



***ERIC RÜCKER
EDDISON***

***THE WORM
OUROBOROS***



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The Worm Ouroboros

EAN 8596547019169

DigiCat, 2022

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Dedication

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*To W. G. E. and to my friends K. H. and G. C. L. M. I
dedicate this book*

It is neither allegory nor fable but a Story to be read for its own sake.

The proper names I have tried to spell simply. The *e* in Carcë is long, like that in Phryne, the *o* in Krothering short and the accent on that syllable: Corund is accented on the first syllable, Prezmyra on the second, Brandoch Daha on the first and fourth, Gorice on the last syllable, rhyming with thrice: Corinius rhymes with Flaminus, Galing with sailing, La Fireez with desire ease: *ch* is always guttural, as in loch.

E. R. E.

9th January 1922

Thomas the Rhymer

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TRUE Thomas lay on Huntlie bank,
A ferlie he spied wi his ee;
And there he saw a Lady bright
Come riding down by the Eildon Tree.

Her skirt was o the grass-green silk,
Her mantle o the velvet fyne,
At ilka tett of her horse's mane
Hung fifty siller bells and nine.

True Thomas he pulld aff his cap,
And louted low down on his knee:
"Hail to thee, Mary, Queen of Heaven!
For thy peer on earth could never be."

"O no, O no, Thomas," she says,
"That name does not belong to me;
I'm but the Queen of fair Elfland,
That am hither come to visit thee.

"Harp and carp, Thomas," she says,
"Harp and carp alang wi me.
And if ye dare to kiss my lips,
Sure of your bodie I will be."

"Betide me weal, betide me woe,
That weird shall never daunt me."
Syne he has kissed her rosy lips,
All underneath the Eildon Tree.

THOMAS THE RHYMER

Introduction

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THE Worm Ouroboros, no worm, but the Serpent itself, is a wonderful book. As a story or as prose it is wonderful, and, there being a cause for every effect, the reason for writing it should be as marvellous again.

Shelley had to write the Prometheus Unbound, he was under compulsion; for a superhuman energy had come upon him, and he was forced to create a matter that would permit him to imagine, and think, and speak like a god. It was so with Blake, who willed to appear as a man but existed like a mountain; and, at their best, the work of these poets is inhuman and sacred. It does not greatly matter that they had or had not a message. It does not matter at all that either can be charged with nonsense or that both have been called madmen—the same charge might be laid against a volcano or a thunderbolt—or this book. It does not matter that they could transcend human endurance, and could move tranquilly in realms where lightning is the norm of speed. The work of such poets is sacred because it outpaces man, and, in a realm of their own, wins even above Shakespeare.

An energy such as came on the poets has visited the author of this book, and his dedicatory statement, that "it is neither allegory nor fable but a story to be read for its own sake," puts us off with the assured arrogance for of the poet who is too busy creating to have time for school-

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mastering. But, waking or in dream, this author has been in strange regions and has supped at a torrent which only the greatest know of.

The story is a long one—this reader would have—liked it twice as long. The place of action is indicated, casually, as the planet Mercury, and the story tells of the wars between two great kingdoms of that planet, and the final overthrow of one.

Mr. Eddison is a vast man. He needed a whole cosmos to play in, and created one; and he forged a prose to tell of it that is as gigantic as his tale. In reading this book the reader must a little break his way in, and must surrender prejudices that are not allowed for. He may think that the language is more rotund than is needed for a tale, but, as he proceeds, he will see that only such a tongue could be spoken by these colossi; and, soon, he will delight in a prose that is as life-giving as it is magnificent.

Mr. Eddison's prose never plays him false; it rises and falls with his subject, and is tender, humorous, sour, precipitate and terrific as the occasion warrants. How nicely the Kaga danced for the Red Foliot.

"Foxy-red above, but with black bellies, round furry faces, innocent amber eyes and great soft paws.... On a sudden the music ceased, and the dancers were still, and standing side by side, paw in furry paw, they bowed shyly to the company, and the Red Foliot called them to, him, and kissed them on the mouth, and sent them to their seats."

"Corund leaned on the parapet and shaded his eyes with his hand, that was broad as a smoked haddock, and covered on the back with yellow hairs growing somewhat sparsely as the hairs on the skin of a young elephant."

"A dismal tempest suddenly surprised them. For forty days it swept them in hail and sleet over wide wallowing ocean, without a star, without a course."

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"Night came down on the hills. A great wind moaning out of the hueless west tore the clouds as a ragged garment, revealing the lonely moon that fled naked betwixt them."

"Dawn came like a lily, saffron-hued, smirked with smoke-gray streaks, that slanted from the north."

"He was naked to the waist, his hair, breast and arms to the armpits clotted and adrop with blood and in his hands two bloody daggers."

Quotations can give some idea of the rhythm of his sentences, but it can give none of the massive sweep and intensity of his narrative. Milton fell in love with the devil because the dramatic action lay with him, and, in this book, Mr. Eddison trounces his devils for being naughty (the word "bad" has not significance here), but he trounces the Wizard King and his kingdom with affection and delight.

What gorgeous monsters are Gorice the Twelfth and Corund and Corinius. The reader will not easily forget them; nor Gorice's great antagonist Lord Juss; nor the marvellous traitor, Lord Gro, with whom the author was certainly in love; nor the great fights and the terrible fighters Lords Brandoch Daha and Goldry Bluszco, and a world of others and their wives; nor will he forget the mountain Koshtra Pivrarcha, that had to be climbed, and was climbed—as dizzying a feat as literature can tell of.

"So huge he was that even here at six miles distance the eye might not at a glance behold him, but must sweep back and forth as over a broad landscape, from the ponderous roots of the mountain, where they sprang black and sheer from the glacier up the vast face, where buttress was piled upon buttress, and tower upon tower, in a blinding radiance of ice-hung precipice and snow-filled gully, to the lone heights where, like spears menacing high heaven, the white teeth of the summit-ridge cleft the sky."

Mr. Eddison's prose does not derive from the English Bible. His mind has more affinities with Celtic imaginings and method, and his work is Celtic in that it is inspired p. xxii by beauty and daring rather than by thoughts and moralities. He might be Scotch or Irish: scarcely the former, for, while Scotland loves full-mouthed verse, she, like England, is prose-shy. But, from whatever heaven Mr. Eddison come, he has added a masterpiece to English literature.

JAMES STEPHENS

The Induction

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p. 1

THERE was a man named Lessingham dwelt in an old low house in Wastdale, set in a gray old garden where yew-trees flourished that had seen Vikings in Copeland in their seedling time. Lily and rose and larkspur bloomed in the borders, and begonias with blossoms big as saucers, red and white and pink and lemon-colour, in the beds before the porch. Climbing roses, honeysuckle, clematis, and the scarlet flame-flower scrambled up the walls. Thick woods were on every side without the garden, with a gap north-eastward opening on the desolate lake and the great fells beyond it: Gable rearing his crag-bound head against the sky from behind the straight clean outline of the Screes.

Cool long shadows stole across the tennis lawn. The air was golden. Doves murmured in the trees; two chaffinches played on the near post of the net; a little water-wagtail scurried along the path. A French window stood open to the garden, showing darkly a dining-room panelled with old oak, its Jacobean table bright with flowers and silver and cut glass and Wedgwood dishes heaped with fruit: greengages, peaches, and green muscat grapes.

Lessingham lay back in a hammock-chair watching through the blue smoke of an after-dinner cigar p. 2 the warm light on the Gloire de Dijon roses that clustered about the bedroom window overhead. He had her hand in his. This was their House.

"Should we finish that chapter of Njal?" she said.

She took the heavy volume with its faded green cover, and read: "He went out on the night of the Lord's day, when nine weeks were still to winter; he heard a great crash, so that he thought both heaven and earth shook. Then he looked into the west airt, and he thought he saw hereabouts a ring of fiery hue, and within the ring a man on a gray horse. He passed quickly by him, and rode hard. He had a flaming firebrand in his hand, and he rode so close to him that he could see him plainly. He was black as pitch, and he sung this song with a mighty voice—

Here I ride swift steed,
His flank flecked with rime,
Rain from his mane drips,
Horse mighty for harm;
Flames flare at each end,
Gall glows in the midst,
So fares it with Flosi's redes
As this flaming brand flies;
And so fares it with Flosi's redes
As this flaming brand flies.

"Then he thought he hurled the firebrand east towards the fells before him, and such a blaze of fire leapt up to meet it that he could not see the fells for the blaze. It seemed as though that man rode east among the flames and vanished there.

"After that he went to his bed, and was senseless for a long time, but at last he came to himself. He bore in mind all that had happened, and told his father, but he bade him

tell it to Hjalhti Skeggi's son. So he went and told Hjalhti, but he said he had seen 'the Wolf's Ride, and that comes ever before great tidings.'"

They were silent awhile; then Lessingham. said suddenly, p. 3 "Do you mind if we sleep in the east wing to-night?"

"What, in the Lotus Room?"

"Yes."

"I'm too much of a lazy-bones to-night, dear," she answered.

"Do you mind if I go alone, then? I shall be back to breakfast. I like my lady with me; still, we can go again when next moon wanes. My pet is not frightened, is she?"

"No!" she said, laughing. But her eyes were a little big. Her fingers played with his watch-chain. "I'd rather," she said presently, "you went later on and took me. All this is so odd still: the House, and that; and I love it so. And after all, it is a long way and several years too, sometimes, in the Lotus Room, even though it is all over next morning. I'd rather we went together. If anything happened then, well, we'd both be done in, and it wouldn't matter so much, would it?"

"Both be what?" said Lessingham. "I'm afraid your language is not all that might be wished."

"Well, you taught me!" said she; and they laughed.

They sat there till the shadows crept over the lawn and up the trees, and the high rocks of the mountain shoulder beyond burned red in the evening rays. He said, "If you like to stroll a bit of way up the fell-side, Mercury is visible to-night. We might get a glimpse of him just after sunset."

A little later, standing on the open hillside below the hawking bats, they watched for the dim planet that showed at last low down in the west between the sunset and the dark.

He said, "It is as if Mercury had a finger on me tonight, Mary. It's no good my trying to sleep to-night except in the Lotus Room."

Her arm tightened in his. "Mercury?" she said. "It is another world. It is too far."

But he laughed and said, "Nothing is too far."

They turned back as the shadows deepened. As they stood in the dark of the arched gate leading from the open fell into the garden, the soft clear notes of a spinet sounded from the house. She put up a finger. "Hark," she said. "Your daughter playing *Les Barricades*." p. 4

They stood listening. "She loves playing," he whispered. "I'm glad we taught her to play." Presently he whispered again, "*Les Barricades Mystérieuses*. What inspired Couperin with that enchanted name? And only you and I know what it really means. *Les Barricades Mystérieuses*."

That night Lessingham lay alone in the Lotus Room. Its casements opened eastward on the sleeping woods and the sleeping bare slopes of Illgill Head. He slept soft and deep; for that was the House of Postmeridian, and the House of Peace.

In the deep and dead time of the night, when the waning moon peered over the mountain shoulder, he woke suddenly. The silver beams shone through the open window on a form perched at the foot of the bed: a little bird, black,

round-headed, short-beaked, with long sharp wings, and eyes like two stars shining. It spoke and said, "Time is."

So Lessingham got up and muffled himself in a great cloak that lay on a chair beside the bed. He said, "I am ready, my little martlet." For that was the House of Heart's Desire.

Surely the martlet's eyes filled all the room with starlight. It was an old room with lotuses carved on the panels and on the bed and chairs and roof-beams; and in the glamour the carved flowers swayed like water-lilies in a lazy stream. He went to the window, and the little martlet sat on his shoulder. A chariot coloured like the halo about the moon waited by the window, poised in air, harnessed to a strange steed. A horse it seemed, but winged like an eagle, and its fore-legs feathered and armed with eagle's claws instead of hooves. He entered the chariot, and that little martlet sat on his knee.

With a whirr of wings the wild courser sprang skyward. The night about them was like the tumult of bubbles p. 5 about a diver's ears diving in a deep pool under a smooth steep rock in a mountain cataract. Time was swallowed up in speed; the world reeled; and it was but as the space between two deep breaths till that strange courser spread wide his rainbow wings and slanted down the night over a great island that slumbered on a slumbering sea, with lesser isles about it: a country of rock mountains and hill pastures and many waters, all a-glimmer in the moonshine.

They landed within a gate crowned with golden lions. Lessingham came down from the chariot, and the little black martlet circled about his head, showing him a yew

avenue leading from the gates. As in a dream, he followed her.

I. The Castle of Lord Juss

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**OF THE RARITIES THAT WERE IN THE LOFTY
PRESENCE CHAMBER FAIR AND LOVELY TO
BEHOLD, AND OF THE QUALITIES AND CONDITIONS
OF THE LORDS OF DEMONLAND: AND OF THE
EMBASSY SENT UNTO THEM BY KING GORICE XI.,
AND OF THE ANSWER THERETO.**

p. 7 THE eastern stars were paling to the dawn as Lessingham followed his conductor along the grass walk between the shadowy ranks of Irish yews, that stood like soldiers mysterious and expectant in the darkness. The grass was bathed in night-dew, and great white lilies sleeping in the shadows of the yews loaded the air of that garden with fragrance. Lessingham felt no touch of the ground beneath his feet, and when he stretched out his hand to touch a tree his hand passed through branch and leaves as though they were unsubstantial as a moonbeam.

The little martlet, alighting on his shoulder, laughed in his ear. "Child of earth," she said, "dost think we are here in dreamland?"

He answered nothing, and she said, "This is no dream.

p. 8 Thou, first of the children of men, art come to Mercury, where thou and I will journey up and down for a season to show thee the lands and oceans, the forests, plains, and ancient mountains, cities and palaces of this world, Mercury, and the doings of them that dwell therein. But here thou canst not handle aught, neither make the folk ware of thee, not though thou shout thy throat hoarse.

For thou and I walk here impalpable and invisible, as it were two dreams walking."

They were now on the marble steps which led from the yew walk to the terrace opposite the great gate of the castle. "No need to unbar gates to thee and me," said the martlet, as they passed beneath the darkness of that ancient portal, carved with strange devices, and clean through the massy timbers of the bolted gate thickly riveted with silver, into the inner court. "Go we into the lofty presence chamber and there tarry awhile. Morning is kindling the upper air, and folk will soon be stirring in the castle, for they lie not long abed when day begins in Demonland. For be it known to thee, O earth-born, that this land is Demonland, and this castle the castle of Lord Juss, and this day now dawning his birthday, when the Demons hold high festival in Juss's castle to do honour unto him and to his brethren, Spitfire and Goldry Bluszco; and these and their fathers before them bear rule from time immemorial in Demonland, and have the lordship over all the Demons."

She spoke, and the first low beams of the sun smote javelin-like through the eastern windows, and the freshness of morning breathed and shimmered in that lofty chamber, chasing the blue and dusky shades of departed night to the corners and recesses, and to the rafters of the vaulted roof. Surely no potentate of earth, not Croesus, not the great King, not Minos in his royal palace in Crete, not all the Pharaohs, not Queen Semiramis, nor all the Kings of Babylon and Nineveh had ever a throne room to compare in glory with that high presence chamber of the lords of Demonland. Its walls and pillars were of snow-white

marble, every vein whereof was set with p. 9 small gems: rubies, corals, garnets, and pink topaz. Seven pillars on either side bore up the shadowy vault of the roof; the roof-tree and the beams were of gold, curiously carved, the roof itself of mother-of-pearl. A side aisle ran behind each row of pillars, and seven paintings on the western side faced seven spacious windows on the east. At the end of the hall upon a dais stood three high seats, the arms of each composed of two hippogriffs wrought in gold, with wings spread, and the legs of the seats the legs of the hippogriffs; but the body of each high seat was a single jewel of monstrous size: the left-hand seat a black opal, asparkle with steel-blue fire, the next a fire-opal, as it were a burning coal, the third seat an alexandrite, purple like wine by night but deep sea-green by day. Ten more pillars stood in semicircle behind the high seats, bearing up above them and the dais a canopy of gold. The benches that ran from end to end of the lofty chamber were of cedar, inlaid with coral and ivory, and so were the tables that stood before the benches. The floor of the chamber was tessellated, of marble and green tourmaline, and on every square of tourmaline was carved the image of a fish: as the dolphin, the conger, the cat-fish, the salmon, the tunny, the squid, and other wonders of the deep. Hangings of tapestry were behind the high seats, worked with flowers, snake's-head, snapdragon, dragon-mouth, and their kind; and on the dado below the windows were sculptures of birds and beasts and creeping things.

But a great wonder of this chamber, and a marvel to behold, was how the capital of every one of the four-and-

twenty pillars was hewn from a single precious stone, carved by the hand of some sculptor of long ago into the living form of a monster: here was a harpy with screaming mouth, so wondrously cut in ochre-tinted jade it was a marvel to hear no scream from her: here in wine-yellow topaz a flying fire-drake: there a cockatrice made of a single ruby: there a star sapphire the colour of moonlight, cut for a cyclops, so that the rays of the star trembled from his single eye: salamanders, mermaids, [p. 10](#) chimaeras, wild men o' the woods, leviathans, all hewn from faultless gems, thrice the bulk of a big man's body, velvet-dark sapphires, cristolite, beryl, amethyst, and the yellow zircon that is like transparent gold.

To give light to the presence chamber were seven escarbuncles, great as pumpkins, hung in order down the length of it, and nine fair moonstones standing in order on silver pedestals between the pillars on the dais. These jewels, drinking in the sunshine by day, gave it forth during the hours of darkness in a radiance of pink light and a soft effulgence as of moonbeams. And yet another marvel, the nether side of the canopy over the high seats was encrusted with lapis lazuli, and in that feigned dome of heaven burned the twelve signs of the zodiac, every star a diamond that shone with its own light.

* * *

Folk now began to be astir in the castle, and there came a score of serving men into the presence chamber with brooms and brushes, cloths and leathers, to sweep and garnish it, and burnish the gold and jewels of the chamber. Lissome they were and sprightly of gait, of fresh

complexion and fair-haired. Horns grew on their heads. When their tasks were accomplished they departed, and the presence began to fill with guests. A joy it was to see such a shifting maze of velvets, furs, curious needleworks and cloth of tissue, tiffanies, laces, ruffs, goodly chains and carcanets of gold: such glitter of jewels and weapons: such nodding of the plumes the Demons wore in their hair, half veiling the horns that grew upon their heads. Some were sitting on the benches or leaning on the polished tables, some walking forth and back upon the shining floor. Here and there were women among them, women so fair one had said: it is surely white-armed Helen this one; this, Arcadian Atalanta; this, Phryne that stood to Praxiteles for Aphrodite's picture; this, Thaïs, for whom great Alexander to pleasure her fantasy did burn Persepolis like a candle; this, she that was rapt by the Dark God from the flowering fields of Enna, to be Queen for ever among the dead that be departed. p. 11 Now came a stir near the stately doorway, and Lessingham beheld a Demon of burly frame and noble port, richly attired. His face was ruddy and somewhat freckled, his forehead wide, his eyes calm and blue like the sea. His beard, thick and tawny, was parted and brushed back and upwards on either side.

"Tell me, my little martlet," said Lessingham, "is this Lord Juss?"

"This is not Lord Juss," answered the martlet, "nor aught so worshipful as he. The lord thou seest is Volle, who dwelleth under Kartadza, by the salt sea. A great sea-captain is he, and one that did service to the cause of

Demonland, and of the whole world besides, in the late wars against the Ghouls.

"But cast thine eyes again towards the door, where one standeth amid a knot of friends, tall and somewhat stooping, in a corselet of silver, and a cloak of old brocaded silk coloured like tarnished gold; something like to Volle in feature, but swarthy, and with bristling black moustachios."

"I see him," said Lessingham. "This then is Lord Juss!"

"Not so," said martlet. "'Tis but Vizz, brother to Volle. He is wealthiest in goods of all the Demons, save the three brethren only and Lord Brandoch Daha."

"And who is this?" asked Lessingham, pointing to one of light and brisk step and humorous eye, who in that moment met Volle and engaged him in converse apart. Handsome of face he was, albeit somewhat long-nosed and sharp-nosed: keen and hard and filled with life and the joy of it.

"Here thou beholdest," answered she, "Lord Zigg, the far-famed tamer of horses. Well loved is he among the Demons, for he is merry of mood, and a mighty man of his hands withal when he leadeth his horsemen against the enemy."

Volle threw up his beard and laughed a great laugh at some jest that Zigg whispered in his ear, and Lessingham leaned forward into the hall if haply he might catch p. 12 what was said. The hum of talk drowned the words, but leaning forward Lessingham saw where the arras curtains behind the dais parted for a moment, and one of princely bearing advanced past the high seats down the body of the hall. His gait was delicate, as of some lithe beast of prey newly wakened out of slumber, and he greeted with lazy

grace the many friends who hailed his entrance. Very tall was that lord, and slender of build, like a girl. His tunic was of silk coloured like the wild rose, and embroidered in gold with representations of flowers and thunderbolts. Jewels glittered on his left hand and on the golden bracelets on his arms, and on the fillet twined among the golden curls of his hair, set with plumes of the king-bird of Paradise. His horns were dyed with saffron, and inlaid with filigree work of gold. His buskins were laced with gold, and from his belt hung a sword, narrow of blade and keen, the hilt rough with beryls and black diamonds. Strangely light and delicate was his frame and seeming, yet with a sense of slumbering power beneath, as the delicate peak of a snow mountain seen afar in the low red rays of morning. His face was beautiful to look upon, and softly coloured like a girl's face, and his expression one of gentle melancholy, mixed with some disdain; but fiery glints awoke at intervals in his eyes, and the lines of swift determination hovered round the mouth below his curled moustachios.

"At last," murmured Lessingham, "at last, Lord Juss!" "Little art thou to blame," said the martlet, "for this misprision, for scarce could a lordlier sight have joyed thine eyes. Yet is this not Juss, but Lord Brandoch Daha, to whom all Demonland west of Shalgreth and Stropardon oweth allegiance: the rich vineyards of Krothering, the broad pasture lands of Failze, and all the western islands and their cragbound fastnesses. Think not, because he affecteth silks and jewels like a queen, and carrieth himself light and dainty as a silver birch tree on the mountain, that his hand is light or his courage doubtful in war. For years

was he held for the third best man-at-arms in all Mercury, along with these, Goldry [p. 13](#) Bluszco and Gorice X. of Witchland. And Gorice he slew, nine summers back, in single combat, when the Witches harried in Goblinland and Brandoch Daha led five hundred and fourscore Demons to succour Gaslark, the king of that country. And now can none surpass Lord Brandoch Daha in feats of arms, save perchance Goldry alone.

"Yet, lo," she said, as a sweet and wild music stole on the ear, and the guests turned towards the dais, and the hangings parted, "at last, the triple lordship of Demonland! Strike softly, music: smile, Fates, on this festal day! Joy and safe days shine for this world and Demonland! Turn thy gaze first on him who walks in majesty in the midst, his tunic of olive-green velvet ornamented with devices of hidden meaning in thread of gold and beads of chrysolite. Mark how the buskins, clasping his stalwart calves, glitter with gold and amber. Mark the dusky cloak streamed with gold and lined with blood-red silk: a charmed cloak, made by the sylphs in forgotten days, bringing good hap to the wearer, so he be true of heart and no dastard. Mark him that weareth it, his sweet dark countenance, the violet fire in his eyes, the sombre warmth of his smile, like autumn woods in late sunshine. This is Lord Juss, lord of this age-remembering castle, than whom none hath more worship in wide Demonland. Somewhat he knoweth of art magical, yet useth not that art; for it sappeth the life and strength, nor is it held worthy that a Demon should put trust in that art, but rather in his own might and main.

"Now turn thine eyes to him that leaneth on Juss's left arm, shorter but mayhap sturdier than he, apparelled in black silk that shimmers with gold as he moveth, and crowned with black eagle's feathers among his horns and yellow hair. His face is wild and keen like a sea-eagle's, and from his bristling brows the eyes dart glances sharp as a glancing spear. A faint flame, pallid like the fire of a Will-o'-the-Wisp, breathes ever and anon from his distended nostrils. This is Lord Spitfire, impetuous in war. p. 14

"Last, behold on Juss's right hand, yon lord that bulks mighty as Hercules yet steppeth lightly as a heifer. The thews and sinews of his great limbs ripple as he moves beneath a skin whiter than ivory; his cloak of cloth of gold is heavy with jewels, his tunic of black sendaline hath great hearts worked thereon in rubies and red silk thread. Slung from his shoulders clanks a two-handed sword, the pommel a huge star-ruby carven in the image of a heart, for the heart is his sign and symbol. This is that sword forged by the elves, wherewith he slew the sea-monster, as thou mayest see in the painting on the wall. Noble is he of countenance, most like to his brother Juss, but darker brown of hair and ruddier of hue and bigger of cheekbone. Look well on him, for never shall thine eyes behold a greater champion than the Lord Goldry Bluszco, captain of the hosts of Demonland."

Now when the greetings were done and the strains of the lutes and recorders sighed and lost themselves in the shadowy vault of the roof, the cup-bearers did fill great gems made in form of cups with ancient wine, and the Demons caroused to Lord Juss deep draughts in honour of

this day of his nativity. And now they were ready to set forth by twos and threes into the parks and pleasaunces, some to take their pleasure about the fair gardens and fishponds, some to hunt wild game among the wooded hills, some to disport themselves at quoits or tennis or riding at the ring or martial exercises; that so they might spend the livelong day as befitteth high holiday, in pleasure and action without care, and thereafter revel in the lofty presence chamber till night grew old with eating and drinking and all delight.

But as they were upon going forth, a trumpet was sounded without, three strident blasts.

"What kill-joy have we here?" said Spitfire. "The trumpet soundeth only for travellers from the outlands. I feel it in my bones some rascal is come to Galing, one that bringeth ill hap in his pocket and a shadow athwart the sun on this our day of festival." p. 15 "Speak no word of ill omen," answered Juss. "Whosoe'er it be, we will straight dispatch his business and so fall to pleasure indeed. Some, run to the gate and bring him in."

The serving man hastened and returned, saying, "Lord, it is an Ambassador from Witchland and his train. Their ship made land at Lookinghaven-ness at nightfall. They slept on board, and your soldiers gave them escort to Galing at break of day. He craveth present audience."

"From Witchland, ha?" said Juss. "Such smokes use ever to go before the fire."

"Shall's bid the fellow," said Spitfire, "wait on our pleasure? It is pity such should poison our gladness."

Goldry laughed and said, "Whom hath he sent us? Laxus, think you? to make his peace with us again for that vile part of his practised against us off Kartadza, detestably falsifying his word he had given us?"

Juss said to the serving man, "Thou sawest the Ambassador. Who is he?"

"Lord," answered he, "His face was strange to me. He is little of stature and, by your highness' leave, the most unlike to a great lord of Witchland that ever I saw. And, by your leave, for all the marvellous rich and sumptuous coat a weareth, he is very like a false jewel in a rich casing."

"Well," said Juss, "a sour draught sweetens not in the waiting. Call we in the Ambassador."

Lord Juss sat in the high seat midmost of the dais, with Goldry on his right in the seat of black opal, and on his left Spitfire, throned on the alexandrite. On the dais sat likewise those other lords of Demonland, and the guests of lower degree thronged the benches and the polished tables as the wide doors opened on their silver hinges, and the Ambassador with pomp and ceremony paced up the shining floor of marble and green tourmaline.

"Why, what a beastly fellow is this?" said Lord Goldry in his brother's ear. "His hairy hands reach down to his knees. A shuffleth in his walk like a hobbled jackass."

p. 17 "I like not the dirty face of the Ambassador," said Lord Zigg. "His nose sitteth flat on the face of him as it were a dab of clay, and I can see pat up his nostrils a summer day's journey into his head. If's upper lip bespeak him not a rare spouter of rank fustian, perdition catch me.

Were it a finger's breadth longer, a might tuck it into his collar to keep his chin warm of a winter's night."

"I like not the smell of the Ambassador," said Lord Brandoch Daha. And he called for censers and sprinklers of lavender and rose water to purify the chamber, and let open the crystal windows that the breezes of heaven might enter and make all sweet.

So the Ambassador walked up the shining floor and stood before the lords of Demonland that sat upon the high seats between the golden hippogriffs. He was robed in a long mantle of scarlet lined with ermine, with crabs, woodlice, and centipedes worked thereon in golden thread. His head was covered with a black velvet cap with a peacock's feather fastened with a brooch of silver. Supported by his trainbearers and attendants, and leaning on his golden staff, he with raucous accent delivered his mission:

"Juss, Goldry, and Spitfire, and ye other Demons, I come before you as the Ambassador of Gorice XI., most glorious King of Witchland, Lord and great Duke of Buteny and Estremerine, Commander of Shulan, Thramnë, Mingos, and Permio, and High Warden of the Esamocian Marches, Great Duke of Trace, King Paramount of Beshtria and Nevria and Prince of Ar, Great Lord over the country of Ojedia, Maltraëny, and of Baltary and Toribia, and Lord of many other countries, most glorious and most great, whose power and glory is over all the world and whose name shall endure for all generations. And first I bid you be bound by that reverence for my sacred office of envoy from the King,