



Helen Simpson

***The Woman
on the Beast***

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FOREWORD

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This book tries to interpret a contradiction, that the most hateful actions are, as often as not, performed for the best of reasons. In the Prologue a Divine promise is made and, for good cause, broken. The three stories that follow have only this same idea in common, that men are driven to persecute and betray, not by malice or folly, but by the good they passionately wish their fellow men; that energy of which St. John speaks, sweet as honey in the mouth, bitter to the belly. The Epilogue shows Heaven defeated because divided against itself.

One personage needs explanation, the hermaphrodite who embodies this contradiction; Johannes of the first story, St. Esprit, the Grand Master, of the second, Mrs. Sopwith of the third. He-she is Antichrist, the false prophet of Revelation, who deceived with miracles all those having the mark of the beast on which the woman rode.

On another page I give some of St. John's terrific texts, but the chapter headings are taken from a lesser prophet, Nostradamus, whose book was Englished and annotated by Theophilus de Garancieres in 1692.

From the Revelation of St. John the Divine

So he carried me away in spirit into the wilderness; and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet-coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten

horns. And the woman was arrayed in purple, and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand, full of abomination and filthiness of her fornication. And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints.

And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again, and said, Go, and take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea, and upon the earth. And I went unto the angel, and said to him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth as sweet as honey.

And lo, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; and the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as the fig-tree casteth her untimely figs when she is shaken of a mighty wind; and the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?

PROLOGUE

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BETWEEN EARTH AND HEAVEN

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By great discord, the Trumpet shall sound, Agreement
broken, lifting the head to Heaven, A bloody mouth--

Annotation:

The words and sense are plain, and I cannot believe
that there is any great mystery hidden under their
words.

(i)

In the year that He-She was born a comet appeared which caused general wonder and some consternation in Europe. It showed suddenly after a week of clouded nights, its length a full third of the heavenly arc, its head more fiercely burning than any of the planets. For a week it lay across the heavens, then departed as it had come, to the relief of the unlettered, and even of some of the learned, who knew by many precedents that such invaders did not appear for nothing. The battle of Salamis, the fall of Carthage, Csar's death, and the destruction of Jerusalem: all these disasters had been heralded by such a portent, and it was not to be supposed that in the present case the nations would escape affliction. Others, more inclined to argument, presented another aspect of the matter. These misfortunes,

they said, were not universal, but one-sided. True, Scipio was the scourge of Carthage, yet to Rome he was a hero; while the defeat of the Persians, though galling to Xerxes, represented triumph for the opposing Greeks, and so might be counted no more than half a calamity.

These were the speculations of wise and learned men, which meant little in the life of every day. To all women, and the greater number of men in cities, the comet brought fear. Astrologers found their calculations obscured by the bright visitant, and descended from their towers in anger. Sea captains would not put out while the strange light hung across their accustomed stars. It checked the advancing fury in the east, that swore by Mahomet, and carried the emblem of the new moon into battle; the new moon showed palely through this fiery trail. In all countries births were difficult and untimely.

There were a few who counted the sign good. Men on the slopes of Rhenish and Burgundian and Tuscan hills looked up and were glad, for it was known that the grapes which ripen under such influence make memorable wine. Farmers, seeing how the comet hung like a full ear of wheat, looked forward to an abundant harvest. To soldiers' eyes it lay across the night like a sword, and they cuffed each other, laughing over their dice at the thought that there might be good wars before long.

(ii)

In a Western Kingdom, which he had usurped, an elderly ruler lay dying. He had adopted the Christian religion at the last moment, for the reason that men adopt children: because he had none of his own. He had spent six weeks

very pleasantly in the intervals of pain matching his wits against those of the young Saint, his evangelist. He had bargained well, gaining a little each day; and whereas the Saint had begun with the mere assurance that all past sins would be forgiven, though they would still have to be paid for, he had ended, such was his eagerness and the old King's skill, with the unconditional promise of an eternal crown. In this he had gone beyond his authority, for while the incidents of the King's past life might, with good will, come to be overlooked, they were not of a nature to deserve reward. The Saint was a Bishop, in the direct line of apostolic succession; that which he bound on earth was bound also in heaven; and the arbiters felt that his thoughtless zeal had put them in a position of some delicacy. Already there was discontent among the blessed, who resented the leniency shown to eleventh-hour repentances; they asserted that some distinction should be made between those who all their lives had striven for virtue, and those who had fled from sin only when sin had no more to offer. The arbiters feared that there would be trouble if that old intolerant King were to show his face in heaven, and it was decided that one of them should descend to earth and reason with the saint.

The arbiter so appointed went out from the east gate, and stepping down the way that was used by souls ascending, came soon to that universe which is warmed by the sun, and to the planet of which his overlord delighted to have care. It was beautiful, he thought; and he smiled to see how, in spite of humanity, order reigned. The pulses of the world kept time, swayed by the moon; the seasons paced

their round, bringing gifts of unrest, love, fruition and sleep; while human creatures, those noisy plaintiffs of free will, at the end of their lives became obedient, and submitted themselves without protest to the earth. He, the passionless, could wonder no longer at his lord's dotage when he watched the evening light die behind clouds, and saw how the rude texture of the grass showed colours more admirable than those assembled in the stormy foundations of heaven.

"This race," mused the arbiter, "may well be considered the spoilt child of creation. Untroubled by wisdom, indifferent to the concerns of the universe, these creatures know nothing of the burden of desire and wonder by which heaven is maintained; not theirs the lifting agony of spirit that for ever acknowledges perfection. They know nothing of the real, dwelling as they do within limitations which their own imaginations have made, but cannot comprehend. They set eternity aside in measured eons which they know as time. They rob love of immortality by putting on it the yoke of the flesh. When they choose they may draw their imaginings like a veil across their world, and see it otherwise than as it is; a gift which no doubt is for their peace, since from all accounts they have allowed matters to come to a pretty pass, as these microcosms go."

At this point in his meditation the arbiter observed a tall young man striding towards him, and knew that this was the saint on whose account he had come. Moving forward a little, he addressed him by name.

"Bishop Chilperic?"

"None other," the Bishop replied, and stared somewhat haughtily. Then, observing that the light about the other's head owed nothing to the dying sun, he understood that he was in the presence of a messenger, and abased himself. The arbiter blessed him, and without further enquiry came to the matter.

"My son," said he, "is it a fact that you have conceded an eternal mansion to this pagan who now wears the crown of the West?"

The Bishop admitted that this was so.

"In that case," the arbiter continued, "I may tell you that we cannot in conscience ratify the concession. Setting aside the lesser aspects--the discontent which such a promotion would undoubtedly arouse among the blessed--there is a larger question to be considered, that of the human attitude to virtue. Already, as a race, you look on her unfavourably. She is in the position of an unprepossessing virgin with a large dowry, while her younger sister, vice, has every attraction, but is portionless. Hitherto this plan has been successful, and has kept the scales level; but if the heavenly riches are to be evened between these two, the elder sister may despair of suitors. Such is humanity. Bishop, it will not do."

"My lord," said the Bishop without humility, though he still knelt, "I thought by securing the King to advance the glory of God upon earth. This man has been a scourge, dreaded by nations. No alliance of kings could subdue him; even now death stands aside, baulked by his will. To my mind such a conversion is worth more--being, as we are, among heathen--than a thousand miracles; more than a

shower of blood, or a monster cast up out of the sea, or a woman possessed by the devil. For these people are apt to attribute such shows to the activity of their old gods, in whose time, they say, such things were common. Misinterpreted, miracles lose their value; but a plain fact, as the conversion of their redoubtable King, must compel them to believe and tremble. For this reason I pledged the word of God."

"You are very young," said the arbiter, "and so put your trust in reason rather than in faith. It is true that God promised your predecessors, the apostles, that they should have power to bind and loose; but it was understood that their function extended to the remission of guilt only, and not of punishment; still less had they power to make unconditional promise of rewards. You may not set the word of God against the nature of God; this is to split creation and set a term to the eternal. You lack, not zeal, but theology; and now you must find some way out of the tangle, or prepare for the coming of Anti-Christ."

Saying this, the arbiter withdrew, and the Bishop, groaning, fell forward until he lay flat against the earth, seeking help from that counsellor as the boy Chilperic had done, when he herded sheep and his father beat him at night for the loss of a lamb. Now, as then, he thought how remote was justice, how lonely each soul made guardian over others, how dreadful was authority, and how blind the rod; but at last, as long ago he had learned to account for a lamb lost, or a wether snatched by wolves from under his crook, he set his wits to work in this matter of the King's soul, his own bargain, and the honour of the Most High.

Bats wheeled above him. Light faded from the sky, and across it slowly appeared the arch of the comet. He lay still, his heart beating against the earth, his thoughts leaping back and forth as his mother's shuttle had used to do, until, like the shuttle, they made a web at last. He sat up, and at once, though he made no sound, the arbiter was by his side.

"Sir," said the Bishop to him, "if I could know what is a word, I might find the way out."

"You ask a wide question," the arbiter answered. "An earthly word may be a bond, an agony, a caress, or the shadow of thought. True thought, the thought of God, is rigid, so held by the furious energy that rages to sustain it; and this is the word, the light, which your darkness cannot comprehend."

"But, my lord," the Bishop insisted, "may it not be with the word of God as with our light? This comes to us white from the sun; but sift it through glass, some bevel of man's making, and it splits into colour."

"Analogy--" The arbiter paused doubtfully upon the word.

"No, but parable," the Bishop corrected him swiftly, "and for parable we have authority."

The arbiter admitted the touch with a gracious gesture, as a fencer might; but immediately resuming:

"Come, Bishop," said he, "your plan."

The Bishop wasted no more time in subtleties, but sat up, and gathering his gown about his feet, his thin boyish hands clasping his knees together, told of his decision.

"It is this," said he. "I have pledged the Infinite word that this King, when he puts off flesh, shall have an undying crown."

"Heaven will not receive him," the arbiter warned.

"Be it so," said the Bishop; and then dropping his voice, "Are there no principalities in hell?"

The arbiter looked at the Bishop, and was silent for a time; slowly he considered, and at last spoke:

"Hell," said the arbiter, "has its constitution as we have. I fear the established lords will not accept without protest a redistribution of power, be the newcomer's qualifications what they may."

The Bishop looked downcast, while the other took, in perplexity, a turn or two among the rocks, that by this time were almost one in colour with the grass. There was no sound of his steps; but his words came clear upon the air.

"We may look for trouble," said the arbiter, pondering. "It might mean war; yet even that is to be preferred to revolution. This suggestion of yours," said he, returning to where the Bishop sat, "though dangerous, may answer. On the whole we are obliged to you."

He stood above Chilperic in radiance; and through his aureole of faint heavenly light an arc of deeper gold began to pulse and glow. The comet, that faithful attendant of the night, was close upon night's heels, and now lay athwart the arbiter's head like a sword, threatening: unperturbed, he made a gesture of blessing, and addressed final words to the Bishop.

"I will," said he, "at once interview the outlawed powers. They are open to reason, a fact which in part explains their present situation. Your sinner shall have a dukedom, if I can contrive it, and some infernal patronage; moreover, he shall

be protected and assured against disturbance by conjuration."

With this he prepared to go; but the Bishop, whose first awe was passing, with outstretched hand stayed the ascent.

"One thing more," said he, and pointed to the hanging star; "is not this sent on the King's account, to warn the world of his passing? It is his whim to think so," went on the Bishop, a little shamefaced, "and perhaps I have lent the fancy some colour."

The arbiter shook his head, standing poised.

"The death of a man," said he, "even a king, needs no sign set in the sky; at such a time God has His will, even of the most stubborn."

"Then what may be its meaning, if not this, my lord?"

"None," tranquilly the arbiter replied. "It is part of the method of action imposed by His creatures upon their indulgent creator. Very rightly, they credit Him with pre-knowledge; but this brings terror, for it seems to them that their fates, being foreknown, must be foredestined. Therefore they demand that free-will, the power of choice, shall seem to be theirs. The working of such a seeming contradiction is excellently set forth in this star. For since God knows what is to come, men think it just that He should warn; yet He may not spell out His meaning--as was done in the past by the prophets--lest He should appear to foreordain. This star He sets up, a sign plain in the heavens for all to read; a portent; but what its meaning is, what it portends, each man must guess for himself."

At this the Bishop became silent, considering the mysterious ways of God; and the arbiter, having no more to

hear or to tell, began smoothly to mount the air. Like smoke he seemed to be drawn upwards, quickening his drift as he ascended. Soon he came out of earth's shadow into the last beams of the sun, and there hung an instant, the merest speck, but glorious, and still seeming to bless; then the night mist hid him.

The Bishop rose from his knees to which he had respectfully fallen, and went back to his dying King, with no further delay than was needed to mark with a pile of stones the patch of grass last pressed by the arbiter's feet. This he did that there might be no after-confusion and therefore no unedifying disputes among the faithful as to the exact, the venerable spot. True, there remained always the test of miracle; authentic grass would heal, no doubt, blindness, and the scars of love. But the Bishop, with a dozen pebbles convenient to his hands, saw no reason to trouble omnipotence.

An hour's walking with his shepherd's stride brought him out of the hilly places to the town, whose lights lay, like gold-dust sprinkled, in the hollow below. He went forward praying; now and then a shiver took him, at the thought of the King's destiny after death, and the burning crown which a trick of words had set upon his forehead.

(iii)

The King's room, when he came to it, was dark, and silent save for the guard's footsteps outside the door; only a sullen fire of damp and knotty wood showed him the bed, and skins where he might set his foot noiselessly. The King seemed to be sleeping. His beard was thrust up, and his breathing wavered, ceased and was renewed, as is the way

with sleepers. The Bishop seated himself, and without thinking began to murmur that prayer with which the exorcist protects himself from the revengeful and assailing spirits of the damned.

"O Lord God Almighty, as Thou didst warn by Thine angel the three Kings of Cologne when they came towards Bethlehem, worshipping with gifts the High King of all the world, Jesus; at which time the holy angel Gabriel warned these three lords, that meekly sought our Saviour; as wittily and truly as these did turn for dread, and take another way; so wisely and truly, O Lord God, of Thy mercy bless us now at this time, and keep us from all evil, Thy holy angel defending."

His lips ceased their motion, but his mind spoke the tremendous names of God, Agla, Adonay, Tetragrammaton; and as the fire for no reason suddenly leaped, he perceived, looking up, that it was well he had done so.

There were figures in the room, insubstantial, he knew, bodiless, but real to the sight. Save one, they were not shaped like men; that is, not wholly. One, tall as the roof, had a raven's head, from whose beak flames were issuing. Another had the appearance of an angel, but obscure and filthy; he held, folded about his wrist, a viper. Another seemed like a leopard, but winged, another like a sea monster; yet another had a single horn starting from his ape's forehead. Only one had the complete form of a man; his face was womanish, and he wore an ugly crown, and seemed, by standing foremost, to be their chief. These beings, remaining motionless and silent, had in their bearing the same flaw. There was about them all a kind of twisted

majesty, pride gone hideous. Their cold eyes, that knew no hope, stared in the one direction, towards where the King's beard showed, tilted in sleep. Despite their flames, and the light they cast about them, a kind of dim and murky glare, the Bishop knew them to be stiff and numbed with the dead cold of hell; this had invaded the room with them, and came about Chilperic as he crouched by the fire, so he could not obey his impulse, which was--for he had courage--to spring up and defend the King. He strove, but the cold held him. He could only watch, since night or death alone can take the sight from the living eye, and watch he did, with starting eyeballs, and hair lifting, and the powerful names of God pacing in turn through his mind.

The personages, it seemed, were content to bide their time. They waited, still as idols, until with a choking cough and an outflung arm the King woke. The light was sufficient; he saw them, and gave a cry. Outside the door the guard's step paused; then, as the sound was not repeated, its rhythm began once more, and the King, drawing himself up by the carved serpents on his bed, sat blinking. The Bishop saw him finger his wrist, and pinch his arm, and knew that the cold was upon him, and that the King was in two minds whether or no this was death.

Observing his movement, the leader of the infernal party, he with the woman's face, began to speak in a voice becoming his appearance, at once hoarse and soft.

"King of the West," said he, "you are about to die."

The King could not answer, being in the chilly bondage of their presence, but his beard went defiantly up.

"And as the matter stands," the personage went on, "you go, according to promise, from a crown to a crown."

The Bishop shuddered in his corner by the fire. "You have been appointed, by those whose concern is not with our affairs, to be prince and captain of seventy legions. These persons, in their arbitrary fashion, take from each one of us here ten legions, to set you up in your dominion. The command does not come with authority; we do not obey, and are here to warn you that should you come to us, you must not look to rule. You are to understand," went on the spokesman, deprecating, "that as a private individual you will be very welcome; but such an elevation as this is unprecedented, and not to be borne. I do not say that it is your fault; it is your misfortune that you are human, and therefore cannot have preserved such integrity in evil as is our privilege. Your life has been sullied by long periods of innocence, for example, your childhood; and even during these later days there have been impulses towards good. I repeat, that as a private citizen of our commonwealth you will receive consideration; but as for a peerage, I recommend you to dismiss the idea without delay from your mind."

At this the King's blood, defying the cold, climbed into his cheeks and set his eyes blazing.

"My crown," said he, the words coming hardly, "has been promised, I would have you know."

"I regret," replied the personage with unyielding courtesy, "that we in hell cannot oblige you. Take your petition higher. Heaven"--there came a sidelong feminine smile--"has more room."

The King stuttered, and something clicked in his throat before he sank back upon the carved serpents; but as if his words had broken an enchantment, the Bishop made an upward lurch, and was upon his feet. From the fire he snatched two flaming faggots, and holding them crosswise before him, advanced, exhorting the assembly by name in a voice that, for all his effort, was no louder than a summer rustling of leaves:

"You seven infernal princes, by the word which Solomon used, and the power of his seal, the secret of secrets, go! Duke Vapula, go! Forneus, sea-monster knowledgeable in tongues, Ipos, Sitri, back to hell's marches! Amducias of the single horn, I command you; Eligor, and you. Prince Paimon, looking to the north-west I bid you return to that mansion in hell for which, silly lord, you changed a seat among the cherubim. I conjure you, by all the royal names of the living God, which, unworthy, I here pronounce; by Algramay, Sidonay, Saboath; by Planaboth, Panthon, Craton--"

The Bishop's mouth stood wide, there was blood on his lips, his robe was disordered; cinders and sparks from the burning wood fell upon his trembling hands, and singed his young beard. In short, the Bishop was a spectacle, and as such the princes of the air seemed to regard him, patiently waiting till he should have done. They displayed no signs of shame or panic, but bowed their heads courteously at each one of the names; and their behaviour was such that the Bishop, whose first exorcism it was, soon ceased, and with a final brandish of his cross, on which the flames were dying, lowered his hands and fell silent.

It was Paimon of the woman's face, commander of seventy legions, within whose knowledge lay the disposition of the world and the whereabouts of the winds, who spoke at last.

"And now," said he, "has your reverence done?" The Bishop did not answer; the fallen cherub continued:

"But for your eloquence we should long since have been on our way. You have no cause, sir, to wear that air of chagrin. If this was your first exorcism, believe me, who am older and experienced, it was very well done. But we have other duties, and with your permission must now be going."

The Bishop answered, sullen under these compliments:

"What kind of fiends are you? Have you in your abysses forgotten that fear which is the beginning of wisdom? Have you forgotten Him whose heel is upon your necks?"

And once more, but with hope rather than faith, he began his recitation of the names. The seven powers listened, something of that discomfort apparent in their attitude with which men hear a solecism or breach of manners; and when for the second time, breathless, he ceased declaiming, the leader spoke with indulgence.

"I perceive," said he, "that you are ignorant of the manner in which the universe is ordered. You have, during the past few minutes, attempted to alarm us and speed our departure with a recital of the dignities of the ruler of heaven. You have yet to learn that his authority does not extend so far as his ministers may have boasted. Heaven and hell are two separate and magnificent creations. The intelligence which directs us is as sure, our spirits are as potent and as numerous, as those of the so-called overlord.

How then, you may ask, does he occupy the position of credit, while we must content ourselves with such intractable lordships as darkness and fire? I will not weary you"--as the Bishop showed signs, having regained his breath, of setting out his formula a third time--"briefly, it is this. It is because, anticipating a commercial maxim of later ages, he has found honesty to be the best policy. He has, throughout the ages, kept faith. What he threatened, he also performed, though a whole city should suffer, or a whole generation. In the matter of rewards, his practice was the same: promise sparingly, but perform entirely. Here was our weakness. We could not rid ourselves of the principle that a lie, being more ingenious than the truth, was better policy; whereas a lie is nothing more than a maze, in which force wanders and is spent. While he maintained this level of judgment, the struggle between us was unequal; but recently he has been nodding a little, has delegated to mankind certain powers which he had better have kept his hand upon; and the upshot of it is, in a little time you may find that the balance has tilted another way."

At this the Bishop could no longer contain indignation, and broke forth in the words of David the singer: "Oh God, how long shall this adversary reproach? Shall the enemy blaspheme thy name for ever?"

"No longer than is necessary," the lord of devils assured him. "Meanwhile I would guide your memory forward, to certain significant words in the psalm that follows: 'He shall cut off the spirit of princes; he is terrible to the kings of the earth.'" Then, with his womanish laugh and a civil gesture:

"We must be going, Bishop Chilperic; nor do we take it unkindly that your penitent has preceded us."

At that, forgetful of their presence, and his own anger, the Bishop ran forward to the bed. As he went the sombre radiance was withdrawn from the room, the cold which had vanquished him passed from his heart and limbs; only in the King's hand and forehead as he touched them something of it remained. He knelt in the darkness, his fingers upon the unresponding pulse, stunned, empty of thought, unable to pray. As he knelt, a voice came to his ears, a lost and bloodless voice, wandering upon the air:

"My crown," it said. "Where's my crown?"

The Bishop sank down in utter wretchedness, beating his breast, and imploring with all his soul the boon of prayer; but the voice continued, thin, and like the tireless song of an insect:

"He whom I trusted has broken faith. I have no kingdom and no dwelling. My baptism was bought with lies. Give me my crown!"

It seemed to the Bishop as though, somewhere, the words echoed; another instant, and he was sure. Painfully up through the earth, swift through the air, thudding like a roar of blood in his ears, a cataract of sound grew, and filled the empty night.

"Keep faith, Eternal! Give him his crown!"

Then, as though to hear the answer, such a silence fell as could never before have been known. Trees and grasses stood still, all breathing ceased of animals and men; the waters paused. But there was no answer, no single trumpet

blown in power and wrath for a sign. The challenge was ignored.

When this was understood by those who waited, the silence ended. Earth was shaken, the airs drove this way and that in fury; against the distant city quays could be heard the bellowing of the sea; while above, the comet's fires were dimmed all at once by an unnumbered host ascending. This the Bishop saw, looking up in fear, and knew that what the straying star portended was nothing less than the coming of Anti-Christ.

BOOK I

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THE INDIES, 1579

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Lost, found again, hidden so great a while, A pastor as
Deme-God shall be honoured; But before the Moon
endeth her great Age By other winds he shall be
dishonoured.

Annotation:

The prophecie is concerning the body of a
famous Churchman, which was lost and shall be
found again, and worshiped as a Demy-God.

(i)

That bloody but most religious piece of piracy, the affair
of Adam's Tooth, has been neglected by historians; yet, for
all that, it was a matter that sent echoes all through Asia,
even into China, and those solitudes of Cambodia where the
bones of another religious adventure lay whitening in the
jungle. The Portuguese, who were most concerned in it,
being loyal sons of Christendom and the Pope, necessarily
took their Archbishop's side in the telling, and so there
remain here and there only scattered hints of the truth,
notably a paragraph in that excellent book of Thomas
Herbert, his *Relation of Some Years Travaile*, published in
London in the year 1634. I give almost the whole of the
chapter, since it is short, but illuminating.

Of the Isle Zeylooon

This famous Isle is not far distant from the point of India called Cape Comrein, it elevates the Articke Pole seven degrees, by which we closely travelled, leaving the Asiaticall continent. It abounds with Cinamon, and other odoriferous and Aromaticall Spices. The people (for the greater part) are Paynims, and know no God. Some have a smacke of Christ, others of Mahomet, but those are very few. The people goe naked, not forced to it by poverty but heat, they are Owners of the best Smaragds, Rubies and Ambergreese through Asia. Yet want these inestimable stones that vertue in their Orient lustre, to lighten them the way to perfect glory (poor wretched creatures) they are too zealous (foolish zeale) in their bewitching cursed Idolatory. For it is apparent, that on the high peake (cald by the Europeans) Columbo, tis orthodoxally held by them that Adam was first Created and lived there, they beleieve it rather in regard his vestigatings are yet imprinted in the Earth, but generally the Inhabitants are egregious Paynims. As testifies the Ape's tooth, so highly, so generally esteemed, so fervently prayed to, which tooth was taken from them not long agoe by the adventurous Lusitanians and carried to Goa, where the Archbishop and Vice-Roy burnt it, although the people to redeem it offered an incredible masse of treasure, refused unwisely. For by a crafty Bannian (priest) an other like to the former was brought forth, which he protested was the same and recovered miraculously, thereby infinitely enriching himself, and joying not a little these credulous and well contented Zeylonians.

Pilgrims from remote parts apace flocke hither, where atop a high mount is conspicuously set the Idaea of a horrible Caco-demon, touching which the Syngales, their priests, Cronography, That once lohna their King held this monstrous Daemon in derision, but entering the sacred Temple, he (in great agonie) beheld the Idoll Devil breath forth fury against him, shewing it by his fiery eyes and flaming Semiter (threatfully held against him) whereat the relenting King amazed returns, becomes penitentiary, and ecchoes sorrow for his former errours.

The Isle is replete with innumerable Abominations, for in most corners are seen one ugly monstrous shape or other, which, as they are diverse, so doe they diversely infect the humors of divers men, and to which (as particular fancie feeds them) they bestow Orizons upon.

The place where the great Pagotha stands, is enveloped with a cloud of armes and as sedulously looked into (and good reason), for they verily beleieve that so soon as that tottering fabrique falls, the finall Ruine of the world shall immediately come after.

Thus far Thomas Herbert, an Englishman of immense respectability and related, as he insists rather naively throughout the course of his book, to the Earls of Pembroke and Powis. It is his practice in narration to give, while deploring, the very fullest possible account of such Abominations as met his eye or his alert ear, and from the fact that he relates no details of the Lusitanian raid, even when he comes to treat of Goa itself, it seems evident that neither side cared to boast of its share in the business. Goa is wealthy, he admits reluctantly; and has a struggle within

his own mind to reconcile this lavishness of an all-wise Providence towards egregious Paynims with the self-evident fact of England's poverty in the matter of precious metals and stones. In the course of an argument wonderfully conceived he comes to the conclusion that these favours are bestowed in order to lull the heathen to a false security of hope, and conduct them the more surely to their undoing. "Notwithstanding, their wealth being mixt with unthankfulness, damnable Idolatory, and variety of carnall objects, turns to their greater destruction, and endlesse miseries." This comfortable doctrine, which seems seldom to have impeded either the English or the Portuguese in their quest for treasure and trade, makes the story of the refusal of ransom for Adam's Tooth all the more odd. The mind, with such scanty facts before it, tries over the situation this way and that. Possibly the Archbishop considered the Tooth a genuine relic and as such determined to rescue it from the hands of the idolatrous people of Ceylon; in that case, why, having acquired, burn it? Or did he take it at its face value as the tooth of an ape, stupidly revered by a people still in darkness; in that case, and if his object was conversion, why leave the Caco-demon? Or did he suppose it to be really a monkey's tooth, but blasphemously miscalled and miscredited to the first man, so that out of piety and reverence as grandson of the two hundred and twentieth generation (allowing four generations to a century) from humanity's common father, he could no longer permit the imposture to go on? Even in this case, why did he not accept the ransom and build magnificently with it, in the belief, which surely he must

have held, that a cathedral equipped with genuine relics and a silver altar could comfortably outpray a mere heathen Pagotha built about one piece of unhallowed bone?

The problem, one of extreme complexity, and of concern to all Christendom as will be shown, may be resolved thus:

(ii)

But first it may be as well to give some description of the Tooth itself, and thus, as the reconstructors of pterodactyls do, build up from this one bone some kind of image of the creature from which it came.

It was, to begin with, some two feet long, and proportionately heavy, the shape of a gigantic eye-tooth, observers say; and its prowess in self-defence against previous raids might reasonably be accounted something more than simian. It was a relic with a mind and semi-miraculous powers of its own. The Viceroy of Goa was by no means the first person to send an expedition in search of it; indeed, he might well have taken warning by the fate of previous ravishers of its temple who attempted, these too, to burn it, and failed pitiably; for they were not only frustrated in their purpose, but converted by its reasoning. It spoke, and made good Buddhists of them, so that very humbly they sent it back to its city of Dantapura, which older writers call Odontopolis, Tothtown.

In the year of Christ 1284, says Marco Polo, the great Khan of China, Kublai, sent envoys to obtain the relic of Adam, together with some of his hair, still preserved in the Cingalese temple. He paid for these, says Polo, a mighty great treasure, and made a mighty bad bargain, for they were teeth of God knows who, and the true tooth, the

revered Dalada, stayed quiet in its temple to receive pilgrims as before. There was another rape in the fourteenth century, and the king of the island had to go in person to the King of the Tamils, and plead, and pay, the Tooth itself this time taking no active part in its own deliverance. It was returned, and revered in peace for another century and a half, until the Viceroy of Goa, Dom Constantino de Braganca, undertook this final, and, until now, unexplained expedition.

(iii)

The Inquisidor Mor, or Grand Inquisitor of Goa, was a personage owning no jurisdiction save that of the supreme council of the Inquisition of Portugal, a comfortable eight thousand miles or so away. The Archbishop might and did stand higher spiritually, might excommunicate, might wear the robes and mitre, while the Inquisidor Mor went about rustily in black, unheralded by children singing and censuring him; for all that, every soul in Goa knew which of the two held the power. The Viceroy, the very noble Dom Constantino de Braganca, might ride about the streets in a palanquin with his arms and quarterings borne on a gilded banner before him, and men in armour following, while the Inquisidor went on foot, spoke peasant-fashion, and as a boy had trodden among the wine-pressers; but the Viceroy, for all the clash of arms about him, never felt comfortable under the eye of this unbeneficed priest. He was a man, the Inquisidor, who lived without display and without excess, perpetually revolving within his mind schemes for the greater glory of God, and for the propagation of truth.

For this he held his office, to impose truth upon the reluctant or unenlightened; this was his passion, he held it close to him day and night like the memory of some loved person lost, and it was his cross that truth, in the East, should be so hard to come by. When he had first arrived from Portugal, three years before, almost the first sight that met his eyes was a crowd of cheerful but indigent blacks squatting in the sun outside a building which he had been told was the court of justice. Asking idly what they did there, he was answered, as idly, that they were the professional witnesses waiting to be summoned; and as he paused in utter dismay two or three braver ones of the fraternity came sidling up to him, saying in their lingo, which he had studied on the voyage and could partly understand, that they hoped he would remember them, poor honest men, if ever he needed anything sworn to.

That scandal had not lasted long. The witnesses were forbidden, under penalties which were made very clear, to practise; they desisted, grumbling, and returned to agricultural labour, or to the fisheries, where their gift of imaginative embroidery was altogether wasted. The Inquisidor Mor found many such minor abuses in Goa, and stopped them without argument, somewhat to the alarm of the Archbishop, an excellent man, but timid, whose character was no match for the narrow swordlike intelligence of the Inquisidor. He trembled, the Archbishop, but he did not interfere; only watched while his zealous coadjutor drove all the incredulity and vice of Goa underground. But the bones of St. Thomas were quite another thing.