"Oh, Mr. Fielding," I said, "the names of your shady females are scarcely fit for mention and lady Bellaston, Miss Matthews and Mrs. Waters, Molly Seagrasm, Laetitia Snap, and Lady Bellaston, who is a diwan, and lady Broun, to be sure; then all your landladies, barmaids, kitchen-wenchers —frailty, thy name is woman!"

Fielding's good-humour was imperturbable. "Truly, I say," he said, "and pardon me for using the direct terms of the time I lived in — would it be considered a very unusual occurrence in Hogarth what thou hast left if a young squire seduced a gamekeeper's daughter? Is there no Miss Matthews, no Lady Bellaston, no Lady Booby, no the elegant squire's lady, which one from? Are the inns kept by virtuous landladies and pure barmaids? No, thou art entirely honest in the matter, I assure thee, and to the world I would prefer my own truth-telling time!"

"Well, well," I said, "Fielding, I remember them well; we all as well as Elysium. I was sitting in the smoking-room with Hogarth at the time, and both wishing there was some vice and ugliness here, were it only to heighten the good and beautiful by contrast, when he pointed at you, and I said "That's Fielding", and I was disarrayed and mine healthy. "For my word, you gave me a chance to thank him for it.

"And how you are doing, and the master of narrative style who ever wrote in the English tongue. The soup, sinew, strength of the sentences; their art, and artless simplicity; their real force and expression and mastery are unapproached. Other writers may beat you in detail. Sterne's dialogue is occasionally more vivacious, Smollett's irony, though never quite so fine and finished, is at times more bitter. Sir Thomas Browne is crotchety and surly and very Johnson has more force and dignity, but the prose of Tom Jones, taking it all round, is easily first, before—"

"Fielding," I said, "how did you come to write that part of the story?

"Only a little for those things," I replied; "but most of all for that they hold you and the master of narrative style who ever wrote in the English tongue. The soup, sinew, strength of the sentences; their art, and artless simplicity; their real force and expression and mastery are unapproached. Other writers may beat you in detail. Sterne's dialogue is occasionally more vivacious, Smollett's irony, though never quite so fine and finished, is at times more bitter. Sir Thomas Browne is crotchety and surly and very Johnson has more force and dignity, but the prose of Tom Jones, taking it all round, is easily first, before—"

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THE ACADEMY.

Jan. 29, 1869.

gauges, ancient and modern. What should we do without “chordle,” “uffel,” “beannish,” “galumphing,” and the rest? The page looks, when we open it, like the wanderings of one who is as we read it. We have no work of creative genius, and our language is enriched as to its vocabulary.

Whether the humour consists chiefly in the conscious defiance of logic by a logical mind, or in the half-uncontrollable control by that logical mind of its lively and grotesque fancies, in either case the charm arises from the authour’s well-ordered mind; and we need not be surprised if the feeling that this is so leads many to look for some hidden purpose in his writings.

The real origin of The Hunting of the Snark is very singular. Mr. Dodgson was walking alone one evening, when the words, “For the Snark was a Boojum, you see,” came spontaneously into his head, and the poem was written up to them. I have heard it said that Wagner began “The Ring of the Nibelung” by writing, “Ding, dong, bell, / To the hunting of the Snark,” a “Funeral March,” which certainly contains the most important motives in the work, and that the rest of the trilogy, or tetralogy, was written of it: but as this first work, though finished after the publication of The Hunting of the Snark (1876), was certainly begun before it, it is scarcely open to the charge that the great German master of musical drama plagiarised in his methods from our distinguished humorist.

Starting in this way, our author wrote three stanzas of his poem (or “fits” of his “agony,” as he called them), and asked if I would design three illustrations to them, explaining that the composition would be introduced as a book he was contemplating; but as this latter would certainly not be ready for a considerable time, he thought of printing the poem for private circulation in the first instance. While I was making sketches for these illustrations, he sent me a fourth “fit,” asking for another drawing; shortly after came a fifth “fit,” with a request for more, and this was followed by a sixth, seventh, and eighth. His mind not being occupied with any other book at the time, this poem seemed especially to be suggesting new developments; and having extended the “agony” thus far beyond his original intentions, Mr. Dodgson decided to publish it as an independent work, without waiting for Sylvie and Bruno, of which it was to have formed a feature.

I rather regretted the extension, as it seemed to me to involve a disproportion between the scale of the work and its substance; and I doubted if the expansion were not greater than so slight a structure would bear. The “Walrus and Carpenter” appeared to be happier in its proportion, and it mattered little whether or not it could establish a claim to be classified among literary vertebrata. However, on re-reading the Snark now I feel it to be unquestionably funny and hoply, and I cannot wish any part cut out; so I suppose my fears were unfounded.

I remember a clever undergraduate at Oxford who asked the Snark for the exact reason, telling me that on all sorts of occasions, in all the daily incidents of life, some line from the poem was sure to occur to him that exactly fitted. Most people will have noticed this peculiarity of Lewis Carroll’s writings.

In the thick of the great miners’ strike of 1893 I sent to the Westminster Gazette a quotation from Alice in Wonderland about a retailer of real-mine, it is true, but a mustard-mine. Alice having hazarded the suggestion that mustard is a mineral, the Duchess tells her that she has a large mustard-mine on her estate, and adds, “The moral of that is—the more there is of mines the less there is of yours”; which goes to the root of the whole system of commercial competition, and was marvellously apt when landowners were struggling for their royalties, mine owners for their profits, railway companies for cheap fuel, and miners for wages; each for “meum” against “tum.”

In our correspondence about the illustrations, the coherency, and consistency of the nonsense on its own nonsensical understanding often became prominent. One of the first three I had to alter the disappearance of the Barker, and I not unnaturally invented a Boojum. Mr. Dodgson wrote that it was a delightful monster, but that it was inadequate. The Boojums of the Boojum were quite unimaginable, and he said the creature to remain so. I assented, of course, though reluctant to dismiss what I am still confident is an accurate representation. I hope that some future Darwin in a new Beagle will find the beast, or its remains; if he does, I know he will confirm my drawing.

When I sent Mr. Dodgson the sketch of the hunting, in which I had personified Hope and Care—

“‘They sought it with thimbles, they sought it with care, They pursued it with forks and hope’”—

he wrote that he admired the figure, but that they interfered with the point, which consisted in the mixing up of two meanings of the word “with,” and replaced, “Precisely, and I intended to add a third—‘in company with’—and so develop the point.” This view he actually accepted, and the ladies were admitted.

In the copy bound in vellum which he gave me the dedication runs: “Presented to Henry Holiday, most patient of artists, by Charles L. Dodgson, most exacting, but not most ungrateful of authors, March 29, 1876.”

The above instance will show that though he justly desired to see his meanings preserved, he was not exacting in any unreasonable spirit. The accompanying letter, written after the work was complete, will sufficiently show the friendly tone which had characterised our correspondence.

HENRY HOLIDAY.

Jan. 26, 1898.

[Copy.]

“MY DEAR HOLIDAY,—I finished off my letter at Brighton yesterday in a hurry, and omitted to say how pleased I am with the proofs you sent me. They seem to me most successful, and I agree with you in thinking the heading of ‘Hope’ a great success; it is quite lovely.

On my return here last night, I found the charming chess-boards, for which accept my best thanks. My sister and I have played several games of ‘Go-bang’ on them already. (I need hardly remark that they serve just as well for that, or for draughts, as they do for chess.)

Now for another bit of design, if you don’t mind undertaking it. Macmillan writes me that he would have a sidehead to the proposed 3d. a copy! We can hardly afford more than 5d. or 6d., as we must not charge more than 3s. for the book. My idea is, to have a simple frame for the 3s. copies, which will, no doubt, be the ones usually sold, but to offer the generous covers also at 4s., which will be bought by the rich and the scions who wish to give them as presents. What I want you to do is to take ‘Alice’ as a guide, and design covers requiring about the same amount of gold, or, better, a little less. ‘As ‘Alice’ and the ‘Looking-Glass’ have both got grotesque faces outside, I should like these to be pretty, as a contrast, and I don’t think we can do better than to take the head of ‘Hope’ for the first side, and ‘Care’ for the second; and, as these are associated with ‘forks’ and ‘thimbles’ in the poem, what do you think of surrounding them, one with a border of interlaced forks, the other with a string of thimbles? And what do you think of putting a bell at each corner of the cover, instead of a single line? The only thing to secure is that the total amount of gold required shall be rather less than on the cover of ‘Alice.’

All these are merely suggestions: you will be a far better judge of the matter than I can be, and perhaps may think of some quite different, and better, design.—Yours ever,

L. DODGSON.

The Chestnuts, Guildford, Jan. 15, 1876.”

II.

Human perversity has identified the Snark with everything possible and impossible. There exist people who, led away by the exquisite demonstration given to the Butcher by the Beaver, have seen in it a treatise on pure mathematics. Others will have it that the Bellman is only an Arctic explorer and the Snark the North Pole. While a few, seeing their conceptions on the fact that the Barrister bears, in his portrait, an extraordinary resemblance to the lory, maintain that the Snark is the Ichthus Claimant. In fact, each reader finds the Snark that he deserves. My own is Fortune, and I can assure you there are people who think it can be anything else. Observe the things with which its capture was attempted. Why, the mere mention of railway shares and soup is sufficient of itself to establish my thesis. And then look at the dramatis personae and their actions. The Butcher, perceiving that novelty is the secret of success, announces himself as the only beaver-butcher in this or any other country, and the Baker aims at interest by specialising in bride-cakes. Even the Banker, whose celebrated interviews with the Bandersnatch gave him so great a fright “that his waistcoat turned white,” abandons his legitimate business in order to push the issue of insurance policies against fire and damage from hail. The Barrister dreams of points of the utmost nicety and rarity, and the influence of the court is so outdone and emphasised by the Snark’s assumption of the prerogatives of the Judge. The Bellman is a truly pathetic figure. He is the type of the man.
who pursues fortune without any sufficient consideration of the facts of practical life, and I fancy that he must, at one time or another, have lost a good deal of money on the Stock Exchange. His sorrowful remark that “he had hoped, when the wind was due East, that the ship would set due West,” is just what one could expect from a disappointed speculator. Of the Billiard-marker nothing is recorded, save that “his skill was immense”; but that of itself was more than sufficient justification for his joining in the search for fortune, and he may well have been the most successful of all the crew. The dichotomy of Snarks into those which have “feathers and bite” and those which have “whiskers and scratch” does not, I think, indicate anything more than a belief that there is more than one sort of good fortune, and that all are somewhat to be feared. The habit—common, apparently, to all Snarks of breakfasting at five o’clock tea and dining the day afterwards, so obviously typifies the tendency of Fortune not to come to a man until it is too late to give him any pleasure that it is unnecessary to labour the point. The taste—“meagre and hollow, but crisp”—I regard as finally settling the question. All varieties of Snark have them, and the most fortunate of mankind freely admit that this is the real flavour of success. On my hypothesis the Bandersnatch would be Scandal. In Through the Looking-Glass this creature is more than once referred to as extraordinarily difficult to stop or to catch, and the judicious reader will discern that the Banker entirely failed to divert its attacks by the offer of large discount or even easier cheques. But what, the reader asks, is a Snark? It is a kind of Snark—that is clear from twenty passages. But if a sort of good fortune, how could it have so distressing an effect upon the man they called Ho? Well, I think a Boojum is that sort of sudden, unexpected luck which puts a man “above his boots,” carries him into a sphere in which he is miserable, and makes him to the green-grocer’s lady. It is a very dangerous creature, and the warning of the Baker’s Uncle is more than justified.

M. H. T.

III.

An ingenious friend of mine once maintained, with considerable speciousness, that The Hunting of the Snark was written as a satire on the craving for what is called “social advancement.” According to his view, the people who hunt the Snark are the people who try to “get into Society,” the Bankers, butchers, billiard-markers, and barristers of our day. They are headed by an individual who rings a bell because their endeavour is to attract attention. They never do get into Society, these good people. The Snark is never caught. They only find a Boojum, which my friend interpreted as a kind of subterfuge set, where they “never are heard of again”—in the Morning Post. The theory, on the face of it, has much to be said in its favour, and I trust I need further details from my informant. Why, for instance, did the

Bellman always repeat everything three times:

“What I say three times is true,” he says, with marked emphasis.

“Ah,” said my friend, “the Bellman was one of those tedious people who always repeat themselves, and who believe that a thing is proved if it is only asserted sufficiently often. I have met loads of them. Can you wonder that they never get into Society? The suburban Boojum (which I take to be a kind of Browning Society) is the only place for them.”

This seemed convincing, and I next inquired why it was the Baker who found the Boojum, and not one of the others. My friend’s reply was circular. “Bakers,” he said, “never get into Society. Barristers and bankers sometimes; bakers never. The Baker, therefore, was very rightly put out in the first round.” No further information could I extract from my friend, and when my questions grew pertinacious, he yawned and went away. For myself, I am tempted to accept his view, and to believe that the whole poem is a prophetic satire on the career of the late Barney Barnato.

Students of the poem will remember that all the Snark-hunters’ names begin with a “B,” which is, I think, strong evidence of my theory.

Sr. J. E. C. H.

The London of the Writers.

V.—The Poets of the Thames.

The Thames has been sung in all ages of song. The Elizabethans, naturally, saw it most as a pure and limpid stream, haunted of nymphs and whispering of love. Spencer made it murmur through a bridal lay. The urban Thames, the Thames which reflected the spires and gardens of London, does not live much in Elizabethan verse. The thoughts of the Elizabethans were not domestic, but were in the ends of the earth. Yet Herrick could not have failed to sing of the London Thames. He loved London.

He greated it with lyric rapture on its return to its streets, and when he bade them farewell it was to the river that he committed his tears. No lovelier lyric of the pride and sweetness of Elizabethan London remains to us than this song, in which the “silver-wristed Naiades” and “golden Cheapside” are quaintly packed:

“Send me, send me here my suprest kiss
To thee, my silver-footed Thamesis
No more shall I retrace thy strand,
Whereon so many stately structures stand:
Nor in the summer’s sweeter evenings go
To bath in thee, as thousand others doe;
No more shall I along thy cristall glide,
In barge with bouges and rushes beautifull
With soft-smooth virgins for our chaste disport.
To Richmond, Kingston, and to Hampton Court;
Never again shall I with fannie ore
Put from or draw unto the faultless shore,
And landing there, or safely landing there,
Make way to my beloved Westminster,
Or to the golden Cheapside, where the earth
Of Julia Herrick gave to me my birth.”

May all clean nimphs and curious water-dames
With swan-like state flute up and down thy streams
No drought upon thy wanton waters fall
To make them lean and languishing at all:
No ruffling winds come hither to disease
Thy pure and silver-wristed Naiades!
Keep up your state, ye streams; and as ye spring
Never make sick your banks by surfeiting
Grow young with tydes, and though I see ye never
Receive this vow, so fare ye well for ever!"

Michael Drayton did us a like service.

He traced the river from Windsor downwards, and it was on the river flowing through London that he spent himself:

“Well, the next great Thames doth entertain;
Yea, more than her palace large, and her most magnificious manse.
The land’s tribunal seat that challenge for here
The crowning of our kings, their famous sequels.
Then go he on along by that more beauteous strand,
Expressing both the wealth and bravery of the town
(So many sumptuous bowers, within so little space,
The all-beholding Sun scatters scenes all in his race)
And on by London leads, which like a chosen line
Whose windows seem to mock the star-bedded skies;
Besides her rating spires, so thick themselves that show,
As do the bristling reeds within his banks that grow.
There sees his crowded wharfs, and people-peddred shores,
His boats overspread with shoals of labouring cars,
With that most costly bridge that doth him most renown
By which he clearly puts all other rivers down.”

But we bear the earliest deliberate poetical eulogy of London’s river to William Dunbar, Scotland’s great disciple of Chaucer.

The poem of his lines has seldom been exceeded. He saw London in the first years of the sixteenth century, when he came over from France in the train of ambassadors to negotiate the King’s marriage. And thus he saluted the “Flour of Cities of All”:

“Genius of all joy, Jasper of jocundite,
Most mighty carbuncle of virtue and valor.
Strong Troy in vigour and in stremniti;
Of royal cities rose and regeroun;
Empress of towns, exalt in honour,
In beauty beryng the crown imperial;
Stowe paradys, precolling in pleasure;
London, thou art the Flour of Cities all.
Above all rivers thy River hath renowne.
Whose beryll streyns, pleasant and pre.
Under thy lusty wallyes reneth down,
Where many a swanne doth swynne with wings faire
Where many a large doth sail, and row with are,
Where many a shippest rest with toppes royall.
O townes of townes, patron and but compare London, thou art the Flour of Cities all.”