

1800-1820

Despite the shock lingering of the recent disappearance, probable murder, of two valuable males, with henceforth, not heaven, of which Donne speaketh, but death, death

as neare, and present to her face,
 As colours are, and objects, in a roome
 Where darkenesse was before, when Tapers come,

on the first day of January 1800, Lemuel now 66, flanked by his two women, wife Vouchsafe Odette 63, former wife Virginie 62, hosted a very festive party celebrating the tercentenary¹ of the Troke quest, which displayed the family, generally speaking, in very fine fettle, save perhaps for Jean who was becoming considerable of a maltwork², and Louis who at 43 suffered from a slowly encroaching ablepsy³, necessitating Angela his wife, – who, with nowhere a grave-side whereat to wope, remember, and thus achieve closure, was cadaverous⁴ over the loss of their youngest son Joseph, – read to him in a voice of sad monotony, for example : *Joseph Andrews* by Richardson; Charlotte, however, wife of Marcel, – thought by many so high-strung as to quickly invalidate⁵, – by setting an example soon to be followed, was stoic in the loss of her youngest son John : carrying herself erect, bearing her burden without a bend.

In that small light-doused first-floor room which Odette commandeered for herself 30 years before to better investigate her ultrasensual⁶ talents, with its arched,

¹ three-hundredth anniversary

² heavy drinker

³ blindness

⁴ melancholy

⁵ weaken

⁶ beyond the range of the senses

pedimented entrance doorway, remarkable catherine-wheel window, sky blue wallpaper, and ornaments none,

a room henceforth referred to as the *adytum*, which means both an innermost part of a shrine or temple, and a private room or sanctum,

lying upon a low Thomas Hope sofa, – a long ago gift from husband Lemuel, – Odette the fourth Vouchsafe believed that the boys Joseph and John were not simply missing but assassinees, for when she strained her talents almost to sweating breaking she could see very faintly that cretose⁷ soil of Exmoor, the unpeopled hills among, sometimes even glimpsing two short solid men, both with two shadows, as if come of a Moon and a lantern, who were somehow instrumental in the plot; there might have been more, indeed there was, much more, but Odette, never forthright enough in her strength too soon feeling too hagged out by the effort to improve the clarity of the image, returned to herself to pant, to wipe the beads of sweat from her over-lip⁸ with its grey granons⁹, to sip a calming caudle¹⁰.

Exmoor, where the air has always a sharp sweetness : a bare brown land upon which, save for heather abundantly, nothing blooms on its tors¹¹ and hillsides but short wiry colourless tussocky grass, hardy grey prickly furze, where run wild horses, small, active, – descendants of horses which the Phoenicians, before even the Romans, brought in their galleys when they traded for tin and silver with Cornwall and Devon, – where plentiful are snipe, woodcock, partridge, black-game¹², wild-duck, and plover, – the which, often at the very feet of a startled walker, rising wailful from the tussocks of brown grass, go flying away in a broken-winged, broken-hearted way, – where are abundant hare, fox, badger, and troublesome otter, where bears, wild pigs, and wolves are no more, where is the last corner in England the red deers, – once a native inhabitant of all these islands, – live in his natural state.

⁷ chalky

⁸ upper lip

⁹ long hairs as about the mouth of a cat

¹⁰ hot sweet drink, especially spiced wine or ale

¹¹ rocky peaks

¹² black grouse

Though no one else in the world shared her vague but confident knowledge, feelings and words had so quickly sowed themselves throughout the house, they soon amounted to a collective suspicion, – most particularly in the outraged hearts of her own two sons, four grandsons, as well as the three sons and four grandsons of Virginie, – that just as the Lemuel Document gave vague warning, there was indeed by a *camorra*¹³ a conspiracy against the family, but by whom none could say, – for who in the world had ever a Troke so wronged?, – nor for why; Steven son of Louis at 14 henceforth carried a small pistol always about his person,

a Knubley flint boxlock, which, favoured by gentlemen for discreet carry, also called a *muff pistol* because ladies sometimes carried one inside their fur muffs,

from Frederick son of Marcel at 17 depended¹⁴ a short damaskin¹⁵ wherewith, thanks to lessons with a hired fencing-master, – who warned that a sword would do him small service against a pistol, – was very proficient, and Richard youngest son of Louis, at 11 only slightly disadvantaged by his youth, carried a concealed poniard¹⁶,

a sixteenth-century bollock dagger¹⁷,

whenever he ventured into the garden; Alexander youngest son of Marcel, never one to act by halves, even at 15, took it wholly upon himself to hire a personal manservant, and this good man, – an honest with accent strong, but in language nothing broken, who said little, but saw much, – was a broadly educated, experienced highlander lately back from the Americas; it was understood that Jamie the Scot,

a man in whom order had repealed disorder, moderation restrained

¹³ group of people united for dishonest or dishonourable ends

¹⁴ suspended

¹⁵ Damascus sword

¹⁶ dagger

¹⁷ type of dagger with a distinctively shaped shaft, and two oval swellings at the guard resembling male genitalia

licentiousness, discretion abandoned vanity, mildness assuaged choler,
 humility allayed arrogancy, consideration reclaimed rashness, and indifferency
 attempered passion,

was to covertly shadow Alexander on his every outlope¹⁸ from the house, and when
 he was clearly committed to remaining within, then Jamie was to use his judgement
 in skillwisely¹⁹ watching over everyone, particularly his seven coevals : as this word
 and its variants shall be used again,

indeed 15 times in all,

it means : of like ages or duration.

Another valuable employee in the Troke annals, a person of such renown worth as
 was said future times must, of duty, owe the debt of honourable memory, Jamie was
 a serious hard-working man who was up well before the servants, and when these
 went late to bed, after taking a final walk around the grounds to ensure they were
 unessential²⁰, after inspecting every door and window both from without and within,
 released two new-acquired anants²¹ to roam the grounds till dawn; it was not long
 before Jamie, by considering that the youth of the realm, – still but in the gristle, not
 yet hardened into the bone of manhood, – were insufficient for all its wars, took it
 upon himself to train a few selected Troke youths, – pregnant²², fresh, industrious,
 quick, and lusty, – in the art of soldiership, for as he said, though his quotation from
*The Admirable Doctor*²³ was not quite apt : *in a slothful peace, both courage will
 effeminate, and manners corrupt.*

So passed two years without incident, during which time, to the delight of the family,
 the maze for the second time was doubled in size, from a quarter of an acre, to 50

¹⁸ excursion

¹⁹ discreetly

²⁰ void of being

²¹ mastiff dog with short ears

²² full of promise

²³ Francis Bacon (1561-1626)

yards to a side, bringing it to 2500 square yards in extensure; in 1802 Edwina the 24-year-old daughter of Marcel & Charlotte, in the company of a goodly family she met at a fair in Glastonbury, went up to London, where, with a mind settled, landed, and fortified, buying a house, from its laced window did little more, for two months together, than sit and in marvel gaze upon motion and busyness,

upon the strumpetry, errors, perturbations, labours, the roamings up and down of men who, by wandering, by straying with no settled course, by taking counsel only from things as they fall out, by fetching a too wide circuit meeting with too many matters, made so little progress;

then in 1809, in Vauxhall Gardens, on the Surrey side of the Thames, once called Spring Gardens, she met then married a later bibacious²⁴ man in assecuration²⁵, (dying both childless during the 1831-2 cholera epidemic).

In mid-April 1804, – the world hominised with one billion exemplars, – with now to be heard the cuckoo,

with no words for the way it walks, the way it flies, the way it congregates, sneaks, &c, and the name of its song is its name overall,

with the first swift anticipated, and primroses everywhere!, the engagement was announced at 21 of Frederick, son of Marcel & Charlotte, to Josephine Tey, governess to the children of a local family of some note; of stately bearing, easy laugh, and of apparently sound health, Vouchsafe Odette vaguely sensed that this young woman wanted that full hand of strength which every life must possess if it is to prevent that sequestrator²⁶ death from calling prematurely; aware of course that weak blood as much, or more, resided in the upper reaches of the social spectrum as in the middle and lower : to best combat the possible enfeebling of their own never hardy line, – for they were not unaware that despite not overly fertile of

²⁴ addicted to alcohol

²⁵ marine insurance

²⁶ person who officially appropriates enemy property

progeny, monsters and madmen resided in their deeps, – Odette believed that wherever possible hybridous vigour²⁷ should be practiced, for with the cosmoplastic²⁸, – to give it a very poor name, – bestowing upon man only a certain span of time in which to dwell, with the knowledge soon acquired that life and death are very fairly isodynamic²⁹, and when the additional burden is added of the Inimicus,

they who did most agitate and turmoil them, they who no caution could divert,
no vigilancy foresee,

this seeming justness was suddenly brought much into jeopardy by such Trokes as are too ram-stam³⁰ in pursuit of their quest.

It should here be made clear that despite the average age of Trokes at death, as stated, only 46 years, some blood members of the family were often macrobian³¹, a few noticeably so, particularly females; to instance : ignoring Trokes living, – whose average age is now 39, – notable past examples of longevity are : Clarice daughter of Hugo lived to be 80, as did doctor George son of Jean, Caroline daughter of Thomas, Branwen daughter of Mark, both lived till 82, Michael son of Edward, Rowena daughter of Paul, both died at 83, Lemuel son of Anthony, Bessie son of Jeremy, Eugenia son of Paul, Joan daughter of Stanley, all lived for 84 years, Martin son of Steven succumbed at age 88, Jeanette daughter of Claude lasted until 90, Phoebe daughter of Jean, and Elise daughter of Erwin, both lived unto 92, Aimee daughter of Jean, laden very tolerably with years, expired at 93, but most remarkable of all, – considering she and her sister Bessie were endrugged in lifelong manrent³² to the Troke family, – Cissie daughter of Jeremy, lived to be 101.

Despite on one hand their quest, on other the threat of further attacks by the Inimicus, despite the, – (yet small, but soon to grow far greater), – assistance given

²⁷ mating of individuals different in one or more genes or characters

²⁸ formative force which moulds the universe

²⁹ of equal force

³⁰ impetuous; pressing on heedless of obstacles

³¹ long-lived

³² vassalage

to the family by their Vouchsafe, Trokes needed to marry strongly rather than prettily or well, for should strength or life-force be wanting, as was alas the case with Josephine Tey, the intended of Frederick, and conspicuously so, – (for of her six children, into the first four of whom she passed her weakness : one son gave himself over to a fever, which in great violence seized on his heart, and of her three daughters, one died one could say foolishly, of recklessness in America, and two took their own lives), – such a person as this, beautiful, bright, often laughing, and kind as she undoubtedly was,

despite the world suffering a locusting³³ of such genetically torpid people,

Vouchsafe Odette should have spoken out, – for a simple conference with Frederick beforehand might have eased the family of much after-trouble, – as should the most loyal of the house : loudly voiced their view that Josephine was simply not the material from which healthy Troke questants could reliably be made, – (for it was later discovered that a brother, actually a homogalact³⁴, an uncle, two nephews, and no fewer than 14 cousins either outright made themselves away, or in one way or another threw down their short lives), – in a word : despite Troke minds and bodies daily improving of health and efficiency, but with eugenics³⁵ never actively practiced, – principally because the health of every person proceedeth so diversely, – it was clear to all that in the matter of careful choice in a marriage-partner, – which concerned not only their race, but far more importantly their quest, both matters of far more importance than the views personal of its participants, – Josephine Tey, who was alas of an inferior alloy, unwittingly retunded³⁶ the Troke essence, (or at least for four generations, whereupon this thin branch propagated from her marriage completely died out); (it should be stressed that this resentment shown toward Josephine has been extracted from almost no other source than the thoughts which accompanied the often bitter rages suffered by the thwarted eighth Vouchsafe, for whom success of the quest held a particular, darkly personal, meaning).

³³ swarming and devastating after the manner of locusts

³⁴ foster-brother

³⁵ study of the best means of improving the race by the careful selection of parents

³⁶ weakened

With a grand dinner arranged to celebrate the engagement of Frederick, youngest of three bachelors, Odette was not the only to feel misgivings, – if of an entirely other and silly sort, – for with Josephine 25 and Frederick but 20 bidding rise a few mixed eyebrows, that she was nearly six feet tall, he not five feet eight, bidding rise a few more, this caused a few males, – despite overhearing women in the house giggle at the whisper that they would be exactly the right height lying down, – to feel very distinctly their supposed want of allure³⁷; vaguely misgiving the engagement dinner itself, Odette confided her suspicions to husband Lemuel, – over the years coming to accept that his wife was manifoldly more intuitive than it was ever given even a woman to be, – who, hearkening to the vagueness of her fears, doubled the guard, which proved a very sensible act, for coming the very day before the dinner, – with a gazehound³⁸ latrant³⁹, with Jamie seen running armed into the woods for a chase which went more than two mile, down long lanes, over crooked reaches, along weary ways, – there came via a clever wanlace⁴⁰ the apprehension of a poacher with all about him tools of his trade.

Before proceeding further, a brief word on poaching, – one of the greatest oldest arts to which man is heir, – and on poachers : at the very first setting up of Trokes in their first and last home in 1770, there was at first a continuing much, and understandably : like all the communiarii⁴¹, – artificer, labourer, layman, clerk, &c, – not qualified by a written grant from the crown to go hunt for their dinner,

nor keep greyhounds, or other dogs of hunt, nor ferrets, nor nets, nor other engines to take or destroy deers, hares, swans, – called royal fowl, – partridges, swish-tail⁴², conies, or other game of gentlemen,

so with dogs, often spaniels, with engines various, sometimes with faces blacked,

³⁷ height

³⁸ dog that pursues by sight

³⁹ barking

⁴⁰ heading-off of game

⁴¹ commoners

⁴² pheasant : term used by poachers

entering upon Troke land, often in a mass, – men almost always, – by day, by night,

whether by wall, rail, pale, fence, hedge, &c, or by enclosed ground, whether forest, wood, park, chase, purlieu, paddock, ancient walk, &c,

persistently hunted, or killed, many only for their own lean stomachs, or stealed alive, or tried.

With the manor seven years closed, isolated, without gamekeeper or bailiff⁴³, with the sheriff⁴⁴, or rather his under-sheriffs, called deputies, so far to come, it is scarce surprising that,

despite for the breaking of a wild egg : a heavy fine, for the taking of a cony : imprisonment, and for again taking : transportation,

game laws were much abused; this severity of punishment,

such indeed that even the buyers, – whether farmeress, or cook, or servant, always at back door, often in the wordless dark, rabbit, long one⁴⁵, wild duck, wild goose, mallard, teal, widgeon⁴⁶, grouse, bustard⁴⁷, &c, – waried also of their continued freedom, their whole skins,

is hardly to be wondered at, for such laws were made by the very same as hath sovereign and uncontrollable despotic authority in making all laws,

confirming, enlarging, restraining, abrogating, repealing, reviving, and expounding, whether ecclesiastical, temporal, civil, military, maritime, or

⁴³ overseer on an estate who protects same from poachers

⁴⁴ one responsible for all the king's business in the county

⁴⁵ hare : term used by poachers

⁴⁶ fowl of the duck kind, or genus *Anas*, with a black bill, the head and upper part of the neck bright bay, the back and sides waved with black and white, and the belly white

⁴⁷ large heavy-bodied game bird with a breadth of wing six to seven feet

criminal, as well addressing all mischiefs, grieves⁴⁸, operations, and remedies, which may transcend the ordinary course of laws,

for by restricting the lower orders of society in favour of lords and landowners, game laws preserved the pleased rights of the great and opulent, anywhere in the kingdom, to hunt, or kill, or otherwise destroy, often simply for fun, all undomesticated life, whether it fly or run; but despite their sympathy, their understanding, – for many a Troke hath been himself a poacher, – with word quickly passing locally around that all trespass must surcease, either voluntarily by never again setting foot upon Troke land, or by a littering off Troke land dead, the event of poaching soon reduced to an occasional itinerant or gypsy.

As the poacher, in the company of Jamie, with Alexander and Steven both horse-mounted, was manned⁴⁹ back to the manor and thence to the stables, Vouchsafe Odette retired to her adytum the better to have knowledge of this man who he was, to try pry from her portentous fears some detail a touch less intangible; when the sweating, panting interloper and his esguard⁵⁰ passed below her beautiful window, because her doubts were still unable to give themselves form, downstairs she hastened so that she might more closely observe the outraged questions, the deceptive answers, the angry exchanges of pride and defiance which all over England,

or wherever liveth a landed people who, capturing a sufficiency of money to enable them to regard the future with calmness and their fellow-creatures with contempt, had achieved that highest state which so many believe humanity can attain,

accompany this commonplace event, for poaching, though larcination, is not only in greater part an answering the age-old urge to hunt, if not dangerous game, then in dangerous terrain, but an honourable acknowledgement of millions of years of

⁴⁸ grievances

⁴⁹ escorted

⁵⁰ escort, guard

species, (today this art is almost dead, but it is perhaps still faintly, feebly acknowledged in shop-lifting, graffiti, and other acts of daring).

Not wishing to trespass upon, thereby complicate, what was considered the business absolutely the privilege of landowning menfolk, nor bring doubts to the members of her family, particularly to the servants, concerning her sanity, – for in truth only a few of the family were vaguely aware of what more vaguely still were her Vouchsafe talents, – Odette climbing upon a rain-barrel and through the balistraria⁵¹ quietly calling to Lemuel who was just beginning in severe manner to put interrogatories unto the trespasser, he, with naturally bemazement, went out to meet with his wife; as Jamie with his deep calm voice, – with eyes open expressing worthy things, with eyes closed odious,

for a good threatening of the law, which is all that can be inflicted, consistent with justice, upon an innocent, was, in its effect, often one and the same as the very punishment dispensed by the law upon a guilty, as Edwards believeth,

continued the interview, Odette took Lemuel his arm, turned him about, and promenaded a few quiet yards.

Then she stopped, faced him, and as he glanced less and less to his rear she quietly reminded him that they had recently lost two grandsons, and though she loved him marvellous dearly, he hopefully still herself, – here she silenced his verification of this by suddenly taking good solid hold on his lapels, and in a manner so firm, in a tone so ringing urgent that he had never experienced the like before, nor never shall again, – she next said that she was convinced that the man up yonder, all very persuasively got up in rustic attire, with his leather bag filled with lures, whistles, nares, springes⁵², and she knew not what else, was not what he seemed, or not wholly, and he, Lemuel, on the life of his great-grandchildren, more particularly on the fate of the family quest initiated by the wondrous vision of his namesake, must

⁵¹ cross-shaped opening in wall for firing arrows

⁵² horsehair nooses for the capture of small animals

not fail to determine absolutely who was this man, where found, how busied, in what posture couched, in short, by asking him all his story, what this intrusour⁵³ was really doing about the family grounds, at this particular time; grown a trifle pale at these so strong words Lemuel nodded, kist[✓] sweetly her trembling hand, and promissive on his name that he would strive for the truth with not an atom less of effort than she suggested, hastened back to the poacher.

The poacher, if he was such, certainly knew, when marched into the dark ancient stables, that if the bailiff or constable were not assummoned, which was half his hope, then the other half was that his tools would be confiscate, and a beating the tradition, indeed his expectation, first in the stable, then after they had dragged him bloodied thereout to prodded stagger to the road, beaten once more, till he would feel killed so nearly entirely that for three hours he would breath for all the world like a corpse,

yet grateful : for in the Middle Ages, when the game laws were intricate, rigid, of incredible cruelty : to hang a man for snaring a hare, was common, whereas to only cut off his thumbs so that he could not hold his tools, or to lame him, was considered far more merciful, far more kindly;

firmly sending everyone but Jamie, Frederick, Alexander, and Steven, about their business, Lemuel ordered the double-doors of the stable closed.

After inspecting the leathern wallet⁵⁴, in which only the expected was found, including a 12-inch jack-a-legs⁵⁵, he ordered the man to unrind⁵⁶, which at his effrontery gesturing Jamie help him, so were the well-worn clothes, one-by-one divested, handed to Lemuel, who after the greatcoat, two coats, thence the shirt, detected first that there was a distinct want of that staler body odour expected in

⁵³ intruder

⁵⁴ knapsack

⁵⁵ clasp knife

⁵⁶ undress

such items, and lastly that the man, soon sark alone⁵⁷,

in leanness, in tone, certainly a sort of walking man, or, simply to get meat to
his stomach, taken often by a walking to get a stomach to his meat,

seemed far too cleanly for his class and profession, for though his hands showed hardening, the nails if a trifle unclean were neatly trimmed, his teeth were without too great rot, and his feet were not overly coarse; with a hat, so old as not to be approved of, modestly hiding his privities, the nakar⁵⁸, standing on the cold cobblestones, white skinned, prefixing all his answers, at least in the early stages of his interview, with, *an' please your worships*, willingly enough gave his name, even a nubilous⁵⁹ locality of dwelling, but to all else his broad local accent and manner avowed, save of trespass, innocency; examining the coats with his more experienced hands Jamie found in the lining of the innermost a hardness which became a *rouleau*⁶⁰ of 20 newly minted guineas, whereupon the man at last displayed animation by a show of verbal protests, – here sparingly recounted, – the main of which was that such was all he had in the world for his old age!; through a gap in a rear shutter Odette unseen observed this group of men, who until now had exercised a certain reserve, close in on a man whom Jamie could clearly see was not one to say what it was not wise to say.

Acting somewhat uncharacteristically for a wild man who had found calm,

but not when it is learned he came from ancestors who had made war, raised rebellions, been defeated, then were either for their ambition and pride cut shorter by the head, or else lofted heavenward by their chins⁶¹,

Jamie hereupon took charge : demanding of Steven a stout rope, of Alexander the

⁵⁷ bare except for a shirt

⁵⁸ naked person

⁵⁹ vague

⁶⁰ roll of coins in a paper wrapper

⁶¹ hanged

dragging near of a yonder solid workbench, of Frederick the chest containing the tools common to a horseleech⁶², with the eyes of the poacher now different, in that their display of innocence had evaporated into fear, and, despite the coldness of the stables drying his sweat come of the chase, new sweat appeared upon his forehead; with the toolchest bang! placed on the table, the rope slap! at its side, Jamie then ordered the boys to lay the man down supine, to tie his hands and feet firmly to the four legs, so that with his head perpendicular, with a voice now augmented an imperfect fifth, asking what they were going to do to him, Jamie opening the oak box, after a great deal of rattling fuss, – more theatre than search, more stir than work, – at last extracting a rusty butteris, – which is the tool a farrier employs to pare the hooves of horses, – making no small play of testing its edge, effecting first dissatisfaction, then giving a shrug of resignation, made next a great do of neatly doffing and folding his jacket, rolling up his shirt-sleeves.

The poacher protested, to be sure, loudly and long, about how netting a few woodcock, or behap a pheasant or two, were his only aims, but gagged with his own kent⁶³, breathing and bubbling through his nose, seemingly soon even through his eyes, he heard Jamie say to Lemuel, – with whom, as the boys raced to their errands, an expression asking indulgence had passed, – that it would be better if the boys were to take the air; as Frederick, Alexander, and Steven were as yet callow, even a trifle pale at the thought of what might forthcome, yet setting their chins with protest, with a nod from Lemuel they reluctantly away to the sunny cobbled yard, where with nothing to see shuffled their feet and avoided eyes, until came the first scream.

This was caused by Jamie taking the roger⁶⁴ of the supposed poacher by its really incredibly generous prepuce,

aye, an extraordinarily extensible akroposthion⁶⁵ he had,

⁶² horse doctor

⁶³ coloured cotton handkerchief

⁶⁴ penis

⁶⁵ the tip of the foreskin

and after pulling the enormously tensible⁶⁶ item, laying the butteris at the race⁶⁷, saying in his rudest Doric⁶⁸,

— If all is nae told, and at once, then by a wee movement like this, here Jamie moved the blade, — ye will be lessened;

after mutely screaming, but by now exactly as wise as the means by which he was made so, the poacher nodding vigorously, divested of his muzzle, commenced telling them all he knew; it so came out in this way : he had been sent to report on the family, to observe how they fared, how in health they appeared, to ascertain the number of servants, to generally determine Troke incolumity⁶⁹, but naught else, naught else!, as he steady be telling them!

When Lemuel then asked for what reason such intelligence was required, but the man knowing not, the name of his patron then demanded, because for a second the man mammered⁷⁰, hence came a second scream, and a fine superficial wound appearing, but with barely the force to bleed, so the man exclaimed a name, loudly!, and in fear perhaps that haplogy⁷¹ would be added to his crimes, in three pronunciations; so it was that the death-shadowed Trokes came at last to learn at least the name of possibly only an agent of their mysterious Inimicus; the poacher, — whose name by the way was Thomas Flax, — became then almost voluble, explaining that as he was known to be a man capable in many shifty ways, a man who gathereth not scattereth information, he had been offered this commission by a gentleman he had been asked to meet in the office of an attorney in Bridgwater, — he here gave the address of this otherwise respectable establishment, — but why he was so to report, pleading he truly knew not, even when pressed further by Jamie, he could reveal nothing more save a description of the man who had directly

⁶⁶ that may be pulled or stretched

⁶⁷ root

⁶⁸ Scottish dialect

⁶⁹ safety; security

⁷⁰ hesitated

⁷¹ omission of syllables in a word

engaged him.

Jamie then untying the man, sitting him up on the edge of the table, facing him closely and squarely, asking him very quietly to look him in the very eye, – pronouncing it ee, – he said Flax would now tell him three things which were secret to all the world; here the pale man blushing, with hands antipudic⁷², with eyes looking away, said small that whilst in the army of the King he had turned transfuge⁷³, but as this would not square well with a conscience not otherwise over-tender, but whose acquaintance he did not wish to cut, he was now 12 years a runagate⁷⁴, and Jamie nodding held up his foreman⁷⁵; Flax then said he had three wives, with a blench giving brief details, again Jamie nodding raised his longman⁷⁶; here Flax searching his private archives, shrugged and said, when he was a far younger man, served by far nimbler senses and desires, he had actually been a poacher, a very fair one too!, but as Jamie slowly shook head and fingers with a studied dismality of gestures, thus urging Flax to struggle further with his memories, here he lowering his head with a sigh which guilt strained to a groan, said that two years past, knowing he was conductitious⁷⁷, – here he darted up a shamed glance at the frowning Jamie, then at Lemuel, – a man asking him to find his too cockpecked wife who was run away a month, sure enough he found her living with a farmer over St Austel way, – name?, Aiden Hotman, – but then as one word borrowed another they coming soon to blows, they got into a dreadful kickup⁷⁸, and, well, before he knew it he had left him for dead in a ditch in his garden, for which act he was probably a lamister⁷⁹; after a very trepidant pause Jamie flicked up his ringman⁸⁰, and nodding, *Content!*, quoth he.

To this interloper his clothes, the tools of his supposed trade, even his gold returned to him, – to his great surprise, – he was then told to tell his employers, but here Flax

⁷² covering the reproductive organs of the body

⁷³ deserter who passes over to the enemy

⁷⁴ deserter

⁷⁵ first finger

⁷⁶ second finger

⁷⁷ for hire

⁷⁸ row

⁷⁹ fugitive

⁸⁰ third finger

said firmly, *Nay!*, for he was going far away to Gloucester to a farm, – belong[✓] to a widow whose seemly personage, no less her goodly thews⁸¹, so much contented her master, advancing her from maid to mistress to wife, left her a wealthy widow, – and he would see nobody but, to which Jamie replied that if he ever returned to the Troke estate or even its broadest environs, he certainly knowing of it, Flax would be hunted up, taken, and then, holding up the almost bloodless butteris, far more permanently dealt with, to this the man nodded with the very greatest understanding; the expectant boys without, astonished yet relieved to see the man walk pale out of the stables unharmed, mounting their horses escorted Flax at a trot, – treading his heels in the almost hope that he would be provoked into obstructing a landowning Troke in the discharge of his duty, – way beyond the boundary, then remaining to watch Flax quickly depart forever away, he vanquished without stroke stricken, (he dying of cold, in 1828, in a misty dell, waiting for the end of night, – which the 1828 Night Poaching Act, — still in effect, — defined as at the beginning of the last hour before sunrise, – and the day, – defined as commencing at the expiration of the first hour after sunset, – to begin); Odette meanwhile, hastening to her adytum to ponder this development, vaguely saw, in the gloom, the Bridgwater office, ten miles away, with maybe panelled walls, desks, prints, lamps, clerks at their scrivenry, and in every room she looked for a man whom the poacher had described as short solid, a shock of blond hair, a limp, but not a bit of him could she see, (for the skill of viewing the past was to come with her successor, when, – for the first time in this world – it could never more be so absolutely true that dead men be dumb all, and no tales can tell).

Great vigilance was maintained during the engagement dinner, as it was for the wedding later in the year, with the short guest-list carefully scruted⁸², as were the extra men hired as footmen, servants, and grooms, – all of whom were given instructions to be ever wareful, for somewhere abroad, Lemuel said, existed an old suitor, darkminded⁸³ by disappointment, set upon punitory⁸⁴ revenge, – but no drama befalling, Frederick wedded his Josephine; the reckoning at the close of 1804 stood

⁸¹ muscle or strength; sinew

⁸² scrutinised

⁸³ of a deep, close, or revengeful mind

⁸⁴ punishing

at 467 years, the male headage⁸⁵ 16, and, if both births and deaths should tarry, 33 years remained until the advent of what the Lemuel Document too simply referred to as the blessed event.

In 1805, Steven, brother to late Joseph, youngest surviving son to Louis & Angela, entered upon an *amour* with a daughter of a man who in title was the first of dignity after the royal family : a Duke,

a man who, recently feeling his years, wishing only to remove the last remaining bounds and hoops from his joys, taking to revels, by suffering a sudden great disturbance to his health, hence coming the same to his affairs, his estate, his brethren, by falling to eat and drink, to go out to whore, to scoff, to revile, to all sort[✓] of gamings, thus, with manifest droopings, showeth he to all how a great high person, – great and high longer than even his life, for he had been exalted to the peerage while still a fetus, – by bankrupting not only his health and strength, but his purse, conscience, and reputation, doth fall into so low estate, for so it is when a man has nothing real to do,

and her name, – (or the name by which she shall here be known, for her line survives still), – was Elizabeth : a bathykolpian⁸⁶ arrhenopiper⁸⁷.

Prosecuting his love with much eagerness, slowly venturing onward toward surely a velocious⁸⁸ exilience⁸⁹, alas, after keeping him long waiting outside her heart, one day permitting him to journey not an inch farther, for she respected the boy : he had raised her upon such a pedestal of his own high thoughts that wings had come to her; true, she had briefly thought to stand there, and with downcast eyes show herself worthy of his love, but she did not, instead, – with the skill of such as followed gold rather than right or virtue, for true love's eyes look not so low as gold, –

⁸⁵ the number of animals

⁸⁶ deep-bosomed

⁸⁷ one who looks lewdly at men

⁸⁸ speedy

⁸⁹ rapture

purposing of her life nothing less than to make an anatomy of far older, far weaker, hearts, she flew away; hazarding out so far upon drowning waters causing the boy to vow never again to allow his youthful heat be conquered by such storm-promising affection,

nay, say rather, better : after joyously floating upon such gilded waters as love seemeth sunlit made, suddenly capsized, night come, unable to swim in such a cesspool as he now considered had something in it which belongs to suicide, Steven nevertheless went through all the foul motions of swimming again to shore,

his heart later following undrowned near four months later, leaving his rooms taking again parts in life, walking the garden, the estate, he was gently taken in hand by a young woman, (destined to become the fifth Vouchsafe), the talented, untrimmed⁹⁰ 19-year-old daughter of a local pothecar⁹¹ and herbalist lately deceased, named, – not the herbalist, – Janet Keefe, whom, whilst trying to walk off the stubborn last of his heart-wounding, he met wandering through a herbose⁹² woods the family had lately acquired.

Coming very abruptly upon the lass simpling⁹³, following introductions and small talk, looking deep into his eyes, she frowning, curtsying, humbly asked the young squire after the cause of his too apparent sorrow, but as Steven spake not a word more, the frappant⁹⁴ wood-nymph saying, *look!*, showed him her basket containing, amongst much else, fresh-gathered carminatives⁹⁵,

yes, valerian of the family *Valerianaceae*, with the botanical name *Valeriana officinalis*, known in varied places as vandal root and setwall, excellent for nervous diseases and hysteria, and fennel called love-in-a-mist and kiss-me-

⁹⁰ virginal

⁹¹ apothecary

⁹² abounding with herbs

⁹³ gathering herbs

⁹⁴ striking

⁹⁵ medicines which relax

twice-before-I-rise, and long ago as fenecel, fenেকেle, fenkelle, and finkel, and heartease or the common wild pansy, known as kiss-me, love-in-idleness, herb-heartease, beedy's-eyes, come-and-kiss-me, call-me-to-you, and kiss-me-at-the-garden-gate, locally Beedy's-eyes, supposed a cure for the pangs of love...

which, if love, – always increasing or decreasing, but never still, – could be satisfactorily understood, or described, or even found, like a god, to be existent, – even that species which pleases more by its ways than by itself, – it might very well succeed at doing,

yes, and wormwort or wormwood, *Artemisia absinthium*, called Dian's bud, ming-wort, mugwort, mogwede, mader-wort, &c, good as an auxiliary in amorous combats, as a cure for love-blindness, for keeping maids virgin, for bringing lovers to dreams...

Carefully selecting a few of these, Janet offered to prepare an infusion to balm what she said was the disheartening she clearly saw in his eyes, walk, and manner, and as Steven expressionless nodded, walking on to a secluded rock-strewn slade⁹⁶, whereout a springlet murmured, (one of many which, futurely, would feed the Troke lake), Janet quickly with her old tinderbox made a smart fire, then in only a muslin pouch cleverly heat[✓] some water whereunto she added her medicines scruzed⁹⁷ between two flat stones; Steven drank off the sour decoction, which for a moment so depraved⁹⁸ his face he feared he may not be able to keep the medicine upon his stomach, but then as told laying back, closing his watchet⁹⁹ eyes, he little by little felt the iron bands disoblige¹⁰⁰ his heart, as well other inward members; gazing down at him Janet smiled, for to her eyes, – which sometimes as now perse¹⁰¹, sometimes

⁹⁶ dingle or dell

⁹⁷ crushed

⁹⁸ presented as crooked

⁹⁹ pale blue

¹⁰⁰ release from an oath or duty

¹⁰¹ greyish-blue colour

violine¹⁰², – he seemed a markedly gainsome¹⁰³ young man, particularly about the hosed hinderlings¹⁰⁴.

Soon so delighted at his new condition as to sit up smiling, he asked that he be permitted to honour whatever bill she might present, but laughingly refusing she said he should rest awhile more for she was going off to bathe as was her practice every single week when she came to the woods to seek out her healful embrocations, for these to her mother were her life and work; as she skipped away after pondering this lass so spiritfule and bright, so slim and strong, so handsmooth, Steven up, and on unsteady legs went by rude stealth to watch the naiad¹⁰⁵ as she swimm'd; feeling him spying, laughing inviting him to join her, for the water she said was fresh, watching him undight¹⁰⁶, lay his hitherto hidden arm,

an 1803 flintlock long sea service pistol,

on the bank within easy reach, noting how all the fashion of his limbs and his body was light, clean done, and beauteous, Steven gracefully enew¹⁰⁷ into water that was not fresh but freezing rather!, but notwithstanding his curglaff¹⁰⁸, all his heartache was gone; soon boy and girl laughing both, splashing, chasing, wrestling, so growing they of a sudden serious, they wondered both how to right the upset of their sudden aphrodisia¹⁰⁹.

As life lotic¹¹⁰ and lentic¹¹¹ recovered from their disturbance, man and woman averted dried themselves on shirt and bodice, then shyly laying their befrose¹¹² young bodies face down under a patch of Sun to warm, soon enough turning to

¹⁰² blue-violet colour

¹⁰³ comely; well-formed

¹⁰⁴ buttocks

¹⁰⁵ freshwater-nymph

¹⁰⁶ undressed

¹⁰⁷ plunged into the water

¹⁰⁸ shock felt when entering cold water

¹⁰⁹ strong sexual passion

¹¹⁰ organisms that prefer moving water

¹¹¹ organisms that prefer still water

¹¹² frozen

each, looking close to their flesh, they observed how each was different, yet complimentary, how together the right man and woman,

considered by some to be one creature in two pieces,

might constitute a wondrous whole; when suddenly Janet lope¹¹³ astraddle Steven, and, pinning his arms to the grass, demanded, *Will we, ye or no, after today ever meet again?*, he staring up at her wonderful elfin face, large eyes, full lips, white teeth, long ringleted hair endiamonded with water droplets, muscled shoulders, curly axilla¹¹⁴, plump pendular breasts, – which as if said, oh let the sight of these strike on thee!, – and with his eyes newly inebriate with such view of her, promised they truly would.

Though they then laughed and weltered¹¹⁵, Janet, a strong lass!, regaining her dominance, continuing to hold fast to his wrists, but oh!, at first slowly, then suddenly assurgent¹¹⁶, until he seemed to her almost spanless¹¹⁷, with a few trepidant wriggles of hungry but innocent assistance, Steven then grasped her elsewhere : cervine¹¹⁸, with what she much later compared, – when she halted to gasp wonderment, sweat, pant, uncouple, and feast her hungrest eyes with so new an image, – to the balanoid¹¹⁹ fruit of that tree always proudest flourishing to the eye, the oak, which in Celtic mythology was believed a sacred gateway between worlds, but differing in colour, for there isabella¹²⁰, here impalmed deeply amaranthine¹²¹, but with the ostium¹²² soon gleaming again, her head fell to what is often believed suppliant of much nutriment in small compass.

113 leapt

114 armpits

115 rolled about

116 rising up

117 not to be spanned; not to be measured

118 deeply

119 acorn-shaped

120 dull brownish-yellow colour

121 of a purple colour

122 mouth

But all this was later, for still astride him and free to play her¹²³ as she would, with songly joy and goodly gree¹²⁴ she convolved¹²⁵ with him much of the early afternoon, for with the curtain upon life drawn aside she was now a very forward, a very coming¹²⁶ lass; she later whispered right into his ear, that he certainly seemed a skilled, compliant charger, for waiting until she was briefly rested, he was ever ready to again be off at a gallop, or a canter, or simply to tirelessly trot, for miles and miles it seemed, at which he marvelled at her with exceeding marvel; when she urged he please gallop with her, and he did so, it was as if two persons were in one substance knit, which is most noteworthy, for all of it, all came of their utter want of experience; with a patumous¹²⁷ resting, – though both were so full of joy, their two stomachs desired none victual other, – came the earned meat and bread and cheese from his wallet, and sweet cake and fruit from her basket, upon which, with cool stream water, making a very tolerable meal, thereafter came words more, laughter, and the vow to never be unloven¹²⁸; when the Sun began slowly to decline, their passions did not, for they were soon remontant¹²⁹, he nuciferous¹³⁰ she nucivorous¹³¹, till came another eruption¹³² and irruption¹³³, another rejoicing corrivation¹³⁴.

With the dappled Sun declining yet more, rather to herself than to Steven, Janet saying, *Stop!, I must to work*, for she had promised to bring her mother very certain herbs, thereupon jumping up, without a covershame¹³⁵, took up her basket; the herbs were there, but she found not lunary, called moon-wort, because,

despite some things in Nature be common in great mass, others rare in small

¹²³ enjoy herself

¹²⁴ superiority

¹²⁵ writhed about, intertwining one part with another

¹²⁶ yielding; willing

¹²⁷ spread-out

¹²⁸ unloving

¹²⁹ blossoming for the second time in a season

¹³⁰ nut-bearing

¹³¹ nut-eating

¹³² bursting out

¹³³ bursting in

¹³⁴ the flowing together of different streams into one

¹³⁵ a cloth to cover nakedness

quantity,

firstly she was too preoccupied by the swiftness, the intensity of events, and secondarily, she eyed more his svelte limbs, his spheropygia¹³⁶, so biconcave¹³⁷!, than her knowing hands; nor found he even a little shaugh¹³⁸ of ragwort,

called by many names such as seggrums, dog-standard, gandergoose, ragweed, cankerweed, and fly-did,

because : when he at last tore his eyes from so beautiful a young woman, – and surely so fair a shape could have come from out no foul forge, – because speculation did not cease with sight : she stood still tall in his proud thoughts; too much taken by his hurdies¹³⁹, so deliciously biconcave¹⁴⁰, neither gathered she yellow ragwort, called marefart, for when she glimpsed his swinging rubigo¹⁴¹ so challengingly cucullate¹⁴², so innocently bloodied, she grew so greedily enamoured of such goldenly¹⁴³ swaying foreparts she could scarcely endure him turn his back.

Resuming her stooping search allowed Steven to look up from his inability even to find common speedwell¹⁴⁴, to observe his euclunious¹⁴⁵ love, so biconvex¹⁴⁶!, goodness!, so stylic¹⁴⁷!, he with a roar lopen¹⁴⁸ upon her, and she with delight squealing, they umbfolded¹⁴⁹ to the grass, arriving interlaqueate¹⁵⁰, and thus, – because they did both now realise there is no sweet content in the possession of any

¹³⁶ full and rounded buttocks

¹³⁷ hollowed on both sides

¹³⁸ thicket

¹³⁹ buttocks

¹⁴⁰ hollow on both sides

¹⁴¹ penis

¹⁴² hooded

¹⁴³ delightfully, splendidly

¹⁴⁴ *Veronica Officinalis*, once used as a substitute for tea, a tonic, and a diuretic

¹⁴⁵ with pretty buttocks

¹⁴⁶ rounded on both sides

¹⁴⁷ causing erection

¹⁴⁸ leapt

¹⁴⁹ embraced

¹⁵⁰ entangled

good thing without a companion, – they again interenjoyed¹⁵¹ till again implete¹⁵²;
with the Sun spearing obliquely through the trees Janet eventually found belbonach,

known as honesty, also pilewort, known then as golden guineas, but now just
plain ficary, *Ranunculus ficaria*;

but besides finding, mistakenly picking, a large bunch of lithe-worts¹⁵³, – which, if
inalimental, is to man neither of benefit nor of harm, – with his heart returning with
elastic recoil, certainly Steven found love,

believed to extinguish indolence, revive the perishing, illuminate the wise,
instruct the ignorant, lead back the wanderer, soothe the angry, humble the
proud, console the oppressed, and help forward the destitute;

with her basket almost full, returning to their clothes, after a further time dressing,
walking slowly to the edge of the wood, they there parted, but with the very greatest
reluctance, for a hug more was necessary, or a kiss more, or a giggling palp of
rufous¹⁵⁴, surbeat¹⁵⁵, still unsurfeited flesh, but at last with a final distant wave to his
fair[✓], – suddenly afraid that concernment for his absence, rapely¹⁵⁶ expressed in
action, would deliver him to relieved, but angry, searchers, – Steven hastened
ovant¹⁵⁷ back to the manor.

Yes, of course they met again : that very evening, – at last completely believing he
was not philtre-charmed, – Steven sent a servant with a simply worded invitation to
Janet to come meet his family, and despite her poverty, her unrefined rusticity, – for
during her early minority she was put only to learn at such schools, of such
mistresses, as the rudeness of the place and country afforded, – truly Trokes were

¹⁵¹ mutually enjoyed

¹⁵² replenished, filled

¹⁵³ forget-me-nots

¹⁵⁴ red

¹⁵⁵ bruised by travel

¹⁵⁶ readily

¹⁵⁷ exultant

so greatly taken by the honest foursquare¹⁵⁸ venerilla¹⁵⁹, that in early 1805 came their marriage; in June to Frederick and his wife Josephine Tey came a first child, a son Daniel, the first male for 11 years, followed the next year by a daughter Diana, then in December to Steven & Janet came a daughter Christine; in March 1806 Mark at 27 married a somewhat deceptively simple girl of 19 years, of name : Leonora, who, as will be seen, almost too soon began to feel much discouraged by her childless condition.

With the title *Patriarch*, – come of the simple chance of his most years, – given, – unless too untrum¹⁶⁰, or addle, – to the eldest male, this allowed of him of superiority only so much,

neither more nor less that may be liked of than it hath pleased the family in their own hearts to set down,

but not as maketh one man amongst them the principal actor in those decisions whereunto,

with none acknowledged the overmost¹⁶¹, but with none either casting off his part in the burden laid upon him,

a majority must concur; (when in 1840 the *Inner Council* was formed, whereof the Patriarch always assumed chairmanship,

a man not necessarily of greatest person of all them that could be considered at that time fittest to oversee matters of state, nor of most reaching mind, nor neither the eloquentest, but simply the eldest,

its duty was not only to monitor family affairs,

¹⁵⁸ forthright

¹⁵⁹ little Venus

¹⁶⁰ infirm

¹⁶¹ highest in authority

with the clear understanding that whatever may be amiss in the conduct of such, the Inner Council was not chargeable until their solutions had failed,

maintain peaceableness, and encourage industriousness, – which nobility of birth commonly abateth, – but to answer questions, solve problems, and dispel umbrages,

both those which rise to a rank of dignity sufficient to occupate¹⁶² familywide concerns, and those even of a single individual,

heal petty differences by estimating injuries, weigh accusations, and where necessary, without doing harm other, punish the guilty, or not, which falls out pat as the Inner Council would have it, for this was their prerogative, which,

as something that can be told what it is, not something that has no name,

is a right reserved exclusively by a particular person or group, especially a right hereditary or official; whilst the rules of the house, – flexible and few enough to mollify even exceptional idiosyncrasies, – gave a special eye to the good of the whole family, to the way they come and go, they were never, – even by a people who committed all to paper, – so committed, – as if it were as idle to imagine the confusion that would result from their presence, as from their non-observance, – but abode unwritten even for those who did not play fair play; whereof, – the parties who, the occasion whereon, the end whereto, – the Inner Council meets, with other like matters, – for a good historian does not make for the end of the journey so blindly as to neglect anything useful or necessary that may turn up by the way, – these will be inserted as occasions offer).

In 1805, in company with Lemuel the Patriarch, at 71 in very good state, and the *Matriarch*, – always,

¹⁶² occupy

though the Vouchsafe was always a greater mother,

unless too infirm, the eldest female of the family, – Caroline, daughter of the late Thomas & Jane, a woman very spry of 73, Vouchsafe Odette went often to peer smiling down into the cratch¹⁶³ of young Daniel son of Frederick & Josephine, (the first of 14 great-grandsons born to Lemuel and his wife, eleven of which he, all but one of which she, would live to smile upon and daily observe the opening of their newest minds, and the slow but inexorable spreading of their functions), for regarding this child Daniel, well, Odette felt a foreboding, for seeing his future shades less brightly than others of her family, she consequently, – yet the babe gurgled, reached, smiled, seemed furthest from morbidity, – discerned that he would make but a short excursion into manhood, (which proved alas true).

In May 1806 youngest son of Marcel 20-year-old Alexander married Imelda, who at 20 was the eldest daughter of the proprietor of a large prosperous finding-store¹⁶⁴ in Bath, and the following year youngest son of Louis 18-year-old Richard married her cousin Frances 23, these two young men meeting these two attractive young ladies when, the year before, – without prior appointment, but coming a good piece¹⁶⁵ to see, – they were permitted to visit the chapel at Troke Manor to view the fine coloured windows, including a small stained-glass reputedly, (but not actually), by Bernard Dininckhoff; if sufficiently delighted by what they saw, yet seen later to much frown, Alexander and Richard, – hovering about in hope of such smiling observance as they might chance passingly to arrest, – heard the young ladies quietly remark upon the glaring absence in the chapel of even a single religious artefact, even a hassock¹⁶⁶; to spare their pious feelings it was not explained that the very large, starkly plain, frankly quite ghastrucifix of German mahogany, taken down in 1770 when the Trokes purchased the manor, was all used up in creating items of far more functional nature, such as, – no insult intended against that which is already insulting to intelligence, – six toilet seats, (which so hardy, endureth unworn to this day).

¹⁶³ cradle

¹⁶⁴ store or shop where tools, &c, used by shoemakers are sold

¹⁶⁵ a long distance

¹⁶⁶ kneeling cushion

As so little worthy of real note occurred at Troke Manor between the mid-18-oughts and the mid-18-teens, or about 1806 to 1815, other than marriages and births, – great events in themselves perhaps, particularly for the parents, for the quest, but for a reader : only of dailiness, – the following of events is a handlist¹⁶⁷ : in 1806 it was first proposed that with their numbers so growing, a family doctor, – or a doctor who was also a member of the family, – would be an excellent idea, (but this was not acted upon until 1810, resulting, in 1818, in doctor George sole son of Jean & Louise returning from London at age 27 to uphold this valuable post for 53 years, then in 1871 doctor Ian replacing him, who in turn was succeeded by doctor Angus in 1900); in March 1807 a son, Hugh, came to Alexander & Imelda, and in December 1808 came Theodore to Steven & Janet, as well a child, a daughter, at last to Mark & Leonora, whom they named Mary; to Frederick & Josephine in that same year came a second daughter, Emma; in 1809 Tristan son of Claude & Giselle,

believing that, for a bachelor, the dangerousest time of all, the most slippery to stay well in, was from seventeen to seven-and-twenty,

at age 28 met and quickly married Caroline who was four-and-twenty, to whom a daughter Elizabeth came early the following year, then, for five years her womb resting, came another daughter Jane, who alas died of winter fever¹⁶⁸ at age three.

In November 1809, with Barry born to Alexander & Imelda, – making Lemuel at 75, beginning in his health to fail, five times a great-grandfather, – in January 1810 Mark & Leonora produced their second child, Edith, who alas died seemingly without cause the following year, in February Frederick & Josephine produced a third daughter whom they named Catrin, and in March,

when the earliest violet : the single blue, the daffodil, and the daisy bloomed, and the almond-tree, the peach-tree burst into blossom, and the sweet-briar,

¹⁶⁷ list without detail

¹⁶⁸ pneumonia

Steven & Janet produced their second son Herbert; in early November of 1811,

with service, known also as shad, with small, edible, applelike berries, with medlars, – which an overeater will extremely irk, and loath, – bullaces, and hollyhocks making a show, and with late roses showing their last,

Rudolph was born to Frederick & Josephine, and a daughter, Theophania, came to Alexander & Imelda; in November 1812 Martin was born to Steven & Janet, and upon the following month another daughter, a last child, Celia, was born to Alexander & Imelda; in that same year, after five years of tireless marriage Richard was at last fruitful, of a daughter Marianne, *octimestris partus*¹⁶⁹, – which infortunateth any birth, – but at the cost of Frances his poor wife at only 23, whom it was believed, rightly, could have been saved from death if the village doctor had only been less surfeit-swelled¹⁷⁰, more precipient¹⁷¹ with his instruments; as Imelda by this time was nursing her own child, her uberous¹⁷² breast willingly provided for the poor motherless babe; in January 1813 Frank was born to Mark & Leonora, in March the wife of Claude Giselle, at 57, died of her seventeen pound liver; in November 1814 came Erwin, last child to Frederick & Josephine, and in December Branwen was born to Mark & Leonora; aye, a manyness of marriages, births, of names, a cumbersome list, but the Troke quest was manned now by 26 males, totalling 669 years, bringing forth the blessed event to 13 years distance.

1815

In this year, with the population of England 15 millions,

over one million of which thought it more felicitous to live in London where

¹⁶⁹ born at eight months

¹⁷⁰ swelled with excessive eating and drinking

¹⁷¹ commanding

¹⁷² abundant in milk

repletion and the liberty to die by disease, by starvation, laid them down together,

when a lovely daughter named Charmain came to Steven & Janet, thus it was that nine years had produced six marriages, with nine males born, and within a further seven years nine more babes would come; certainly this is many names to further bemuse, – which means, of course, not to mildly amuse, but to bewilder, confuse, – but be assured : only a few of these will signalise¹⁷³; meanwhile informant¹⁷⁴ Michael Overslaugh, ever more bear-like at 52, despite a man much given to philomythy¹⁷⁵, was also, as stated, inordinately fond of his sleeps, for with conversation at pleasant hiatus, he characteristically pandiculated¹⁷⁶, settled down amongst his chins, and after a chasmin¹⁷⁷ of final warning, briefly dormitated¹⁷⁸; he more than once explained :

— For myself, a small sleep is entaticous¹⁷⁹, and though discourse, provided of course it be not godful and therefore a tediatio¹⁸⁰, is, as any of my students can testify, a very powerful somnifuge¹⁸¹, for unlike words sleep is delenifical¹⁸², nay!, by acknowledging that a somnifery¹⁸³ is properly my bedchamber, it is simply the case that when one is aphebic¹⁸⁴, a brief subarboreal¹⁸⁵ doze is a rejuvenant without equal.

His somnivolence¹⁸⁶ whilst every day indulged, was only briefly, for after his nap this

¹⁷³ become noteworthy

¹⁷⁴ head-teacher

¹⁷⁵ love of talk

¹⁷⁶ stretching and yawning before or after sleep

¹⁷⁷ yawn

¹⁷⁸ fell asleep

¹⁷⁹ stimulating, invigorating

¹⁸⁰ wearying by overlong discourse

¹⁸¹ something that drives away sleep

¹⁸² soothing, pacifying

¹⁸³ a place to sleep

¹⁸⁴ past youth

¹⁸⁵ under a forest of trees

¹⁸⁶ eager desire for sleep

man who cried knowledge¹⁸⁷, much-standing, newly questioning¹⁸⁸, was eager to go nutting¹⁸⁹, or to search for wild bullace¹⁹⁰ for a jam whereof he was greatly fond, or, if his time was full his own, eager to retire to his quarters to continue his own very personal quest for, – if not individuality, believing he already possessed this simple quality, then, – quiddity¹⁹¹, from which he felt he was still very afar; in this year of 1815, to prove himself even further not only justified but celebrative for forfeiting one god for another, Overslaugh commenced seriously to pursue his inquiry into the necromancy of words by commencing to write a work on what it pleased him to call their more magical properties, which he believed some several could be said to possess, provided of course he could satisfy certain criteria, first : decipher their inenodable¹⁹² nature, second : place them in a magic mouth, if there was one ever, and third : dispatch them to magic ears, if any existed.

Convinced that he was becoming daily less parviscient¹⁹³ in his silent search amongst words for what was at least verisimilar¹⁹⁴, his verbosity little by little beginning to sound, at least to himself, too much like logodiarrhoea¹⁹⁵, as a result : the spontaneity of his former times, which seemed lately to his own ears as *lepide lexeis compostae ut tesserulae omnes*¹⁹⁶, somewhat reduced; as time passed, – save when tutoring keeping more and more to himself, to his two small rooms, – which for their very starkness resembled a tugury¹⁹⁷, – ever at his long solitary struggle for enucleation¹⁹⁸, occasionally overheard in his monologues, he was thought, (quite wrongly), to be idioglottic¹⁹⁹, or perhaps in the very process of inventing a language of his own; despite these and other small really trivial changes

¹⁸⁷ teacher

¹⁸⁸ full of questions, inquisitive

¹⁸⁹ to look for and gather nuts

¹⁹⁰ hard, round, dark purple plum

¹⁹¹ whatness, the essence, the essential quality of something

¹⁹² that cannot be disentangled, inexplicable

¹⁹³ little knowing

¹⁹⁴ the appearance of truth, apparent probability, likelihood

¹⁹⁵ an uncontrolled flow of words

¹⁹⁶ elegant expressions put together like a mosaic

¹⁹⁷ cell of a hermit

¹⁹⁸ clarification, explanation

¹⁹⁹ using words invented by the self

to his character he was still the tutor of old, smiling much, eating well, boiling with sportfulness, and producing fine scholars, for as was said : pupils came out of his hands finished orators, fitted to speak in the highest presence, to the greatest assemblies, even in Parliament, Courts of Justice, but of course not a one of these afterward was so fool as spake in any such places.

In this same year of 1815 widower of three years Richard marrying again, one Jennifer Goodnestone, in the course of years she bore him five children : Adelina, Leandra, and Sabrina, then at last two sons, Albert in November 1820 (destined to sonlessness), and in April 1822, (born weighing as much as his brain at his murder at age 78 in 1900, which is to say : four pounds), Henry,

(who, if destined similarly to be sonless, became a father of remarkable inventions, many smaller than either art or Nature can produce any[✓], – for such small things, slight and common, coming from the consideration, then the hands of wise industrious men, sometimes grow to be of a force incredible, – others, – making here note that these words, seeming smooth and plain easy, reach in their meaning far farther than is lightly imagined, – greater than all the world can comprehend);

with the house so filling with families, it was almost incedingly²⁰⁰ that Lemuel, witnessing the Troke empire grow about him, with Odette and Virginie flanking him, toured the nurseries and classrooms, spoke with nurses, governesses, tutors, with fathers and mothers, and then on that sunnish bright day in the early of October, in looking casually out of the window, all three silently in the wind-romaged²⁰¹ garden littered with twigs and leaves, seeing the ever-vigilant Jamie their protector listening solemnly to a tradesman, one Willem Benhacock, who, for a few silverlings²⁰² out of an unrecompensed pocket, was imparting the latest intelligence from the parish, tears coming to the lately blinkard²⁰³ eyes of 81-year-old Lemuel, his women

²⁰⁰ with majesty

²⁰¹ stirred

²⁰² small silver coins

²⁰³ one with bad eyes, or an habitual blinker

thereupon squeezed tightly his arms in theirs, for the Manor and all his family, modesty aside, had stemmed from his very own loins and mind.

1816

In July to Tristan & Caroline coming a son, Paul (destined to be first a wastrel, then, after his disheiring²⁰⁴, fatal victim of the Inimicus), in that same month Jean son of Lemuel & Virginie died of intemperate imbibition at age 57; in 1817 blind Louis, son also of Lemuel and Odette, died at 60 as a slow result of internal injuries caused by a silly fall down a steep staircase used by servants, and in September a second son Jeremy was born to Tristan & Caroline, and then in 1818, in October, Lemuel himself, at almost exactly 84, died very much mourned; it was of course an event of particularly sad sort for newly doctor of medicine George Troke, who arriving home out of time for the solemn funeral of his dear grandfather, was in time at least for the far less dignified *silicernium*²⁰⁵; with now 24 male family members, with every mortal year that passed a stride of 24 years was taken toward the Troke goal, which, – if none more were born, if all lived and continued so to do for 19 more years, – a thousand years!

In 1819, the year a last son Hugo was born in June to Mark & Leonora, came the retirement of Jamie, who, near 70, yet still vigorous, wanted to return to his old Scotland, spend a few good years with his books, and enjoy such profound reveries, such subtle speculations, as were the fruits of all his lifetime; at the dinner held in gratitude of his 20 years of loyal service, the Troke family, having it in them to give, presented the man with both a very generous stipend, and the freedom both to remain and return; in long anticipation of this departure, as well imparting much protective wisdom unto the family, as historian Samuel, 25-year-old grandson of Virginie, described in his journal, but in such finick²⁰⁶ detail, one quails at his summation,

²⁰⁴ disinheritance

²⁰⁵ funeral feast

²⁰⁶ finicking

If time, at her own stately pace, granteth me to write something further about these matters, I will do so, in the hope...

Jamie ensured that at his departure there would be at least one carefully trained member of the family to act as protector; (by making Samuel the first official defender of weal²⁰⁷ and safety, – a position he held with no small pride until 1864 when he handed over his post to Christopher, – *Guardian* became one of a number of offices established to endure²⁰⁸ in an almost unbroken line into the present century, as Trokes, via treachery and mishap, gained slowly but inexorably upon their quest).

When in May at age 83 widow Odette began quickly to succumb to her mortality, the family one by one formally visited her to bid their goodbyes, receive her last blessing, and receive each a piece of vague, sometimes silly, sometimes prescientific advice which upon the nearing approach of her end came upon a Vouchsafe to prove of benefit, possibly of great, in afterdays, (but for reasons assumed not the province of any determining : a skill wholly to vanish in the last sisters four); she spoke first to all the women of the family, – the particulars whereof, of small concern to this chronicle, or rather of none, will be galloped post over, – then to every man and boy : to Marcel at 63 Odette suggested he heed his taste for tobacco, (he obeyed, to the great benefit of his health), to Claude at 62 : he must cease reading in poor light, else he loose the main of his sight like Louis, (but not so minded, so suffered he luscition²⁰⁹), to deserted husband Harold at 60 : look less to the French *soubrette*²¹⁰ Désirée, for she was a coquette,

or a woman who rouses passions she has no intention of gratifying, one of those who interpose their power over men in matters wherein they cannot influence him, but to his loss and disparagement,

²⁰⁷ wellbeing

²⁰⁸ endure

²⁰⁹ dimness of sight

²¹⁰ pert, intriguing maid

else he be thought a Betty²¹¹, (because he looked less, but imagined the more a depudication²¹², such luxury²¹³ brought him enrapt²¹⁴ dreams far better than any reality), to Mark at 41 : he must look to his blood, its circulation, his skin, particularly of the lower legs, which would one day desquamate²¹⁵, and to see habile²¹⁶ Janet for advice, (doing so he was thus saved from a far greater disorder).

To Tristan at 39 Odette advised he beware a merchant with whom he was considering entering into a small business venture, for despite his pleasant nature he was not only a limmer²¹⁷ but a gestour²¹⁸, (Tristan keeping closed his purse, the merchant performed his skeldring²¹⁹ upon another), to Frederick at 37 she warned he take care of his heart, which if it be not the better looked to would smite him, for it murmured ill after a cold swim, (but his vigilance lapsing, he suffered a mild attack on the dene²²⁰, but thanks to this waterscape²²¹ henceforth heeded well), to Alexander at 35 : be advertent²²² of the strong but unexpressed need in his frick²²³ horse to balotade²²⁴ else he be made lame, (but alas not bewaring enough, one day, – the 16 muscles in each of its ears laying them full back, – Boxer all-to²²⁵ kicking, Alexander walked with a stick to the end of his days), to Steven at 34 : to contact,

a pair of words by Johnson called a lubricious barbarism,

²¹¹ contemptfully of a man who interferes with duties of female servants, or occupies himself in female pursuits

²¹² ravishing of a maid

²¹³ lasciviousness

²¹⁴ enraptured, delighted to ecstasy

²¹⁵ come off in scales

²¹⁶ skilful

²¹⁷ blackguard

²¹⁸ tale-teller

²¹⁹ acquiring money under false pretences

²²⁰ a bare sandy tract by the sea

²²¹ escape from drowning

²²² heedful

²²³ mettlesome; of proud and unbroken spirit

²²⁴ attempt by horse to kick

²²⁵ soundly

a certain bookseller in Torquay who possessed two certain books for which he so ached, (he immediately writing, the books were acquired), to Richard at 31 : be more veriloquent²²⁶ with his children else they be estranged, (he speaking openly with his children, they newly loved him).

To doctor George at 29 Odette bewared his drinking, from which only pot-valour²²⁷ would come, else he end like his father Jean, (he remained in remembrance of her words all his days, but on rare occasion was quietly, pleasantly drunken), to Samuel at 26 : never offer aid to a woman in a mourning-coach²²⁸ stranded on the way to a village cemetery, (he one day meeting a walking carriageman who explained the broken fellow²²⁹, riding on for help, thus never met he this dangerous woman), to Daniel at 15 Odette urged he live heartily, even with daring, for as she said, and quite rightly, his was the only life of its kind, and full evancalous²³⁰, by however thin arms, (the boy acted upon her advice, but, – because he could never, not in all his life, sift out the useful from the prejudicial, the virtuous from the vicious, the honest from the dishonest, nor the worthy of esteem from the deserving of censure, – not wholeheartedly enough), to Hugh at 13 : never climb to the roof with his brother Frank, no matter what he says about the erotic antefixa²³¹, (sorely tempted, Hugo never climbed, never fell, dying at 70 instead of 14 barely), to Theodore at 12 : beware one day coming upon a dog named Jeff of perhaps Biff, – so deep-damaged by a puzzle-peg²³² as to wag its tail only on its left side, – with one tulip-ear²³³, and never even pretend to take its bone, (this forgotten, the dog with its sharp holders²³⁴ savaged an arm, which as a consequence, until he took up weaving, was rendered weak and limited).

²²⁶ truth-speaking

²²⁷ courage from drink

²²⁸ black carriage drawn by black horses, used at funerals

²²⁹ the outer part of a wheel supported by spokes

²³⁰ pleasant to embrace

²³¹ small decorative fixtures at the eaves of roofs to conceal the ends of tiles

²³² piece of wood fastened to the lower jaw of a dog to keep its head off the ground

²³³ upright ear

²³⁴ fangs

Odette bewared Barry at 11 of one day an agemate²³⁵ from the village named Rick or Dick who, – though his parents bestowed a small matter, very small, of education upon him, as reading, writing, casting of accounts, but not of sense, for no end of ingenuities in the idiot head of him, – with a stolen sun-glass²³⁶ he would show a Troke the beautiful fury of fire, (this advice was only recalled when the fool boy pulled the glass from his pocket, whereupon Barry, simply turning around, walked wordless away, and the boy, later caught at red-hand dancing around a burning hay-rick, – shouting, — more or less, — that when he was a king, he would live like a lord, have peas and bacon every day, and a whip that cried slash!, – as a fire-flinger²³⁷ was transported), to Herbert at ten Odette advised he more acrobate²³⁸ through his life, for did he never realise that sharp things sought him out, that falling wanted him for its very own?, (truly he was respectful of such advice, but Herbert was then of such endless energy, as many more bones, much more skin were to bear witness), to Rudolph at nine his great-grandmother Odette warned he beware one day soon the coming of a large charlotte²³⁹ to the dinner-table, to say no when his tummy demanded a fourth slice, else he sicken beyond all reason, (come this fated day, suddenly remembering, he paled, and at the third slice managed to halt his piggery).

Odette assured Martin aged eight similarly : that as food was really only fuel for his life-engine, a too plentiful charging would turn him so ventripotent²⁴⁰ as to resemble *The Pig*, the name privately child-given to their tutor Mr. Stanhope, not because he was an eatall²⁴¹ never aquott²⁴²,

for he loved eating, lived greatly by eating, was utterly without faculty of willing, except as food willed, (and, still digging his grave with his teeth, this *homo*

²³⁵ person of the same age

²³⁶ burning-glass

²³⁷ incendiary

²³⁸ walk on tiptoe

²³⁹ pudding of stewed apples covered with bread crumbs and baked

²⁴⁰ big-bellied

²⁴¹ glutton

²⁴² weary of eating

culinarius would die of a stroke of apoplexy, while at dinner, while eating), – nor for being so very a fat one, – an official cataract of saponifiable²⁴³ tallow he was, a man of proportions so vast as the bodily eye was barely fitted to receive : from chin to codpiece nothing but belly,

but for his almost vertical columella²⁴⁴, (Martin never forgot her words, but he was still on occasion unhappily adepagous²⁴⁵), to Frank aged seven : beware an excellent old flintlock which at 20 he would gift to the son of a local jobmaster²⁴⁶, for whereas it was accurate and balanced, it would often wilfully discharge even at rest, (this advice carefully noted, the gun was first repaired).

To Erwin at six Odette explained very carefully that he must one day tell Doctor George his knee was not properly cleaned after a fall else he fester with such dire results he might even lose his leg, (naturally enough this advice was lost on the manling²⁴⁷, for he was too young to stop these words, after bouncing off him, falling to the ground, but it was lost too on his neglectful mother Josephine despite her similar telling, and worst of all, almost unpardonably, upon Doctor George too were these words lost, so at 15 Erwin lost his leg); to Paul at four Odette advised he listen to his preceptress²⁴⁸ about the dangers of befriending lame animals, particularly stoats, *Mustela erminea*, for they can bite and bring fever, (Paul remembered, even as he hugged the foundling animal), to Jeremy at three Odette urged, and rather strongly, that he linger less in the kitchen, particularly if it be a snowy Monday, for Mrs Royce the cook would one day turn on him her floury hands, (remembering this advice, but alas as an after-cast²⁴⁹, he received such a wherret²⁵⁰ that he never forgot all days of his life thereafter), to baby Hugo still in his first year of life, sensing nothing untoward, Odette simply cooed.

²⁴³ able to be converted into soap

²⁴⁴ fleshy part of nose that separates nostrils

²⁴⁵ gluttonous

²⁴⁶ one who lets out horses and carriages for hire

²⁴⁷ little man

²⁴⁸ governess

²⁴⁹ something done too late

²⁵⁰ box on the ear

Just before her quiet peaceful departure five days following these considerative leave-takings, Vouchsafe Odette, coming very brightly to herself, wondered newly at her skills, wherefrom they came, and though of course, (like her every successor), she could make no answer, she knew in her comfortable old heart that they would not be lost but simply inherited by the sister next; late the following afternoon, with the Sun brilliant warm upon her bedspread, at her own request sola²⁵¹ in her room, suddenly keenly aware that the month was May, the year 1820, the reckoning of their 26 males 584 years, and the family a mere 16 years from the blessed event, thus assured the future a most promising place, with a smile of great contentment, with all the pride which thereto attaches, Odette closing her eyes quietly died;

it was 10:40 on the twenty-third of May 1820, and Odette Troke, born Fuche, lived 83 years, five months, nine days, reigning as the fourth Vouchsafe for 52 years, two months, one day.

How painful soever it may be to learn : after collecting sufficient quantity of particulars, in sufficient certainty and subtlety, of all several kinds, together with those advantages and discretions in the entry and sorting which are requisite, this is the sum : save for the ten generation life-cycle of the Vouchsafe matriheritage²⁵², there is not a jot of evidence to be found in the complete history of man that there exists either a soul,

meaning to many the higher, subtle, intuitive, or archetypal mind, – archetype taken here to mean : the tradition of subjectively known forms, also, and rather mysteriously : the eternal ones, six examples of which : the hero, the orphan, the wanderer, the warrior, the martyr, and the magician, – and mind meaning to many : the immaterial part of a person, the actuating cause of an individual life,

or a spirit,

²⁵¹ alone

²⁵² inheritance along the female line

meaning perhaps the transcendental summit of human being,

let alone that it postexists²⁵³ to journey either freely away, or into another, and considering what Trismegistus is said to have said on the matter,

But all things are full of Soul, and all things are properly moved by it; some things about the Heaven, and some things about the Earth; and neither of those on the right hand to the left; nor those on the left hand to the right; nor those things that are above, downward; nor those things that are below, upwards.

it is all very unlikely.

As that which is doubly and trebly said should not be singly regarded, this point is ever to be most stood upon : as mysticism presents the intensity of immediate knowledge with conviction, – but by failing to address any reality outside, deals only with subjective impressions, – so is the spirit, – as much as freedom : an illusion based on ignorance, – merely a concept existing in the human mind : an agent of curious power, boundless resource, but trembling with sensibilities, tender, and irritable; this fact, – how ill this agreeth with that which is everywhere felt, believed, written, taught, none can be ignorant, – needs to be borne in mind when, for the convenience of awarding this odd inexistent aspect of humanity a name, the word soul is used.

Now : upon the very moment this soul of Odette departed for the sky, – or rather : her essence dissipated unto nothing, – whilst kneeling on a sack in the conservatory, Janet pitched over face foremost into a seminary²⁵⁴ of newly turned, newly watered loamy soil, – a rich-smelling chessom²⁵⁵, – a wonder she did not suffocate or drown; after minutes coming moanful back to herself, – or at least to that part more animal than human, which save for sometimes in coitus is never otherwise brought from its

²⁵³ lives subsequently

²⁵⁴ seed-garden

²⁵⁵ loose, friable soil, free from stones or grit

fetid dungeon into the blessed light of modern existence, – staggering herself up as would a drunken clodpoll or clodpate²⁵⁶, with her face and front all blackened but for her white staring eyes and gaping pink mouth, commencing very intently to doytin²⁵⁷, she slowly gathered around her a concerned vociferous crowd of whom she was totally unaware.

Her almost determined journey took in a large part of the ground-floor and the rear garden, until passing through the kitchen, – where Virginie at that moment was teaching young Leonora, wife of Mark, how to make a botargo²⁵⁸, – without a too great show of surprise, – though of course her heart went out to her dear friend Odette whom she knew was now dead, – Virginie saying,

— Behold, the new Vouchsafe!,

after a stunned pause, a very relieved cheer went up; for all of the remaining morning, all of the afternoon, part of the evening, with her golliwogg²⁵⁹ face and organ-stop eyes, Janet continued to strake²⁶⁰ the grounds, but followed now on their insistence only by her husband Steven and doctor George, for, clearly, Janet still standeth not in free choice to do what herself best liketh in this case at this day; for 11 hours did she wander, until, come twilighting, deep in the maze through which the two men had followed her random wandering for all of two hours, Janet suddenly halting, with a deep sigh bursting into tears, voicing loud wonder and fear, she was tiredly led, – not without difficulty as may well be imagined, for no real notice was taken of their inward route, – back to the house, and there the fifth Vouchsafe, taking of the advice to wash her, make her clean, quickly bathing herself, the while drinking lashings of tea, changing into a simple dress, and reappearing, received from her family their hearty congratulations.

²⁵⁶ thick skull, a dolt

²⁵⁷ walk stupidly about

²⁵⁸ relish made from roe of mullet or tunny

²⁵⁹ grotesque black doll

²⁶⁰ wander about

Her mind awhirl with whisperous half-visions, fifth Vouchsafe Janet Keefe, gifted wife of Steven, mother of five : Christine, Theodore, Herbert, Martin, and Charmain, going aclumsid²⁶¹ to an early bed, there fell into a sleep where fortunately no dreams awaited; ten hours later, as if from winter-sleep²⁶² into a sunny morning, awaking with a great sense of things, both of their rightness and otherwise, she unbedded with a yoll²⁶³, – which caused her sleeping husband to leap up as if scalded, and her maid in the next room to take an hysteric turn, – then jumping back onto the bed attempted, but of course utterly failed, to explain to her concerned husband Steven, – hitherto, so far as Vouchsafedom and the quest were concerned, a man given to amused yet respectful suspiciency, – what was the wondrous thing that had happened to her; soon becoming somewhat frustrate, Janet, now astride him, tapped the topmost of two books on his *Louis Treize*²⁶⁴ pier-table²⁶⁵ at bedside, received yestreen²⁶⁶ from a Torquay bookseller,

scarcely rarissima²⁶⁷, but surprising absent from Troke library : the 1786 *Epea Pteroenta; or, Diversions of Purley* in two volumes by John Horne Tooke, – being conjectures, considered upon the foot of philosophy, on the origins of words, – and the 1501 Aldine edition²⁶⁸ of *Virgil*, for which Aldo Manuzio, or Manuccio, the elder, commissioned Francesco Griffo to design the italic script,

which, if Steven had so far only glanced through them, had already brought him promise of much joy, as so very few books can.

Reminding him that Odette had told him where to find them, Steven nodding, Janet went on, well, she could probably perform similar feats of foresaying²⁶⁹, for instance, closing her eyes, yes, she somehow knowed[✓] it would storm on the

²⁶¹ benumbed

²⁶² hibernation

²⁶³ yell

²⁶⁴ style associated with the reign of Louis XIII (1610-43)

²⁶⁵ table between windows

²⁶⁶ yesterday evening

²⁶⁷ extremely rare books

²⁶⁸ printed by Aldus Manutius of Venice between 1490 and 1597

²⁶⁹ divination

overmorrow²⁷⁰ despite want of all evidence in air or heavens, and just as the sky suddenly loured, Herbert their beloved son would, – here she squinted up her elfin face, – suffer a fall, no, nothing serious!, in the afternoon this would be, yes, just after tea! : a very rare example of Vouchsafe prescience; Steven here looking newly close at his wife, if such was his love that so profound an intelligence brought with it the wisdom to at least half disbelieve, it brought also the fear that he might become soon wise enough to cease to only half believe in the quest; Janet continued by saying she saw a sort of giant bookhouse²⁷¹ in her head, – note this metaphor, for it shall be returned to, – with one large door, no windows, and as soon as she had learned to reach for the *biblia abiblia*²⁷² and open them, then she might come to know everything!; (if this was a somewhat ambitious hope, – for even the final Vouchsafe would not possess the power to know *everything*, – her point can be taken); but there she left the matter for their hands were now so much upon each other they were both, their bodies, almost crimson-warm²⁷³.

With the skies as predicted suddenly vivid with labouring clouds in blusterous pre-storm gloom, so it came to pass, – far more than half-fearfully, far less than half-amusedly, – that Steven watched unseen as his son fell very heavily from an ancient crowde²⁷⁴ he pretended was a carriage; when in surprise, after his remarkably little hurt was felt and mastered, coming a rather shocked standing, – thereby overcoming the gravitational pull of the entire planet, – a brushing at his leaf-stained jacket of purple velvet, growing now determined, before climbing back into the wheelbarrow giving it a firm kick, – for the lifeless inanimate is never wholly not to blame, as shall later be explained, or not, – noticing then his appeared father, running crying to him, kissing the grazed knee better, so was Steven newly in awe not only of his wife and her sex, – which throughout history has proven a duty very neglected in the male, – but of her Vouchsafe lineage, which as every Troke had been told, and a good few fully believed, played a perhaps major part in a mysterious human destiny which

²⁷⁰ day after or following to-morrow

²⁷¹ library

²⁷² books that are not books

²⁷³ warm to redness

²⁷⁴ wheelbarrow

could not even be imagined.