



CRITICISM

VOLUME

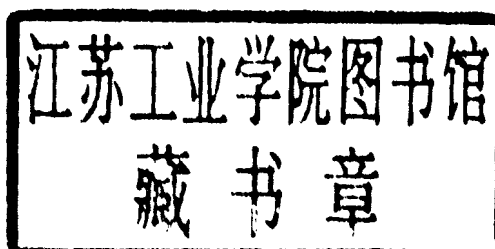
74

Poetry Criticism

*Excerpts from Criticism of the Works
of the Most Significant and Widely
Studied Poets of World Literature*

Volume 74

Michelle Lee
Project Editor



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Poetry Criticism, Vol. 74

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Scope of the Series

PC is designed to serve as an introduction to major poets of all eras and nationalities. Since these authors have inspired a great deal of relevant critical material, PC is necessarily selective, and the editors have chosen the most important published criticism to aid readers and students in their research. Each author entry presents a historical survey of the critical response to that author's work. The length of an entry is intended to reflect the amount of critical attention the author has received from critics writing in English and from foreign critics in translation. Every attempt has been made to identify and include the most significant essays on each author's work. In order to provide these important critical pieces, the editors sometimes reprint essays that have appeared elsewhere in Thomson Gale's Literary Criticism Series. Such duplication, however, never exceeds twenty percent of a PC volume.

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Each PC entry consists of the following elements:

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- The **Introduction** contains background information that introduces the reader to the author and the critical debates surrounding his or her work.
- The list of **Principal Works** is ordered chronologically by date of first publication and lists the most important works by the author. The first section comprises poetry collections and book-length poems. The second section gives information on other major works by the author. For foreign authors, the editors have provided original foreign-language publication information and have selected what are considered the best and most complete English-language editions of their works.
- Reprinted **Criticism** is arranged chronologically in each entry to provide a useful perspective on changes in critical evaluation over time. All individual titles of poems and poetry collections by the author featured in the entry are printed in boldface type. The critic's name and the date of composition or publication of the critical work are given at the beginning of each piece of criticism. Unsigned criticism is preceded by the title of the source in which it appeared. Footnotes are reprinted at the end of each essay or excerpt. In the case of excerpted criticism, only those footnotes that pertain to the excerpted texts are included.
- Critical essays are prefaced by brief **Annotations** explicating each piece.

- A complete **Bibliographical Citation** of the original essay or book precedes each piece of criticism.
- An annotated bibliography of **Further Reading** appears at the end of each entry and suggests resources for additional study. In some cases, significant essays for which the editors could not obtain reprint rights are included here. Boxed material following the further reading list provides references to other biographical and critical sources on the author in series published by Thomson Gale.

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Glen, Heather. "Blake's Criticism of Moral Thinking in *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*." In *Interpreting Blake*, edited by Michael Phillips, 32-69. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978. Reprinted in *Poetry Criticism*. Vol. 63, edited by Michelle Lee, 34-51. Detroit: Thomson Gale, 2005.

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Lewis Carroll

1832-1898

(Pseudonym of Charles Lutwidge Dodgson) English novelist, poet, satirist, and essayist.

For further information on Carroll's life and career, see *Poetry Criticism*, Vol. 18.

INTRODUCTION

Known primarily for his two fantasy novels, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking-Glass* (1872), Carroll also composed a number of "nonsense" poems, some of which were included in the two novels. "Jabberwocky," which appeared in the first *Alice* story, and *The Hunting of the Snark: An Agony in Eight Fits* (1876) are his best known and most frequently anthologized works of poetry.

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Born Charles Lutwidge Dodgson on January 27, 1832, in Daresbury, Cheshire, Carroll was the first son and third child of eleven children. His parents were the Reverend Charles Dodgson, a country pastor, and Frances Lutwidge Dodgson. During his early childhood he was educated at home and he often entertained his younger siblings by inventing nonsense games and stories. In 1843 his father took a position as rector of a parish in Yorkshire and moved the family to Croft, where Carroll was enrolled at Richmond Grammar School the following year. In 1846 he began studying at Rugby; his stay there lasted until 1850, when he entered Christ Church, Oxford, where he earned both bachelor's and master's degrees. He remained at Oxford for the rest of his life as a lecturer and curator. Carroll published a number of scholarly treatises on mathematics and symbolic logic, all under his own name; in 1856 he began using the pseudonym Lewis Carroll for his poetry and fictional works. Also in 1856, he took up photography as a hobby and became quite famous as an art photographer and as the nineteenth-century's premiere photographer of children. He became a deacon of the Church of England in 1861, but decided against taking holy orders.

Carroll remained a bachelor all his life, and although he had no children of his own, he befriended a number of little girls who inspired his creative imagination.

Foremost among these was Alice Liddell, the daughter of a friend, who provided the inspiration for the *Alice* stories; of lesser importance was Gertrude Chataway, for whom Carroll is believed to have written *The Hunting of the Snark*. His attraction to little girls has been studied by numerous critics and scholars, both in his own time and ever since, and most have concluded that the relationships were strictly platonic. Carroll died of a bronchial infection at his sister's home in Guildford on January 14, 1898, at the age of sixty-six. His family auctioned off most of his papers, games, and photographs shortly after his death, and much of this material is now lost.

MAJOR POETIC WORKS

Carroll's most significant work of poetry is *The Hunting of the Snark*, illustrated by Henry Holiday and considered the perfect nonsense poem by several critics. The poet himself denied that the work had a deep allegorical meaning, insisting that he intended it as nothing more than nonsense. A number of important poems were incorporated into the two *Alice* stories, most notably "The Walrus and the Carpenter" and "Jabberwocky," whose language is similar to that of the *Snark*; both make use of "portmanteau" words that feature two meanings combined into one word, such as "slithy" (which combines "lithe" and "slimy") or "snark" (which combines "snail" and "shark"). "Speak Roughly," in which parents are encouraged to abuse their children both physically and mentally, is a parody of "Speak Gently," a tender nursery rhyme well known in Victorian England and attributed variously to G. W. Langford or David Bates. Carroll also incorporated poetry into his novel for adults, *Sylvie and Bruno* (1889), but it is more serious than the nonsense pieces in the *Alice* books.

Carroll's other volumes of poetry include *Phantasmagoria and Other Poems* (1869), which includes most of Carroll's serious verse, and *Rhyme? and Reason?* (1883). His serious poetry was reissued in the 1898 volume *Three Sunsets and Other Poems*. Individual works include "The Valley of the Shadow of Death," "Solitude," "Stolen Waters," and "Faces in the Fire." Carroll also composed several parodies of the works of his contemporaries—Oliver Goldsmith, William Wordsworth, and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, among others—as well as a number of acrostics, including a

double acrostic in which the initial letters of each line as well as the words that begin each stanza spell out "Gertrude Chataway," to whom *The Hunting of the Snark* is dedicated.

CRITICAL RECEPTION

Although Carroll composed serious as well as humorous poetry, the former is generally considered uninspired and dull—as though it were the product of the sober deacon and mathematician Charles Dodgson, rather than the more playful, imaginative Lewis Carroll. Several critics have commented on the two opposing aspects of Carroll's personality, the mathematician/logician and the poet. According to Richard Kelly, Carroll's "serious poetry is largely derivative, romantic, sentimental, lyrical, and moral. His nonsense poetry, on the other hand, is highly original, cerebral, amoral and sometimes sadistic." He attributes the failure of the serious verse to the fact that "it is the product of an analytical and logical mind that shuns the richness of ambiguity and symbolism." Derek Hudson also maintains that Carroll's "'serious' romantic poems are conventional exercises lacking originality and inspiration," and provides as an example "Song of Love" from *Sylvie and Bruno*, which Hudson claims "is almost painfully sincere but at the same time cloyingly sweet and sentimental." Edmund Wilson, however, refutes the idea of a dichotomy between the poet's serious and humorous pieces and asserts that Carroll's work should be considered as a whole: "The truth is that, if Dodgson and his work were shown as an organic whole, his 'nonsense' would not seem the anomaly which it is usually represented as being."

Critics have long tried to analyze the deeper, allegorical meaning of Carroll's nonsense verse, particularly in *The Hunting of the Snark*. Alexander Taylor notes that "the Snark has been identified with Fortune, Social Advancement, Popularity, and the Absolute, to mention only a few." Martin Gardner reports that "many attempts have been made to force the whole of the *Snark* into one overall metaphorical pattern." He mentions several arguments that equate the Snark variously with material wealth, social advancement, and even the North Pole. Gardner, himself, claims that "the *Snark* is a poem about being and nonbeing, an existential poem, a poem of existential agony." Edward Guiliano maintains that the poem is taken far more seriously today than it was in Carroll's time, as "intellectuals now find its lurking terrors immediate and compelling."

The contemporary reception of *The Hunting of the Snark* was mixed, as reported by Morton N. Cohen, who has studied the reviews of the work that appeared shortly after its publication. Cohen quotes a reviewer for *The*

Athenaeum who called the work "the most bewildering of modern poems," and one from *Vanity Fair* who claimed it was more "rubbish" than "nonsense." Cohen notes, however, that the *Graphic* raved about the work. Guiliano emphasizes that for the Victorians, "it seems there was no tension between the nonsense ballad and the underlying anxieties—but only failed fantasy or delirious nonsense." Modern scholars have been far kinder, although with some reservations. Taylor, for example, takes a dim view of Carroll's abilities as a poet and contends that "*The Hunting of the Snark* is flawed because it was written in verse"; in his opinion "it is only in his prose that Dodgson is a true poet." He believes, therefore, that *Snark* "is a poem of genius, but not metrically." Hudson agrees to a certain extent, claiming that although Carroll was a true poet, he was "perhaps most poetic when he wrote in prose, and we must think of the 'Alice' books, with their harmonious and unforced blending of prose and verse, as being primarily a poetic achievement."

PRINCIPAL WORKS

Poetry

Phantasmagoria and Other Poems 1869
The Hunting of the Snark: An Agony in Eight Fits 1876
Rhyme? and Reason? 1883
Three Sunsets and Other Poems 1898
The Collected Verse of Lewis Carroll 1932; reprinted as
The Humorous Verse of Lewis Carroll, the Reverend Charles L. Dodgson 1960
Useful and Instructive Poetry 1954
The Poems of Lewis Carroll 1973

Other Major Works

A Syllabus of Plane Algebraical Geometry (essay) 1860
Alice's Adventures in Wonderland (novel) 1865
The Dynamics of a Particle (satire) 1865
The New Belfry of Christ Church, Oxford (satire) 1872
Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There (novel) 1872
Euclid and His Modern Rivals (essay) 1879
The Game of Logic (essay) 1886
Sylvie and Bruno (novel) 1889
Sylvie and Bruno Concluded (novel) 1893
The Complete Works of Lewis Carroll (novels, poetry, essays, satires, letters, and games) 1939
The Diaries of Lewis Carroll. 2 vols. (diaries) 1954
The Letters of Lewis Carroll. 2 vols. (letters) 1979

Dreaming in Pictures: The Photography of Lewis Carroll (photography) 2002

CRITICISM

Belle Moses (essay date 1910)

SOURCE: Moses, Belle. "Hunting of the Snark and Other Poems." In *Lewis Carroll in Wonderland and at Home: The Story of His Life*, pp. 176-201. New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1910.

[In the following excerpt, Moses provides an overview of *The Hunting of the Snark* and several of Carroll's minor poems, including "Phantasmagoria," "The Three Voices," and "A Game of Fives."]

There is no doubt that the second "Alice" book was quite as successful as the first, but regarding its merit there is much difference of opinion. As a rule the "grown-ups" prefer it. They like the clever situations and the quaint logic, no less than the very evident good writing; but this of course did not influence the children in the least. They liked "Alice" and the pretty idea of her trip through the Looking-Glass, but for real delight *Wonderland* [*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*] was big enough for them, and to whisk down into a rabbit-hole on a summer's day was a much easier process than squeezing through a looking-glass at the close of a short winter's afternoon, not being quite sure that one would not fall into the fire on the other side.

The very care that Lewis Carroll took in the writing of this book deprived it of a certain charm of originality which always clings to the pages of "Wonderland." Each chapter is so methodically planned and so well carried out that, while we never lose sight of the author and his cleverness, fairyland does not seem quite so real as in the book which was written with no plan at all, but the earnest desire to please three children. Then again there was a certain staidness in the prim little girl who pushed her way through the Looking-Glass. And there were no wonderful cakes marked "eat me," and bottles marked "drink me," which kept the *Wonderland Alice* in a perpetual state of growing or shrinking; so the fact that nothing happened to *Alice* at all during this second journey lessened its interest somewhat for the young ones to whom constant change is the spice of life. A very little girl, while she might enjoy the flower chapter, and might be tempted to build her own fanciful tales about the rest of the garden, would not be so attracted toward the insect chapter, which may possibly

have been written with the praiseworthy idea of teaching children not to be afraid of these harmless buzzing things that are too busy with their own concerns to bother them.

There are, in truth, little "cut and dried" speeches in the Looking-Glass "Alice," which we do not find in *Wonderland*. A real hand is moving the Chessman over the giant board, and the *Red* and the *White Queen* often speak like automatic toys. We miss the savage "off with his head" of the *Queen of Hearts*, who, for all her cardboard stiffness, seemed a thing of flesh and blood. But the poetry in the two "Alices" is of very much the same quality.

In his prose "nonsense" anyone might notice the difference of years between the two books, but Lewis Carroll's poetry never loses its youthful tone. It was as easy for him to write verses as to teach mathematics, and that was saying a good deal. It was as easy for him to write verses at sixty as at thirty, and that is saying even more. From the time he could hold a pencil he could make a rhyme, and his earlier editorial ventures, as we know, were full of his own work which in after years made its way to the public, either through the magazines or in collection of poems, such as *Rhyme and Reason*, *Phantasmagoria*, and *The Three Sunsets*.

In *The Train*, [an] early English magazine . . . , are several poems written by him and signed by his newly borrowed name of Lewis Carroll, but they are very sentimental and high-flown, utterly unlike anything he wrote either before or after.

Between the publication of *Through the Looking-Glass* and *The Hunting of the Snark* was a period of five years, during which, according to his usual custom, Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, in the seclusion of Christ Church, calmly pursued his scholarly way, smiling sedately over the literary antics of Lewis Carroll, for the Rev. Charles was a sober, over-serious bachelor, whose one aim and object at that time was the proper treatment of Euclid, for during those five years he wrote the following pamphlets: "Symbols, etc., to be used in Euclid—Books I and II," "Number of Propositions in Euclid," "Enunciations—Euclid I-VI," "Euclid—Book V. Proved Algebraically," "Preliminary Algebra and Euclid—Book V," "Examples in Arithmetic," "Euclid—Books I and II."

He also wrote many other valuable pamphlets concerning the government of Oxford and of Christ Church in particular, for the retiring "don" took a keen interest in the University life, and his influence was felt in many spicy articles and apt rhymes, usually brought forth as timely skits. *Notes by an Oxford Chiel*, published at Oxford in 1874, included much of this material, where his clever verses, mostly satirical, generally hit the mark.

And all this while, Lewis Carroll was gathering in the harvest yielded by the two "Alices," and planning more books for his child-friends, who, we may be sure, were growing in numbers.

We find him at the Christmas celebration of 1874, at Hatfield, the home of Lord Salisbury, as usual, the central figure of a crowd of happy children. On this occasion he told them the story of *Prince Uggug*, which was afterwards a part of *Sylvie and Bruno*. Many of the chapters of this book had been published as separate stories in *Aunt Judy's Magazine* and other periodicals, and, as such, they were very sweet and dainty as well as amusing. It was Lewis Carroll's own special charm in telling these stories which really lent them color and drew the children; they lost much in print, for they lacked the sturdy foundations of nonsense on which the "Alices" were built.

On March 29, 1876, *The Hunting of the Snark* was published, a new effort in "nonsense" verse-making, which stands side by side with "*Jabberwocky*" in point of cleverness and interest.

The beauty of Lewis Carroll's "nonsense" was that he never tried to be funny or "smart." The queer words and the still queerer ideas popped into his head in the simplest way. His command of language, including that important knowledge of how to make "portmanteau" words, was his greatest aid, and the poem which he called "An Agony in Eight Fits" depends entirely upon the person who reads it for the cleverness of its meaning. To children it is one big fairy tale where the more ridiculous the situations, the more true to the rules of fairyland. *The Snark*, being a "portmanteau" word, is a cross between a *snake* and a *shark*, hence *Snark*, and the fact that he dedicated this wonderful bit of word-making to a little girl, goes far to prove that the poem was intended as much for children as for "grown-ups."

The little girl in this instance was Gertrude Chataway, and the verses are an acrostic on her name:

Girt with a boyish garb for boyish task,
Eager she wields her spade: yet loves as well
Rest on a friendly knee, intent to ask
The tale he loves to tell.

Rude spirit of the seething outer strife,
Unmeet to read her pure and simple spright,
Deem, if you list, such hours a waste of life,
Empty of all delight!

Chat on, sweet maid, and rescue from annoy,
Hearts that by wiser talk are unbeguiled;
Ah, happy he who owns that tenderest joy,
The heart-love of a child!

Away, fond thoughts, and vex my soul no more!
Work claims my wakeful nights, my busy days,

Albeit bright memories of that sunlit shore
Yet haunt my dreaming gaze!

There was scarcely a little girl who claimed friendship with Lewis Carroll who was not the proud possessor of an acrostic poem written by him—either on the title-page of some book that he had given her, or as the dedication of some published book of his own.

The Hunting of the Snark owed its existence to a country walk, when the last verse came suddenly into the mind of our poet:

"In the midst of the word he was trying to say,
In the midst of his laughter and glee,
He had softly and suddenly vanished away—
For the Snark was a Boojum, you see."

In a very humorous preface to the book, Lewis Carroll attempted some sort of an explanation, which leaves us as much in the dark as ever. He writes:

If—and the thing is wildly possible—the charge of writing nonsense was ever brought against the author of this brief but instructive poem, it would be based, I feel convinced, on the line:

'Then the bowsprit got mixed with the rudder
sometimes.'

In view of this painful possibility, I will not (as I might) appeal indignantly to my other writings as a proof that I am incapable of such a deed; I will not (as I might) point to the strong moral purpose of the poem itself, to the arithmetical principles so cautiously inculcated in it, or to its noble teachings in Natural History. I will take the more prosaic course of simply explaining how it happened.

The Bellman, who was almost morbidly sensitive about appearances, used to have the bowsprit unshipped once or twice a week to be revarnished; and more than once it happened, when the time came for replacing it, that no one on board could remember which end of the ship it belonged to. They knew it was not of the slightest use to appeal to the Bellman about it—he would only refer to his Naval Code and read out in pathetic tones Admiralty Instructions which none of them had ever been able to understand, so it generally ended in its being fastened on anyhow across the rudder. The Helmsman used to stand by with tears in his eyes; he knew it was all wrong, but, alas! Rule 4, of the Code, '*No one shall speak to the man at the helm*,' had been completed by the Bellman himself with the words, '*and the man at the helm shall speak to no one*,' so remonstrance was impossible and no steering could be done till the next varnishing day. During these bewildering intervals the ship usually sailed backward.

Is it any wonder that a poem, based upon such an explanation, should be a perfect bundle of nonsense? But we know from experience that Lewis Carroll's nonsense was not stupidity, and that not one verse in all that delightful bundle missed its own special meaning and purpose.

We do not propose to find the key to this remarkable work—for two reasons: first, because there are different keys for different minds; and second, because the unexplainable things in many cases come nearer the “mind’s eye,” as Shakespeare calls it, without words. We cannot tell *why* we understand such and such a thing, but we *do* understand it, and that is enough—quite according to Lewis Carroll’s ideas, for he always appeals to our imagination and that is never guided by rules. The higher it soars, the more fantastic the region over which it hovers, the nearer it gets to the land of “make believe,” “let’s pretend” and “supposing,” the better pleased is Lewis Carroll. In a delightful letter to some American children, published in *The Critic* shortly after his death, he gives his own ideas as to the meaning of the *Snark*.

“I’m very much afraid I didn’t mean anything but nonsense,” he wrote; “still you know words mean more than we mean to express when we use them, so a whole book ought to mean a great deal more than the writer means. So whatever good meanings are in the book, I shall be glad to accept as the meaning of the book. The best that I’ve seen is by a lady (she published it in a letter to a newspaper) that the whole book is an allegory on the search after happiness. I think this fits beautifully in many ways, particularly about the bathing machines; when people get weary of life, and can’t find happiness in towns or in books, then they rush off to the seaside to see what bathing machines will do for them.”

Taking this idea for the foundation of the poem, it is easy to explain *Fit the First*, better named *The Landing*, though where they landed it is almost impossible to say.

“Just the place for a Snark,” the Bellman cried, and, as he stated this fact three distinct times, it was undoubtedly true. That was the *Bellman*’s rule—once was uncertain, twice was possible, three times was “dead sure.” And the *Bellman* being a person of some authority, ought to have known. The crew consisted of a *Boots*, a *Maker of Bonnets and Hoods*, a *Barrister*, a *Broker*, a *Billiard-marker*, a *Banker*, a *Beaver*, a *Butcher*, and a nameless being who passed for the *Baker*, and who, in the end, turned out to be the luckless victim of the *Snark*. He is thus beautifully described:

There was one who was famed for a number of things
He forgot when he entered the ship:
His umbrella, his watch, all his jewels and rings,
And the clothes he had brought for the trip.

He had forty-two boxes, all carefully packed,
With his name painted clearly on each:
But, since he omitted to mention the fact,
They were all left behind on the beach.

The loss of his clothes hardly mattered, because
He had seven coats on when he came,

With three pair of boots—but the worst of it was,
He had wholly forgotten his name.

He would answer to ‘Hi!’ or to any loud cry,
Such as ‘Fry me!’ or ‘Fritter my wig!’
To ‘What-you-may-call-um!’ or ‘What-was-his-name!’
But especially ‘Thing-um-a-jig!’

While, for those who preferred a more forcible word,
He had different names from these:
His intimate friends called him ‘Candle-ends,’
And his enemies ‘Toasted-cheese.’

‘His form is ungainly, his intellect small’
(So the Bellman would often remark);
‘But his courage is perfect! and that, after all,
Is the thing that one needs with a Snark.’

He would joke with hyenas, returning their stare
With an impudent wag of the head:
And he once went a walk, paw-in-paw with a bear,
‘Just to keep up its spirits,’ he said.

He came as a Baker: but owned when too late—
And it drove the poor Bellman half-mad—
He could only bake Bride-cake, for which I may state,
No materials were to be had.

Notice how ingeniously the actors in this drama are introduced; all the “B’s,” as it were, buzzing after the phantom of happiness, which eludes them, no matter how hard they struggle to find it. Notice, too, that all these beings are unmarried, a fact shown by the *Baker* not being able to make a bride-cake as there are no materials on hand. All these creatures, while hunting for happiness, came to prey upon each other. The *Butcher* only killed *Beavers*, the *Barrister* was hunting among his fellow sailors for a good legal case. The *Banker* took charge of all their cash, for it certainly takes money to hunt properly for a *Snark*, and it is a well-known fact that bankers need all the money they can get.

Fit the Second describes the *Bellman* and why he had such influence with his crew:

The Bellman himself they all praised to the skies:
Such a carriage, such ease, and such grace!
Such solemnity, too! One could see he was wise,
The moment one looked in his face!

He had bought a large map representing the sea,
Without the least vestige of land:
And the crew were much pleased when they found it
to be
A map they could all understand.

“What’s the good of Mercator’s North Poles and
Equators,
Tropics, Zones, and Meridian Lines?”
So the Bellman would cry: and the crew would reply,
“They are merely conventional signs!”

“Other maps are such shapes, with their islands and
capes!

But we've got our brave Captain to thank"
 (So the crew would protest), "that he's bought us the
 best—
 A perfect and absolute blank!"

And true enough, the *Bellman's* idea of the ocean was a big square basin, with the latitude and longitude carefully written out on the margin. They found, however, that their "brave Captain" knew very little about navigation, he—

Had only one notion for crossing the ocean,
 And that was to tingle his bell.

He thought nothing of telling his crew to steer starboard and larboard at the same time, and then we know how—

The bowsprit got mixed with the rudder sometimes.
 "A thing," as the *Bellman* remarked,
 "That frequently happens in tropical climes,
 When a vessel is, so to speak, 'snarked.'"

The *Bellman* had hoped, when the wind blew toward the east, that the ship would not travel toward the west, but it seems that with all his nautical knowledge he could not prevent it; ships are perverse animals!

But the danger was past—they had landed at last,
 With their boxes, portmanteaus, and bags:
 Yet at first sight the crew were not pleased with the
 view,
 Which consisted of chasms and crags.

Now that they had reached the land of the Snark, the *Bellman* proceeded to air his knowledge on that subject.

"A snark," he said, "had five unmistakable traits—its taste, 'meager and mellow and crisp,' its habit of getting up late, its slowness in taking a jest, its fondness for bathing machines, and, fifth and lastly, its ambition." He further informed the crew that "the snarks that had feathers could bite, and those that had whiskers could scratch," adding as an afterthought:

'For although common Snarks do no manner of harm,
 Yet I feel it my duty to say,
 Some are Boojums—' The *Bellman* broke off in alarm,
 For the *Baker* had fainted away.

Fit the Third was the *Baker's* tale.

They roused him with muffins, they roused him with
 ice,
 They roused him with mustard and cress,
 They roused him with jam and judicious advice,
 They set him conundrums to guess.

Then he explained why it was that the name "Boojum" made him faint. It seems that a dear uncle, after whom he was named, gave him some wholesome advice about the way to hunt a snark, and this uncle seemed to be a man of much influence:

'You may seek it with thimbles, and seek it with care;
 You may hunt it with forks and hope;
 You may threaten its life with a railway-share;
 You may charm it with smiles and soap——'

'That's exactly the method,' the *Bellman* bold
 In a hasty parenthesis cried,
 'That's exactly the way I have always been told
 That the capture of Snarks should be tried!'

'But, oh, beamish nephew, beware of the day,
 If your Snark be a Boojum! For then
 You will softly and suddenly vanish away,
 And never be met with again!'

This of course was a very sad thing to think of, for the man with no name, who was named after his uncle, and called in courtesy the *Baker*, had grown to be a great favorite with the crew; but they had no time to waste in sentiment—they were in the Snark's own land, they had the *Bellman's* orders in *Fit the Fourth*—the Hunting:

To seek it with thimbles, to seek it with care;
 To pursue it with forks and hope;
 To threaten its life with a railway share;
 To charm it with smiles and soap!

For the Snark's a peculiar creature, that won't
 Be caught in a commonplace way.
 Do all that you know, and try all that you don't:
 Not a chance must be wasted to-day!

Then they all went to work according to their own special way, just as we would do now in our hunt for happiness through the chasms and crags of every day.

Fit the Fifth is the *Beaver's* Lesson, when the *Butcher* discourses wisely on arithmetic and natural history, two subjects a butcher should know pretty thoroughly, and this is proved:

While the *Beaver* confessed, with affectionate looks
 More eloquent even than tears,
 It had learned in ten minutes far more than all books
 Would have taught it in seventy years.

The *Barrister's* Dream occupied *Fit the Sixth*, and here our poet's keen wit gave many a slap at the law and the lawyers.

The *Banker's* Fate in *Fit the Seventh* was sad enough; he was grabbed by the *Bandersnatch* (that "frumious" "portmanteau" creature that we met before in the "*Lay of the Jabberwocky*") and worried and tossed about until he completely lost his senses. Some bankers are that way in the pursuit of fortune, which means happiness to them; but fortune may turn, like the *Bandersnatch*, and shake their minds out of their bodies, and so they left this *Banker* to his fate. That is the way of people when bankers are in trouble, because they were reckless and not always careful to

Beware the Jubjub bird, and shun
The frumious Bandersnatch.

Fit the Eighth treats of the vanishing of the Baker according to the prediction of his prophetic uncle. All day long the eager searchers had hunted in vain, but just at the close of the day they heard a shout in the distance and beheld their *Baker* “erect and sublime” on top of a crag, waving his arms and shouting wildly; then before their startled and horrified gaze, he plunged into a chasm and disappeared forever.

‘It’s a Snark!’ was the sound that first came to their ears,
And seemed almost too good to be true.
Then followed a torrent of laughter and cheers,
Then the ominous words, ‘It’s a Boo——’

Then, silence. Some fancied they heard in the air
A weary and wandering sigh
That sounded like ‘jum!’ but the others declare
It was only a breeze that went by.

They hunted till darkness came on, but they found
Not a button, or feather, or mark
By which they could tell that they stood on the ground
Where the Baker had met with the Snark.

In the midst of the word he was trying to say,
In the midst of his laughter and glee,
He had softly and suddenly vanished away—
For the Snark was a Boojum, you see.

What became of the *Bellman* and his crew is left to our imagination. Perhaps the *Baker*’s fate was a warning, or perhaps they are still hunting—not *too* close to the chasm. Lewis Carroll, always so particular about proper endings, refuses any explanation. The fact that this special Snark was a “Boojum” altered all the rules of the hunt. Nobody knows what it is, but all the same nobody wishes to meet a “Boojum.” That’s all there is about it.

“Now how absurd to talk such nonsense!” some learned school girl may exclaim; undoubtedly one who has high ideals about life and literature. But is it nonsense we are talking, and does the quaint poem really teach us nothing? Anything which brings a picture to the mind must surely have some merit, and there is much homely common sense wrapped up in the queer verses if we have but the wit to find it, and no one is too young nor too old to join in this hunt for happiness.

Read the poem over and over, put expression and feeling into it, treat the *Bellman* and his strange crew as if they were real human beings—there’s a lot of the human in them after all—and see if new ideas and new meanings do not pop into your head with each reading,

while the verses, all unconsciously, will stick in your memory, where Tennyson or Wordsworth or even Shakespeare fails to hold a place there.

Of course, Lewis Carroll’s own especial girlfriends understood “*The Hunting of the Snark*” better than the less favored “outsiders.” First of all there was Lewis Carroll himself to read it to them in his own expressive way, his pleasant voice sinking impressively at exciting moments, and his clear explanation of each “portman-teau” word helping along wonderfully. We can fancy the gleam of fun in the blue eyes, the sweep of his hand across his hair, the sudden sweet smile with which he pointed his jests or clothed his moral, as the case might be. Indeed, one little girl was so fascinated with the poem which he sent her as a gift that she learned the whole of it by heart, and insisted on repeating it during a long country drive.

The Hunting of the Snark created quite a sensation among his friends. The first edition was finely illustrated by Henry Holiday, whose clever drawings show how well he understood the poem, and what sympathy existed between himself and the author.

“*Phantasmagoria*,” his ghost poem, deals with the friendly relations always existing between ghosts and the people they are supposed to haunt; a whimsical idea, carried out in Lewis Carroll’s whimsical way, with lots of fun and a good deal of simple philosophy worked out in the verses. One canto is particularly amusing. Here are some of the verses:

Oh, when I was a little Ghost,
A merry time had we!
Each seated on his favorite post,
We chumped and chawed the buttered toast
They gave us for our tea.

“That story is in print!” I cried.
“Don’t say it’s not, because
It’s known as well as Bradshaw’s Guide!”
(The Ghost uneasily replied
He hardly thought it was.)

It’s not in Nursery Rhymes? And yet
I almost think it is—
“Three little Ghostesses” were set
“On postesses,” you know, and ate
Their “buttered toastesses.”

“*The Three Voices*,” his next ambitious poem, is rather out of the realm of childhood. A weak-minded man and a strong-minded lady met on the seashore, she having rescued his hat from the antics of a playful breeze by pinning it down on the sands with her umbrella, right through the center of the soft crown. When she handed it to him in its battered state, he was scarcely as grateful as he might have been—he was rude, in fact,