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### Tolkien and De La Mare: The Fantastic Secondary Worlds of *The Hobbit* and *The Three Mulla-Mulgars*

#### Abstract

Notes many similarities between De la Mare's rather obscure fantasy, *The Three Mulla-Mulgars* (later changed to *The Three Royal Monkeys*) and *The Hobbit*, and their authors' attitudes about fantasy.

#### Additional Keywords

de la Mare, Walter. The Three Royal Monkeys—Relation to Tolkien; Tolkien, J.R.R. The Hobbit

# Tolkien and De La Mare

## *The Fantastic Secondary Worlds of The Hobbit and The Three Mulla-Mulgars*

A. Bentinck

Those who have read Walter de la Mare's *The Three Mulla-Mulgars* (1910) or *The Three Royal Monkeys*, as it was re-titled later (1935), may well agree with Vera Chapman that it has a "very curious feeling of affinity" with J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit* (1937) and *The Lord of the Rings*.<sup>1</sup> Marcus Crouch is one of the few who have made a similar connection, when he writes of de la Mare's tale that "of all the great fantasies of the first decade of the century this is the most magical and the most convinced", and that "nothing comparable appeared in children's literature until Professor Tolkien introduced his *Hobbit* a quarter of a century later".<sup>2</sup>

Vera Chapman's short essay consists mainly of a description of *The Three Royal Monkeys*, to show in a general way how it appears to anticipate Tolkien.<sup>3</sup> It is my purpose here, however, to illustrate in greater detail the similarities between de la Mare's story and *The Hobbit*.

They are both stories in the old Quest tradition about "growing up or maturation",<sup>4</sup> and in each the hero is the smallest person. In *The Three Royal Monkeys*, the mother Mutta-matutta has three sons, Thumb, Thimble and Nod, and of these Nod (the magic child) is "the youngest, the littlest, and the gaysomest" (TRM 10); while Bilbo Baggins, in *The Hobbit*, though not young like Nod, is a member of a tribe of "little people, about half our height, and smaller than the bearded Dwarves" (H 2).

Nod and Bilbo and their companions live in their own complete "Secondary Worlds" – fantasy worlds which, as Tolkien writes, though based on a foundation of mundane actuality, are of "an arresting strangeness", and yet appear real and "true" while the imaginative reader is inside them.<sup>5</sup> De la Mare makes the same point: "All fairy-tales lead out into fantasy and back again into life"; and though "within their own framework they are reasonable enough ... it is a wild reasonableness."<sup>6</sup> This strangeness is a staple part of modern fantasy, which is based to a great extent on the traditional fairy tale. Both Tolkien and de la Mare agree that fairy tale stories should not be specially associated with children: "If fairy-story as a kind is worth reading at all it is worthy to be written for and read by adults" says Tolkien (TL 40,43); and de la Mare remarks of Hans Andersen's stories that many of them "appeal directly to the ruminating, memory-bewitched adult mind".<sup>7</sup> *The Three Royal Monkeys* and *The Hobbit* were written ostensibly for children, although adults can delight in them too. They are both full of exciting incidents, but contain some dif-

ficult language and also something of symbolism and philosophy which a child will not necessarily appreciate.

Each author read a great deal and came to love myth, legend, fairy story and romance through the influence of his mother. "Many of these old tales", writes de la Mare, "... were either said or told to me, or read to me, for the first time when I was a small child. It was then I fell in love with them... Few things have given me more pleasure" (*Animal Stories*, xv); and Tolkien writes: "It is to my mother who taught me... that I owe my tastes for philology, especially of Germanic languages, and for romance"; and "I have been a lover of fairy-stories since I learned to read" (TL 11). As de la Mare was only about twenty years older than Tolkien, their source material in this respect was likely to be very similar. They were brought up on the Authorized version of the Bible (as were so many of their generation), and it is probable that the fairy stories they read were the same. They both knew George MacDonald's fairy tales and, indeed, it is noticeable that there are many resemblances between his fantasies and both de la Mare's and Tolkien's tales. Christina Scull has commented upon the influence of E.H. Knatchbull-Hugessen's *Stories for my Children* on Tolkien, and as this book was first published in 1869 (and reprinted many times up to 1904), it is possible that de la Mare knew it too.<sup>8</sup> Like de la Mare, Tolkien was a fond father who read to his children and provided them with "full nursery book-shelves."<sup>10</sup> He may or may not have known de la Mare's *The Three Royal Monkeys* and his fairy stories *Told Again*, but it is very probable that, because he loved fantasy, he gave them to his children and read them himself.

This love of fairy story and romance is not the only way in which the two men seem alike. Words and the English language, rhythm and poetry excited them both and, as Tolkien puts it, they had "a sensibility to linguistic pattern" (*Letters*, 212). Each lived apparently quite a down-to-earth and uneventful life, loving the ordinary English countryside and nature in general. But each had an extraordinary and romantic imagination, their writings reflecting their preoccupation with a strange "other world" which had connections with Paradise and the mythic East, with Eden and the Fall. Tolkien writes that "we all long for it [Eden]... our whole nature at its best and least corrupted, its gentlest and most humane, is still soaked with the sense of 'exile'" (*Letters* 110); and the word "exile" haunts de la Mare's prose and poetry:

I am that Adam who, with Snake for guest,

Hid anguished eyes upon Eve's piteous breast.  
I am that Adam who, with broken wings,  
Fled from the Seraph's brazen trumpeting.  
Betrayed and fugitive, I still must roam  
A world where sin, and beauty, whispher of Home.<sup>11</sup>

Both *The Three Monkeys* and *The Hobbit* are instinct with this feeling of exile and nostalgia. Bilbo yearns for his "own home" (H 74), his comfortable Hobbit hole, while the three monkeys search longingly for their lost father and for their Uncle's royal palace.

It is obvious that Tolkien knew the work of de la Mare (who was an eminent poet and writer at the time he was growing up). But although he writes of him:

I do not think Walter de la Mare walked in my country... as far as my feelings for and understanding of his work goes, I should guess that he inhabited a much darker and more hopeless world: one anyway that alarms me profoundly (*Letters*, 253),

they do appear to have had a similar literary background and much basic technique, imagery and philosophy in common, as a comparison of these two stories shows.

## II

*The Three Royal Monkeys* and *The Hobbit*, like many modern fantasy stories of the fairy-tale type, are written in an often lyrical, slightly archaic, even Biblical style, which has sometimes been criticized. For example, an anonymous reviewer remarks that de la Mare's prose is whimsical, archaic and sometimes mannered,<sup>12</sup> while John Metcalf writes in *The Sunday Times*: "Far too often Mr Tolkien strides away into a kind of Brewers' Biblical, enwreathed with inversions, encrusted with archaisms".<sup>13</sup> Certainly neither author favors the modern fashion for unadorned, underwritten prose, although, at the same time, they often write quite simply and employ much concrete imagery. For both, the use of inversion, archaism and unusual words is not just a mannerism but is necessary to achieve the special effects they want. "A pleasant-sounding old term even in isolation, may act on the fancy like a charm. In collusion with its fellows it resembles an incantation", writes de la Mare,<sup>14</sup> and Tolkien says that "a real archaic English is far more terse" than modern English and many things can not be said "in our slack and often frivolous idiom" (*Letters* 225). In *The Three Royal Monkeys* and *The Hobbit* verse is interspersed with prose and that prose is often poetic, though Tolkien's style is on the whole more colloquial than that of de la Mare.

This combination of simple and archaic language is very often part of the trappings of fairy tale and fantasy, and de la Mare and Tolkien make full use of the fairy-tale conventions. Their story-lines are simple and straightforward, and both start uncompromisingly in the fashion of "once upon a time" - "In a hole in the ground there lived a

hobbit"; and "On the borders of the Forest of Munza-Mulgar lived once an old grey Fruit Monkey. . ."

The overall form of both *The Three Royal Monkeys* and *The Hobbit* is based on the fairy tale with its ancient Traveller and Quest theme, though the motives for the quest in each story are quite different. Nod and his princely brothers want to follow their father Seelem and discover their family and the riches of their palace home. Bilbo and the dwarves search for the long-forgotten, stolen, dragon-guarded, "pale enchanted gold" (H 13). Bilbo also longs for adventure: "something Tookish woke up inside him" (H 15), and he wanted to be thought fierce (H 17). For them all there are dangerous paths to be followed, difficulties and tests to be overcome, evil to be confronted, and battles to be fought, but there is eventually the usual happy ending and return "home". In both stories there is an emphasis on clear-cut good and evil. In *The Three Royal Monkeys* the good spirit of Tishnar is ranged against the evil Immanala, while in the great Battle of Five Armies at the end of *The Hobbit*, the evil Goblins and the wild Wolves are ranged against the forces of good - the Elves and Men and Dwarves.

Nod and Bilbo, like many fairy-tale heroes, are small but cunning, kind-hearted and courageous, and they each possess the magic - Nod's "milk-white Wonderstone of Tishnar" and Bilbo's Ring stolen from Gollum - which they have to manipulate in some way. Nod, of course, has "inborn magical gifts", as well as his Wonderstone, while Bilbo only accidentally acquires the magical Ring for, as Tolkien writes, the hobbits are "entirely without non-human powers" (*Letters*, 158). Both Nod and Bilbo have coats which seem to have a special significance for them, and one is tempted to recall the "little coat" which Samuel had - the child specially called by The Lord (1 Sam. 2:19). Nod is given by his mother "the little coat of mountain-sheep's wool, with its nine ivory buttons" (TRM 17), which recalls the little "sheep's-wool coat" with its "Buttons of bone" in de la Mare's talking cat poem "Comfort" (CP 283); while Thorin gives Bilbo "a small coat of mail, wrought for some young elf-prince long ago. . . of silver-steel" (H 220).

They both have fairy-tale magic helpers. Nod is befriended by Mishcha the old witch-hare, and led to safety by the spirit of Tishnar; and Bilbo is protected and guided by Gandalf "the wandering wizard", Beorn the Bear-man, and the Thrush and the Raven. Magic numbers figure in both stories, especially in *The Three Royal Monkeys*, where there are, for example, three sons, five days' journey, seven drum beats, and three sneezes. In *The Hobbit*, Gandalf makes Bilbo the fourteenth member of the traveling company to avoid the bad luck of thirteen (H 18); there are five armies (257), and the runes read: "Five feet high the door and three may walk abreast" (19).

There are fairy-tale prohibitions in both. "Don't leave the path!" Gandalf instructs Bilbo and the dwarves (H 128),

and Beorn tells them not to drink from, nor bathe in the stream in Mirkwood for "it carries enchantment and a great drowsiness and forgetfulness" (H 123). Similarly, Nod is told by his dying mother: "never lose, nor give away, nor sport with, nor even lend this Wonderstone" (TRM 18). He also is warned by Thumb not to drink from the river under the mountain, for it is "Sleepy water" (TRM 260). And, in true fairy-tale fashion, these prohibitions are ignored, for the dwarves leave the forest path, Bombur falls into the Enchanted River and Nod lends his Wonderstone to the Little Water Midden.

Both books describe the simple preparations for the journey and the farewell to friends, seen in many fairy stories. The three monkeys made cudgels and "tied up their few possessions into three bundles, and filled their pockets with old nuts" and "one by one their friends waved good-bye and left them" (TRM 34-5); while Bilbo and the dwarves, "rode away amid songs of farewell and good speed, with their hearts ready for more adventure, and with a knowledge of the road they must follow over the Misty Mountains to the land beyond" (H 50), with their ponies "slung about with all kinds of baggages, packages, parcels, and paraphernalia" (H 28).

Often in fairy stories great emphasis is placed on food and shelter and music and so it is in these two stories. At the beginning of *The Hobbit*, for example, there is a detailed description of tea and supper and the musical entertainment provided by the dwarves (H 10-15), and there is much talk of the fine hospitality at Elrond's Last Homely House (H 47) and the warm welcome at Lake Town (H 183). Similarly, when Nod invokes the magic of Tishnar, he sees "a long low table spread with flowers and strange fruits and nuts" where they feast to the sound of music (TRM 226-8). The monkeys were lured to the gigantic Gaunga-Mulgar's house by "a wonderful steaming smell of broth cooking" and his "blazing fire" (TRM 54); and Bilbo and the dwarves went inquisitively forward towards the lights and fire of the Wood-elves because of their hunger and "the smell of the roast meats" (H 140).

The romantic landscapes through which they travel are also very similar and primordial images appear which are often used in fairy tales and by fantasy writers – dense forests, paths and crossroads, mountains, rivers, caves, light and shadow.

And, just as fairy stories are often peopled by kings, princes and princesses, so there is mention in each story of royalty. The three monkeys are princes of royal descent and are making their way to their uncle's palace; and in *The Hobbit*, there is the Elvenking and his palace and Thorin, King under the Mountain.

### III

Apart from the use by both de la Mare and Tolkien of these particular fairy-tale conventions, there are other

scenes and happenings in their stories which are remarkably similar, particularly in the first stages of the adventures. In neither book is there a real geographical country, though both are obviously basically of our world, but their imaginary dimensions are concretely worked out. De la Mare's topography is not as extensive as Tolkien's, but it would be quite easy to draw a map from directions in his text which would show forests, rivers, valleys and mountains similar to those which can be seen in the actual map drawn by Tolkien for *The Hobbit*.

Forests and trees play an important part in the two tales. Both authors loved trees. De la Mare describes what pleasure he took in the great plane tree outside the window of his flat in Twickenham;<sup>18</sup> and Tolkien features a great tree in his story "Leaf by Niggle", and remarks how much he was "in love with plants and above all trees" (*Letters*, 220). So it seems natural that nature and the elements should figure largely in both books – plants and trees and wild creatures, the beauty of the moon and stars, rain, cold, snow and thunder. At one point a great tempest with "thunder and wind", lightning, ice and snow, breaks over the little monkeys and their friends Ghibba and the Men of the Mountains (TRM 202). Similarly, Bilbo and the dwarves are caught in a terrific thunderstorm, with wind whipping "the rain and the hail about in every direction" (H 53).

At the beginning, however, there is a difference between the two landscapes and their inhabitants. The land of *The Three Royal Monkeys* is apparently the tropics where live many different kinds of monkeys and animals. But Bilbo's home country, Hobbiton and The Hill, is typically English, and he adventurously leaves it to search for the Treasure and "to go and see the great mountains, and hear the pine-trees and the waterfalls, and explore the caves, and wear a sword instead of a walking-stick" (H 15). When Thumb, Thimble and Nod start out on their quest, however, the tropical heat turns to a strange "White Winter" which remains throughout the whole journey, during which they too encounter forest, river, swamp and mountains (TRM 16), until they arrive "home" in the Kingdom of Assamimmon, which is by contrast in a warm, blossom-filled, valley, surrounded by "Tishnar's unchanging snows" (TRM 264).

Each story starts from home and each dwelling-place is well described and its contents listed in detail – the monkey's "rickety, tumble-down old wooden hut" (TRM 7), and Bilbo Baggins' comfortable hobbit-hole (H 1). The family ancestors are noted: "This Mulgar, Zebbah, was Mutta-Matutta's great-great-grandfather. Dead and gone were all" (TRM 8); and "Belladonna Took, one of the three remarkable daughters of the Old Took, head of the hobbits who lived across The Water" (H 2).

Both the monkeys and dwarves leave home in a little company, and soon come to lands "dark with trees" (H 29)

and "after a while the lofty branches began to knit themselves above, and to hang thickly over the travellers, and to shut out the light. And the path grew faint and narrow" (TRM 35). They all suffer from rain and cold and darkness (TRM 36; TH 29) and have to camp in or under the trees. Later on, they are caught, bound and fattened for food – the monkeys by the flesh-eating Minims (TRM 72) and the dwarves and Bilbo by the man-eating trolls (H 37), and later by the Spiders (H 145-6).

They all have to cross several rivers (a favorite traditional symbolic hazard). For the little monkeys it is firstly "the deep and swollen Obba-Munza" (TRM 48). While looking for a boat (cf. TH 133), Nod encounters the ugly, gigantic Gunga-Mulgar (TRM 54). There is some humorous questioning between the two (TRM 57-9) which recalls the exchange of riddles between Bilbo and the ugly slimy creature Collum (H Chap. 5), and both heroes have to use their cunning and magic to escape from these two repulsive creatures although, by contrast, Collum is much smaller than the Gunga-Mulgar (TRM 67; TH 80-81). Both the monkeys and the dwarves have to negotiate an enchanted, sleep-inducing river, pass through an opening in a rock, and float through an underground stream. The monkeys have to build boats to take them on the current which "swept green and full and smooth into a rounded cavern in the mountain-side" (TRM 233), to bring them out eventually to the longed-for Valleys of Tishnar (TRM Chap. XXIII); and the dwarves have to escape from the Elvenking in barrels by an underground stream down to the Lake (H 171-4). Each group of travelers has a friend who has to be carried – Thimble, sick and faint with fever (TRM 179), and Bombur after tumbling into the Enchanted River and falling fast asleep (H 135).

Nod and Bilbo both get lost for a time (TRM 88; TH 63, 84) and both lose their precious magic Wonderstone and Ring, though Bilbo's is only a momentary loss (TRM 193; TH 82). Both are hurt. Nod is wounded by Gungar's arrow (TRM 68), and comes to his senses in the earth-mounds of the flesh-eating Minims. Bilbo gets a blow on the head (H 62-3) and is later hit by a stone in the battle (H 262) and, after the first accident, comes to in a tunnel just before picking up Collum's precious ring (H Chap. 5). Nod's rubbing of the Wonderstone brings Tishnar's "little flame" to lead the monkeys on their escape route (TRM 79); and, similarly, Gandalf's wand with its "pale light" leads Bilbo and the dwarves through the dark tunnels of the goblins' realm (H 60-62).

Both sets of travelers have ponies, but Nod is thrown and loses his steed when the monkeys make their escape from the Minims upon the Zevveras, the little Horses of Tishnar (TRM 86-88); while Bilbo and the dwarves are given little ponies for their journey but lose them (H 57). Fierce wolves figure in both stories (TRM 190; TH 93-96), as do eagles, although the eagles are enemies in *The Three Royal Monkeys* (186), and friends in *The Hobbit* (99-104).

Both our heroes show cleverness and courage in their respective battles and both use their magic. Nod's big battle is with Immanala (Chap. XI) and he needs cunning, diplomacy and great mental and physical bravery to overcome this dark, nameless, ravenous beast. Bilbo is also cunning and diplomatic in his use of the Arkenstone (H Chap. 16). But he too is frightened and needs to be very courageous when he encounters the great dragon Smaug (H 197).

Both stories are full of laughter and bantering fun, tenderness and sympathy. The principal characters have human traits. Nod is able to strike up a friendship with Andy Battle, the human, and be loyal to him, "struggling between love for his brothers and for the Comgar [man]" (TRM 121) and, after Thimble and Thumb's quarrel, he is affectionately described in human terms as looking "so queer, and small, and anxious, and loving, and all these things so much at once, that Thumb burst out into a roar of laughter" (TRM 161). His encounter with the Water Midden is full of descriptions of his kindness and his compassion for her loneliness: "He spoke gently, for he could not look into her beautiful wild face, and her eyes. . . and still be angry, or even sad. . . I will not harm you – I could not harm you, beautiful one" (TRM 249, 251). Similarly, Bilbo Baggins, although sometimes acerbic, is also portrayed as "a kindly little soul" (H 265), loyal and affectionate to his companions and even inexplicably understanding about his enemy: "Gollum had not actually threatened to kill him, or tried to yet. And he was miserable, alone, lost. A sudden understanding, a pity mixed with horror, welled up in Bilbo's heart" (H 80).

One of the main differences between the two stories is that *The Three Royal Monkeys* is primarily a fantasy tale about beasts even though they are articulate and semi-humanized. Andy Battle is the only human being in the story and, though important, he is a peripheral character. But in *The Hobbit* a race of men dwell by the Lake and Bilbo, in spite of living in a hole in the ground and having furry feet, seems to be very like a human being. For he is dressed like a little countryman and Tolkien says that "the Hobbits are. . . really meant to be a branch of the specifically human race" (*Letters*, 158). But the three little monkeys do also have something of mankind in them. Their father Seelam owned a shirt, jacket, cap and musket (TRM 13), and each monkey was given a White Man's jacket (TRM 17): "Shave, their chops and put them in breeches, they might well be little men" (TRM 33).

#### IV

Compared with Tolkien de la Mare is not now well-known except for a few popular lyrics and some verses and stories for children. His *The Three Royal Monkeys* has not enjoyed the success of Tolkien's books, yet it is an unique fantasy written in poetic prose of a high order. Its minority appeal may be because, although it was originally made up as a bed-time story for his own children, it is rather too

difficult for children. Another reason may be that it is primarily an animal fantasy without the simplicity of, say, *The Wind in the Willows*, or the natural history adult appeal of real animals such as appear in, for example, Henry Williamson's nature books.

It may also be true to say that it is not much read because de la Mare has slipped into obscurity, having been dismissed by Modernist critics as an out-dated Georgian Romantic, and by Leavis and his school in particular as an "escapist" poet with nothing to say to our modern world. In respect of that "escapist" label, it is relevant to note Tolkien's protest in 1938, which might well stand as a defence of de la Mare:

I have claimed that Escape is one of the main functions of fairy-stories, and since I do not disapprove of them it is plain that I do not accept the tone of scorn or pity with which "Escape" is now so often used: . . . In what the misusers are fond of calling Real Life, Escape is evidently as a rule very practical. . . in criticism it would seem to be the worse the better it succeeds (TL 53-4).

Tolkien recognizes that fantasy is important to man and is relevant to living and that it can be used to put "imaginatively starved modern man back once again into awe and reverent contact with a living universe."<sup>16</sup> De la Mare, too, finds that men are becoming estranged from their true place in nature and

are often so thorned in with material worries, and immortal anxieties, and a stodgy heredity, and the deadly environment of too much money, or of the longing for more, or of the absence of any, that most of their joy and beauty must come at second hand and be translated for them out of experience by an eye that sees, an ear that hears. . . .<sup>17</sup>

Are not all writers of fantasy trying to effect such a translation as they entice their readers into their own "secondary" worlds of make-believe and magic?

A Song of Enchantment I sang me there,  
In a green – green wood, by waters fair,  
Just as the words came up to me  
I sang it under the wild wood tree.  
(CP 186) \*

#### Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> A Forerunner of Tolkien? Walter de la Mare's *The Three Royal Monkeys*, *Mythlore* 28 (1981): 32-33.
- <sup>2</sup> See *Treasure Seekers and Borrowers: Children's Books in Britain 1900-1960* (London: The Library Association, 1962) 19.
- <sup>3</sup> Citations are from the Faber paper-covered edition of *The Three Royal Monkeys* (London: 1969); and from the 3rd ed. of *The Hobbit* (London: Unwin books, 1966), abbreviated hereafter to TRM and H respectively.
- <sup>4</sup> J.C. Nitzsche, "The King Under the Mountain: Tolkien's *Hobbit*," *North Dakota Quarterly* 47. 1 (1979): 5-18 (5).
- <sup>5</sup> See his essay "On Fairy-stories" a lecture originally given at St. Andrews in 1938, and reprinted in *Tree and Leaf* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1964) 36, 44, abbreviated hereafter to TL.

- <sup>6</sup> "Feodor Sologub," *Times Literary Supplement* (TLS), 24 June 1915: 212; and *Introduction to Animal Stories chosen, arranged, and in some part rewritten by Walter de la Mare* (London: Faber, 1939) xxxiii.
- <sup>7</sup> "Hans Christian Andersen," *TLS* 1 Jan. 1914: 1-2.
- <sup>8</sup> See *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*, ed. Humphrey Carpenter, (London: Allen & Unwin, 1981) 212, No. 163, abbreviated hereafter to *Letters*.
- <sup>9</sup> *The Fairy-Tale Tradition*, *Mallorn* 23 (1986): 30-36.
- <sup>10</sup> See Humphrey Carpenter, *J.R.R. Tolkien: A Biography* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1977) 164.
- <sup>11</sup> "The Exile," *The Complete Poems of Walter de la Mare* (London: Faber, 1969) 201, abbreviated hereafter to CP.
- <sup>12</sup> "Creatures of Dream," *TLS* 14 Oct. 1955: 597-9 (597).
- <sup>13</sup> Quoted by Carpenter in *J.R.R. Tolkien: A Biography*, 222-23.
- <sup>14</sup> "A Book of Words," *TLS* 1 June, 1922: 350; and see A. Bentinck, "Walter de la Mare: A Study of His Poetry," Ph.D. thesis, U of Edinburgh, 1984, Chap. 2.
- <sup>15</sup> Russell Brain, *Ten with Walter de la Mare* (London: Faber, 1957) 20, 40.
- <sup>16</sup> Randal Helms, *Tolkien's World* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1974) 24.
- <sup>17</sup> "Afoot in England," *TLS* 1 July, 1909: 244.



#### Thackeray's *The Rose and the Ring* continued from page 38

##### Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Gordon Ray points out the enormous popularity of Christmas pantomimes in Thackeray's day, noting that "the pantomime came to be divided into two distinct parts," an opening with material taken from "nursery tales, familiar dramas" or history, and a concluding Harlequinade employing stock characters from the Commedia dell'Arte (xiii). *The Rose and the Ring*, Ray suggests, "is in fact the 'speaking opening' of an early Victorian pantomime, infinitely refined and elaborated" (xv).
- <sup>2</sup> The "author" of *The Rose and the Ring* was M.A. (Michael Angelo) Titmarsh, a name under which Thackeray also authored other Christmas stories. Thackeray not only did the drawings for his fairy tale; he also had a hand in the woodcuts, although his skill with wood nowhere neared his talents with pencil and paints.
- <sup>3</sup> In a series of parodies originally written for *Punch* (1847-8) and later published as *Novels by Eminent Hands*, Thackeray satirizes the work of G.P.R. James in a short piece entitled "Barbazure."
- <sup>4</sup> Thackeray's narrator is considered rather forward even in an age when intrusive narrators were commonplace. As Ina Ferris has noted, "Thackeray's narrator is distinguished [from narrators employed by other Victorian authors such as Dickens, Trollope and Eliot] by his conversational, personal tone" (34).
- <sup>5</sup> Thackeray was, after all, the author whose usual literary "credo" was that "the Art of Novels is to represent Nature: to convey as strongly as possible the sentiment of reality" (Ray, xii). But he also delighted in pantomimes containing "the sparkling sugar of benevolence, the plums of fancy, the sweetmeats of fun, the figs of – well, the figs of fairy fiction" all popped into "the seething cauldron of imagination" (Stevens, 8).
- <sup>6</sup> As C.N. Manlove has suggested, Blackstock's concern "is in contrast to traditional fairy tales, where the means by which the hero becomes a king and not in his fitness to govern" (11).

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