





*The Fellowship of the Ring*

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## NOTE ON THE TEXT

*The Lord of the Rings* is often erroneously called a trilogy, when it is in fact a single novel, consisting of six books plus appendices,<sup>1</sup> published for convenience in three volumes. The first volume, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, was published in Great Britain by the London firm George Allen & Unwin on 29 July 1954; an American edition followed on 21 October of the same year, published by Houghton Mifflin Company of Boston.

In the production of this first volume, Tolkien experienced what became for him a continual problem: printer's errors and compositor's mistakes, including well-intentioned "corrections" of his sometimes idiosyncratic usage. These "corrections" include the altering of *dwarves* to *dwarfs*, *elvish* to *elfish*, *further* to *farther*, *nasturtians* to *nasturtiums*, and ("worst of all" to Tolkien) *elven* to *elfin*. In a work such as *The Lord of the Rings*, containing invented languages and delicately constructed nomenclatures, errors and inconsistencies impede both the understanding and appreciation of serious readers—and Tolkien had many such readers from very early on. Even before publication of the third volume, which contained much hitherto unknown information on the invented languages and writing systems, Tolkien had received many letters from readers written in these systems, in addition to many inquiries on the finer points of their usage.

The second volume, *The Two Towers*, was published in England on 11 November 1954 and in the United States on 21 April 1955. Meanwhile Tolkien worked to keep a promise he had made in the foreword to volume one: that "an index of names and strange words" would appear in the third volume. As originally planned, this index would contain much etymological information on the languages, particularly on the Elvish language, with a large Elvish vocabulary. It proved the chief cause of the delay in publishing volume three, which in the end contained no index at all, but only an apology from the publisher for its absence. Tolkien had abandoned work on it after indexing volumes one and two, believing its cost and size to be ruinous.

Volume three, *The Return of the King*,<sup>2</sup> finally appeared in England on 20 October 1955 and in the United States on 5 January 1956. With the appearance of the third volume, *The Lord of the Rings* was published in its entirety, and its first edition text remained unrevised and virtually unchanged for nearly a decade. (Apparently at some time around 1955–56 the text was reset, thereby introducing mistakes into the later printings which were not in the earlier ones. When revising the text, Tolkien noted many of these in his check copy, particularly in volume one.)

In 1965, stemming from what then appeared to be copyright problems in the United States, an American paperback firm published an unauthorized and nonroyalty-paying edition of *The Lord of the Rings*. This edition was published by Ace Books in May (volume one) and July (volumes two and three). For this edition the text of the narrative was reset, thus introducing new typographical errors; the appendices, however, were reproduced photographically from the hardcover edition, and remain consistent with it.

Tolkien set to work on his first revision of the text so that a newly revised and authorized edition could successfully compete on the market. This first revision of the text was published in America in paperback by Ballantine Books in October 1965. In addition to revisions within the text itself, Tolkien replaced his original foreword with a new one,<sup>3</sup> and added an extension to the prologue and an index—not the detailed index of names promised in the first edition, but, rather, a bald index with only names and page references. Also, at this time the appendices were greatly revised.

Tolkien received his copies of the Ballantine edition in late January 1966, and in early February he recorded in his diary that he had “worked for some hours on the Appendices in Ballantine version & found more errors than I at first expected.” Soon after this he sent a small number of further revisions to Ballantine for the appendices, including the now well-known addition of “Estella Bolger” as wife of Meriadoc in the family trees in Appendix C. Most of these revisions, which first appeared in the fourth impression (August 1966) of volume three, and which were not always inserted correctly (thereby causing further confusion in the text), somehow never made it into the main descent of revision in the three-volume British hardcover edition, and have to this day remained an anomaly. Tolkien once wrote, concerning the revising of *The Lord of the Rings*, that perhaps he had failed to keep his notes in order; this errant branch of revision seems likely to be an example of that disorder.

The revised text first appeared in Great Britain in a three-volume hardcover “Second Edition” from Allen & Unwin on 3 November 1966. The text of this edition is slightly different from the Ballantine text, perhaps due to closer attention to Tolkien’s directions for revision. The Ballantine text had been typeset under a great pressure of urgency, in order to be published as quickly as possible, and Tolkien’s revisions were sometimes sloppily incorporated or simply overlooked.

For this 1966 Allen & Unwin edition the appendices were reset to include Tolkien’s extensive revisions and the index. This introduced a number of typographical errors which are often mistaken for revisions. A close scrutiny of the first edition text and of the much later corrected impressions of the second edition is therefore necessary to discern

whether any particular change in this edition is authorial or erroneous.

In America, the revised text appeared in hardcover in the three-volume edition published by Houghton Mifflin on 27 February 1967. This text was photo-offset from the 1966 Allen & Unwin three-volume hardcover, and is thus consistent with it. Aside from the first printing of this second Houghton Mifflin edition, which has a 1967 date on the title page, none of the many reprintings are dated. After the initial printings of this edition, which bore a 1966 copyright notice, the date of copyright was changed to 1965 to match the statement in the Ballantine edition. This change has caused a great deal of confusion for librarians and other researchers who have tried to sort out the sequence of publication of these editions.

Meanwhile Tolkien spent much of the summer of 1966 further revising the text. In June he learned that any further revisions were too late for inclusion in the 1966 Allen & Unwin second edition, and he recorded in his diary: "But I am attempting to complete my work [on the revision]—I cannot leave it while it is all in my mind. So much time has been wasted in all my work by this constant breaking of threads." This was the last set of revisions Tolkien himself made to the text. They were added to the second impressions (1967) of the three-volume hardcover Allen & Unwin second edition. The revisions themselves mostly included revisions of nomenclature and attempts at consistency of usage throughout the three volumes. One specific revision is important: the recasting of page 203 of volume two, which concerns Gandalf's knowledge of the *palantíri*.

J.R.R. Tolkien died in 1973. His third son and literary executor, Christopher Tolkien, sent a large set of further corrections of misprints, mainly in the appendices and index, to Allen & Unwin for inclusion in their three-volume hardcover edition of 1974. Most of these corrections were typographical, and in line with his father's expressed intent. This set of corrections includes one example worth noting here because of the frequency with which it has been quoted as Tolkien's usage when it is in fact only a misprint that had escaped detection. Page 206 of volume one should correctly refer to one of the Silmarils as the "bride-price" (not "bride-piece") of Lúthien to her father.

Since 1974 Christopher Tolkien has sent additional corrections, as they have been discovered, to Allen & Unwin, who have been conscientious in seeing that any corrections made in the main three-volume hardcover edition are carried over into all other editions of *The Lord of the Rings* that they publish. Every time the text has been reset for publication in a new format (e.g., the various paperback editions published in England by Unwin Books), huge numbers of new misprints have crept in, though at times some of these have been observed and corrected in the various editions.

In the United States, the text of the Ballantine paperback has remained

unchanged since Tolkien added his few revisions in 1966. The text in all of the Houghton Mifflin editions derives from their 1967 second edition, and has remained unchanged since that date. This new reprinting of the three volumes of *The Lord of the Rings* is photo-offset from the most recent reprinting of the three-volume British hardcover edition, which has been until now the most authoritative text available. Additionally this new reprinting contains some further corrections, and integrates the errant Ballantine branch of revision (including the "Estella Bolger" addition) into the main branch of textual descent.<sup>4</sup>

The present text, then, is the most faithful to the author's intent, and in a typographical sense, the most near-to-perfect text of *The Lord of the Rings* ever to appear in print. To a general reader this text may be of only minor significance; but to anyone interested in Tolkien's work in detail, especially with regard to his nomenclatures and invented languages, this text is essential.

The textual history of *The Lord of the Rings* is a vast and complex web. In this brief note I have given only a glimpse of the overall sequence and structure, and also a few examples of the salient points and intricacies. Further details on the revisions and corrections made over the years to the text of *The Lord of the Rings*, and a fuller account of its publishing history, will be found in my and Wayne G. Hammond's descriptive bibliography of the works of J.R.R. Tolkien, now in progress.

Douglas A. Anderson  
Ithaca, New York  
October 1986

1. Tolkien's titles for the six books were not used. A contents listing with the manuscript of *The Lord of the Rings* at Marquette University gives them as follows: Volume I, "The First Journey" and "The Journey of the Nine Companions"; Volume II, "The Treason of Isengard" and "The Journey of the Ringbearers"; Volume III, "The War of the Ring" and "The End of the Third Age." A variant set of titles can be found in *Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*, p. 167.
2. For the third volume Tolkien preferred the title *The War of the Ring*, as it gave away less of the story.
3. Tolkien was pleased to remove the original foreword. In his check copy he wrote of it: "Confusing (as it does) real personal matters with the 'machinery' of the Tale, is a serious mistake."
4. It should be noted here that while a revised map of Middle-earth by Christopher Tolkien (which originally appeared in *Unfinished Tales* [1980] and which is presently tipped in at the ends of volumes one and two) has replaced his earlier version of this map, his two other maps are unrevised and still contain a few spelling errors. Noteworthy of these errors is the use of "k" for "c" in the enlarged map of the Gondor area in volume three, reflecting J.R.R. Tolkien's original usage, which he altered only at the proof stage, leaving the map alone in error (cf. Kiril, Kelos, and Kirith Ungol for Ciril, Celos, and Cirith Ungol; see *Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*, p. 247). In the map of "A Part of the Shire" in volume one, Rushey is misspelled "Rushy", and "Green-Hill Country" should be unhyphenated.

THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING





# THE LORD OF THE RINGS

*Three Rings for the Elven-kings under the sky,  
Seven for the Dwarf-lords in their halls of stone,  
Nine for Mortal Men doomed to die,  
One for the Dark Lord on his dark throne  
In the Land of Mordor where the Shadows lie.  
One Ring to rule them all, One Ring to find them,  
One Ring to bring them all and in the darkness bind them  
In the Land of Mordor where the Shadows lie.*



## FOREWORD TO THE SECOND EDITION

This tale grew in the telling, until it became a history of the Great War of the Ring and included many glimpses of the yet more ancient history that preceded it. It was begun soon after *The Hobbit* was written and before its publication in 1937; but I did not go on with this sequel, for I wished first to complete and set in order the mythology and legends of the Elder Days, which had then been taking shape for some years. I desired to do this for my own satisfaction, and I had little hope that other people would be interested in this work, especially since it was primarily linguistic in inspiration and was begun in order to provide the necessary background of 'history' for Elvish tongues.

When those whose advice and opinion I sought corrected *little hope* to *no hope*, I went back to the sequel, encouraged by requests from readers for more information concerning hobbits and their adventures. But the story was drawn irresistibly towards the older world, and became an account, as it were, of its end and passing away before its beginning and middle had been told. The process had begun in the writing of *The Hobbit*, in which there were already some references to the older matter: Elrond, Gondolin, the High-elves, and the orcs, as well as glimpses that had arisen unbidden of things higher or deeper or darker than its surface: Durin, Moria, Gandalf, the Necromancer, the Ring. The discovery of the significance of these glimpses and of their relation to the ancient histories revealed the Third Age and its culmination in the War of the Ring.

Those who had asked for more information about hobbits eventually got it, but they had to wait a long time; for the composition of *The Lord of the Rings* went on at intervals during the years 1936 to 1949, a period in which I had many duties that I did not neglect, and many other interests as a learner and teacher that often absorbed me. The delay was, of course, also increased by the outbreak of war in 1939, by the end of which year the tale had not yet reached the end of Book I. In spite of the darkness of the next five years I found that the story could not now be wholly abandoned, and I plodded on, mostly by night, till I stood by Balin's tomb in Moria. There I halted for a long while. It was almost a year later when I went on and so came to Lothlórien and the Great River late in 1941. In the next year I wrote the first drafts of the matter that now stands as Book III, and the beginnings of Chapters 1 and 3 of Book V; and there as the beacons flared in Anórien and Théoden came to Harrowdale

I stopped. Foresight had failed and there was no time for thought.

It was during 1944 that, leaving the loose ends and perplexities of a war which it was my task to conduct, or at least to report, I forced myself to tackle the journey of Frodo to Mordor. These chapters, eventually to become Book IV, were written and sent out as a serial to my son, Christopher, then in South Africa with the R.A.F. Nonetheless it took another five years before the tale was brought to its present end; in that time I changed my house, my chair, and my college, and the days though less dark were no less laborious. Then when the 'end' had at last been reached the whole story had to be revised, and indeed largely re-written backwards. And it had to be typed, and re-typed: by me; the cost of professional typing by the ten-fingered was beyond my means.

*The Lord of the Rings* has been read by many people since it finally appeared in print; and I should like to say something here with reference to the many opinions or guesses that I have received or have read concerning the motives and meaning of the tale. The prime motive was the desire of a tale-teller to try his hand at a really long story that would hold the attention of readers, amuse them, delight them, and at times maybe excite them or deeply move them. As a guide I had only my own feelings for what is appealing or moving, and for many the guide was inevitably often at fault. Some who have read the book, or at any rate have reviewed it, have found it boring, absurd, or contemptible; and I have no cause to complain, since I have similar opinions of their works, or of the kinds of writing that they evidently prefer. But even from the points of view of many who have enjoyed my story there is much that fails to please. It is perhaps not possible in a long tale to please everybody at all points, nor to displease everybody at the same points; for I find from the letters that I have received that the passages or chapters that are to some a blemish are all by others specially approved. The most critical reader of all, myself, now finds many defects, minor and major, but being fortunately under no obligation either to review the book or to write it again, he will pass over these in silence, except one that has been noted by others: the book is too short.

As for any inner meaning or 'message', it has in the intention of the author none. It is neither allegorical nor topical. As the story grew it put down roots (into the past) and threw out unexpected branches; but its main theme was settled from the outset by the inevitable choice of the Ring as the link between it and *The Hobbit*. The crucial chapter, 'The Shadow of the Past', is one of the oldest parts of the tale. It was written long before the foreshadow of 1939 had yet become a threat of inevitable disaster, and from that point the story

would have developed along essentially the same lines, if that disaster had been averted. Its sources are things long before in mind, or in some cases already written, and little or nothing in it was modified by the war that began in 1939 or its sequels.

The real war does not resemble the legendary war in its process or its conclusion. If it had inspired or directed the development of the legend, then certainly the Ring would have been seized and used against Sauron; he would not have been annihilated but enslaved, and Barad-dûr would not have been destroyed but occupied. Saruman, failing to get possession of the Ring, would in the confusion and treacheries of the time have found in Mordor the missing links in his own researches into Ring-lore, and before long he would have made a Great Ring of his own with which to challenge the self-styled Ruler of Middle-earth. In that conflict both sides would have held hobbits in hatred and contempt: they would not long have survived even as slaves.

Other arrangements could be devised according to the tastes or views of those who like allegory or topical reference. But I cordially dislike allegory in all its manifestations, and always have done so since I grew old and wary enough to detect its presence. I much prefer history, true or feigned, with its varied applicability to the thought and experience of readers. I think that many confuse 'applicability' with 'allegory'; but the one resides in the freedom of the reader, and the other in the purposed domination of the author.

An author cannot of course remain wholly unaffected by his experience, but the ways in which a story-germ uses the soil of experience are extremely complex, and attempts to define the process are at best guesses from evidence that is inadequate and ambiguous. It is also false, though naturally attractive, when the lives of an author and critic have overlapped, to suppose that the movements of thought or the events of times common to both were necessarily the most powerful influences. One has indeed personally to come under the shadow of war to feel fully its oppression; but as the years go by it seems now often forgotten that to be caught in youth by 1914 was no less hideous an experience than to be involved in 1939 and the following years. By 1918 all but one of my close friends were dead. Or to take a less grievous matter: it has been supposed by some that 'The Scouring of the Shire' reflects the situation in England at the time when I was finishing my tale. It does not. It is an essential part of the plot, foreseen from the outset, though in the event modified by the character of Saruman as developed in the story without, need I say, any allegorical significance or contemporary political reference whatsoever. It has indeed some basis in experience, though slender

(for the economic situation was entirely different), and much further back. The country in which I lived in childhood was being shabbily destroyed before I was ten, in days when motor-cars were rare objects (I had never seen one) and men were still building suburban railways. Recently I saw in a paper a picture of the last decrepitude of the once thriving corn-mill beside its pool that long ago seemed to me so important. I never liked the looks of the Young miller, but his father, the Old miller, had a black beard, and he was not named Sandyman.

*The Lord of the Rings* is now issued in a new edition, and the opportunity has been taken of revising it. A number of errors and inconsistencies that still remained in the text have been corrected, and an attempt has been made to provide information on a few points which attentive readers have raised. I have considered all their comments and enquiries, and if some seem to have been passed over that may be because I have failed to keep my notes in order; but many enquiries could only be answered by additional appendices, or indeed by the production of an accessory volume containing much of the material that I did not include in the original edition, in particular more detailed linguistic information. In the meantime this edition offers this Foreword, an addition to the Prologue, some notes, and an index of the names of persons and places. This index is in intention complete in items but not in references, since for the present purpose it has been necessary to reduce its bulk. A complete index, making full use of the material prepared for me by Mrs. N. Smith, belongs rather to the accessory volume.

# PROLOGUE

## I

### *Concerning Hobbits*

This book is largely concerned with Hobbits, and from its pages a reader may discover much of their character and a little of their history. Further information will also be found in the selection from the Red Book of Westmarch that has already been published, under the title of *The Hobbit*. That story was derived from the earlier chapters of the Red Book, composed by Bilbo himself, the first Hobbit to become famous in the world at large, and called by him *There and Back Again*, since they told of his journey into the East and his return: an adventure which later involved all the Hobbits in the great events of that Age that are here related.

Many, however, may wish to know more about this remarkable people from the outset, while some may not possess the earlier book. For such readers a few notes on the more important points are here collected from Hobbit-lore, and the first adventure is briefly recalled.

Hobbits are an unobtrusive but very ancient people, more numerous formerly than they are today; for they love peace and quiet and good tilled earth: a well-ordered and well-farmed countryside was their favourite haunt. They do not and did not understand or like machines more complicated than a forge-bellows, a water-mill, or a hand-loom, though they were skilful with tools. Even in ancient days they were, as a rule, shy of 'the Big Folk', as they call us, and now they avoid us with dismay and are becoming hard to find. They are quick of hearing and sharp-eyed, and though they are inclined to be fat and do not hurry unnecessarily, they are nonetheless nimble and deft in their movements. They possessed from the first the art of disappearing swiftly and silently, when large folk whom they do not wish to meet come blundering by; and this art they have developed until to Men it may seem magical. But Hobbits have never, in fact, studied magic of any kind, and their elusiveness is due solely to a professional skill that heredity and practice, and a close friendship with the earth, have rendered inimitable by bigger and clumsier races.

For they are a little people, smaller than Dwarves: less stout and stocky, that is, even when they are not actually much shorter. Their height is variable, ranging between two and four feet of our measure. They seldom now reach three feet; but they have dwindled, they say,



and in ancient days they were taller. According to the Red Book, Bandobras Took (Bullroarer), son of Isengrim the Second, was four foot five and able to ride a horse. He was surpassed in all Hobbit records only by two famous characters of old; but that curious matter is dealt with in this book.

As for the Hobbits of the Shire, with whom these tales are concerned, in the days of their peace and prosperity they were a merry folk. They dressed in bright colours, being notably fond of yellow and green; but they seldom wore shoes, since their feet had tough leathery soles and were clad in a thick curling hair, much like the hair of their heads, which was commonly brown. Thus, the only craft little practised among them was shoe-making; but they had long and skilful fingers and could make many other useful and comely things. Their faces were as a rule good-natured rather than beautiful, broad, bright-eyed, red-cheeked, with mouths apt to laughter, and to eating and drinking. And laugh they did, and eat, and drink, often and heartily, being fond of simple jests at all times, and of six meals a day (when they could get them). They were hospitable and delighted in parties, and in presents, which they gave away freely and eagerly accepted.

It is plain indeed that in spite of later estrangement Hobbits are relatives of ours: far nearer to us than Elves, or even than Dwarves. Of old they spoke the languages of Men, after their own fashion, and liked and disliked much the same things as Men did. But what exactly our relationship is can no longer be discovered. The beginning of Hobbits lies far back in the Elder Days that are now lost and forgotten. Only the Elves still preserve any records of that vanished time, and their traditions are concerned almost entirely with their own history, in which Men appear seldom and Hobbits are not mentioned at all. Yet it is clear that Hobbits had, in fact, lived quietly in Middle-earth for many long years before other folk became even aware of them. And the world being after all full of strange creatures beyond count, these little people seemed of very little importance. But in the days of Bilbo, and of Frodo his heir, they suddenly became, by no wish of their own, both important and renowned, and troubled the counsels of the Wise and the Great.

Those days, the Third Age of Middle-earth, are now long past, and the shape of all lands has been changed; but the regions in which Hobbits then lived were doubtless the same as those in which they still linger: the North-West of the Old World, east of the Sea. Of their original home the Hobbits in Bilbo's time preserved no knowledge. A love of learning (other than genealogical lore) was far from