

Old Tom Bombadil was a merry fellow;
bright blue his jacket was and his boots were yellow,
green were his girdle and his breeches all of leather;
he wore in his tall hat a swan-wing feather.
He lived up under Hill, where the Withywindle
ran from a grassy well down into the dingle.

Old Tom in summertime walked about the meadows
gathering the buttercups, running after shadows,
ticking the bumblebees that buzzed among the flowers,
sitting by the waterside for hours upon hours.

There his beard dangled long down into the water:
up came Goldberry, the River-woman's daughter;
pulled Tom's hanging hair. In he went a-wallowing
under the water-lilies, bubbling and a-swallowing.

'Hey, Tom Bombadil! Whither are you going?'
said fair Goldberry. 'Bubbles you are blowing,
frightening the funny fish and the brown water-rat,
startling the dabchicks, and drowning your feather-hat!'

'You bring it back again, there's a pretty maiden!'
said Tom Bombadil. 'I do not care for wading.
Go down! Sleep again where the pools are shady
far below willow-roots, little water-lady!'

Back to her mother's house in the deepest hollow
swam young Goldberry. But Tom, he would not follow;
on knotted willow-roots he sat in sunny weather,
drying his yellow boots and his draggled feather.

Up woke Willow-man, began upon his singing,
sang Tom fast asleep under branches swinging;
in a crack caught him tight: snick! it closed together,
trapped Tom Bombadil, coat and hat and feather.

'Ha, Tom Bombadil! What be you a-thinking,
peeping inside my tree, watching me a-drinking
deep in my wooden house, tickling me with feather,
dripping wet down my face like a rainy weather?'

'You let me out again, Old Man Willow!
I am stiff lying here, they're no sort of pillow,
your hard crooked roots. Drink your river-water!
Go back to sleep again like the River-daughter!'

Willow-man let him loose when he heard him speaking;
locked fast his wooden house, muttering and creaking,
whispering inside the tree. Out from willow-dingle
Tom went walking on up the Withywindle.

Under the forest-eaves he sat a while a-listening:
on the boughs piping birds were chirruping and
whistling.

Butterflies about his head went quivering and winking,
until grey clouds came up, as the sun was sinking.

Then Tom hurried on. Rain began to shiver,
round rings spattering in the running river;
a wind blew, shaken leaves chilly drops were dripping;
into a sheltering hole Old Tom went skipping.

Out came Badger-brook with his snowy forehead
and his dark blinking eyes. In the hill he quarried
with his wife and many sons. By the coat they caught
him,
pulled him inside their earth, down their tunnels
brought him.

Inside their secret house, there they sat a-mumbling:
'Ho, Tom Bombadil! Where have you come tumbling.

bursting in the front-door? Badger-folk have caught
you.
You'll never find it out, the way that we have brought
you!'

'Now, old Badger-brook, do you hear me talking?
You show me out at once! I must be a-walking.
Show me to your backdoor under briar-roses;
then clean grimy paws, wipe your earthy noses!
Go back to sleep again on your straw pillow,
like fair Goldberry and Old Man Willow!'

Then all the Badger-folk said: 'We beg your pardon!'
They showed Tom out again to their thorny garden,
went back and hid themselves, a-shivering and
a-shaking,
blocked up all their doors, earth together raking.

Rain had passed. The sky was clear, and in the summer-
gloaming
Old Tom Bombadil laughed as he came homing,
unlocked his door again, and opened up a shutter.
In the kitchen round the lamp moths began to flutter:
Tom through the window saw waking stars come
winking,
and the new slender moon early westward sinking.

Dark came under Hill. Tom, he lit a candle;
upstairs creaking went, turned the door-handle.
'Hoo, Tom Bombadil! Look what night has brought
you!
I'm here behind the door. Now at last I've caught you!
You'd forgotten Barrow-wight dwelling in the old
mound
up there on hill-top with the ring of stones round.
He's got loose again. Under earth he'll take you.
Poor Tom Bombadil, pale and cold he'll make you!'

'Go out! Shut the door, and never come back after!
Take away gleaming eyes, take your hollow laughter!

Go back to grassy mound, on your stony pillow
lay down your bony head, like Old Man Willow,
like young Goldberry, and Badger-folk in burrow!
Go back to buried gold and forgotten sorrow!

Out fled Barrow-wight through the window leaping,
through the yard, over wall like a shadow sweeping,
up hill wailing went back to leaning stone-rings,
back under lonely mound, rattling his bone-rings.

Old Tom Bombadil lay upon his pillow
sweeter than Goldberry, quieter than the Willow,
snugger than the Badger-folk or the Barrow-dwellers;
slept like a humming-top, snored like a bellows.

He woke in morning-light, whistled like a startling,
sang, 'Come, derry-dol, merry-dol, my darling!'
He clapped on his battered hat, boots, and coat and
feather;
opened the window wide to the sunny weather.

Wise old Bombadil, he was a wary fellow;
bright blue his jacket was, and his boots were yellow.
None ever caught old Tom in upland or in dingle,
walking the forest-paths, or by the Wittywindle,
or out on the lily-pools in boat upon the water.
But one day Tom, he went and caught the River-
daughter,
in green gown, flowing hair, sitting in the rushes,
singing old water-songs to birds upon the bushes.

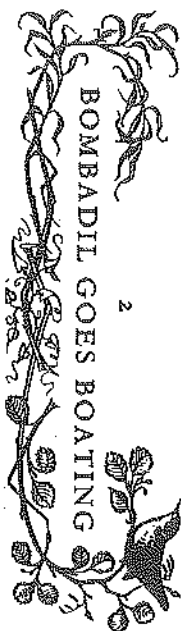
He caught her, held her fast! Water-rats went scuttering
reeds hissed, herons cried, and her heart was fluttering.
Said Tom Bombadil: 'Here's my pretty maiden!
You shall come home with me! The table is all laden:
yellow cream, honeycomb, white bread and butter;
roses at the window-sill and peeping round the shutter.
You shall come under Hill! Never mind your mother
in her deep weedy pool: there you'll find no lover!'



Old Tom Bombadil had a merry wedding, crowned all with buttercups, hat and feather shedding; his bride with forgetmenots and flag-lilies for garland was robed all in silver-green. He sang like a starling, hummed like a honey-bee, lilted to the fiddle, clasping his river-maid round her slender middle.

Lamps gleamed within his house, and white was the bedding; in the bright honey-moon Badger-folk came treading, danced down under Hill, and Old Man Willow tapped, tapped at window-pane, as they slept on the pillow, on the bank in the reeds River-woman sighing heard old Barrow-wight in his mound crying.

Old Tom Bombadil heeded not the voices, taps, knocks, dancing feet, all the nightly noises; slept till the sun arose, then sang like a starling: 'Hey! Come derry-dol, merry-dol, my darling!' sitting on the door-step chopping sticks of willow, while fair Goldberry combed her tresses yellow.



The old year was turning brown; the West Wind was calling;

Tom caught a beechen leaf in the Forest falling.

'I've caught a happy day blown me by the breeze!

Why wait till morrow-year? I'll take it when me pleases.
This day I'll mend my boat and journey as it chances
west down the wilty-stream, following my fancies!

Little Bird sat on twig. 'Whillo, Tom! I heed you.

I've a guess, I've a guess where your fancies lead you.
Shall I go, shall I go, bring him word to meet you?

'No names, you tell-tale, or I'll skin and eat you,
babbling in every ear things that don't concern you!
If you tell Willow-man where I've gone, I'll burn you,
roast you on a willow-spit. That'll end your prying!

Willow-wren cocked her tail, piped as she went flying:
'Catch me first, catch me first! No names are needed.
I'll perch on his hither ear: the message will be heeded.
'Down by Mithe', I'll say, 'just as sun is sinking'
Hurry up, hurry up! That's the time for drinking!

Tom laughed to himself: 'Maybe then I'll go there,
I might go by other ways, but today I'll row there.'



He shaved oars, patched his boat; from hidden creek he hauled her through reed and sallow-brake, under leaning alder, then down the river went, singing: 'Silly-sallow, Flow withy-willow-stream over deep and shallow!' 'Whee! Tom Bombadil! Whither be you going, bobbing in a cockle-boat, down the river rowing?'

'Maybe to Brandywine along the Withywindle; maybe friends of mine fire for me will kindle down by the Hays-end. Little folk I know there, kind at the day's end. Now and then I go there.' 'Take word to my kin, bring me back their tidings! Tell me of diving pools and the fishes' hidings!'

'Nay then,' said Bombadil, 'I am only rowing just to smell the water like, not on errands going.'

'See hee! Cocky Tom! Mind your tub don't founder! Look out for willow-snags! I'd laugh to see you founder.'

'Talk less, Fisher Blue! Keep your kindly wishes! Fly off and preen yourself with the bones of fishes! Gay lord on your bough, at home a dirty varlet living in a sloven house, though your breast be scarlet. I've heard of fisher-birds beak in air a-dangling to show how the wind is set: that's an end of angling!'

The King's fisher shut his beak, winked his eye, as singing

Tom passed under bough. Flash! then he went winging; dropped down jewel-blue a feather, and Tom caught it gleaming in a sun-ray: a pretty gift he thought it. He stuck it in his tall hat, the old feather casting: 'Blue now for Tom', he said, 'a merry hue and lasting!'

Rings swirled round his boat, he saw the bubbles quiver. Tom slapped his oar, smack! at a shadow in the river.

'Hoosht! Tom Bombadil! 'Tis long since last I met you. Turned water-boatman, eh? What if I upset you?'

'What? Why, Whisker-lad, I'd ride you down the river. My fingers on your back would set your hide a-shiver.' 'Pish, Tom Bombadil! I'll go and tell my mother.'

'Call all our kin to come, father, sister, brother! Tom's gone mad as a coot with wooden legs: he's padding down Withywindle stream, an old tub a-straddling!'

'I'll give your otter-fell to Barrow-wights. They'll taw you! Then smother you in gold-rings! Your mother if she saw you,

she'd never know her son, unless 'twas by a whisker. Nay, don't tease old Tom, until you be far brisker!'

'Whoosht! said otter-lad, river-water spraying over Tom's hat and all; set the boat a-swaying, dived down under it, and by the bank lay peering, till Tom's merry song faded out of hearing.

Old Swan of Elvet-isle sailed past him proudly, gave Tom a black look, snorted at him loudly.

Tom laughed: 'You old cob, do you miss your feather? Give me a new one then! The old was worn by weather. Could you speak a fair word, I would love you dearer: long neck and dumb throat, but still a haughty sneerer! If one day the King returns, in tipping he may take you, brand your yellow bill, and less lordly make you!' Old Swan huffed his wings, hissed, and paddled faster; in his wake bobbing on Tom went rowing after.

Tom came to Withy-weir. Down the river rushing foamed into Windle-reach, a-bubbling and a-splashing; bore Tom over stone spinning like a windfall, bobbing like a bottle-cork, to the hythe at Grindwall.

'How! Here's Woodman Tom with his billy-beard on!'
laughed all the little folk of Hays-end and Brevedon.

'Ware, Tom! We'll shoot you dead with our bows and
arrows!

We don't let Forest-folk nor bogies from the Barrows
cross over Brandywine by cockle-boat nor ferry'.
'Fie, little fatbelly! Don't ye make so merry!

I've seen hobbit-folk digging holes to hide 'em,
frightened if a horny goat or a badger eyed 'em,
ateared of the moony-beams, their own shadows
shunning.

I'll call the orks on you: that'll send you running!

'You may call, Woodman Tom. And you can talk your
beard off.

Three arrows in your hail! You we're not afear'd off!
Where would you go to now? If for beer you're making,
the barrels aint deep enough in Brevedon for your
slaking!

'Away over Brandywine by Shirebourn I'd be going,
but too swift for cockle-boat the river now is flowing.
I'd bless little folk that took me in their wherry,
wish them evenings fair and many mornings merry'.

Red flowed the Brandywine; with flame the river
kindled.

as sun sank beyond the Shire, and then to grey it
dwindled.

Mithe Steps empty stood, None was there to greet him.
Silent the Causeway lay. Said Tom: 'A merry meeting!'

Tom stumped along the road, as the light was failing.
Rushey lamps gleamed ahead. He heard a voice him
hailing.

'Whoa there!' Ponies stopped, wheels halted sliding.
Tom went plodding past, never looked beside him.

'Ho there! beggarman tramping in the Marish!
What's your business here? Hat all stuck with arrows!
Someone's warned you off, caught you at your sneaking?

Come here! Tell me now what it is you're seeking!
Shire-ale, I'll be bound, though you've not a penny.

I'll bid them lock their doors, and then you won't get
any!'

'Well, well, Muddy-feet! From one that's late for
meeting

away back by the Mithe that's a surly greeting!
You old farmer fat that cannot walk for wheezing,
cart-drawn like a sack, ought to be more pleasing.

Penny-wise tub-on-legs! A beggar can't be chooser,
or else I'd bid you go, and you would be the loser.
Come, Maggot! Help me up! A tankard now you owe
me.

Even in cockshut light an old friend should know me!

Laughing they drove away, in Rushey never halting,
though the inn open stood and they could smell the
mating.

They turned down Maggot's Lane, rattling and bumping,
Tom in the farmer's cart dancing round and jumping.
Stars shone on Barnfurlong, and Maggot's house was
lighted.

fire in the kitchen burned to welcome the benighted.

Maggot's sons bowed at door, his daughters did their
curtsy,

his wife brought tankards out for those that might be
thirsty.

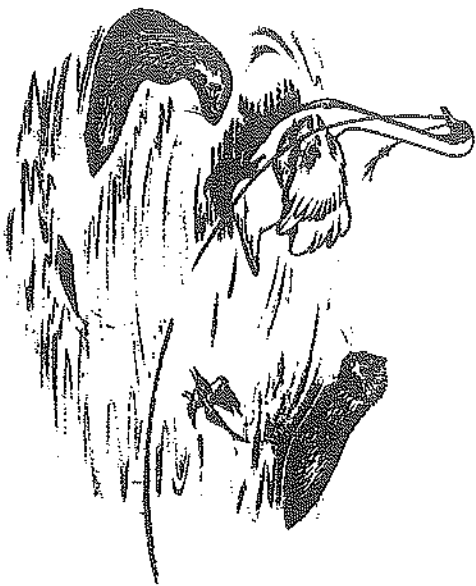
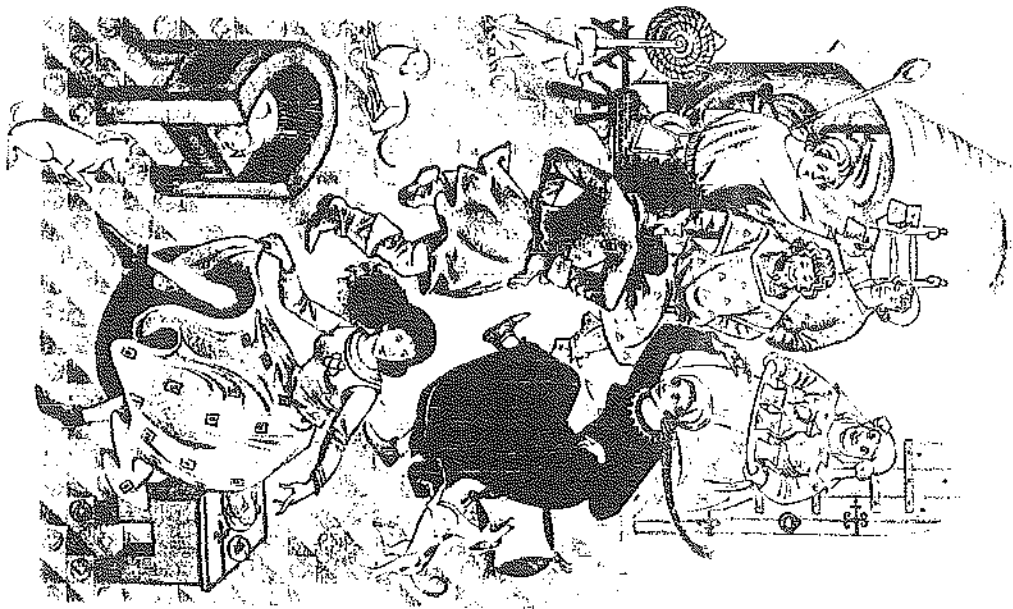
Songs they had and merry tal-'s, the supping and the
dancing;

Goodman Maggot there for all his belt was prancing.
Tom did a horrpipe when he was not quaffing,
daughters did the Springle-ying, goodwife did the
laughing.

When others went to bed in hay, fern, or feather,
close in the ingle-nook they laid their heads together,
old Tom and Muddy-feet, swapping all the tidings
from Barrow-downs to Tower Hills: of walkings and
of ridings;
of wheat-ear and barley-corn, of sowing and of reaping;
queer tales from Bree, and talk at smithy, mill, and
cheaping;
rumours in whispering trees, south-wind in the larches,
tall Watchers by the Ford, Shadows on the marches.

Old Maggot slept at last in chair beside the embers.
Ere dawn Tom was gone: as dreams one half remembers,
some merry, some sad, and some of hidden warning.
None heard the door unlocked; a shower of rain at
morning
his footprints washed away, at Mifhe he left no traces,
at Hays-end they heard no song nor sound of heavy
paces.

Three days his boat lay by the hythe at Grindwall,
and then one morn was gone back up Withywindle.



Otter-folk, hobbits said, came by night and loosed her,
dragged her over weir, and up stream they pushed her.

Out from Elvet-isle Old Swan came sailing,
in beak took her painter up in the water trailing,
drew her proudly on; otters swam beside her
round old Willow-man's crooked roots to guide her;
the King's fisher perched on bow, on thwart the wren
was singing,

merrily the cockle-boat homeward they were bringing.
To Tom's creek they came at last. Otter-lad said:

'Whish now!

What's a coot without his legs, or a finless fish now?
O! silly-sallow-willow-stream! The oars they'd left
behind them!

Long they lay at Grindwall hythe for Tom to come and
find them.



There was a merry passenger,
a messenger, a mariner:
he built a gilded gondola
to wander in, and had in her
a load of yellow oranges
and porridge for his provender;
he perfumed her with marjoram
and cardamom and lavender.

He called the winds of argosies
with cargoes in to carry him
across the rivers seventeen
that lay between to tarry him.
He landed all in loneliness
where stonily the pebbles on
the running river Derrilyn
goes merrily for ever on.
He journeyed then through meadow-lands
to Shadow-land that dreary lay,
and under hill and over hill
went roving still a weary way.

He sat and sang a melody,
his errantry a-tarrying;
he begged a pretty butterfly
that fluttered by to marry him.
She scorned him and she scoffed at him,
she laughed at him un pitying;
so long he studied wizardry
and sigaldry and smithying.