty a very angel, for endowment of mind of incredible and rare hopes, – then followed two stillbirths; in July 1781, after suffering for years from his heart, father of Lemuel, recent widower of Hortense Anthony died suddenly, in the night, at the age nearly of 73.

The second-born son of Lemuel & Virginie, Jean, married pretty Louise in 1786, after two years of hard wooing, for she was a nurse he met in London whilst his broken leg was resetting after a throwing from an owlhead⁴⁹⁴, and if she held his hand as he bit down upon the spatula as the doctor let his hammer carefully fall, she would not thereafter hold his hand more despite flowers and gifts, as well as he vowing to himself all celibacy other, the which at times seemed more painful than the osteoclasia⁴⁹⁵; it came about later that same year that he again broke the same leg, drunkenly tumbling out of a carriage madly speeding around a corner in Pall Mall; if he was pretty well, – all that was left of him, for he escaped a killing, as many drunken do, by sheer want of all physical governance, – he was certainly more so when he awoke to find Louise again holding his hand, – she at last realising Jean was not as so many of her patients seemed, (known hodiernally⁴⁹⁶ as a threpterophilic⁴⁹⁷), – and more so again when she gracefully accepted of his proposal of marriage.

If Jean forever after limped, used a stick, for his leg was now stiff as well as short,

⁴⁹⁴ horse that cannot be trained

⁴⁹⁵ surgical breaking of bone

⁴⁹⁶ relating to today

⁴⁹⁷ with a fondness for female nurses

this in no way impeded⁴⁹⁸ his conjugality,

for there is no virtue, no good work, but has some impediment to it,

for within five years came four girls : Aimee, Ellissa, Henrietta, and Phoebe, then, at last, in September 1791, a boy, a rather sickly one, named George (yet destined to become one day a fine healthy doctor); despite family reassurances that it was an act of no small arrogance to assume the responsibilities of a chance production of fourfold daughters, Jean agreeing but thereafter feeling lessest of all his brothers, – save Harold who was abroad travelling, – who had all contributed far more fruitfully to the quest than he, – Claude with his two surviving sons, and Louis and Marcel each with three sons, – as a consequence Jean became somewhat a morose father whom in time his son avoided, his daughters pitied.

Regarding sole bachelor Harold, the youngest son of Lemuel : after first travelling throughout France, Germany, Italy, Turkey, Egypt, and that way, – in youthful pride of life enjoying all the lusts of the flesh, all the lusts of the eyes, in all over seven years away, therefore understandably backward in becoming a productive being, – with his skin tanned almost to the colour of ebon⁴⁹⁹, returning home on three occasions with crates of artefacts, works of art, – many of which, even the few Christian articles, were gained, — though he never spoke of it of his own head, — by nefarious, and defended by often violent, means, – each evening after dinner, to his ever-growing audience, with Overslaugh, all ears and smile, certainly not the least delighted, without need for that license for lying which travellers into far countries have always levied upon facts,

a sort of tax or fine, for remunerating their risks,

without reserve, Harold related his multivagant⁵⁰⁰ adventures of great seas, faraway

⁴⁹⁸ hindered

⁴⁹⁹ ebony

⁵⁰⁰ wandering much

places, magical folklore, of things pleasant and unpleasant, reading sometimes from his journals, (to be found in the archive), which, – minute in the detail, yet not trivial in the amount, – recorded many sights, many strange, exciting experiences such as are meet for the squaring of life; the servants too, – Vouchsafe Odette saw to it, – if they so chose, were often present to hear so gifted a storyteller never the like seen.

Watching the so tanned, so apertly⁵⁰¹ but closely dressed young man, – beneath which he was all bronze skin and whipcord, – gallivant about the room as if the devil himself held his strings, – his slender arms flashing, his words of almost Pegasean imagination building this scene and that, bloating, shrivelling himself before their eyes as he mimicked shadeful characters, poor waifs who seemed to drag the winter behind them, strutting sultans at their rich evil doings, – caused many to wonder if monopolylogue⁵⁰² Harold was not perfectly whole in his mind; (here is evidenced another Troke talent : that of storyteller, later to reappear, but with even far greater skill, in the body of Jeffrey, as shall far less briefly be explained when it comes time to treat of one of the brightest ornaments in these annals); save for life when in brisk motion, believing there was nothing sweeter than peace when at rest, Harold after sleeping much, one day the house awaked to find him again away on his adventures, which to fully recount as well as words are able, might too much violence do to their natural modesty.

In 1793 was the sibylline⁵⁰³ skill of Vouchsafe Odette confirming : the French *Reign of Terror*, which lasting, – so say historiagraphs⁵⁰⁴, – 420 days, from May 31 1793 to July 27 1794, – the slaughter making no distinction between nobleman and labourer, women and children, nuns and priests, – claimed well over one hundred thousand lives; eyewitnessing all this horror, Harold returned, at age 34, permanently, to Troke Manor from an extended stay in Paris,

⁵⁰¹ plainly

⁵⁰² single actor playing many parts

⁵⁰³ oracular; prophetic

⁵⁰⁴ historians

where it was said goeth many a bashful British blockhead to gain personal force, social effectiveness, and to complete the polishing of their parts, but return oft a fine French fop,

accompanied by an untidy, nervously curtsying, pregnant woman named H el ene, and their year-old twin sons Jacques and Justin; shortly following their return, Vouchsafe Odette asking Harold outright if he was a wed⁵⁰⁵, and were the children if not conceived, for that mattered not, but born in wedlock?, whereas certainly Harold recalled the Troke quest, but as a man who felt himself far now too worldly to attach to superstition any more than the very poorest faith and significance, feeling the question came rather of a perhaps lately awoken moral if not religious conscience, thinking to repaise⁵⁰⁶ his good aunt, making sweet answer, Odette knew on the moment that he had answered her false, yet she said nothing; ignoring the fact, as a Vouchsafe often must, that the sensibilities of others were always of lesser account when it concerned their quest, she asking that they marry again, simply as she said to aggrate⁵⁰⁷ her, when here he laughingly protested she inflamed⁵⁰⁸ him by saying he was the only son whose wedding she had not arranged and attended; in short then, he used in former like ceremonies, – a ininerant cleric, sort of *locum tenens*⁵⁰⁹, – one who fortunated to jingle, quibble, and play least the fool with the texts, – of birth name : Not Wanted James, but who called himself William, – was summoned to the Troke chapel, where Harold and H el ene were wed.

In that same year of 1794 came their first legitimate child, in December, the last of this generation, whom they named Samuel, (or Samuel the scribe as he later came to be known, – already met with furthest above, – but as this to many was soon to prove a far too flattering title, many suggested Samuel the screed⁵¹⁰ a far better

⁵⁰⁵ married man

⁵⁰⁶ appease

⁵⁰⁷ please

⁵⁰⁸ reproached

⁵⁰⁹ one who holds office temporarily in place of the person to whom the office belongs

⁵¹⁰ long and tedious speech or tale

eunym⁵¹¹, for, as forementioned, scarce was a man more verbose in his writing, as his 42 diaries and the three bound volumes of his letters, all to be found in the archive, will vouchen, for in addition to the faults already listed, – prior to quoting the much-doctored extracts of his description of Troke Manor, – he was far too busy giving out miles of ink to notice the azygous⁵¹² correlative conjunctions⁵¹³, misplaced clauses⁵¹⁴, allusive commonplaces, and both scyalla⁵¹⁵, and charybdis⁵¹⁶, – indeed so much so that he painted the city of Bath,

in which, when one has sucked in above six or seven mouthful[✓] of air, one discovers to be an excitingly colourful sink of profligacy and extortion, a place where disease and diseased delight so to rendezvous,

as a drear locality indeed, – that it seemed first unto some, afterward generally : in producing the least possible effect by means of the greatest possible quantity of words, – and naught tended in the least to negative this suppose[✓], – nothing but the greatest talent applied with the exquisitest care could possibly have made his style as bad as it was; to measure his tongue by his pen would be to condemn Samuel largiloquent⁵¹⁷, which fortunately he was not, oh would that he were, for it is impossible for one who is habitually silent in company to write well,

for the which there are three necessaries : the reading of best authors, the hearing of best speakers, and the much exercise of one's own voice,

for he was a Troke perhaps less rare then than later, whose eyes and ears, – but with surely want of both eyesight and insight, both simultaneous and successive!, – always far busier than his mouth, were far less busier than his pen; but to give him at

⁵¹¹ name that is suitable or appropriate

⁵¹² unpaired

⁵¹³ connectives used in pairs, such as either/or

⁵¹⁴ failure to place a clause as close as possible to the word it modifies

⁵¹⁵ omission of the possessive when the sense is not clear without it

⁵¹⁶ insertion of the possessive when unnecessary

⁵¹⁷ talkative

least a small piece of credit : it was Samuel and no other who wrote an authoritative, detailed, if achingly overlanguaged⁵¹⁸, account of the shocking events very soon to feature).

No more children forthcame to Harold because in 1796, two years after their arrival and marriage, leaving a note in poor French, H  l  ne, – in her cape of shepherd's holland⁵¹⁹, thought with her merry-begotten⁵²⁰ sons Jacques and Justin to be long out bringing the cows in, – ran away back to her mother, all the way to their large Auvergne farm, but leaving behind her true Troke son Samuel; (because there is an vast of people of which history does not tell anything, as well a far less vast of people of which history says only that they lived, this history will not omit mentioning, at least once, briefly, the fate of every person, either married to a Troke, or with Troke blood in his or her veins : so : H  l  ne, – becoming not only a prude,

one who demolishes every one's character to set up their own by maliciously prying, by magnifying into crimes every unguarded innocent liberty taken by unwary persons,

but an hypocrite,

one who, in the utmost secrecy and security, is a most voluptuous private libertine,

died naturally enough in 1833 at age 67; of her son Jacques, neither fell out his end very fortunate : when attaining to his age making good use of the generous stipend Samuel allowed his mother by buying up a neighbouring farm from which he and his hogherd⁵²¹ grandfather so greatly benefited, he was able to win him a wife of small rank in that rural backwoods, but this availed him poorly, for in visiting the family of

⁵¹⁸ verbose

⁵¹⁹ holland linen used for shepherds' smocks

⁵²⁰ bastard

⁵²¹ keeper of swines

his newly pregnant wife in Tours in 1818, they all of them fatally contracted diphtheria; twin Justin fared scarcely better, for after bravely surviving a foray by his *enfant perdu*⁵²² at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815, – slain all to a single three, – he too died undescended after a *tire-balle*⁵²³ was too deeply inserted into an otherwise shallow wound, by an overworked dresser⁵²⁴).

It can be seen then that by 1794, from the three brothers Jean, Claude, and Harold, from the two brothers Louis & Marcel, in all ten sons were legitimately added to the regenerative core of the family; the hurry with which these events and actors have been treated comes in part from a want of notable incident, and in part, not so much a want of Troke character, but of its sufficient display, which, – no doubt already seeming of very oddball stamp, – shall begin shortly to come to the fore when the whole family is beset by calamity, for pain as much teaches as fashions identity,

for to suffer is that supreme modality of taking the world seriously, as saith Cioran;

with seven male children between the ages of eight and 15 proving somewhat a drachm⁵²⁵ even for tutor Overslaugh, who believed in individually giving to every child only his best, two further tutors were employed to teach the younger their pothooks and hangers⁵²⁶; selected from nearly 80 applicants, these new tutors alas soon proved so woefully poor in comparison with Overslaugh, – particularly in their eagerness to fill young sails with the wind of knowledge before a good ballast of wisdom be laid down, – that within a year these were dispensed with in preference to supplying schoolmen from out the family itself; so, as scholarship continued to be assured, and a somewhat uneventful childhood and youth moved in train amongst

⁵²² suicide squad

⁵²³ forceps to extract bullets from wounds

⁵²⁴ assistant to a surgeon

⁵²⁵ handful

⁵²⁶ the practise of handwriting : p-shape, s-shape

the latest, rising generation, – of which all but two sons would fully ascend to the new monarchy of adulthood, – this history, – the better to move itself on to matters far more interesting, – will now make a small leap to the terrible year of 1799, whereat awaits events of more than interest and disturbance enough.

Despite their isolation, their one could say unworldliness, – Harold only excepted, – not unfamiliar with the ordinary bales⁵²⁷ of life, – the death from his heart of Edmund, the death from age of Hortense, stillbirths, Allan dead at age four, &c, – Trokes were certainly unprepared for the tragedy, of a markedly horrid and unsearchable⁵²⁸ stamp, – (but which was to prove merely the first in a long series of assaults which in one form or another, for better than 200 years, would continue to repullulate⁵²⁹ to subvert the Troke quest, toward which, in one way or another, knowingly or otherwise, the whole family so diligently laboured), – which this year smote them from so mysterious a source, so unexpectedly, (and in light of later knowledge : so unnecessarily prematurely); the two events about to be narrated, which so distinctly monstered the general happiness of the family as to never allow its full repair, commenced to unfold in June, when the ages of all 19 males totalled in the whole a handsome, a very promising, 453 years, the blessed event at only 29 years distance, and, – with yet four young men on the very verge of manhood soon surely to contribute further, – not inconceivably within reach of all, even Lemuel who was then 65.

Joseph, the first son of Louis & Angela, then in his nineteenth year, becoming secretly, oh deperditely⁵³⁰ besotten by the 16-year-old daughter of Jackson the gatekeeper,

renowned by those not alone of her own class as owner of the prettiest foot and ankle in the country round,

⁵²⁷ woes

⁵²⁸ inscrutable

⁵²⁹ recur

⁵³⁰ hopelessly

for despite a Troke he was no different to any other lusty young man on any part of this planet at any point in history,

save that, as a Troke, he was far less ambitious, proud, self-conceited, vain, prodigal, deceitful, envious, malicious, unjust, revengeful, and factious, as well, therefore, far less experienced,

it would be far more fair to say that the more animal, therefore the far more real, healthy parts of Joseph were possessed, in that he seemed prey to a sort of erethism⁵³¹ which, – restricting the main of its location to no higher than the belly down, to no lower than the thighs up, – because wholly denied of utterance, seemed at times to almost consume him; this girl, Penny, Penelope,

from the Greek : bird with a purple neck,

owed her virtue to a somewhat misinformed prurience, come of one only cause, one only detail in the venereal arena, which to relate bluntly : she was markedly frightened by the dire size, compared to herself, which the human male sexual member might possibly attain to in the protuberate or expansile state, for only the year before, when she first witnessed with both horror and wonder a stallion putten to a mare, even setting aside her not yet vigorous imagination, then, with only slightly imperfect sums, scaling accordingly, she nevertheless came up with a measurement which dwarfed the diameter of any finger, or even pair of fingers, she had ever seen, even those of her father who was of a sturdy coarse build; had this fear not bolstered so her moral virtue,

which, by intimately knowing appetites, strives ever to reduce the natural thereof to a lean mean, the unnatural and vicious thereof to expel,

⁵³¹ unusual or excessive degree of irritation or stimulation in an organ or tissue

her purity would, with a little pain, even a little blood, have vanished perhaps two or three, or even five, or even more, years before.

So Joseph stalked his may⁵³² with flowers, little gifts, trochaic⁵³³ verse, sloe-eyed looks, also with his hands, sometimes his lips, – provided of course a darkness or at least a good gloom was present, company distantly absent, or audibly asleep, – which were allowed with almost full permission to widely roam her abundant upper body; but as he could not tice⁵³⁴ her to let him proceed farther, so grew he pale, wan, in dreams soiled his bed linen, and yet every day on his afternoon walk, – dismissing that of which the eve consumed him : that never in so great a labour could he remember to have wasted so much time with such both sorrow of heart and grief of mind, – he again visited the gatehouse cottage, which, – (now very sad, almost a ruin, as may have been noted), – is append like a limpet to the boundary wall; after the knowing father, touching his forelock had gone off in search of expedient employment without, Joseph resumed his chase, often with words alone,

sifted of course into language so open, so drawn out, that it was straight levelled to her understanding,

which so musical, so mysterious, by bringing her to often gasps, sometimes gained him not more but sooner ground than the acts of nibbling at her neck; when, unlacing her bodice only a mite more speedily that she laced it back up, thrusting then his exosculating⁵³⁵ flushed face amongst her ample white bosom, asking in a muffled voice, whether her fears would not still be fears after they were wed?, to neither herself nor to her lover could Penelope offer answer.

Disordered daily in the starlight of his reason, his brain put upon the rack, Joseph was one night taken up by a dream, – exactly as silly as all and any another, –

⁵³² maiden

⁵³³ a foot of two syllables, first long, second short, or first accented, second unaccented

⁵³⁴ entice

⁵³⁵ heartily kissing

wherein, finding himself incarcerated in a dungeon with a great thirst, espying beyond the bars a small barrel of water, he raught⁵³⁶, but insufficiently despite every effort; when he awoke, finding an idea fresh come to him, which sprung, getting to sudden station⁵³⁷ into his head, determining it to pursue, – for if they had almost but not quite openly discussed the sore of the matter, he believed he knew precisely the fears the girl entertained, – proposing his notion to Penelope at their next meeting, naturally she blushed, protested, yet clearly seeing the security inherent in his proposal grew first pale, then with a sudden rubescent giggle, acquiescent; the simple idea was as follow : by reaching through the bars of her bedroom window, he would prove to her that his slender finger was not grossly smaller than that which her own reaching hand would discover, and yet, if this were not so, then she need but pull away to be again safe.

Late that night, as arranged, creeping to the southern side of her cottage, after rapping quietly on the green jalousies⁵³⁸, their opening, he found Penelope in her sleep-attire, a heavy cotton shift, – from which only her head, her hands, and her renowned feet, displayed, – blushing and trembling; seeing as the Moon if not full was nevertheless a touch too bright for her liking, insisting Joseph bind his eyes with his celeste⁵³⁹ silk kerchief, (one day to be known as a watersman⁵⁴⁰), which he did with a smile, then insisting further on his promise not to peep, she then knelt upon the window-seat, shyly lifted her robe, and with flight available with but a flexing of her largest muscles, they slowly, – she her eyes tight closed, he blinded, – ventured through the bars their first horizontal then netherward⁵⁴¹ arms, their delicately waving fingers.

536 reached

537 fixity

538 outside shutters

539 sky-blue

540 worn by friends of Oxford and Cambridge at the annual boat-race

541 in a downward direction

Not to dwell *too* long here : at first asynartetic⁵⁴², as if both were paraphrasic⁵⁴³, but after quiet giggles soon attaining a manual eurythmy⁵⁴⁴, her sudden animal yickers⁵⁴⁵, – which coming from lips lustrous swole, between furnace gasps thrown all in his way, – awoke her father who lumbered bear-like into her room, where, from her swythe⁵⁴⁶-gained bed, she professed to a night-mare; when her father returned to his room, from which after a few moments snores again thundered, to the unmasked elate⁵⁴⁷ face of Joseph appearing again at the window, she flushed, disbelieving girl stared back with all fears, or nearly all, forsaken, whereupon, rushing to the bars to embrace him, they clasped each one other in their arms as best they could; overtaken now by a more mature, more sensible passion, the girl again venturing out and down her now hungry hands and fingers, these were proud to confirm to her eyes, which were now widest open, that he, blessed be!, was no stallion, or not quite, but wondrous terete⁵⁴⁸!

What with the bars, as well a slight fear for that part of her which such an ✓ mighty machine seemed very fit indeed to lay all in brief ruins, a mutual consummation of a manual order was quickly achieved, which from the looks, the sounds, – such a mixture of seeming pleasure and pain, – there is no giving a definition of; hanging from the bars, panting their new wonder, therefore new love, this caused further heating, which obliged them to clasp afresh, &c; with the Sun in debt soon to rise, with their lips speaking all the good words that might be, they at last parted happy, delighted, and yet still imperfectly satient⁵⁴⁹,

for nonsense like this is not to be compared with a woman fully enclosing a man, when, it may be, supplying to her cool his heat, then to his drought her

⁵⁴² having two members with different rhythms

⁵⁴³ unable properly to perform purposive movements

⁵⁴⁴ rhythmic and harmonious movement

⁵⁴⁵ sharp little cries

⁵⁴⁶ quickly

⁵⁴⁷ elated

⁵⁴⁸ smooth and cylindrical

⁵⁴⁹ satiated

moisture, a complete, full, every way sufficient satisfaction is achieved, yet with her half-promise of a far less inconsummate morrow, the still trembling Penelope watched Joseph march tiredly waving away, until the scrog⁵⁵⁰ swallowed him up; neither she nor a Troke ever saw him again living or otherwise.

With Joseph vanished not only from Penelope, the family, the manor, but as if from reality itself, – as if his name alone remaining, he in flesh was henceforth entirely without being, – his occultation⁵⁵¹ was not noted until a servant thought the matter odd that his bed had not been slept in, but said nothing until that afternoon when greying-haired Lemuel asked at dinner where Joseph could be; as it was not until dinner that it was realised no one in the house knew of his whereabouts, come the late evening when an at first casual, then an intense search was instigated, learning from her father, – who was preparing pine torches, – what was the fare⁵⁵² up at the big house, blushing from temples to throat, from carnation to scarlet, Penelope giving him a much truncated testimony, so it became known at least where Joseph had last been seen.

With the whole estate combed, venturing then beyond their own lands, soon every farmer and labourer was awoken, axed⁵⁵³, – revealing nothing save a slight oddity by a local ostler⁵⁵⁴ : an unknown carriage had been late-heard to pass, – and immediately conscripted in the search; as night drew mornward on, as black night made off with all her sickly dews, energetic grandmother and Vouchsafe, Odette, in this year of 1799 aged 63, taking to her finest horse with a hantle⁵⁵⁵ of mounted grooms, – on foot farmers, their wives and woken children, for miles around making ever deeper and wider inquires, – it was learned that an elderly farmeress had also

⁵⁵⁰ dwarf bushes

⁵⁵¹ disappearance

⁵⁵² commotion

⁵⁵³ asked

⁵⁵⁴ innkeeper

⁵⁵⁵ good number, considerable quantity

heard the carriage, light and two wheeled it might have been, drawn to one shod horse, but as none knew of exactly such locally it was presumed the occupant was not indigene⁵⁵⁶ to the environs; then, in very shabby clothes, in linen marvellous foul, a young farm-boy catching up with Odette, after a little bow circling out of windward as he had been often beaten taught, panted that they had found footprints!

Twice more poor Penelope explained their madding⁵⁵⁷ meaning outside her barred window, the first in the presence of two fetisly⁵⁵⁸-dressed grooms, the second time to Odette alone, who sitting the bestraught girl down in the small kitchen, dismissing everyone from the room, gently demanded every detail; because this was rather a labour for the poor girl, – for she was frightened, as well not by nature of mind scenical, – Odette encouraged the girl to employ her hands, face, and body, which proving more than demonstrative enough, giving the girl a crown⁵⁵⁹ to debarass⁵⁶⁰ her, strode to her waiting horse and there spoke loudly to the gathered searchers,

— I do nor will accept such a thing as this, why it is all, – how do you say?, – a too ludicral⁵⁶¹ bolus⁵⁶², for when a palmerin⁵⁶³, such as my dear Joseph, is leaded so patiently, so resourcefully to a very brink, then another meeting, which would be all that any poor boy could wish, would be as inevitable as an arrantest tomorrow, why, the whole matter is... preposterousest!, un-excreable⁵⁶⁴!; with new fury calling loudly for a *montoir*, — or how do you English say?, a horse-block⁵⁶⁵, human or otherwise, quickly!,

⁵⁵⁶ native

⁵⁵⁷ frenzied

⁵⁵⁸ elegantly

⁵⁵⁹ five shillings

⁵⁶⁰ to disembarrass, to disencumber

⁵⁶¹ ludicrous

⁵⁶² mass of medical material larger than a pill

⁵⁶³ knightly hero, champion, of age of chivalry

⁵⁶⁴ unable to be spit out

⁵⁶⁵ used for aiding to mount a horse

stepping onto the broad back of a kneeling groom, finding her footstall⁵⁶⁶, remounting her great sweated, spurgalled destrier⁵⁶⁷, – though he was near 20 year old, she preferred him for a piece of sure service, – with a bite of her single prick spur⁵⁶⁸ she was away with her meiny⁵⁶⁹ to prosecute further her search.

But after a week of inchmeal exploremment, even with printed advertisements offering reward for information of any sort, even confidentially, from whomsoever, from wheresoever, it was at last accepted, separating the precious news from the vile, that the statement *non est inventus*⁵⁷⁰ was to remain true, not forever but long; naturally, foul play was held as inescapable, but poor Penelope thinking at first not, sitting at her window, with love intermixing passion, waited every evening to again hold in her hands that superb piece of mindfilling furniture with which Nature had so liberally enriched her lover, but he came not; when after two months she at last believed herself utterly forsaken, resuming her life, she next year married a seedful tinsmith, (and in 20 years bearing seventeen children, with 12 surviving, eight of these reaching manhood, the loss to the Troke family, hence to the quest, may, however improbably, have proved as considerable as this).

It was not until late in the following month when the second traiterie⁵⁷¹ occurred that this was acknowledged : far too little weight had been accorded two words of warning in the Lemuel Document : *marplot*⁵⁷², *Inimicus*; John, handsome 18-year-old son of Marcel & Charlotte, first cousin to the fugacious⁵⁷³ Joseph, was a quiet young man of usual Troke stature, – though the addition of extra solidity gave the impression he was overly shortish, – much taken by books, by poetry, even to the point of writing fine odes to strength and manliness; it was afterward suspicioned that

⁵⁶⁶ stirrup of a side-saddle of a woman

⁵⁶⁷ war-horse

⁵⁶⁸ worn on the instep

⁵⁶⁹ retinue

⁵⁷⁰ he has not been found

⁵⁷¹ treachery

⁵⁷² one who, or that which, mars or defeats a plot

⁵⁷³ quickly disappearing

his reticent mien, slightly routed bearing, taken together with his aversation⁵⁷⁴ of strange company which had slowly burgeoned from age 14 to be full-blown at 18, was due, and here the brothers, half-brothers, lowered their voices unto nothing to sacrifice words to facial lineaments and gestures.

If upon ordinary occasions this making of a very chaity⁵⁷⁵ point as clear as wordlessness would allow would have been utterly unacceptable to Troke honesty and outspokenness, it seemed on this rare occasion to have sufficed for the business, for, in a word, – with that chilled sympathy of unregretted aversion come when the head is more exercised than the heart, – the younger men thought that John might be sexually transposed, a poor victim of the terrible affliction of loving boys, – of taking a way traditionally so very beastly, so much to be abhorred, as to cause not only at the mentioning, but at the thinking of it, the utmost detestation and loathing, an attitude considered narrow perhaps, and unforgiving, but biologically, and backed by Nature, eminently sensible and sound, – and that this disease, in establishing a kingdom, had proven so unendurable John had done away himself, for had he not openly expressed adulation for Mr Milton who, despite the beweté⁵⁷⁶, tendresse⁵⁷⁷, unequalled delicacy, even overnicety, of his words, (as one day soon a Mr Keats, for he too will have something feminine and twisted in his mind, also a Mr Poe, in whom there would be also too much of the woman in the making), – even of anger in his splendidly indignant *Areopagitica*, – was markedly wanting in masculine energy, strength, and action?

To the latest and last Vouchsafe it was clear and irrefutable : sexual inversion can be brought about by many means, such as abuse, ignorance, conditioning, and of course infection, or adopted for reasons of opportunity, fashion, fear, and rebellion, but these are but means, and not the main, for inversion is predominantly a damaged condition,

⁵⁷⁴ abhorrence

⁵⁷⁵ careful; nice; delicate

⁵⁷⁶ beauty

⁵⁷⁷ tenderness

to which, for the victims, sympathy and understanding is perhaps considered proper, but, – as with Nature her horrified self, – not condonance,

into which a babe is born, as is often alcoholia and other addictions, manias, phobias, perversions, excessive greeds, angers, &c, as better microscopists will one day learn; ah but John was anyways not a badde⁵⁷⁸, not in the least!, but simply suffered from occasional anorology⁵⁷⁹, as did Overslaugh, but with this difference : whereas the latter thought nothing of his permanent condition, young John, –even realising that his invirility was but temporary, and would one day find aligement⁵⁸⁰ in a patient and loving woman, – thought all too deeply on the matter.

It will be here stated also, that save for those if not never, then rarely, repeated, innocent, healthy, pubigerous⁵⁸¹ experiments or games undertaken everywhere at all times in history, entailing contests of strength, length, distance, even speed, there has been no incidence of even a possible sexual inversion since long before the original Lemuel, when, – by a vast transition passing back nearly eight centuries, – on the nineteenth day of the fourth month,

remembering of course that until 1752 the English year began in March, so that by the calendar then in use, June was the fourth month,

of the year a thousand an hundred xxx and vi years, at a little after three-twenty-five in the afternoon, in a chill cloister in Isleworth near London,

later to become part of the Syon monastery of the Brigittine⁵⁸² order,

⁵⁷⁸ homosexual person

⁵⁷⁹ male impotence

⁵⁸⁰ alleviation

⁵⁸¹ pubescent

⁵⁸² founded in 1346 by St Brigit, or Bridget, of Sweden

atavic⁵⁸³ Jude Truke, because of poor eyesight denied the occupation of soldier and artisan, for want of firmness, or rather of callousness, of a nature assentatory⁵⁸⁴, denied the occupation of merchant or trader, with naught remaining in his future save famine, theft, or imposture, the only profession that afforded an opening into a career the least intellectual, – even though he was a man with not unmoderate entendment⁵⁸⁵, nor of a moral standard higher than the average, nor possessed of some rhetorical affluence, nor of great glibness of speech, – was to run his head into a monk's cowl.

After years amidst a stable of clerks made scribe to a senior *armarius*⁵⁸⁶, one night, in the light of a small candle, sitting at his portable desk, listening too closely to a lonely bromopneal⁵⁸⁷ astrologaster⁵⁸⁸ who told him that certain pleasures were very combinable with both business and studies, Jude, very briefly, indulged what was, even in sum, simply his perfect, too long innocence battling his confuse⁵⁸⁹, much brow-beaten feelings concerning his utter nequience⁵⁸⁹ to believe in a deity, particularly one so wanting of intelligence, wisdom, and sanity, for it was astonishing to him,

far less so were it known that from indolence, weakness, indifference, or incapacity, doubts are impotent to arise,

that man would make such show to believe what to Nature, logic, and reason, even in that thirteenth century, was so repugnant, to all the propensities of the heart so opposite, to all the sensual pleasures so inimical, whereupon, – small wonder that, not a virtuous man,

⁵⁸³ remote ancestor

⁵⁸⁴ assenting insincerely, or conniving

⁵⁸⁵ intellect

⁵⁸⁶ monk who presides over a scriptorium

⁵⁸⁷ suffering bad breath

⁵⁸⁸ fraudulent astrologer

⁵⁸⁹ inability

for the virtuous man is an impossible man, nay, a monster he is, more a monster,

but an honest man, should actually seek to be alone, – he next morning fled; in the years to come, after suffering a difficult period as that most prevalent parasite of late medieval society : a mendicant friar, than another as a jocolator⁵⁹⁰, by learning the language of court and castle, of church and constitution, of chivalry and the chase, giving great satisfaction to the quality, – taking for reason of no matter the name Peter Passelewe, – Jude eventually became, – besides a court lovmonger, – a well-respected professional storyteller to the French nobiliary⁵⁹¹.

For further evidence of Troke sexual aberrancy, also feeble, it would be necessary to travel one thousand and one hundred and twenty-one winters agone, to a time when, with Nature seen as merely a collection of mystic symbols, of divine or diabolical allegories, – whose meaning could only be discovered by correct interpretation of the scriptures, wherein, – visions, miracles, whether worked by a god or a devil, were of continual occurrence, for every natural event, – not only an eclipse of the Sun, a comet, even lightning, but a dream, even a sneeze, – stood for something else : the symbol of some spiritual event concealed behind every the least phenomenon; but this will not be made matter for these pages, nor that amongst female Trokes, – though in date this belongs elsewhere, – one recent spinster came sensibly to realise that her slight lesbian tendencies of thought were simply yet another strategy for escaping patriarchal conceptions of femininity and female sexuality; else further occasion hereafter be not found, it will be timely to mention also that no Troke was circumcised, nor ever had been, and an acucullophile⁵⁹² would have had a lean time of it in the Troke family, oh a very lean time!

To be done with such matters : mastrupation⁵⁹³ : save in certain instances, – tedious

⁵⁹⁰ professional jester or minstrel

⁵⁹¹ of or relating to nobility

⁵⁹² woman aroused by a circumcised penis

⁵⁹³ masturbation

to enumerate when the experiences of common life are so decisive, but mainly for the reason that if taken to the extreme of actually replacing coitus, such would prove very barayne⁵⁹⁴ to the quest, – rarely actually⁵⁹⁵ encouraged, this healthy and necessary practice,

which idoneity⁵⁹⁶ quickly recommends to favour, for apparently this *splendidum peccatum*⁵⁹⁷, – yet another imperfection man believes he hath by the fall of Adam, – fleets the time not unpleasantly,

was rarely in anywise discouraged, particularly in Troke females, (which this saga will alas soon show were always in spinsterous flock-meal⁵⁹⁸), else old maid's insanity⁵⁹⁹ develop; despite much irrisible⁶⁰⁰ literature quoting of Chrysippus : *abstain and endure*, much pernicious gadgetry, (especially during the upcoming Victorian era : machines to deny its deleterious effects upon the energies of budding flesh and mind), no Vouchsafe, – save in fearing immoderacy might prove a rust to the soul, – could ever find the least harm in this practice of paying oneself out of one's own purse.

Thus it was on an innocent, exciting, yet soon afterward unboastworthy, occasion, in the library, that John and his second cousins once removed, the brothers Steven and Richard, discovering a volume of licentious sketches, – the very commissioned by the late Vouchsafe Gwendoline to encourage her grand-daughter-in-law Odette to greater fecundity, – were soon, two of them, in tumescent wonder, but because the then fashion caused the brech⁶⁰¹ to conceal very little, it was clear that John was

⁵⁹⁴ unproductive

⁵⁹⁵ actively

⁵⁹⁶ convenience

⁵⁹⁷ splendid sin

⁵⁹⁸ great numbers

⁵⁹⁹ erotomania, insanity arising from unanswered erotic passion

⁶⁰⁰ ridiculous

⁶⁰¹ brech

markedly unlike themselves, which is to say : marcescent⁶⁰², a condition which it is not inexpedient to observe came almost equally from distaste, disinclination, and, – his very nature allowing himself no place for any crime, – bashfulness; additionally, – save for twice involuntarily during sleep, – John was wholly even proudly chaste, continent, virtuous, – which he knew it not in the common lump of men to be, for *multum sibi adjicit virtus lacescita*⁶⁰³, – which, – causing alas virtue to remain more innocent than virtuous, – required, – else shame, fevers, orbation⁶⁰⁴, torments, even death, ensue, – a considerable strength of will in the avoiding of such temptations as fortune, – conducing ever to disturb with rough and stormy eftures⁶⁰⁵, exotic appetites : inordinate difficulties to wrestle, – delights to supply, to best interrupt the speed of a noble career; whilst these were the fuller truths : John was afraid to impair his strength, and terrified by contagion, it was nevertheless from this most sorry piece of evidence, witnessed on a sole occasion, that his more lusty coevals, – who had heard that not a lineage but hides a few in its history, – in the manner of those who squinting at but the poorest part, distort it to be greater even than the whole, – half believing that John was sexually conversed⁶⁰⁶, attributed to suicide his evanition⁶⁰⁷.

Though similarly thorough searches of the convicinity⁶⁰⁸ were launched, – with now an anger adding scrupulousness, but coupled to an hopelessness on the part of many, – despite every firearm counted, every water searched, despite men in dozens skyward eyed seeking a gibbet, with dogs everywhere sniffing, in a row to the horizon everyone conscripted to comb all the woodlands, with in short everyone, local and imported, given according to his work shall be[✓] : no intelligence was anywhere garnered; within three weeks, as with Joseph Lowell Roland Troke, both to the family and to the quest, it was accepted that John Cornelius Troke too was

⁶⁰² drooping

⁶⁰³ virtue is much strengthened by combats

⁶⁰⁴ poverty

⁶⁰⁵ passages

⁶⁰⁶ reversed

⁶⁰⁷ vanishing

⁶⁰⁸ neighbourhood

utterly without being; at the coming of the year 1800, which was the tricentenary of the Troke quest, with the death in March of aforementioned William in Quebec, with the ages of the eight members of the rising generation ranging from six to 21, the reckoning was of males 16, and their tally of years 387; as well illustrating to the family that their exclave⁶⁰⁹ was threatened by perhaps the whole world, these two very mysterious disappearances, treated as deaths, as murders, retrahended⁶¹⁰ the blessed event ten years, to a distance of 39, in other words,

for it would be wise always to remember, particularly in this saga : if it can be said in other words, then it has not yet been said,

60 percent, or 300 years, of time was passed, and only 40 percent, or 200 years, – time surely sufficient to create with say 15 old men, or 50 young, 613 years, – remained.

⁶⁰⁹ part of a country, province etc, disjoined from the main part; enclosed in foreign territory

⁶¹⁰ drew back