

## **"Baker for Butcher on p. 83"**

by Alan Tannenbaum

If you search for first editions of *The Snark*, you will invariably find booksellers using the phrase "Baker for Butcher on p. 83" as "proof" that their copy for sale is a rare first printing of the first edition. But . . .

**There has never been a copy of *The Snark* with "Butcher" on page 83.**

This myth has been perpetuated throughout the years, and this article is not the first one to mention it. If you see the above phrase, gently "help" the seller by forwarding this article.

### **Background and a query**

Just today (pick any day) I visited one of the popular online rare-book-searching tools, and there were thirty-five results for Lewis Carroll's *Snark* with keywords "Butcher" and "Baker." The descriptions for ALL of them were wrong. They usually contain words to the effect: "First issue with 'Baker' instead of 'Butcher' on page 83."

These dealers mean well. They have seen this phrase repeated many times by other non-Snarkian booksellers as an identifying point for the first edition, first issue, of Carroll's book-long nonsense poem *The Hunting of the Snark*, arguably the third most popular book he wrote.

The implication is that there was a typographical error in the printing of the first edition, and that finding "Where the Baker had met with the Snark" on the last page of the book ensures you have found the earliest printing! They are of course wrong; those familiar with the story of the voyage to find a Snark know that the Baker IS the correct crew member, having just encountered the dangerous Boojum variety on the previous page.

Ironically, the last crew member to mention the Baker, albeit using a pronoun, was the Butcher, on page 80: "He was always a desperate wag!" Could it be that a quick misreading of "Fit the Eighth" by some bookseller resulted in the misdescribing, which has appeared in so many book catalogues since?

I'll go out on a limb and state that there are NO typographical errors of this nature in the first edition of Carroll's *Snark*. The poem was re-issued by Macmillan in London and New York many times, mostly as a separate title in the standard and miniature series, and also in *Rhyme? And Reason?*, the illustrated anthology of Carroll's humorous poems.

In conclusion, all copies of *The Snark* in all of the Macmillan series contain the correct form of the line: "Where the Baker had met with the Snark."

The ease of access to current and historical book descriptions online may make it impossible to stop this myth from perpetuating. A future update to the *Lewis Carroll Handbook* can possibly help by pointing out this common error.

## **Postscript: When and why did this error first occur?**

The only typographical errors remotely close to the one discussed above occurred (after Carroll's death) in the October 1910 first Macmillan printing of the miniature edition of *Snark*. "Baker" is used for "Banker" incorrectly in two places: the next-to-last stanza of the First Fit: "This the Baker suggested, and offered for hire . . ." (p. 12); and in the Fourth Fit: "Then the Baker endorsed a blank cheque . . ." (p. 42). The latter was found immediately by Macmillan, who tipped in an erratum slip at page 42 and fixed it the next month in the first reprinting. The former appears to have never been noted by Macmillan and so was reproduced erroneously throughout the life of the miniature series ending in 1936. Neither of these typos appear in the standard editions of *The Snark* or *Rhyme? and Reason?*

On a related note, possibly connected to the issue at hand, the 1962 edition of *The Lewis Carroll Handbook*<sup>1</sup>, calls out the typographical error I just mentioned (i.e., Baker for Banker) in the First Fit, but doesn't mention the second one in Fit Four. It then goes on incorrectly to assign the error to the first (i.e., 1876) London standard Macmillan edition of *The Snark* instead of the later miniature series. See also the postscript on page 116 to Selwyn Goodacre's 1976 article in *Jabberwocky*<sup>2</sup>. It is just possible that this misleading description (later removed from Denis Crutch's 1979 revision of *The Lewis Carroll Handbook*) raised the awareness for an errant cataloguer that there was some misprint of "Baker" in the first edition, and if they misinterpreted the "Butcher" in "Fit the Eighth" as described above, they may have started this mess.

If anyone has a better theory, or facts, or what they think is the earliest incorrect mention of "Baker for Butcher on page 83," please forward them to the editor. ✍

*Alan Tannenbaum is a long time member of the Lewis Carroll Society of North America, during which time he has served as Vice President, President, and a member of the board of directors since 1991. He has given talks at, and organized, a number of the LCSNA's annual meetings, and currently manages their YouTube channel. He is an avid collector of all things Lewis Carroll and Alice, with his forty-year catalogue comprising over 9,500 items, including some of the rarest. Before he retired, Alan worked as a software engineer for IBM.*

## **Endnotes:**

- 1 Originally titled *A Handbook of the Literature of the Rev. C. L. Dodgson* (1931) by Sidney Herbert Williams and Falconer Madan, it was renamed *The Lewis Carroll Handbook* in 1962 when it was revised, augmented, and brought up to 1960 by Roger Lancelyn Green. The error referred to above can be found on page 87 of the 1962 edition: "In the first edition there is a misprint in the last stanza but one of the First Fit, where 'Baker' should read 'Banker'." This sentence does not appear in the 1931 or the 1979 editions of *The Handbook*.
- 2 Goodacre, Selwyn. "The Hunting of the Snark: A History of the Publication," *Jabberwocky*, Vol. 5, No. 4, Autumn 1976, The Lewis Carroll Society, UK.