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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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The Hunting of the Snark: The Landing (1/8)

“Just the place for a Snark!” the Bellman cried,
As he landed his crew with care;
Supporting each man on the top of the tide
By a finger entwined in his hair.

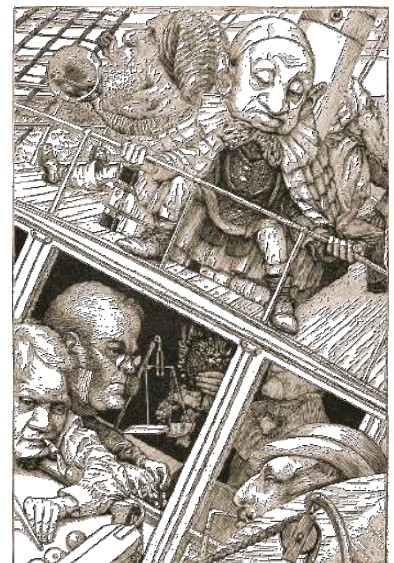
“Just the place for a Snark! I have said it twice:
That alone should encourage the crew.
Just the place for a Snark! I have said it thrice:
What I tell you three times is true.”

The crew was complete: it included a Boots—
A maker of Bonnets and Hoods—
A Barrister, brought to arrange their disputes—
And a Broker, to value their goods.

A Billiard-marker, whose skill was immense,
Might perhaps have won more than his share—
But a Banker, engaged at enormous
expense,

Had the whole of their cash in his
care.

There was also a Beaver, that paced
on the deck,
Or would sit making lace in the bow:
And had often (the Bellman said)
saved them from wreck,
Though none of the sailors knew how.



There was one who was famed for the number of things
He forgot when he entered the ship:
His umbrella, his watch, all his jewels and rings,
And the clothes he had bought for the trip.
He had forty-two boxes, all carefully packed,
With his name painted clearly on each:
But, since he omitted to mention the fact,
They were all left behind on the beach.
The loss of his clothes hardly mattered, because
He had seven coats on when he came,
With three pairs of boots—but the worst of it was,
He had wholly forgotten his name.
He would answer to "Hi!" or to any loud cry,
Such as "Fry me!" or "Fritter my wig!"
To "What-you-may-call-um!" or "What-was-his-name!"
But especially "Thing-um-a-jig!"
While, for those who preferred a more forcible word,
He had different names from these:
His intimate friends called him "Candle-ends,"
And his enemies "Toasted-cheese."
"His form is ungainly—his intellect small—"
(So the Bellman would often remark)
"But his courage is perfect! And that, after all,
Is the thing that one needs with a Snark."
He would joke with hyenas, returning their stare
With an impudent wag of the head:
And he once went a walk, paw-in-paw, with a bear,
"Just to keep up its spirits," he said.
He came as a Baker: but owned, when too late—
And it drove the poor Bellman half-mad—

He could only bake Bridecake—for which, I may state,
No materials were to be had.

The last of the crew needs especial remark,
Though he looked an incredible dunce:

He had just one idea—but, that one being “Snark,”
The good Bellman engaged him at once.

He came as a Butcher: but gravely declared,
When the ship had been sailing a week,
He could only kill Beavers. The Bellman looked scared,
And was almost too frightened to speak:

But at length he explained, in a tremulous tone,
There was only one Beaver on board;
And that was a tame one he had of his own,
Whose death would be deeply deplored.

The Beaver, who happened to hear the remark,
Protested, with tears in its eyes,

That not even the rapture of hunting the Snark

Could atone for that dismal
surprise!



It strongly advised that the
Butcher should be
Conveyed in a separate ship:
But the Bellman declared
that would never agree

With the plans he had made for the trip:

Navigation was always a difficult art,

Though with only one ship and one bell:

And he feared he must really decline, for his part,
Undertaking another as well.

The Beaver's best course was, no doubt, to procure
A second-hand dagger-proof coat—
So the Baker advised it—and next, to insure
Its life in some Office of note:
This the Banker suggested, and offered for hire
(On moderate terms), or for sale,
Two excellent Policies, one Against Fire,
And one Against Damage From Hail.
Yet still, ever after that sorrowful day,
Whenever the Butcher was by,
The Beaver kept looking the opposite way,
And appeared unaccountably shy.