THE PEDESTRIAN

Vol. 1, No. 1    February 1923

Manifesto

by Lawrence and Jane Wellbeloved

We were blind but now we see. Our lives were filled with wayward chicanery, dubious entrendre and wanton ruckus. SoHo beckoned and we were too weak to resist. As children, we lapped at the sparkling pool which was 'The Railway Children' by the temptress E. Nesbit. As teens, in the teens, we rejoiced in Oscar Wilde and H.G. Wells. We flirted with Fabians and courted Coefficients. We daringly invited rumours of incest and worse.

All that is now behind us. More than a six-shilling train ride separates our new/old/young/timeless lives in Chelmsford from the cesspool that stretches outward from Liverpool Street Station—so much more that it stretches our capacity to describe it. But try mightily to describe it we shall, in the pages, numbers, and volumes that follow.

We originally intended to call this venture 'The Prodigal,' to indicate the path we have commenced, and will continue to elongate with bricks of stone, away from our forlorn past. But rather than focus on the past, we want to dwell on the future, or rather, the true past which transcends the incorrect, ungodly, and frivolous future which wickedly calls itself 'modern.'

Why 'The Pedestrian' instead? Because now, more than any period in the history of humankind, it is time to SLOW DOWN not SPRINT, to TAKE IN not to be TAKEN IN by modernist claptrap, to AMBLE not AVIATE. Talk of progress, however gradual, however scientific, however tested by anthropometry and biometry, is a collection of lies, first forged in the so-called 'Bronze Age' and added to with each new alleged counterfoil to superstition.

Instead of setting parenthetically through the sieve of eugenic fitness, 'The Pedestrian' will revel in the mediocrity of heredity. We start at home, where all must commence their pedestrian existence. We welcome, with celebration and ceaseless patience, the hitherto hidden wisdom of our dear father, W. Rawson Wellbeloved, who has been curate these thirty-seven years of the chapel in Champness Green. His quiet reflections on unsung scriptural passages and his natural-historical ramblings along Essex cow-paths will feature prominently in these columns, in order to remind us all that the future of England lies not in Socialistic efficiency and double-entry book-keeping, but in tireless contemplation and tolerable submission to the afternoon breeze, to the winding road, to the underwhelming, unambitious interstices of the everyday.

Instead of advocating the rights of the working classes to unemployment insurance and a breadwinner wage, we welcome the occasional missive from our loyal maid Eliza Smith, who shall deliver overdue encomiums on the washboard, the dust mop, and the linen cabinet: servants' servants, one and all, each nobly pedestrian in its own way. We say: workers of the world, take pride in the monotony that binds you to what is truly human! Revel in the revolving routine of recurring tasks! Turn a blind eye to those who urge upon you the possibility, destined to disappoint, of 'something more!'

Instead of impatiently knocking at the gates protecting the altar of the God technos from his unworthy acolytes, we humbly celebrate the simplicity of Stone-Age Man. No mustard gas, no aeroplane, no abattoir, no iron spur, no Babylonian ziggurat of commerce, no brazen fetish shall pollute our pages. We shall trace with Lord Avebury the true bedrock on which the CIVILISATION of this Isle can only ever honestly claim to rest: the stone slabs, flint-edged pots and rock-hewn gates scattered yon and hither from Orkney to Cornwall.

Instead of ensnaring children by placing before them prancing, prideful, clever, frivolous, devious, ever-scheming versions of themselves, we shall offer as exemplary the simple manners and heroic exploits of Curdie and other models of boy- and girlhood who grace the pages of George MacDonald's wondrous tales. Commencing with this issue we shall, as well, present TODAY's children in true harmony with YESTERDAY's wise relics, as recounted in the serialised adventures to be known as 'Henge Family Huddleston.' We invite readers old and young alike to experience (if for the first time, so be it!) the splendour of discovery as they follow the serenely dilatory forays of Richard, Lester, Prudence, Emily and little Cecil as they accompany their father Prof. Laycock-Huddleston on his archaeological excavations.

In short, reader, we invite you to recoil with us; to recoil from the false gods of the modern, to recoil from the atheism of aesthetics, to recoil and to retreat, into the ever-patient, ever-waiting arms of the preindustrial. Mind you, we are not Luddites! We desire violence against neither the machine nor the mechanic. Rather, we preach abstention. We are Rechabites in the service of simplicity, teetotalers of technology. Stroll with us, if you will. Like it or not, whether or not we delude ourselves with ambitions to transform art or society or the monetary system, we are all predestined to be pedestrian.
Only the Stones Remain

by Lawrence Wellbeloved

Walk on any sheep-path between Fyfield and Leaden Roding, or, for that matter, in the general radius of Hatfield Peverel, and you will see them scattered wide and far. Reach into the road-side furrow on the way to Thaxted, and you will hold one in your hand. Stride down the Latin highway along the River Chelmer and they will push back against the soles of your feet. Everywhere, lying supine yet unyielding before the iron and steel and reinforced concrete pricks of the new, they silently remind us of their power, their stoic durability, their timelessness.

Stones! We skim them, we throw them, pedestrians kick them as they amble, anglers upturn them in search of worms, worms find shelter beneath them from the dessicating sun. Yet who sufficiently appreciates their services to scenery and to humankind alike? All too often, we take granite for granted, we do not query the quarry, we fail to scrutinise scree.

Our ancient human race was not always so oblivious to the glories of gravel. Thousands of years ago, before the fetish of BRONZE reared its heretical head, before (from that fateful beginning) we aspired to iron and steel, we made do with simple tools of flint. Armed with slingshots, we pelted pinnacles of firing bullets from an infernal machine gun. We learned to live within our limitations, and we did not hesitate to hoist our Stones onto the high pedestals which they deserved.

The wise Lord AVEBURY correctly averred, in his Prehistoric Times, as Illustrated by Ancient Remains, that in the Stone Age 'the wants of the artificers seem to have been few and simple', whereas 'all this is altered' in the Age of Bastard Bronze: 'We find not only, as before, axes, arrows, and knives, but, in addition, swords, lances, sickles, ear-rings, bracelets, pins, rings, and a variety of other articles.' Writing, as he did, half a century before the Great War and forty years before the Gomorrah that was SoHo in 1909, Avebury can perhaps be excused for mistaking this profusion of armaments and accessories as 'progress.' We now know better.

One illustration alone should have been enough, however, to have cautioned even the optimistic Avebury against the descent that was destined to overtake mankind once he traded Stone for Bronze. Let his own words be our guide: 'in the Neolithic Stone Age it was usual to bury the corpse,' while 'during the Bronze Age, the dead were generally burnt.' Generally burnt! How fitting, is it not, that these bejewelled barbarians, in utter neglect of the dignity due their dead, rendered them into ash, which they then deposited in (of course!) a bronze urn. The Lord saith, 'ashes to ashes': but it is for the Lord, and not meddling man, to convert flesh to cinder. From cremation to the abattoir, whence the murderous trenches of Ypres: this is what the Bronze Age hath wrought.

For proof of the sanctity of STONE, reflect on what remains in place in a village or mart centuries after its human commerce has ceased, after marauders and archaeologists have passed through with their propensity to pillage. It is not bronze, which ends in the satchel of the Viking, the Frank, or the Norman; and even if buried so deep as to elude the greedy grasp of England's invaders, bronze ultimately succumbs to the clutches of the modern Scientific Digger, who in a misguided effort to celebrate the Ascent of Man performs as much a disservice to society as the Diggers of yore when they aimed to upend the monarchical order. The gleaming bronze artifact will ever attract the magpie-instinct of Man, and if at all near the earth's surface will ultimately reside in garish display at the local history museum, attracting the wrong sort of attention to the sordid echoes of our past. In our own municipal Cabinet of Curiosities here in Chelmsford, the shelves positively groan beneath the weight of stolen spears and borrowed bowls, all betraying the glint of Bronze.

What remains, I repeat, is not bronze, but STONE. Too heavy to budge from the earth, too 'valueless' (measured by the present era's perverted price mechanism) to warrant so much as a second glance, Stones still stud our country, where God or man left them hundreds and thousands of years ago. And they will remain centuries hence, after new waves of invaders have further besoiled this sceptred Isle. Be they Teutons, be they Americans, or be they the space-monsters of Mr. Wells' dyspeptic imagination, it is certain that they will leave our Stones alone. Our hewn Stones shall survive to testify to what is truly English, what is truly Human, to the hostile jury of the Future.

Not ten miles from Chelmsford, away from its bronze booty encased in iron girders, a cluster of 100 round stone houses lay just beneath the peat, gloriously obscure and implacably immovable. Many a damp afternoon have I happily trod to Mucking Chadwell to view these soil-encased tributes to the persistence of Stone. Having learnt what to look for, I can here detect drainage gutters running downward from what once were rooftops, there espy enclosures, pits and post-holes where, perhaps, dogs were tethered or tents erected. And everywhere I sense the solidity of the Stones, which shield me as it were from the fleeting, fatuous Modern Struggle. Feeling their firmness beneath my feet, knowing that they long served their purpose of sheltering innocent Neolithic Man from animals and elements, fills me with an enormous sense of well-being, and makes me realize that we, too, God willing, might just be Here to Stay.
On the Banks of the Reedy Chelmer

by the Rev. W. Rawson Wellbeloved

One of the brightest memories to bless my young manhood was the time in 1902 when I visited London to attend the Nature Study Exhibition with my infant twins in tow. The highlight of the outing was a discourse on 'The Study of Nature' delivered by Sir John Lubbock, who had just two years earlier been elevated to the peerage and had so nobly chosen to pattern his new surname after the stone ruins at Avebury. With a twin in each arm, I (all three of us, in fact, if I recall correctly) sat mesmerised in the large greenhouse at Kew as the august Avebury expounded on our 'wonderful and beautiful world ... which it is most important to understand, and dangerous, if not fatal, to misunderstand.' He posed such profound questions as: 'What are the relations between the North and South Downs?' and 'Why has the Spanish chestnut long, sword-shaped leaves?—displaying many times over the endless puzzles Nature offers the curious mind.

As a boy growing up in Walton on the Naze, I had long marvelled at the tiger lilies that grew near my father's vicarage, and listened with rapt attention as he compared the lilies of our field to the Biblical 'lilies of the field.' As soon as I took charge of a congregation of my own, in 1886, I took it upon myself to avail my congregants of the sundry natural-historical marvels, however modest, that Champness Green had to offer. I revived the near-mortibund garden behind the chapel, I installed flower boxes in every window of my house, and I gleaned the Holy Book for any suitable reference to the neighbouring fauna.

As I pondered which members of the plant kingdom with which to begin this series of botanical belles-lettres, it suddenly hit me in a flash: reeds! Tall, strong, and swaying, they abound throughout our river-strewn land; and nowhere do they appear in more glorious variety than on the Chelmer, the greatest watery thoroughfare (second, of course, to the Thames itself) in the county. Numberless have been the occasions (excuses, I nearly wrote!) I have had to stroll the Chelmer's bankside paths, whether south to Chelmsford and Great Baddow or northerly to Dunmow, and at all such times I am struck by the majesty of the reeds which surround me.

As the Lord preaches that the meek shall inherit the Earth, so shall I commence my disquisition with the Common Reed (Arundo Phragmites), about which Sowerby correctly opines: 'Nothing can be more common.' Bridging river and road, these reeds in the summer months remove the Chelmer altogether from view, leaving only its burbling current and the whisper of the wind as it murmurs through their feathery plumes. Many a time have I solved the puzzle of a vexing passage in Lamentations or Ezra whilst thusly bewalled on my journey home from visiting the poor, so calming was the reeds' rustling chorus. Many a November, as well, has steady Phragmites soberly reminded me of the turning of the season, as its silvery down gave way to melancholy husk. Sowerby well captures the noble patience, the quiet dignity, of these plant-peasants, when he remarks that they 'continue to ornament many a dreary fen throughout the autumn, lifting their heads high above all other herbage.' He also reminds us that Common Reeds are 'for no purpose more useful, than to make warm sheltered enclosures for a kitchen garden.'

Hidden among the Common Reeds, revealing their secrets only in the flowering months of June and July, are the rare Wood Reed (A. Epiggo) and the rarer-still Small Reed (A. Calamagrostis). The Wood Reed, as its name implies, shuns the fen, and shows itself only where sylva meets stream. Luckily, Champness Green is home to a small copse of alders, which approach near enough to the Chelmer to provide refuge for a few hardy specimens of A. Epiggo. These can be distinguished from Common Reeds by their shorter flowering season (the tail end of July) and by the thick clusters into which the purple flowers group themselves. As for the Small Reed, I count myself lucky to have witnessed this thick-stemmed cousin of the Wood Reed, which flowers in June and seldom strays far from Norfolk, on an outing near Thaxted in the marshes where the Chelmer springs from the earth.

No survey of Chelmer reeds would, of course, be complete without mention of Typha Latifolia, or the Great Cat's-tail, which outshines the Common Reed in flowery display but seldom attains the latter's towering heights—reaching, at most, a yeoman farmer's eye-level. No child I ever met has failed to resist the temptation, which recurs every July, to snap the stalk of a Great Cat's-Tail and roll between his or her small hands its fuzzy brown sprout, topped (towards the end of the month) by a yellowish dunce-cap. On rare occasion, in especially swampy summers, I've noticed specimens of the Lesser Cat's Tail (T. Angustifolia) who prances about near her taller, fuller brother reeds, wearing a dainty yellow bonnet above her slim brown jacket.

A final entry on my list of riverside plants is Sisymbium Sylvestre, or the Creeping Water Rocket, although it certainly (I hasten to a excuse) has no reed. This beautiful vine has, on occasion, crept right into my vicarage pantry, although usually she keeps to herself in the gravel beneath the bird-bath. This 'rocket' has nought to do with George Stephenson's famous railway engine of the same title, but instead earns its nomem from the yellow flowers which burst forth from its pods whether 'tis June or September. I consider S. Sylvestre a dear old friend, and one of the manifold ways in which my humble vicarage is blest—since, although water rockets loudly blare in Tothill, in Battersea, and in Hammersmith (to what scant appreciation, among the ruffians who there reside, I do not deign to speculate), I have yet to encounter this colorful creeper whilst visiting any other parish in Essex.

I know of no better way to conclude this, my first offering in what I hope will be an edifying series of natural-historical musings, than with the wise words of Avebury:

Man, we know, is born to sorrow and suffering, but he is not born to be dull. If an one is ever dull it is his own fault. Every wood, every field, every garden, every stream, every pond, is full of interest for those who have eyes to see. No one would sit and drink in a public-house, if he knew how delightful it was to sit and think in a field.

Whether your field draws its sustaining fluid from the Stour, the Colne, or from the Chelmer which has come, over these nigh on two-score years, to fill me with wonder, heed these words! If you feel you have lost the path that leads to salvation, it lies but a stone's throw from you, wherever streams lap and cat's-tails sway in the breeze.
LESTER LAYCOCK-HUDDELETON COUL hardly contain his enthusiasm as he struggled with his galoshes on the platform at Colchester Station. The threatening skies had finally let loose with a deluge of raindrops, a mere five minutes before their train to London was scheduled to arrive, and bossy Prudence was insisting that little Lester protect his shoes from the elements. 'O why must you boss so, sister?' wailed Lester as she raised her finger in redoubled rebuke. He had been certain, a year prior when the infant Cecilia had appeared, that his new status as second-youngest would offer some reprieve from his sister's scoldings.

In light of subsequent events, it looked as if he would have to consign this fond hope to the realm of 'ice cream before tea' and other foiled desires.

Before Pru could respond to this heartfelt if short-sighted query, an ominous shadow passed over the both of them. They anxiously looked skyward, where rain once pelted but now, instead, a dark canvas canopy shaded them. It was the largest umbrella Lester had ever seen, at least since two weeks ago, and it had been raised rampart-like by their father, Professor Laycock-Huddleston, the locally renowned archaeologist. 'Bicker not, children of mine,' he boomed in his playful baritone. 'Let this umbrella shield you from rain and fruitless argument.'

Would that it could also shield them from the infernal railway-locomotive which was about to take them away from the comforts of Essex, he thought to himself, as he espied the train's billowy steam-columns approaching from the north. He had thought long and hard, but in the end could see no other way to transport his five children, Nurse Sprague, chest of digging tools, and sheaf of field notes, from Colchester to Deptford in time for him to start work investigating the newly-discovered ruins just to the north of Stonehenge. He took solace in the fact that if the Laycock-Huddlestons had a single family trait that stood above the rest, it was their Capacity to Endure. A two-hour journey to London, followed by another three on the Great Western line, would most likely be enough to induce Railway Spine or worse in families of lesser constitutions, but he was certain that his sturdy brood could buttock the burden with dignity.

As for the brood itself, when the train finally squeezed and squealed to a stop, dignity quickly gave way to unvarnished excitement. A train! Only prudent Pru, who had discussed the dangers of rail travel with her father and had seen Statistics, shared the elder Laycock-Huddleston's frown as the porter bundled their luggage into the carriage. Richard, who at ten was a year younger than Pru, was torn between the apparent splendour of such an exciting New Experience and the rueful awareness that his sister usually knew best about Things that Mayn't be Trusted. No such qualms clouded the horizons of Emily and Lester, who at the respective ages of nine and seven still had much to learn about the world, and would perhaps learn much on this very excursion to Wiltshire. The infant Cecilia, swaddled and sleeping, was oblivious to both steel and steam.
Pru was just about to round up the children for the return trip and supper when Richard pointed past the water lilies with a look in his eye that bade stillness and silence. The rest gathered round their brother and stared in the direction he was pointing. There, on the town side of the brook, crouching behind a clump of reeds with their backs to the peering children, were two tall girls, and one large turtle. The girls had dark brown hair and deep-tanned skin, in stark contrast to the children's strawberry-blond tresses and pale complexions. They were possibly Pru's age, or perhaps a bit younger, but a good three inches taller than her. The turtle was on his back, feet flailing, not amused.

Wordlessly moving his pointing finger to his lips, Richard beckoned his siblings to follow as he crept stealthily across the bridge and found where a footpath joined the road. Following single-file, they made their way within earshot of the girls.

'We shall call him Richard,' said the one with shorter hair, apparently referring to the turtle. 'After "Richard the Third", because he's so hunched and wrinkly.'

'Yes, let's!' agreed the one with curls. 'And he can race against Emily!' Not waiting to hear what sort of beast had his sister's name, Richard intervened. 'You can't call it Richard because that's my name. And I'm not hunched nor am I wrinkly!'

If the twins (for they were twins) were at all startled by this outburst, they made no indication. Instead, the one with curls rose to her full height and parted the reeds, looking down on her new friends (for they would soon be friends), and said: 'Then he shall be Quasimodo, from "The Hunchback of Notre Dame"—unless,' she added as an afterthought, 'your little brother is called Quasimodo.'

'My name is Lester,' lisped Lester (for Lester had a lisp, especially when around new people). 'But Quasimodo is such a funny name.'

'It's French,' said the short-haired girl. 'Just like my name, Antoinette.'

'But we call her Annie, because she's not really French,' said her sister. 'And we call me Lettie, which is short for Leticia. Our surname is Shuttleworth.'

The Laycock-Huddlestons were well brought up, in the matter of reciprocating introductions if not in the matter of creeping up on strangers. Before long the twins and the children had learnt each others' names and had discovered that their fathers were both part of the excavation at Shrewton Mounds. Eventually Lester noticed that Quasimodo was still on his back, looking very wrinkly and none too happy about his new name. It occurred to him to ask after the Emily who was not his sister.

'Emily's a rabbit, of course,' said Lettie, as though this should have been obvious. 'We were going to play the tortoise and the hare, but our father says there are no actual tortoises in Wiltshire so we shall have to settle for Quasimodo.'

Lester was about to ask what 'the tortoise and the hare' was when Pru, eager to exhibit learning of some sort (since she had to admit neither Richard III nor Notre Dame meant a thing to her), rushed in with: 'You mean from Aesop? But his animals are meant to be people really, not actual animals. Your turtle and your rabbit would probably just go off in different directions. And a rabbit isn't the same as a hare,' she added for good measure.

'We shan't know what will happen till we hold the race, shall we?' was Lettie's somewhat scientific reply. The rest of the children nodded vigorously, though Pru still had her doubts.

At this moment the twins' names were called out from the road, signifying supper. 'That's Nursey,' said Lettie, standing on her toes so she could see the bridge. 'We must go in. Are you staying at the Hotel as well?'

'No, we're in a villa closer to the Mounds,' said Pru. She wondered how the innkeeper felt about rabbits and turtles, fabled or otherwise. Then a thought struck her: 'Our father's taking us up to the Mounds tomorrow—perhaps you could come join us!'

Lettie and Annie glanced at each other, considering. 'We arrived two weeks ago, so we've seen them already,' Annie finally said, taking care not to sound superior in the saying. 'But it would be splendid to meet your father. We'll ask Daddy if he can take us in with him tomorrow.'

'We have a Nursey too,' said Emily. She had been sullenly considering the rabbit who had stolen her name, but the discovery of a second Nurse now got the better of her. 'Is yours terribly plaguey?'

'Ours is impatient, that's what she is,' said Lettie over Pru's fervent shushing of Emily and the Shuttleworth family nurse's rekindled cry after her charges. 'Perhaps we'll see you in the morning then!' As Lettie and Annie made their way out of the reeds with turtle in tow, Lester frantically called after them: 'You won't hold the race without us, surely?'

'Oh of course not!' called Annie over her shoulder. She, too, was well brought-up, in matters of race invitations if not inadvertent name-stealing. 'We'll hold the race tomorrow afternoon, in the alley behind the Hotel. Then you could stay for tea.'

'It's terribly plaguey that the rabbit gets my name,' pouted Emily after the twins had gone; then her face brightened somewhat. 'But perhaps she will win the race against that slow turtle!'

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**chapter two: The Tortoise and the Hare**

THE NEXT MORNING IT RAINED without cease, and Professor Laycock-Huddleston assured his children that there would be no point accompanying him to the excavation site.

'But Daddy, what about your enormous umbrella?' wailed Lester, forlornly prodding the remains of a crumpet at the breakfast table.

'A train platform is one thing, children, and an archaeological excavation is quite another. With this weather, all the ditches will be covered in canvas, as will the scaffolding round the Mounds. There will be virtually nothing to see.'

'But what if the twins come and we're not there?' asked Emily, forgetting that they had yet to tell their father of their chance meeting the evening before. Pru, noticing his raised eyebrows, hastened to explain.

'Shuttleworth, eh? He's the worst of the Bronze-lovers, that one. Positively gaga over the stuff. In fact, he and I have a friendly wager over whether that foul metal will turn up at this site or whether it's certifiably Neolithic. I wasn't aware he had daughters.'

'Well he has, and they're splendid, even if their father has faulty beliefs,' chimed Emily, who in anticipation of the race had long since forgiven them for attaching her name to a rabbit. 'And we've been invited to have tea with them at the Hotel today.'
'Have you, now?' asked their father, eyebrows elevated once more. 'Well, Nursey should be able to postpone her shopping till teatime, and accompany you into Town. And I wouldn't worry about them missing you at the site, if I were you—today is a day for children to play marbles and for archaeologists to read books.'

This comment had a more than ordinarily damp effect on the children's spirits, since whilst tea might certainly be taken on a rainy day, restaging Aesop's famous fable on such an afternoon was far less certain. Fortunately, though, after a pensive forenoon full of steady dripping the rain let up, and although the skies did not actually brighten, they appeared to have had their fill of moisture. By mid-afternoon the children eagerly gathered round Nursey as she withdrew her shopping basket from the closet. They retraced their steps to the bridge, with Nursey now in front, then continued into Town and the Hotel.

The Winter's Tale was a newish inn, taking its name partly from Winterbourne and partly (along with so many other inns in proximity to the Avon) in allusion to the Bard. It featured a homely pub on the ground floor and comfortable rooms above. Nursey directed the children to wait outside while she inquired after the Shuttleworths, and reappeared with news that the twins would be out shortly. True to their word, they were soon standing by Nursey's side. Lettie held a shopping basket much like Nursey's, only hers was draped in a thick folded woolen scarf. After introductions, Nursey excused herself and set off to explore the local grocer's offerings.

It was fairly clear that the basket must be home to Quasimodo, since it was too small for a rabbit and what else could it be? Having surmised as much, Lester asked the next logical question: 'Where's the rabbit, then?'

'In the stables—Father said we couldn't keep her in the rooms with us,' said Lettie. The race-organisers and spectators marched over to the stables, which as horse-travel became less common had slowly been taken over by rubbish tips and half-empty wooden crates. A horse and a mule stood tethered at one end, and at the other was a wire mesh rabbit hutch. After introductions, Nursey excused herself and set off to explore the local grocer's offerings.

Emily was enormous. She had clearly been part of the Shuttleworth family for some time, and she glanced out at the twins' new friends as if to say: 'these girls belong to me, but I might let you play with them if you stroke my back.' Within minutes Annie held Emily by the nape of her neck and was allowing the Laycock-Huddleston children, one at a time, to engage in the requisite stroking.

Lester was anxious for the race to begin. 'Where's the alley?' he asked.

'Just through here,' said Annie, leading them out to a narrow crevice bounded by the hotel on one side and the ironmonger's shop on the other. The end of the alley where they stood was abutted by the back of the Post Office, blocking egress in that direction. Pru could see that the race track's design at least made it plausible that the animals might head in the same direction. Annie and Lettie went to one end of the alley with their respective burdens. Giving the other children a supply of carrots, they told them to stand at the other end some thirty feet away. 'The carrots are for coaxing,' Annie said.

'But that's not fair,' objected Richard. 'Rabbits like to eat carrots, and turtles like—I don't know—flies or something.'

'Well, then that's what Father calls a "hard case,"' said Lettie. 'If Emily can't beat Quasimodo with carrots for the prize, then it proves Aesop is right and it's not a fluke.' Shrugging, Richard took the paper bag and led his siblings down the alley.

A moment later, and the race was set to begin. And for a few minutes, it looked as if Aesop had, indeed, been right about Quasimodo. The turtle, freed at last from his captivity, did his best turtle imitation of a scamper in the general direction of the only open end of the alley. Emily, meanwhile, looked up at the twins, expecting food. She remained in this posture until the turtle had progressed forward a dozen feet or so, then seemed to realise that the twins were not going to feed her, and that coaxing was taking place at the alley's end. Coaxing, and carrots. She scampered the way only rabbits (and perhaps hares) can do, startling Quasimodo en route so that the turtle played dead for the short remainder of the race. Emily gained her carroty reward from the human—Emily's waiting hands (she having insisted on being the one to feed her namesake).

Tea was a cacophony of disputations regarding the meaning of what had come to be known simply as The Race. Pru insisted that she knew all along that real turtles would never defeat real rabbits in a race, and used the occasion to elaborate on her deep understanding of anthropomorphism in the Greek oral tradition (though she would not have put it quite that way). Lettie suggested that the problem was that Quasimodo was not actually a tortoise, and she was even willing to grant Pru's point about the difference between hares and rabbits to add further force to this line of argument. Richard reverted to his theory that Quasimodo might have fared much better if something turtles enjoyed eating had awaited him at the race's end. Annie helpfully added that perhaps the two creatures should have been walled off from one another to prevent Quasimodo from fearing for his life when Emily approached.

Such were the hypotheses that swirled until the children realised, to their dismay, that there was no more food to be eaten or tea to be sipped. Moreover, there was one Nursey at the door, and another Nursey flattening her apron and extending her hand in a welcoming gesture. This could only mean that their splendid afternoon was about to end.

Perhaps inspired by the need to find an excuse for further adventures with the twins, or perhaps propelled by the recent Race and its aftermath, Pru sat up suddenly and exclaimed: 'I have an idea for a Game!'

Once she had everyone's attention (apart from the Nurseys, who were conversing in the corner about the quality of chandlers and linen drapers in Wiltshire, Essex, and Suffolk), she went on: 'Well, you know how Father—our Father, I mean—said he thinks the Stone-Age people were still around when Stonehenge and the Shrewton Mounds were built? (This was greeted with uncertain nods from the rest.) 'And how your Father thinks the Bronze-Age people did all these things themselves?' (At this the twins nodded a bit more vigorously.) 'Well, I thought, why don't we pretend to be Stone-Age and Bronze-Age boys and girls? We can make tools and fight each other and hunt for food and build things...'

Lettie caught Pru's enthusiasm for this idea almost at once. 'How wonderful, Pru! You shall be the slow, plodding people of Stone, and we shall be the bright young people of Bronze!'

Richard, perhaps sensing the tone of superiority that was seeping out of Lettie in spite of herself, said his chance. What difference was there really, at bottom, between the tortoise of the fable and the Neolithic Man their father had so often described to them at the supper table? 'Yes, Lettie, how splendid that will be! We shall see if Aesop was right after all!'

In our next issue: a discovery at Shrewton Mounds, and a contest betwixt bronze and stone