

The Book of Wonder and The Last Book of Wonder - Illustrated: Tolkien's Bookshelf #8 (Volume 8)

Lord Dunsany



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TOLKIEN'S BOOKSHELF #8 THE BOOK OF WONDER AND THE LAST BOOK OF WONDER -ILLUSTRATED Lord Dunsany (1878 – 1957) wrote more than eighty books during his career in the early 20th Century. J.R.R. Tolkien enjoyed reading Dunsany's works, a fact which he acknowledged numerous times in his letters. Tolkien was twenty years old in 1912, when 'The Book of Wonder', illustrated by Sidney Sime, first appeared in British bookshops and libraries. The short stories in this book are Gothic in style, poetic, mysterious and dream-like - often nightmarish, horrific and almost hallucinatory. Numerous accoutrements of fantasy are found within the realms of 'The Book of Wonder and The Last Book of Wonder', as they are in Middle Earth; talismans, precious metals, jewels, signalling horns, dark, dangerous woods infested with evil spiders and more. A red, glowing, all-seeing eye opens above Dunsany's frightening fantasyland, just as the Eye of Sauron glares across Middle Earth. This edition is ornamented with the original pictures printed in the 1912 edition - sixteen intricate illustrations and numerous ornate initial capitals by renowned fantasy artist Sidney Sime. Dart-Thornton's introduction discusses intriguing links between Dunsany's and Tolkien's works, noting also that in an unusual twist, Dunsany used to write his stories based on Sime's illustrations, rather than the other way around. Dale J Nelson, in 'Possible Echoes of Blackwood and Dunsany in Tolkien's Fantasy', concludes, 'Tolkien's letters and other sources for his life do not say very much about his recreational reading, but given his lifelong interest in literary fantasy and the parallels adduced above, one seems to be justified in suspecting that Tolkien was indebted to ... Dunsany.'

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