

For a Lewis Carroll Society

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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.

The Hunting of the Snark

The publication of Martin Gardner's *Annotated Alice* (1) and *Annotated Snark* (2) has given new life to the Lewis Carroll, or whimsicalological, school of recreational linguistics. Is there a place in the world for a formal organization to give support and encouragement to this wordy school? I think that there is, and that the place is here.

I propose that a call be issued to all serious Carroll students and funny imitators to form a society for the hunting of Snarks. (Due to the dearth of warranted genuine Snarks, it would be necessary to recognize merely *literary* Snarks as fair game. See definitions and specimens below.) The society would be founded on established Pickwickian principles, and members would be admitted only upon evidence of having captured a Snark.

One possible name which suggests itself is "Professional Snark Hunters' Association of the World" (acronym PSHAW). Another, for which I acknowledge a preference, is the shorter and in every way punchier "Bold Order of Snark Hunters" (BOSH). Once honored by admission to the society, members would be entitled to use its initials after their names on formal occasions and in advertising.

If a society emblem were to be adopted, perhaps it could display an arrangement of shoes and ships and sealing-wax and cabbages and kings, along with a suitable motto, such as "*Lingua in Bucca!*"

DEFINITIONS AND SPECIMENS OF LITERARY SNARKS

Snark of the First Type: An Observation. In *Through the Looking-Glass* the White Knight is discoursing about inventions:

"Now the cleverest thing of the sort that I ever did," [he says] "was inventing a new pudding during the meat-course."

"In time to have it cooked for the next course?" said Alice. "Well, that *was* quick work, certainly!"



"Well, not the *next* course," the Knight said in a slow thoughtful tone: "no, certainly not the next *course*."

"Then it would have to be the next day. I suppose you wouldn't have the two pudding-courses in one dinner?"

"Well, not the *next* day," the Knight repeated as before: "not the next *day*. In fact," he went on . . . "I don't believe that pudding ever *was* cooked! In fact, I don't believe that pudding ever *will* be cooked! And yet it was a very clever pudding to invent."

Surely this is an allusion to the adage that the *proof of the pudding is in the eating!* Yet, since the recipe given includes gunpowder, perhaps in this case it is as well that the pudding was not even cooked!

Snark of the Second Type: A Contradiction. Again in *Through the Looking-Glass*, when Alice discovers the chess people strolling among the cinders of the hearth, she picks up the White King, dusts him off, and sets him beside his Queen on the table top. The startled King says: "I assure you, my dear, I turned cold to the very ends of my whiskers!", to which the Queen replies, "You haven't got any whiskers."

Yet the official Tenniel illustrations clearly show the King to have *chin* whiskers at least!

Snark of the Third Type: A Speculation. Nowhere in *The Hunting of the Snark* are we told the name of the ship. Yet, given the fact that the captain was a Bellman, and knowing the propensity of captains to name their vessels after their lady friends, mightn't we infer that the ship was called "*The Bellman's Belle?*"

Snark of the Fourth Type: A Question. Sir John Tenniel's illustration of the slaying of the Jabberwock shows a youthful figure with long, blond hair wielding the vorpal sword. Is it Alice?

Snark of the Fifth Type: An Imitation. See "A Helico-Spherical Cocktail Party," by A. Vorpal Penn, in *Word Ways*, Vol. 1, No. 3.

Snark of the Sixth Type: The Invention of a new type of Snark.

Snark of the "Non" Type: One Which Would Be a Snark if it were directly related to the writings of Lewis Carroll, "but as it isn't, it ain't."

Compared to *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*, L. Frank Baum's children's classic, *The Wizard of Oz*, has little, except perhaps nostalgia, to interest an adult reader. True, the omnipotent Wizard turns out to be a bumbling humbug who creates the Emerald City by having everyone wear green-tinted spectacles, but as a rule the action gets along with only old-fashioned witchcraft and magical props.

A mildly sophisticated twist was added to the 1939 film version by M-G-M, however.

In the original book version (1899), little Dorothy's three fellow pilgrims along the yellow brick road have their problems solved by the Wizard (read "witch-doctor") in the following ways:

1. The Scarecrow, who thinks he needs brains, has a mixture of bran and needles (for sharpness) poured into his head.
2. The Tin Woodman, who feels he lacks a heart, has a heart-shaped pin-cushion transplanted into his breast.

3. The "Cowardly" Lion gets his "courage" from a bottle!
But in the film version these crude devices are replaced by *conventional signs* or *tokens of recognition*.

1. The Scarecrow receives a diploma—the token of brains;
 2. The Tin Woodman receives a testimonial award—the token of philanthropy;
 3. The "Cowardly" Lion receives a well-deserved medal for bravery.
- All ends happily, as before.

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Readers who are interested in the proposal for a Lewis Carroll society are invited to correspond with the writer *c/o Word Ways*.

References

1. *The Annotated Alice*, Martin Gardner, ed., Clarkson N. Potter, Inc., New York, 1960.
2. *The Annotated Snark*, Martin Gardner, ed., Simon and Schuster, New York, 1962.