

Leaves from  
THE NOTION CLUB PAPERS

FOREWORD

These Papers have a rather puzzling history. They were found after the Summer Examinations of 2012 on the top of one of a number of sacks of waste paper in the basement of the Examination Schools at Oxford by the present editor, Mr. Howard Green, the Clerk of the Schools. They were in a disordered bundle, loosely tied with red string. The outer sheet, inscribed in large Lombardic capitals:

NOTION CLUB PAPERS,

attracted the notice of Mr. Green, who removed them and scrutinized them. Discovering them to contain much that was to him curious and interesting, he made all possible enquiries, without result.

The Papers, from internal evidence, clearly had no connexion with any examinations held or lectures given in the Schools during Mr. Green's many years of office. Neither did they belong to any of the libraries housed in the building. Advertisement has failed to find any claimant to ownership. It remains unknown how the Papers reached the waste-paper sack. It seems probable that they had at some time been prepared for publication, since they are in many places provided with notes; yet in form they are nothing more than an elaborate minute-book of a club, devoted to conversation, debate, and the discussion of 'papers', in verse or prose, written and read by its members, and many of the entries have no particular interest for non-members.

The minutes, or reports, covered probably about 100 meetings or 'nights' during the years of last century, approximately 1980 to 1990. It is, however, not the least curious fact about these Papers that no such club appears ever to have existed. Though certain resemblances are inevitable between a group of imaginary academic persons and their real contemporaries, no such persons as those here depicted, either with such names, or

such offices, or such tastes and habits, can be traced in the Oxford of the last generation, or of the present time.

The author appears in one or two passages, and in the occasional notes, to identify himself with the character called in the dialogues Nicholas Guildford. But Mr. J. R. Titmass, the well-known historian of twentieth-century Oxford, who has given all possible assistance to the present editor, has shown that this is certainly a fictitious name and derived from a mediaeval dialogue at one time read in the Schools of Oxford.

On examination the bundle was found to contain 205 foolscap pages, all written by one hand, in a careful and usually legible script. The leaves were disarranged but mostly numbered. The bundle contains the entries for Nights 51 to 75, but they are defective and several leaves appear to have been lost; some of the longer entries are incomplete. It is probable that three other bundles, containing Nights 1-25, 26-50, 76-100, once existed. Of the missing sections, however, only a few scattered sheets were found in the sack, and these, so far as can be discerned, belonged originally to the entries 1-25. Among them was a crumpled and much corrected sheet, of a different paper, containing a list of members.

The total on this scale would have made a volume of considerable bulk, but its size will be overestimated, if calculation is based on the length of the extracts here printed. Many Nights are represented only by a few lines, or by short entries, of which Nights 54 and 64 have been included as specimens. As a rule these short items have been omitted, unless they bear closely on the longer reports here selected and presented to those interested in literary curiosities.

#### *Note to the Second Edition*

Mr. W. W. Wormald of the School of Bibliopoly, and Mr. D. N. Borrow of the Institute of Occidental Languages, found their curiosity aroused by the published extracts, and asked Mr. Green for permission to examine the manuscript of the Papers. They have now sent in a joint report, which raises some interesting points.

'Paper of this kind,' they write, 'is, of course, very difficult to trace or to date. The sheets submitted to us are of a poor quality much inferior to the paper now in general use for such purposes. Without venturing on a definite opinion, we record our sus-

picion that these sheets are much older than the dates of the supposed meetings of the Club, perhaps 40 to 50 years older, belonging, that is, to the period during or just after the Six Years' War. This suspicion is supported by various items of internal evidence, notably the idiom of the dialogues, which is old-fashioned and does not represent with any fidelity the colloquial language either of the nineteen-eighties or of the present time. We conclude, then, that *The Notion Club Papers* were written sixty years ago, or more.

It remains, nonetheless, on this hypothesis a puzzling fact that the Great Explosion of 1975 is referred to, and even more precisely, the Great Storm, which actually occurred on the night of Thursday, June 12th, 1987;<sup>1</sup> though certain inaccuracies appear in the account given of the progress and effects of the latter event. Mr. Green has proposed to us a curious explanation of this difficulty, evidently suggested to him by the contents of the Papers: the future events were, he thinks, "foreseen". In our opinion a less romantic but more probable solution is this: the paper is part of a stock purchased by a man resident in Oxford about 1940. He used the paper for his minutes (whether fictitious or founded on fact), but he did not use all his stock. Much later (after 1987) he copied out his matter again, using up the old paper; and though he did not make any general revision, he moved the dates forward and inserted the genuine references to the Explosion and the Storm.

Mr. Green rejoins: "This is one of the most fantastic "probable solutions" I have yet met, quite apart from the unlikelihood of an inferior paper being stored for about fifty years and then used for the same purpose again. The writer was not, I think, a very young man; but the handwriting is certainly not that of an old man. Yet if the writer was not young in 1940, he must have been old, very old, in 2000. For it is to that date, not to 1987, that we must look. There is a point that has escaped the notice of Messrs. Wormald and Borrow: the old house, no. 100 Banbury Road, the last private dwelling house in that block, was in fact the scene of "hauntings",\* a remarkable display of poltergeist activity, between the years 2000 and 2003, which only ended when the house was demolished and a new building, attached to the Institute of National Nutrition, erected on the site. In the year 2003 a person possessed of the paper, the

\* See Night 61, p. 179.

pen-habits,\* and the idiom of the period of the Six Years' War would have been an oddity that no pseudonym could conceal from us.

'In any case, the Storm is integral to all the entries from Night 63 to Night , [sic] and is not just "inserted". Messrs. Wormald and Borrow must either neglect their own evidence and place the whole composition after 1987, or else stick to their own well-founded suspicions of the paper, the hand,\* and the idiom, and admit that some person or persons in the nineteen-forties possessed a power of "prevision".

'Mr. Titmass informs me that he cannot find any record in the nineteen-forties of the names given in the list. If therefore, any such club existed at that earlier period, the names remain pseudonyms. The forward dating might have been adopted as an additional screen. But I am now convinced that the Papers are a work of fiction; and it may well be that the predictions (notably of the Storm), though genuine and not coincidences, were unconscious: giving one more glimpse of the strange processes of so-called literary "invention", with which the Papers are largely concerned.'

#### MEMBERS OF THE NOTION CLUB

The Notion Club, as depicted, was informal and vague in outline. A number of characters appear in the dialogues, some rarely or fitfully. For the convenience of readers the List of Members found among the Papers is here printed, though several of the persons named do not appear in this selection. The order is not alphabetical and seems intended to represent some kind of seniority: the first six names were written earlier and larger; the rest were added at various times and in different inks, but in the same hand. There are also later entries inserted after some of the names, recording details of their tastes or history. A few further details, gleaned from the Papers themselves, have been added in brackets.

\*Mr. Wormald himself, something of an expert in such matters, before he proposed his 'probable solution', ventured the opinion that the handwriting of the Papers in general character went with the old-fashioned idiom and belonged to the same period. The use of a pen rather than a typewriter would indeed, in itself, already have been most unusual for a man of 1990, whatever his age.

MICHAEL GEORGE RAMER. Jesus College. Born 1929 (in Hungary). Professor of Finno-Ugric Philology; but better known as a writer of romances. His parents returned to England when he was four; but he spent a good deal of time in Finland and Hungary between 1956 and 68. [Among his interests are Celtic languages and antiquities.]

RUPERT DOLBEAR. Wadham. Born 1929. Research Chemist. Has many other interests, notably philosophy, psychoanalysis, and gardening. [A close friend of Ramer. He is redhaired and redbearded, and known to the Club as Ruthless Rufus.]

NICHOLAS GUILDFORD. Lincoln. Born 1937. Archaeologist. The Club reporter; because he likes it and knows shorthand. [He is seldom recorded as reading anything to the Club, and it is then not reported; but he appears to have written several novels.]

ALWIN ARUNDEL LOWDHAM. B.N.C. Born 1938. Lecturer in English Language. Chiefly interested in Anglo-Saxon, Icelandic, and Comparative Philology. Occasionally writes comic or satirical verse. [Known as Arry.]

PHILIP FRANKLEY. Queen's. Born 1932. A poet, once well-known as a leader of the Queer Metre movement; but now just a poet, still publishing volumes of collected verse; suffers from *horror borealis* (as he calls it) and is intolerant of all things Northern or Germanic. [He is, all the same, a close friend of Lowdham.]

WILFRID TREWIN JEREMY. Corpus Christi. Born 1942. University Lecturer in English Literature. He specializes in Escapism, and has written books on the history and criticism of *Ghost-stories*, *Time-travel*, and *Imaginary Lands*.

*James Jones*. Born 1927. Has been a schoolmaster, journalist, and playwright. Is now retired, living in Oxford, and divides his time between producing plays and his hobby of private printing. A very silent man, but assists the Reporter with his retentive memory.

*Dr. Abel Pitt*. Trinity. Born 1928. Formerly Chaplain of Trinity College; now Bishop of Buckingham. Scholar, occasional poet.

*Colombo Arditì*. St. John's. Born 1940. Tempestosa Professor of Italian. Is fond of (and not unskilled in) singing (basso), swimming, and the game of bowls. Collects books and cats.

*Dom Jonathan Markison*, O.S.B.<sup>2</sup> New College, Master of St. Cuthbert's Hall. [Polymath.]

*Sir Gerard Manface*. All Souls. Lawyer. Mountaineer; much travelled. Has many children, for whom he wrote many (unpublished) books and tales. [Seldom appears. A special friend of Frankley, but not resident in Oxford.]

*Ranulph Stainer*. University College. Born 1936. Professionally an expert in banking and economics; privately devoted to the history and practice of music, and has composed several works, major and minor, including one (moderately successful) opera: *Midas*.

*Alexander Cameron*. Exeter. Born 1935. Modern historian, specially interested in Spanish and South American history. Collects coins and stamps. Plays a pianola. [No one remembers his being invited to join the Club, or knows why he comes; but he appears from time to time.]

*John Jethro Rashbold*. Magdalen. Born 1965. Undergraduate. Classical scholar; apprentice poet. [Introduced by Frankley, to whom he is much attached.]

*Note.* It is represented as the habit of the Club for all members to initial the record of any meeting at which they were present, whether they are reported as speaking or not. Presumably the initialling, which in the extant Papers is in the same hand as the text, took place after N.G.'s report has been seen and passed, and before the fair copy was made. Mr. Cameron's initials never appear.

Night 65. Thursday, May 8th, 1987.<sup>9</sup>

This was the first meeting of Trinity term. We met in Frankley's rooms in Queen's. Jeremy and Guildford arrived first (in time); others arrived one by one at intervals (late). There was nothing definite on for the evening, though we had hoped for some more talk from Ramer; but he seemed disinclined to say anything further. Conversation hopped about during the first hour, but was not notable.

Lowdham was restless, and would not sit down; at intervals he burst into a song (with which he had, in fact, entered at about half past nine). It began:

*I've got a very Briny Notion  
To drink myself to sleep.*

It seldom progressed further, and never got beyond:

*Bring me my bowl, my magic potion!  
Tonight I'm diving deep.  
down! down! down!  
Down where the dream-fish go.*

It was not well received, least of all by Ramer. But Lowdham subsided eventually, into a moody silence – for a while.

About ten o'clock the talk turned to neologisms; and Lowdham re-entered in their defence, chiefly because Frankley was taking the other side. (No. Pure love of truth and justice. AAL)

Lowdham to Frankley: 'You say you object to *panting*, which all the younger people use now for *desire* or *wish*?'

'Yes, I do. And especially to *having a great pant* for anything; or worse *having great pants* for it.'

'Well, I don't think you've got any good grounds for your objection: nothing better than novelty or unfamiliarity. New words are always objected to, like new art.'

'Nonsense! Double nonsense, Arry!' said Ramer.<sup>10</sup> 'Frankley is complaining precisely because new words are *not* objected to. And anyway, I personally object to lots of old words, but I have to go on using 'em, because they're current, and people won't accept my substitutes. I dislike many products of old art. I like many new things but not all. There is such a thing as merit, without reference to age or to familiarity. I took to *doink* at once: a very good onomatopoeia for some purposes.'

'Yes, *doink* has come on a lot lately,' said Lowdham. 'But it's not brand-new, of course. I think it's first recorded, in the Third

Supplement to the N.E.D.,<sup>11</sup> in the fifties, in the form *döing*: seems to have started in the Air Force in the Six Years' War.'<sup>12</sup>

'And it's an onomatopoeia, mark you,' said Frankley. 'It's easy to appraise the merits of that kind of word, if you can call it a real word. Anyway, adopting that is not at all on all fours with misusing an established word, robbing Peter to relieve the poverty of Paul: lexicographical socialism, which would end by reducing the whole vocabulary to one flat drab Unmeaning, if there were no reactionaries.'

'And won't anybody give poor Peter his pants back?' Lowdham laughed. 'He's got some more pairs in the cupboard, you'll see. He'll just have to take to wearing modern *whaffing* and *whooshing*. And why not? Do you object to Language, root and branch, Pip? I'm surprised at you, and you a poet and all.'

'Of course I don't! But I object to ruining it.'

'But are you ruining it? Is it any worse off with *panting*: *whaffing* than with *longing*: *panting*? This is not only the way language is changed, it is how it was made. Essentially it consists in the contemplation of a relationship "sound : sense; symbol : meaning". It's not only when this is new (to you at any rate) that you can appraise it. At inspired moments you can catch it, get the thrill of it, in familiar words. I grant that an onomatopoeia is a relatively simple case: *whaff*. But "*to pant for* equals *to long for*" contains the same element: new phonetic form for a meaning. Only here a second thing comes in: the interest, pleasure, excitement, what you will, of the relation of old sense to new. Both are illumined, for a time, at any rate. Language could never have come into existence without the one process, and never have extended its grasp without the other. Both must go on! They will, too.'

'Well, I don't like this example of the activity,' said Frankley. 'And I detest it, when philologues talk about Language (with a capital L) with that peculiarly odious unctious usually reserved for capitalized Life. That we are told "must go on" – if we complain of any debased manifestations, such as Arry in his cups. He talks about Language as if it was not only a Jungle but a Sacred Jungle, a beastly grove dedicated to Vita Fera,<sup>13</sup> in which nothing must be touched by impious hands. Cankers, fungi, parasites: let 'em alone!

'Languages are *not* jungles. They are gardens, in which sounds selected from the savage wilderness of Brute Noise are turned into words, grown, trained, and endued with the scents

of significance. You talk as if I could not pull up a weed that stinks!

'I do not!' said Lowdham. 'But, first of all, you have to remember that it's not *your* garden – if you must have this groggy allegory: it belongs to a lot of other people as well, and to them your stinking weed may be an object of delight. More important: your allegory is misapplied. What you are objecting to is not a weed, but the soil, and also any manifestations of growth and spread. All the other words in your refined garden have come into being (and got their scent) in the same way. You're like a man who is fond of flowers and fruit, but thinks loam is dirty, and dung disgusting; and the uprising and the withering just too, too sad. You want a sterilized garden of immortelles, no, paper-flowers. In fact, to leave allegory, you won't learn anything about the history of your own language, and hate to be reminded that it has one.'<sup>14</sup>

'Slay me with pontifical thunder-bolts!' cried Frankley. 'But I'll die saying *I don't like pants for longings.*'

'That's the stuff!' laughed Lowdham. 'And you're right of course, Pip. Both are right: the Thunder and the Rebel. For the One Speaker, all alone, is the final court of doom for words, to bless or to condemn. It's the agreement only of the separate judges that seems to make the laws. If your distaste is shared by an effective number of the others, then *pants* will prove – a weed, and be thrust in the oven.

'Though, of course, many people – more and more, I sometimes feel, as Time goes on and even language stales – do not judge any longer, they only echo. Their native language, as Ramer would call it, dies almost at their birth.

'It's not so with you, Philip my lad; you're ignorant, but you have a heart. I dare say *pants* just doesn't fit your native style. So it has always been with full men: they have had their hatreds among the words, and their loves.'

'You talk almost as if you'd seen or heard Language since its beginning, Arry,' said Ramer, looking at him with some surprise. It was a long time since Lowdham had let himself go at such length.

'No! Not since its beginning,' said Lowdham, while a strange expression came over his face. 'Only since – but ... Oh well!' He broke off and went to the window. It was dark but clear as glass in the sky, and there were many white stars.

The conversation drifted again. Starting from the beginnings

of Language, we began to talk about legends of origins and cultural myths. Guildford and Markison began to have an argument about Corn-gods and the coming of divine kings or heroes over the sea, in spite of various frivolous interjections from Lowdham, who seemed curiously averse to the turn of the talk.

'The Sheaf personified,'\* said Guild[ford. Here unfortunately one leaf is missing.] . . . . .

[Jeremy] . . . . 'as you said. But I don't think one can be so sure. Sometimes I have a queer feeling that, if one could go back, one would find not myth dissolving into history, but rather the reverse: real history becoming more mythical – more shapely, simple, discernibly significant, even seen at close quarters. More poetical, and less prosaic, if you like.

'In any case, these ancient accounts, legends, myths, about the far Past, about the origins of kings, laws, and the fundamental crafts, are not all made of the same ingredients. They're not wholly inventions. And even what is invented is different from mere fiction; it has more roots.'

'Roots in what?' said Frankley.

'In Being, I think I should say,' Jeremy answered; 'and in human Being; and coming down the scale, in the springs of History and in the designs of Geography – I mean, well, in the pattern of our world as it uniquely is, and of the events in it as seen from a distance. A sort of parallel to the fact that from far away the Earth would be seen as a revolving sunlit globe; and that is a remote truth of enormous effect on us and all we do, though not immediately discernible on earth, where practical men are quite right in regarding the surface as flat and immovable for practical purposes.

'Of course, the pictures presented by the legends may be partly symbolical, they may be arranged in designs that compress, expand, foreshorten, combine, and are not at all realistic or photographic, yet they may tell you something true about the Past.

'And mind you, there are also real details, what are called facts, accidents of land-shape and sea-shape, of individual men and their actions, that are caught up: the grains on which the stories crystallize like snowflakes. There was a man called Arthur at the centre of the cycle.'

\* [See Night 66, p. 236.]

'Perhaps!' said Frankley. 'But that doesn't make such things as the Arthurian romances real in the same way as true past events are real.'

'I didn't say *in the same way*,' said Jeremy. 'There are secondary planes or degrees.'

'And what do you know about "true past events", Philip?' asked Ramer. 'Have you ever seen one, when once it was past? They are all stories or tales now, aren't they, if you try to bring them back into the present? Even your idea of what you did yesterday — if you try to share it with anyone else? Unless, of course, you can go back, or at least see back.'

'Well, I think there's a difference between what really happened at our meetings and Nicholas's record,' said Frankley. 'I don't think his reports erase the true history, whether they're true in their fashion to the events or not. And didn't you claim to be able sometimes to re-view the past as a present thing? Could you go back into Guildford's minutes?'

'Hmm,' Ramer muttered, considering. 'Yes and no,' he said. 'Nicholas could, especially into the scenes that he's pictured or re-pictured fairly solidly and put some mental work into. We could, if we did the same. People of the future, if they only knew the records and studied them, and let their imagination work on them, till the Notion Club became a sort of secondary world set in the Past: they could.'

'Yes, Frankley,' said Jeremy, 'you've got to make a distinction between lies, or casual fiction, or the mere verbal trick of projecting sentences back by putting the verbs into the past tense, between all that and *construction*. Especially of the major kind that has acquired a secondary life of its own and passes from mind to mind.'

'Quite so!' said Ramer. 'I don't think you realize, I don't think any of us realize, the force, the daimonic force that the great myths and legends have. From the profundity of the emotions and perceptions that begot them, and from the multiplication of them in many minds — and each mind, mark you, an engine of obscured but unmeasured energy. They are like an explosive: it may slowly yield a steady warmth to living minds, but if suddenly detonated, it might go off with a crash: yes: might produce a disturbance in the real primary world.'

'What sort of thing are you thinking of?' said Dolbear, lifting his beard off his chest, and opening his eyes with a gleam of passing interest.

'I wasn't thinking of any particular legend,' said Ramer. 'But, well, for instance, think of the emotional force generated all down the west rim of Europe by the men that came at last to the end, and looked on the Shoreless Sea, unharvested, untraversed, unplumbed! And against that background what a prodigious stature other events would acquire! Say, the coming, apparently out of that Sea, riding a storm, [of] strange men of superior knowledge, steering yet unimagined ships. And if they bore tales of catastrophe far away: battles, burned cities, or the whelming of lands in some tumult of the earth – it shakes me to think of such things in such terms, even now.'

'Yes, I'm moved by that,' said Frankley. 'But it's large and vague. I'm still stuck a good deal nearer home, in Jeremy's casual reference to King Arthur. There you have a sort of legendary land, but it's quite unreal.'

'But you'll allow, won't you,' said Ramer, 'that the Britain of Arthur, as now imagined, even in a debased when-knights-were-bold sort of form, has some kind of force and life?'

'Some kind of literary attraction,' said Frankley. 'But could you go back to King Arthur's Camelot, even on your system? Of which, by the way, I'm not yet convinced: I mean, what you've told us seems to me very likely no more than an exceptionally elaborate, and exceptionally well-remembered form of what I call "dreaming" simply: picture-and-story-spinning while asleep.'

'And anyway: if legend (significant on its own plane) has gathered about history (with its own importance), which would you go back to? Which would you see, if you saw back?' asked Guildford.

'It depends on what you yourself are like, and on what you are looking for, I imagine,' Ramer answered. 'If you were seeking the story that has most power and significance for human minds, then probably that is the version that you'd find.'

'Anyway, I think you could – I think I could go back to Camelot, *if* the conditions of my mind and the chances of travel were favourable. The chances are not, as I told you, more than very slightly affected by waking desire. An adventure of that sort would *not* be the same thing as re-viewing what you'd call Fifth-century Britain. Neither would it be like making a dream-drama of my own. It would be more like the first, but it would be more active. It would be much less free than the second. It would probably be more difficult than either. I fancy it might be

the sort of thing best done by one or two people in concert.'

'I don't see how that would help,' said Frankley.

'Because different people have different views, or have individual contributions to make: is that what you mean?' asked Guildford. 'But that would be just as true of historical research or "backsight".'

'No, it wouldn't,' said Jeremy. 'You're mixing up history in the sense of a story made up out of the intelligible surviving evidence (which is not necessarily truer to the facts than legend) and "the true story", the real Past. If you really had a look back at the Past as it was, then everything would be there to see, if you had eyes for it, or time to observe it in. And the most difficult thing to see would be, as it always is "at present", the pattern, the significance, yes, the moral of it all, if you like. At least that would be the case, the nearer you come to our time. As I said before, I'm not so sure about that, as you pass backward to the beginnings. But in such a thing as a great story-cycle the situation would be different: much would be vividly real and at the same time . . . er . . . portentous; but there might be, would be, uncompleted passages, weak joints, gaps. You'd have to consolidate. You might need help.'

'You might indeed!' said Frankley. 'Riding down from Camelot (when you had discovered just where that was) to most other places on the legendary map, you'd find the road pretty vague. Most of the time you'd be lost in a fog! And you'd meet some pretty sketchy characters about the court, too.'

'Of course! And so you would about the present court,' said Markison, 'or in any Oxford quadrangle. Why should that worry you? Sketchy characters are more true to life than fully studied ones. There are precious few people in real life that you know as well as a good writer knows his heroes and villains.'

'Riding down to Camelot. Riding out from Camelot,' murmured Lowdham. 'And there was a dark shadow over that too. I wonder, I wonder. But it is still only a tale to me. Not all legends are like that. No, unfortunately. Some seem to have come to life on their own, and they will not rest. I should hate to be cast back into some of those lands. It would be worse than the vision of poor Norman Keeps.'

'What on earth is he talking about now?' said Guildford.

'The cork's coming out pretty soon, I think,' grunted Dolbear without opening his eyes.

'Oh, Norman Keeps is our barber,'<sup>15</sup> said Frankley. 'At least

that's what Arry and I call him: no idea what his real name is. Quite a nice and moderately intelligent little man: but to him everything beyond a certain vague distance back is a vast dark barren but utterly fixed and determined land and time called The Dark Ages. There are only four features in it: Norman Keeps (by which he means baronial castles, and possibly the house of any man markedly richer than himself); Them Jameses (meaning roughly I suppose the kings One and Two); The Squires (a curious kind of bogey-folk); and The People. Nothing ever happened in that land but Them Jameses shutting up The People in the Keeps (with the help of The Squires) and there torturing them and robbing them, though they don't appear ever to have possessed anything to be robbed of. Rather a gloomy legend. But it's a great deal more fixed in a lot more heads than is the Battle of Camlân!<sup>16</sup>

'I know, I know,' said Lowdham loudly and angrily. 'It's a shame! Norman Keeps is a very decent chap, and would rather learn truth than lies. But Zigūr<sup>17</sup> pays special attention to the type. Curse him!'

Conversation stopped, and there was a silence. Ramer and Guildford exchanged glances. Dolbear opened his eyes quietly without moving his head.

'Zigūr?' said Jeremy, looking at Lowdham. 'Zigūr? Who is he?'

'No idea, no idea!' said Lowdham. 'Is this a new game, Jerry? Owlamoo,<sup>18</sup> who's he?' He strode to the window and flung it open.

The early summer night was still and glimmering, warmer than usual for the time of year. Lowdham leant out, and we turned and stared at his back. The large window looked west, and the two towers of All Souls' stuck up like dim horns against the stars.

Suddenly Lowdham spoke in a changed voice, clear and ominous, words in an unknown tongue; and then turning fiercely upon us he cried aloud:

*Behold the Eagles of the Lords of the West! They are coming over Nūmenōr!*<sup>19</sup>

We were all startled. Several of us went to the window and stood behind Lowdham, looking out. A great cloud, coming up slowly out of the West, was eating up the stars. As it approached it opened two vast sable wings, spreading north and south.

Suddenly Lowdham pulled away, slammed the window down, and drew the curtains. He slumped into a chair and shut his eyes.

We returned to our seats and sat there uncomfortably for some time without a sound. At last Ramer spoke.

'*Nūmenōr? Nūmenōr?*' he said quietly. 'Where did you find that name, Arundel Lowdham?'

'Oh, I don't know,' Lowdham answered, opening his eyes, and looking round with a rather dazed expression. 'It comes to me, now and again. Just on the edge of things, you know. Eludes the grasp. Like coming round after gas. But it's been turning up more often than usual this spring. I'm sorry. Have I been behaving oddly or something, not quite my old quiet friendly self? Give me a drink!'

'I asked,' said Ramer, 'because *Nūmenōr* is my name for Atlantis.'<sup>20</sup>

'Now that *is* odd!' began Jeremy.

'Ah!' said Lowdham. 'I wondered if it might be. I asked you what your name was that night last term; but you didn't answer.'

'Well, here's a new development!' said Dolbear, who was now wide awake. 'If Arry Lowdham is going to dive where the dreams go and find the same fish as Ramer, we shall have to look into the pool.'

'We shall,' said Jeremy; 'for it's not only Ramer and Arry. I come into it too. I knew I had heard that name as soon as Arry said it.'<sup>21</sup> But I can't for the life of me remember where or when at the moment. It'll bother me now, like a thorn in the foot, until I get it out.'

'Very queer,' said Dolbear.

'What do you propose to do?' said Ramer.

'Take your advice,' said Jeremy. 'Get your help, if you'll give it.'

'Go into memory-training on the Rufus-Ramer system and see what we can fish up,' said Lowdham. 'I feel as if something wants to get out, and I should be glad to get it out – or forget it.'

'I'm a bit lost in all this,' said Markison. 'I've missed something evidently. Philip has told me a bit about the Ramer revelations last term, but I'm still rather at sea. Couldn't you tell us something, Lowdham, to make things a little clearer?'

'No, really, I'm feeling frightfully tired,' said Lowdham. 'You had better read up the records, if Nick has written them out

yet.<sup>22</sup> I expect he has. He's pretty regular, and pretty accurate, if a bit hard on me. And come along to the next meeting. And we'd better make that in a fortnight's time, I think. You can have my room, if you think you can all get in. We'll see what we have got by then. I've nothing much to tell yet.'

The conversation then dropped back uncertainly towards the normal, and nothing further occurred worth noting.

As we went out Lowdham said to Ramer: 'D'you think I could come round and talk to you, and to Rufus, some time soon?'

'Yes,' said Ramer. 'The sooner the better. You come too, Jeremy.'

MGR. PF. RD. JM. JJ. RS. AAL. WTJ. NG.

**Night 66.** Thursday, May 22nd, 1987.

A crowded evening. Lowdham's rather small room was pretty packed. The idea of Arry 'seeing things' was sufficiently astonishing to attract every member who was in Oxford. (Also I am supposed to keep more bottles in my cupboard than some that I could name. AAL)

Lowdham seemed in a bright and rather noisy mood again; reluctant to do anything but sing. Eventually he was quietened and got into a chair.

'Well now,' said Markison, 'I've read the records. I can't say I've made my mind up about them yet; but I'm very interested to hear how you come into such business, Arry. It doesn't seem in your line.'

'Well, I'm a philologist,' said Lowdham, 'which means a misunderstood man. But where I come in is, I think, at the point you've mentioned: at *Arry*. The name Arry, which some of you are pleased to attach to me, is *not* just a tribute to my vulgar noisiness, as seems assumed by the more ignorant among you: it is short not for Henry or Harold, but for Arundel. In full *Alwin Arundel Lowdham* your humble jester, at your service.'

'Well, what has that got to do with it?' said several voices.

'I'm not quite sure yet,' said Lowdham. 'But my father's name was Edwin.'<sup>23</sup>

'Illuminating indeed!' said Frankley.

'Not very, I think,' said Lowdham. 'Not illuminating, but puzzling. My father was an odd sort of man, as far as I

remember. Large, tall, powerful, dark. Don't stare at me! I'm a reduced copy. He was wealthy, and combined a passion for the sea with learning of a sort, linguistic and archaeological. He must have studied Anglo-Saxon and other North-western tongues; for I inherited his library and some of his tastes.

'We lived in Pembrokeshire, near Penian:<sup>24</sup> more or less, for we were away a large part of the year; and my father was always going off at a moment's notice: he spent a great deal of his time sailing about Norway, Scotland, Ireland, Iceland, and sometimes southward to the Azores and so on. I did not know him well, though I loved him as much as a small boy can, and used to dream of the time when I could go sailing with him. But he disappeared when I was only nine.'

'Disappeared?' said Frankley. 'I thought you told me once that he was lost at sea.'

'He disappeared,' said Lowdham. 'A strange story. No storm. His ship just vanished into the Atlantic. That was in 1947, just forty years ago next month. No signals (he wouldn't use wireless, anyway). No trace. No news. She was called *The Éarendel*.<sup>25</sup> An odd business.'

'The seas were still pretty dangerous at that time, weren't they?' said Stainer. 'Mines all over the place?'

'Not a spar at any rate was ever found,' said Lowdham. 'That was the end of *The Éarendel*: a queer name, and a queer end. But my father had some queer fancies about names. I am called Alwin Arundel, a mouthful enough, out of deference to prudence and my mother, I believe. The names he chose were Ælfwine Éarendel.'

'One of the few conversations I remember having with him was just before he went off for the last time. I had begged to go with him, and he had said NO, of course. "When can I go?" I said.

"Not yet, Ælfwine," he said. "Not yet. Some time, perhaps. Or you may have to follow me."

'It was then that it came out about my names. "I modernized 'em," he said, "to save trouble. But my ship bears the truer name. It does not look to Sussex,<sup>26</sup> but to shores a great deal further off. Very far away indeed now. A man has more freedom in naming his ship than his own son in these days. And it's few men that have either to name."

'He went off next day. He was mad to be at sea again, as he had been kept ashore all through the Six Years' War,<sup>27</sup> from the summer of 1939 onward, except I believe just at the Dunkirk

time in 1940. Too old – he was fifty when the war broke out, and I was only a year; for he had married late – too old, and I fancy a good deal too free and unbiddable to get any particular job, and he had become fiercely restless. He only took three sailors with him,<sup>28</sup> I think, but of course I don't know how he found them, or how they ever managed to get off, in those days of tyranny. I fancy they just cleared out illegally, somehow. Whither, I wonder? I don't think they meant to return. Anyway I never saw him again.'

'I can't see the connexion of this thread at all yet,' said Guildford.

'Wait a bit!' said Ramer. 'There is a connexion, or we think so. We've discussed it. You'd better let Arundel have his say.'

'Well – as soon as he'd gone . . . I was only nine at the time, as I said, and I had never bothered much about books, let alone languages, naturally at that age. I could read, of course, but I seldom did . . . as soon as my father had gone, and we knew that it was for good, I began to take up with languages, especially making them up (as I thought). After a time I used to stray into his study, left for years it was, just as it had been when he was alive.

'There I learned a lot of odd things in a desultory way, and I came across some sort of a diary or notes in a queer script. I don't know what happened to it when my mother died. I only found one loose leaf of it among the papers that came to me. I've kept it for years, and often tried and failed to read it; but it is mislaid at present. I was about fourteen or fifteen when I got specially taken with Anglo-Saxon, for some reason. I liked its word-style, I think. It wasn't so much what was written in it as the flavour of the words that suited me. But I was first introduced to it by trying to find out more about the names. I didn't get much light on them.

'*Eadwine* friend of fortune? *Ælfwine* elf-friend? That at any rate is what their more or less literal translation comes to. Though, as most of you will know (except poor Philip), these two-part names are pretty conventional, and not too much can be built on their literal meaning.'

'But they must originally have been made to have a meaning,' said Ramer. 'The habit of joining, apparently at random, any two of a list of beginners and enders, giving you Spear-peace and Peace-wolf and that sort of thing, must have been a later development, a kind of dried-up verbal heraldry. *Ælfwine* any-

way is one of the old combinations. It occurs outside England, doesn't it?

'Yes,' said Lowdham. 'And so does *Éadwine*. But I could not see that any of the many recorded Ælfwines were very suitable: Ælfwine, grandson of King Alfred, for instance, who fell in the great victory of 937; or Ælfwine who fell in the famous defeat of Maldon, and many others; not even Ælfwine of Italy, that is Albuin son of Auduin, the grim Langobard of the sixth century.'<sup>29</sup>

'Don't forget the connexion of the Langobards with King Sheaf,<sup>30</sup> put in Markison, who was beginning to show signs of interest.

'I don't,' said Lowdham. 'But I was talking of my earliest investigations as a boy.'

'Nor the repetition of the sequence: Albuin son of Auduin; Ælfwine son of Éadwine; Alwin son of Edwin,' said Ramer.<sup>31</sup>

'Probably deliberately imitated from the well-known story of Rosamund,<sup>32</sup> objected Philip Frankley. 'Arry's father must have known it. And that's quite enough to explain Alwin and Ælfwine, when you're dealing with a family of Nordic philologues.'

'Perhaps, O Horsefriend of Macedon!'<sup>33</sup> said Lowdham. 'But it doesn't take in *Éarendel*. There's little to be found out about that in Anglo-Saxon, though the name is there all right. Some guess that it was really a star-name for Orion, or for Rigel.<sup>34</sup> A ray, a brilliance, the light of dawn: so run the glosses.<sup>35</sup>

*Éalá Éarendel engla beorhtost  
ofer middangeard monnum sended!*

he chanted. "Hail Earendel, brightest of angels, above the middle-earth sent unto men!" When I came across that citation in the dictionary I felt a curious thrill, as if something had stirred in me, half wakened from sleep. There was something very remote and strange and beautiful behind those words, if I could grasp it, far beyond ancient English.

'I know more now, of course. The quotation comes from the *Crist*; though exactly what the author meant is not so certain.<sup>36</sup> It is beautiful enough in its place. But I don't think it is any irreverence to say that it may derive its curiously moving quality from some older world.'

'Why *irreverent*?' said Markison. 'Even if the words do refer to Christ, of course they are all derived from an older pre-Christian world, like all the rest of the language.'

'That's so,' said Lowdham; 'but *Éarendel* seems to me a

special word. It is not Anglo-Saxon;<sup>37</sup> or rather, it is not *only* Anglo-Saxon, but also something else much older.

'I think it is a remarkable case of linguistic coincidence, or congruence. Such things do occur, of course. I mean, in two different languages, quite unconnected, and where no borrowing from one to the other is possible, you will come across words very similar in both sound and meaning. They are usually dismissed as accidents; and I daresay some of the cases are not significant. But I fancy that they may sometimes be the result of a hidden symbol-making process working out to similar ends by different routes. Especially when the result is beautiful and the meaning poetical, as is the case with *Éarendel*.'

'If I follow all this,' said Markison, 'I suppose you are trying to say that you've discovered *Éarendel*, or something like it, in some other unconnected language, and are dismissing all the other forms of the name that are found in the older languages related to English. Though one of them, *Auriwandalo*, is actually recorded as a Langobardic name, I think. It's odd how the Langobards keep cropping up.'

'It is,' said Lowdham, 'but I am not interested in that at the moment. For I do mean that: I have often heard *éarendel*, or to be exact *ëarendil*, *e-a-r-e-n-d-i-l*, in another language, where it actually means Great Mariner, or literally Friend of the Sea; though it also has, I think, some connexion with the stars.'

'What language is that?' said Markison, knitting his brows. 'Not one I've ever come across, I think.' (He has 'come across' or dabbled in about a hundred in his time.)

'No, I don't suppose you've ever met it,' said Lowdham. 'It's an unknown language. But I had better try and explain.'

'From the time of my father's departure I began to have curious experiences, and I have gone on having them down the years, slowly increasing in clearness: visitations of linguistic ghosts, you might say. Yes, just that. I am not a *seer*. I have, of course, pictorial dreams like other folk, but only what Ramer would call marginal stuff, and few and fleeting at that: which at any rate means that if I see things I don't remember them. But ever since I was about ten I have had words, even occasional phrases, ringing in my ears; both in dream and waking abstraction. They come into my mind unbidden, or I wake to hear myself repeating them. Sometimes they seem to be quite isolated, just words or names. Sometimes something seems to "break my dream"<sup>38</sup> as my mother used to say: the names seem to be

connected strangely with things seen in waking life, suddenly, in some fleeting posture or passing light which transports me to some quite different region of thought or imagination. Like the Camera that night in March, Ramer, if you remember it.

'Looking at a picture once of a cone-shaped mountain rising out of wooded uplands, I heard myself crying out: "Desolate is Minul-Tārik, the Pillar of Heaven is forsaken!" and I knew that it was a dreadful thing. But most ominous of all are the Eagles of the Lords of the West. They shake me badly when I see them. I could, I could – I feel I could tell some great tale of Nūmenor.

'But I'm getting on too fast. It was a long time before I began to piece the fragments together at all. Most of these "ghost-words" are, and always were, to all appearance casual, as casual as the words caught by the eye from a lexicon when you're looking for something else. They began to come through, as I said, when I was about ten; and almost at once I started to note them down. Clumsily, of course, at first. Even grown-up folk make a poor shot, as a rule, at spelling the simplest words that they've never seen, unless they have some sort of phonetic knowledge. But I've still got some of the grubby little note-books I used as a small boy. An unsystematic jumble, of course; for it was only now and again that I bothered about such things. But later on, when I was older and had a little more linguistic experience, I began to pay serious attention to my "ghosts", and saw that they were something quite different from the game of trying to make up private languages.

'As soon as I started looking out for them, so to speak, the ghosts began to come oftener and clearer; and when I had got a lot of them noted down, I saw that they were not all of one kind: they had different phonetic styles, styles as unlike as, well – Latin and Hebrew. I am sorry, if this seems a bit complicated. I can't help it: and if this stuff is worth your bothering about at all, we'd better get it right.

'Well, first of all I recognized that a lot of these ghosts were Anglo-Saxon, or related stuff. What was left I arranged in two lists, A and B, according to their style, with a third rag-bag list C for odd things that didn't seem to fit in anywhere. But it was language A that really attracted me; it just suited me. I still like it best.'

'In that case you ought to have got it pretty well worked out by now,' said Stainer. 'Haven't you got a *Grammar and Lexicon of Lowdham's Language A* that you could pass round? I

wouldn't mind a look at it, if it isn't in some hideous phonetic script.'

Lowdham stared at him, but repressed the explosion that seemed imminent. 'Are you deliberately missing the point?' he said. 'I've been painfully trying to indicate that I do *not* believe that this stuff is "invented", not by me at any rate.

'Take the Anglo-Saxon first. It is the only known language that comes through at all in this way, and that in itself is odd. And it began to come through *before* I knew it. I recognized it as Anglo-Saxon only after I began to learn it from books, and then I had the curious experience of finding that I already knew a good many of the words. Why, there are a number of ghost-words noted in the very first of my childish note-books that are plainly a beginner's efforts at putting down spoken Old English words in modern letters. There's *wook*, *woak*, *woof* = crooked, for instance, that is evidently a first attempt at recording Anglo-Saxon *wōh*.

'And as for the other stuff: A, the language I like best, is the shortest list. How I wish I could get more of it! But it's *not* under my control, Stainer. It's not one of my invented lingo. I have made up two or three, and they're as complete as they're ever likely to be; but that's quite a different matter. But evidently I'd better cut out the autobiography and jump down to the present.

'It's now clear to me that the two languages A and B have got nothing to do with any language I've ever heard, or come across in books in the ordinary way. Nothing. As far as it is possible for any language, built out of about two dozen sounds, as A is, to avoid occasional resemblances to other quite unrelated tongues: nothing. And they have nothing to do with my inventions either. Language B is quite unlike my own style. Language A is very agreeable to my taste (it may have helped to form it), but it is independent of me; I can't "work it out", as you put it.

'Any one who has ever spent (or wasted) any time on composing a language will understand me. Others perhaps won't. But in making up a language you are free: too free. It is difficult to fit meaning to any given sound-pattern, and even more difficult to fit a sound-pattern to any given meaning. I say *fit*. I don't mean that you can't assign forms or meanings arbitrarily, as you will. Say, you want a word for *sky*. Well, call it *jibberjabber*, or anything else that comes into your head

without the exercise of any linguistic taste or art. But that's code-making, not language-building. It is quite another matter to find a relationship, sound plus sense, that satisfies, that is when made *durable*. When you're just inventing, the pleasure or fun is in the moment of invention; but as you are the master your whim is law, and you may want to have the fun all over again, fresh. You're liable to be for ever niggling, altering, refining, wavering, according to your linguistic mood and to your changes of taste.

'It is not in the least like that with my ghost-words. They came through made: sound and sense already conjoined. I can no more niggle with them than I can alter the sound or the sense of the word *polis* in Greek. Many of my ghost-words have been repeated, over and over again, down the years. Nothing changes but, occasionally, my spelling. They don't change. They endure, unaltered, unalterable by me. In other words they have the effect and taste of real languages. But one can have one's preferences among real languages, and as I say, I like A best.

'Both A and B I associate in some way with the name *Nūmenor*. The rag-bag list has got pretty long as the years have gone on, and I can now see that, among some unidentified stuff, it contains a lot of echoes of later forms of language derived from A and B. The *Nūmenorean* tongues are old, old, archaic; they taste of an Elder World to me. The other things are worn, altered, touched with the loss and bitterness of these shores of exile.' These last words he spoke in a strange tone, as if talking to himself. Then his voice trailed off into silence.

'I find this rather hard to follow, or to swallow,' said Stainer. 'Couldn't you give us something a bit clearer, something better to bite on than this algebra of A and B?'

Lowdham looked up again. 'Yes, I could,' he said. 'I won't bother you with the later echoes. I find them moving, somehow, and instructive technically: I am beginning to discern the laws or lines of their change as the world grew older; but that wouldn't be clear even to a philologist except in writing and with long parallel lists.

'But take the name *Nūmenōre* or *Nūmenor* (both occur) to start with. That belongs to Language A. It means Westernesse, and is composed of *nūme* "west" and *nōre* "folk" or "country". But the B name is *Anadūnē*, and the people are called *Adūnāim*, from the B word *adūn* "west". The same land, or so I think, has

another name: in A *Andōre* and in B *Yōzāyan*,<sup>39</sup> and both mean "Land of Gift".

'There seems to be no connexion between the two languages there. But there are some words that are the same or very similar in both. The word for "sky" or "the heavens" is *menel* in Language A and *minil* in B: a form of it occurs in *Minul-tārik* "Pillar of Heaven" that I mentioned just now. And there seems to be some connexion between the A word *Valar*, which seems to mean something like "The Powers", we might say "gods" perhaps, and the B plural *Avalōim* and the place-name *Avallōni*. Although that is a B name, it is with it, oddly enough, that I associate Language A; so if you want to get rid of algebra, you can call A Avallonian, and B Adunaic. I do myself.

'The name *Ēarendil*, by the way, belongs to Avallonian, and contains *ēare* "the open sea" and the stem *ndil* "love, devotion": that may look a bit odd, but lots of the Avallonian stems begin with *nd*, *mb*, *ng*, which lose their *d*, *b*, or *g* when they stand alone. The corresponding Adunaic name, apparently meaning just the same, is *Azrubēl*. A large number of names seem to have double forms like this, almost as if one people spoke two languages. If that is so, I suppose the situation could be paralleled by the use of, say, Chinese in Japan, or indeed of Latin in Europe. As if a man could be called Godwin, and also Theophilus or Amadcus. But even so two different peoples must come into the story somewhere.

'Well there you are. I hope you are not all bored. I could give you long lists of other words. Words, words, mostly just that. For the most part significant nouns, like *Isil* and *Nīlū* for the Moon; fewer adjectives, still fewer verbs, and only occasional connected phrases. I love these languages, though they are only fragments out of some forgotten book. I find both curiously attractive, though Avallonian is nearest to my heart. Adunaic with its, well, faintly Semitic flavour belongs more nearly to our world, somehow. But Avallonian is to me beautiful, in its simple and euphonious style. And it seems to me more august, more ancient, and, well, sacred and liturgical. I used to call it the Elven-Latin. The echoes of it carry one far away. Very far away. Away from Middle-earth altogether, I expect.' He paused as if he was listening. 'But I could not explain just what I mean by that,' he ended.

There was a short silence, and then Markison spoke. 'Why did you call it Elven-Latin?'<sup>40</sup> he asked. 'Why Elven?'

'I don't quite know,' Lowdham answered. 'It seems the nearest English word for the purpose. But certainly I didn't mean *elf* in any debased post-Shakespearean sort of sense. Something far more potent and majestic. I am not quite clear what. In fact it's one of the things that I most want to discover. What is the real reference of the *ælf* in my name?

'You remember that I said Anglo-Saxon used to come through mixed up with this other queer stuff, as if it had some special connexion with it? Well, I got hold of Anglo-Saxon through the ordinary books later on: I began to learn it properly before I was fifteen, and that confused the issue. Yet it is an odd fact that, though I found most of these words already there, waiting for me, in the printed vocabularies and dictionaries, there were some – and they still come through now and again – that are not there at all. *Tiwes*,<sup>41</sup> for instance, apparently used as an equivalent of the Avallonian *Valar*; and *Nówendaland*<sup>42</sup> for *Nūmenōre*. And other compound names too, like *Fréafíras*,<sup>43</sup> *Regeneard*,<sup>44</sup> and *Midswípen*.<sup>45</sup> Some were in very archaic form: like *hebaensuil* "pillar of heaven", or *frumaeldi*; or very antique indeed like *Wihawinia*.<sup>46</sup>

'This is dreadful,' sighed Frankley. 'Though I suppose I should be grateful at least that Valhalla and Valkyries have not made their appearance yet. But you'd better be careful, Arry! We're all friends here, and we won't give you away. But you will be getting into trouble, if you let your archaic cats out of your private bag among your quarrelsome philological rivals. Unless, of course, you back up their theories.'<sup>47</sup>

'You needn't worry,' said Lowdham. 'I've no intention of publishing the stuff. And I haven't come across anything very controversial anyway. After all Anglo-Saxon is pretty near home, in place and time, and it's been closely worked: there's not much margin for wide errors, not even in pronunciation. What I hear is more or less what the received doctrine would lead me to expect. Except in one point: it is so slow! Compared with us urban chirrupers the farmers and mariners of the past simply mouthed, savoured words like meat and wine and honey on their tongues. Especially when declaiming. They made a scrap of verse majestically sonorous: like thunder moving on a slow wind, or the tramp of mourners at the funeral of a king. We just gabble the stuff. But even that is no news to philologists, in theory; though the realization of it in sound is something mere theory hardly prepares you for. And, of course, the

philologists would be very interested in my echoes of very archaic English, even early Germanic – if they could be got to believe that they were genuine.

‘Here’s a bit that might intrigue them. It’s very primitive in form, though I use a less horrific notation than is usual. But you had better see this.’ He brought out from his pocket several scraps of paper and passed them round;

*westra lage wegas rehtas, wraikwas nu isti.*

‘That came through years ago,<sup>48</sup> long before I could interpret it, and it has constantly been repeated in various forms:

*westra lage wegas rehtas, wraikwas nu isti.*

*westweg wæs rihtweg, wóh is núpa*

and so on and on and on, in many snatches and dream-echoes, down from what looks like very ancient Germanic to Old English.

*a straight way lay westward, now it is bent.*

It seems the key to something, but I can’t fit it yet. But it was while I was rummaging in an Onomasticon,<sup>49</sup> and poring over the list of Ælfrwines, that I got, seemed to *hear* and *see*, the longest snatch that has ever come through in that way. Yes, I said I wasn’t a *seer*; but Anglo-Saxon is sometimes an exception. I don’t see pictures, but I see letters: some of the words and especially some of the scraps of verse seem to be present to the mind’s eye as well as to the ear, as if sometime, somewhere, I had seen them written and could almost recall the page. If you turn over the slips I gave you, you’ll see the thing written out. It came through when I was only sixteen, before I had read any of the old verse; but the lines stuck, and I put them down as well as I could. The archaic forms interest me now as a philologist, but that’s how they came through, and how they stand in my note-book under the date October 1st 1954. A windy evening: I remember it howling round the house, and the distant sound of the sea.

*Monath módaes lust mith meriflóda  
forth ti foeran thaet ic feorr hionan  
obaer gaarseggaes grimmae holmas  
aelbuuina eard uut gisoecae.*

*Nis me ti hearpun hygi ni ti bringthegi  
ni ti wíbae wyn ni ti weoruldi hyct  
ni ymb oowict ellaes nebnae ymb ýtha giwalc.*

It sounds to me now almost like my own father speaking across grey seas of world and time:

My soul's desire over the sea-torrents  
 forth bids me fare, that I afar should seek  
 over the ancient water's awful mountains  
 Elf-friends' island in the Outer-world.  
 For no harp have I heart, no hand for gold,  
 in no wife delight, in the world no hope:  
 one wish only, for the waves' tumult.

'I know now, of course, that these lines very closely resemble some of the verses in the middle of *The Seafarer*, as that strange old poem of longing is usually called. But they are not the same. In the text preserved in manuscript it runs *elpéodigra eard* 'the land of aliens', not *aelbuuina* or *ælfwina* (as it would have been spelt later) 'of the Ælfwines, the Elven-friends'. I think mine is probably the older and better text – it is in a much older form and spelling anyway – but I daresay I should get into trouble, as Pip suggests, if I put it into a "serious journal".<sup>50</sup>

'It was not until quite recently that I picked up echoes of some other lines that are not found at all among the preserved fragments of the oldest English verses.<sup>51</sup>

*Pus cwæð Ælfwine Wídlást Éadwines sunu:  
 Fela bið on Westwegum werum uncúðra,  
 wundra and wihȝa, wlitescéne land,  
 eardgeard ælfa and ésa bliss.  
 Lýt ænig wát hwylc his langoð síe  
 þám þe eftsiðes éldo getwéfeð.*

'Thus spake Ælfwine the Fartravelled son of Éadwine:

There is many a thing in the west of the world unknown to men; marvels and strange beings, [a land lovely to look on,] the dwelling place of the Elves and the bliss of the Gods. Little doth any man know what longing is his whom old age cutteth off from return.

'I think my father went before Eld should cut him off. But what of Éadwine's son?

'Well, now I've had my say for the present. There may be more later. I am working at the stuff – as hard as time and my duties allow, and things may happen. Certainly I'll let you know, if they do. For now you have endured so much, I expect you will want some more news, if anything interesting turns up.

If it's any comfort to you, Philip, I think we shall get away from Anglo-Saxon sooner or later.'

'If it's any comfort to you, Arry,' said Frankley, 'for the first time in your long life as a preacher you've made me faintly interested in it.'

'Good Heavens!' said Lowdham. 'Then there must be something *very* queer going on! Lor bless me! Give me a drink and I will sing, as the minstrels used to say.

*Fil me a cuppe of ful gode ale,  
for longe I have spelled tale!  
Nu wil I drinken or I ende  
that Frenche men to helle wende!*<sup>52</sup>

The song was interrupted by Frankley. Eventually a semblance of peace was restored, only one chair being a casualty. Nothing toward or untoward occurred for the remainder of the evening.

AAL. MGR. WTJ. JM. RD. RS. PF. JJ. JJR. NG.

Night 67. Thursday, June 12th, 1987.<sup>53</sup>

We met in Ramer's rooms in Jesus College. There were eight of us present, including Stainer and Cameron, and all the regulars except Lowdham. It was very hot and sultry, and we sat near the window looking into the inner quadrangle, talking of this and that, and listening for the noises of Lowdham's approach; but an hour passed and there was still no sign of him.

'Have you seen anything of Arry lately?' said Frankley to Jeremy. 'I haven't. I wonder if he's going to turn up at all tonight?'

'I couldn't say,' said Jeremy. 'Ramer and I saw a good deal of him in the first few days after our last meeting, but I haven't set eyes on him for some time now.'

'I wonder what he's up to? They say he cancelled his lectures last week. I hope he's not ill.'

'I don't think you need fret about your little Elf-friend,' said Dolbear. 'He's got a body and a constitution that would put a steamroller back a bit, if it bumped into him. And don't worry about his mind! He's getting something off it, and that will do him no harm, I think. At least whatever it does, it will do less harm than trying to cork it up any longer. But what on earth it all is — well, I'm still about as much at sea as old Edwin Lowdham himself.'

'Sunk, in fact,' said Stainer. 'I should say it was a bad attack of repressed linguistic invention, and that the sooner he brings out an Adunaic Grammar the better for all.'

'Perhaps,' said Ramer. 'But he may bring out a lot more besides. I wish he would come!'

At that moment there was the sound of loud footsteps, heavy and quick, on the wooden stairs below. There was a bang on the door, and in strode Lowdham.

'I've got something new!' he shouted. 'More than mere words. Verbs! Syntax at last!' He sat down and mopped his face.

'Verbs, syntax! Hooray!' mocked Frankley. 'Now isn't that thrilling!'

'Don't try and start a row, O Lover of Horses<sup>54</sup> and Horseplay!' said Lowdham. 'It's too hot. Listen!

'It's been very stuffy and thundery lately, and I haven't been able to sleep, a troublesome novelty for me; and I began to have a splitting headache. So I cleared off for a few days to the west coast, to Pembroke. But the Eagles came up out of the Atlantic, and I fled. I still couldn't sleep when I came back, and my headache got worse. And then last night I fell suddenly into a deep dark sleep – and I got this.' He waved a handful of papers at us. 'I didn't come round until nearly twelve this morning, and my head was ringing with words. They began to fade quickly as soon as I woke; but I jotted down at once all I could.

'I have been working on the stuff every minute since, and I've made six copies. For I think you'll find it well worth a glance; but you fellows would never follow it without something to look at. Here it is!'

He passed round several sheets of paper. On them were inscribed strange words in a big bold hand, done with one of the great thick-nibbed pens Lowdham is fond of. Under most of the words were glosses in red ink.<sup>55</sup>

## I

(A)	O	<i>sauron</i>	<i>túle</i>	<i>nukumna</i>	...	<i>lantaner</i>	<i>turkildi</i>
	and	?	came	humbled	...	fell	?
	<i>nuhuinenna</i>	...	<i>tar-kalion</i>	<i>ohtakáre</i>	<i>valannar</i>	...	
	under shadow	...	?	war made	on Powers	...	
	<i>númeheruvi</i>	<i>arda</i>	<i>sakkante</i>	<i>lenéme</i>	<i>ilúvatáren</i>	...	
	Lords-of-West	Earth	rent	with leave	of	?	...

*ëari ullier ikilyanna ... númenóre ataltane*  
 seas should flow into chasm ... Numenor fell down

\* \* \*

- (B) *Kadō zigūrun zabathān unakkha ... ēruhīnim*  
 and so ? humbled he-came ... ?
- dubdam ugru-dalad ... ar-pharazōnun azaggara*  
 fell ?shadow under ... ? was warring
- avalōiyada ... bārim an-adūn yurahtam dāira*  
 against Powers ... Lords of-West broke Earth
- sāibēth-mā ēruvō ... azrīya du-phursā akhāsada*  
 assent-with ?-from ... seas so-as-to-gush into chasm
- ... anadūnē zīrān hikallaba ... bawība dulgī*  
 ... Numenor beloved she-fell down ... winds black
- ... balīk hazad an-nimruzīr azūlada*  
 ... ships seven of ? eastward

## II

- (B) *Agannālō burōda nēnud ... zāira nēnud*  
 Death-shadow heavy on-us ... longing (is) on-us
- ... adūn izindi batān tāidō ayadda: idō*  
 ... west straight road once went now
- kātha batīna lōkhī*  
 all roads crooked
- (A) *Vahaiya sīn Andóre*  
 far away now (is) Land of Gift
- (B) *Ēphalak idōn Yōzāyan*  
 far away now (is) Land of Gift
- (B) *Ēphal ēphalak idōn hi-Akallabēth*  
 far far away now (is) She-that-hath-fallen
- (A) *Haiya vahaiya sīn atalante.*  
 far far away now (is) the Downfallen.<sup>56</sup>

'There are two languages here,' said Lowdham, 'Avallonian and Adunaic: I have labelled them A and B. Of course, I have put them down in a spelling of my own. Avallonian has a clear simple phonetic structure and in my ear it rings like a bell, but I

seemed to feel as I wrote this stuff down that it was not really spelt like this. I have never had the same feeling before, but this morning I half glimpsed quite a different script, though I couldn't visualize it clearly. I fancy Adunaic used a very similar script too.

"I believe these are passages out of some book," I said to myself. And then suddenly I remembered the curious script in my father's manuscript. But that can wait. I've brought the leaf along.

"These are only fragmentary sentences, of course, and not by any means all that I heard; but they are all that I could seize and get written down. Text I is bilingual, though they are not identical, and the B version is a little longer. That's only because I could remember a bit more of it. They correspond so closely because I heard the A version, a sentence at a time, with the B version immediately following: in the same voice, as if someone was reading out of an ancient book and translating it bit by bit for his audience. Then there came a long dark gap, or a picture of confusion and darkness in which the word-echoes were lost in a noise of winds and waves.

'And then I got a kind of lamentation or chant, of which I have put down all that I can now remember. You'll notice the order is altered at the end. There were two voices here, one singing A and the other singing B, and the chant always ended up as I have set it out: A B B A. The last word was always *Atalante*. I can give you no idea of how moving it was, horribly moving. I still feel the weight of a great loss myself, as if I shall never be really happy on these shores again.

'I don't think there are any really new words here. There are a lot of very interesting grammatical details; but I won't bother you with those, interesting as they are to me – and they seem to have touched off something in my memory too, so that I now know more than is actually contained in the fragments. You'll see a lot of query marks, but I think the context (and often the grammar) indicates that these are all names or titles.

'*Tar-kalion*, for instance: I think that is a king's name, for I've often come across the prefix *tar* in names of the great, and *ar* in the corresponding Adunaic name (on the system I told you about) is the stem of the word for "king". On the other hand *turkildi* and *ērubīnim*, though evidently equivalent, don't mean the same thing. The one means, I think, 'lordly men', and the other is rather more startling, for it appears to be the name of

God the Omnipotent with a patronymic ending: in fact, unless I am quite wrong, "Children of God". Indeed, I need not have queried the words *ēruvō* and *ilúvatāren*: there can't really be any doubt that *ēruvō* is the sacred name *Ēru* with a suffixed element meaning "from", and that therefore *ilúvatāren* means the same thing.

'There is one point that may interest you, after what we were saying about linguistic coincidence. Well, it seems to me a fair guess that we are dealing with a record, or a legend, of an Atlantis catastrophe.'

'Why *or*?' said Jeremy. 'I mean, it might be a record *and* a legend. You never really tackled the question I propounded at our first meeting this term. If you went back would you find myth dissolving into history or history into myth? Somebody once said, I forget who, that the distinction between history and myth might be meaningless outside the Earth. I think it might at least get a great deal less sharp on the Earth, further back. Perhaps the Atlantis catastrophe was the dividing line?'

'We may be able to deal with your question a great deal better when we've got to the bottom of all this,' said Lowdham. 'In the meantime the point I was going to bring up is worth noting. I said "Atlantis" because Ramer told us that he associated the word Nūmenor with the Greek name. Well, look! here we learn that Nūmenor was destroyed; and we end with a lament: *far, far away, now is Atalante*. *Atalante* is plainly another name for Nūmenor-Atlantis. But only after its downfall. For in Avallo-nian *atalante* is a word formed normally from a common base *talat* "topple over, slip down": it occurs in Text I in an emphatic verbal form *ataltane* "slid down in ruin", to be precise. *Atalante* means "She that has fallen down". So the two names have approached one another, have reached a very similar shape by quite unconnected routes. At least, I suppose the routes are unconnected. I mean, whatever traditions may lie behind Plato's *Timaeus*,<sup>57</sup> the name that he uses, Atlantis, must be just the same old "daughter of Atlas" that was applied to Calypso. But even that connects the land with a mountain regarded as the pillar of heaven. Minul-Tārik, Minul-Tārik! Very interesting.'

He got up and stretched. 'At least I hope you all think so! But, good lord, how hot and stuffy it is getting! Not an evening for a lecture! But anyway, I can't make much more out of this with only words, and without more words. And I need some pictures.'

'I wish I could *see* a little, as well as hear, like you, Ramer. Or

like Jerry. He's had a few glimpses of strange things, while we worked together; but he can't hear. My words seem to waken his sight, but it's not at all clear yet. Ships with dark sails. Towers on sea-washed shores. Battles: swords that glint, but are silent. A great domed temple.<sup>58</sup> I wish I could see as much. But I've done what I can. *Sauron. Zigūrun, Zigūr.* I can't fathom those names. But the key is there, I think. *Zigūr.*'

'Zigūr!' said Jeremy in a strange voice.<sup>59</sup> We stared at him: he was sitting with his eyes closed, and he looked very pale; beads of sweat were on his face.

'I say, what's the matter, Jerry?' cried Frankley. 'Open the other window, Ramer, and let's have some more air! I think there's a storm brewing.'

'Zigūr!' cried Jeremy again, in a remote strained voice. 'You spoke of him yourself not long ago, cursing the name. Can you have forgotten him, Nimruzīr?'<sup>60</sup>

'I had forgotten,' Lowdham answered. 'But now I begin to remember!' He stood still and clenched his fists. His brow lowered, and his eyes glittered. There was a glimmer of lightning far away through the darkening window. Away in the west over the roofs the sky was going dead black. There came a distant rumour of thunder.

Jeremy groaned and laid his head back.

Frankley and Ramer went to him, and bent over him; but he did not seem to notice them. 'It's the thunder, perhaps,' said Frankley in a low voice. 'He seemed all right a few minutes ago; but he looks pretty ghastly now.'

'Leave him alone,' growled Dolbear. 'You'll do no good hovering over him.'

'Would you like to lie down on my bed?' said Ramer. 'Or shall I get the car out and run you home?'

'Are you feeling ill, old man?' said Frankley.

'Yes,' groaned Jeremy without moving. 'Deathly. But don't trouble me! Don't touch me! *Bā kitabdahē!*<sup>61</sup> Sit down. I shall speak in a moment.'

There was a silence that seemed long and heavy. It was then nearly ten o'clock, and the pale sky of summer twilight was pricked by a few faint stars; but the blackness crawled slowly onwards from the West. Great wings of shadow stretched out ominously over the town. The curtains stirred as with a presage of wind, and then hung still. There was a long mutter of thunder ending in a crack.

Lowdham was standing erect in the middle of the floor, looking out of the window with staring eyes. Suddenly:

'*Narīka 'nBāri 'nAdūn yanākhim,*'<sup>62</sup> he shouted, lifting up both his arms. 'The Eagles of the Lords of the West are at hand!'

Then all at once Jeremy began to speak. 'Now I see!' he said. 'I see it all. The ships have set sail at last. Woe to the time! Behold, the mountain smokes and the earth trembles!'

He paused, and we sat staring, oppressed as by the oncoming of doom. The voices of the storm drew nearer. Then Jeremy began again.

'Woe to this time and the fell counsels of Zigūr! The King hath set forth his might against the Lords of the West. The fleets of the Nūmenoreans are like a land of many islands; their masts are like the stems of a forest; their sails are golden and black. Night is coming. They have gone against Avallōni with naked swords. All the world waiteth. Why do the Lords of the West make no sign?'<sup>63</sup>

There was a dazzle of lightning and a deafening crash.

'Behold! Now the black wrath is come upon us out of the West. The Eagles of the Powers of the World have arisen in anger. The Lords have spoken to Ēru, and the fate of the World is changed!'<sup>64</sup>

'Do you not hear the wind coming and the roaring of the sea?' said Lowdham.

'Do you not see the wings of the Eagles, and their eyes like thunderbolts and their claws like forks of fire?' said Jeremy. 'See! The abyss openeth. The sea falls. The mountains lean over. *Urīd yakalubim!*' He got up unsteadily, and Lowdham took his hand, and drew him towards him, as if to protect him. Together they went to the window and stood there peering out, talking to one another in a strange tongue. Irresistibly I was reminded of two people hanging over the side of a ship. But suddenly with a cry they turned away, and knelt down covering their eyes.

'The glory hath fallen into the deep waters,' said Jeremy weeping.

'Still the eagles pursue us,' said Lowdham. 'The wind is like the end of the world, and the waves are like mountains moving. We go into darkness.'<sup>65</sup>

There was a roar of thunder and a blaze of lightning: flashes north, south, and west. Ramer's room flared into a blistering light and rocked back into darkness. The electric light had

failed. At a distance there was a murmur as of a great wind coming.

'All hath passed away. The light hath gone out!' said Jeremy.

With a vast rush and slash rain came down suddenly like waterfalls out of the sky, and a wind swept the city with wild wings of fury; its shriek rose to a deafening tumult. Near at hand I heard, or I thought I heard, a great weight like a tower falling heavily, clattering to ruin. Before we could close the windows with the strength of all hands present and heave the shutters after them, the curtains were blown across the room and the floor was flooded.

In the midst of all the confusion, while Ramer was trying to find and light a candle, Lowdham went up to Jeremy, who was cowering against the wall, and he took his hands.

'Come, Abrazān!'<sup>66</sup> he said. 'There is work to do. Let us look to our folk and see to our courses, before it is too late!'

'It is too late, Nimruzīr,' said Jeremy. 'The Valar hate us. Only darkness awaits us.'

'A little light may yet lie beyond it. Come!' said Lowdham, and he drew Jeremy to his feet. In the light of the flickering candle that Ramer now held in a shaking hand, we saw him drag Jeremy to the door, and push him out of the room. We heard their feet stumbling and clattering down the stairs.

'They'll be drowned!' said Frankley, taking a few steps, as if to follow them. 'What on earth has come over them?'

'The fear of the Lords of the West,' said Ramer, and his voice shook. 'It is no good trying to follow them. But I think it was their part in this story to escape from the very edge of Doom. Let them escape!'

And there this meeting would have ended, but for the fact that the rest of us could not face the night and dared not go.

For three hours we sat huddled up in dim candle-light, while the greatest storm in the memory of any living man roared over us: the terrible storm of June 12th 1987,<sup>67</sup> that slew more men, felled more trees, and cast down more towers, bridges and other works of Man than a hundred years of wild weather.\*

\*The centre of its greatest fury seems to have been out in the Atlantic, but its whole course and progress has been something of a puzzle to meteorologists – as far as can be discovered from accounts it seems to have proceeded more like blasts of an explosion, rushing eastward and slowly diminishing in force as it went. N.G.

When at last it had abated in the small hours, and through the rags of its wild retreat the sky was already growing pale again in the East, the company parted and crept away, tired and shaken, to wade the flooded streets and discover if their homes and colleges were still standing. Cameron made no remark. I am afraid he had not found the evening entertaining.

I was the last to go. As I stood by the door, I saw Ramer pick up a sheet of paper, closely covered with writing. He put it into a drawer.<sup>68</sup>

'Good night – or good morning!' I said. 'We should be thankful at any rate that we were not struck by lightning, or caught in the ruin of the college.'

'We should indeed!' said Ramer. 'I wonder.'

'What do you wonder?' I said.

'Well, I have an odd feeling, Nick, or suspicion, that we may all have been helping to stir something up. If not out of history, at any rate out of a very powerful world of imagination and memory. Jeremy would say "perhaps out of both". I wonder if we may not find ourselves in other and worse dangers.'

'I don't understand you,' I said. 'But at any rate, I suppose you mean that you wonder whether they ought to go on. Oughtn't we to stop them?'

'Stop Lowdham and Jeremy?' said Ramer. 'We can't do that now.'

MGR. RD. PF. RS. JM. NG. Added later AAL. WTJ.

Night 68. June 26th, 1987.

Frankley's rooms. A small attendance: Frankley, Dolbear, Stainer, Guildford.

There is not much to record. Most of the Club, present or absent, were in one way or another involved in examinations, and tired, and more bothered than is usual at this season.\*

\* The extraordinary system of holding the principal examinations of the year in the summer, which must have been responsible for an incalculable amount of misery, was still in force. During the period of 'reforms' in the forties there was talk of altering this arrangement, but it was never carried out, though it was one of the few thoroughly desirable minor reforms proposed at the time. It was the events of the summer of 1987 that finally brought things to a head, as most of the examinations had that year to be transferred to the winter, or held again after the autumn term. N.G.