

at Bayreuth — especially at Bayreuth — I have wished the actors would go away; I have wished the scenery would disappear; I have wished I could be left alone in the darkness to steep my soul in the ocean of music welling up from the unseen orchestra.

That, I think, is what remains of Wagner, and will remain: his music — extraordinarily eloquent, amazingly pictorial, sometimes terrible, sometimes overwhelmingly lovely, always great. And so the most pitiful mouse has reconsidered the mountain.

## TO SHELLEY

BY LEIGH HUNT

*[This unpublished poem of Leigh Hunt's is from a manuscript owned by Messrs. Chaundy and Cox, of London. The mood and manner is that of about 1853, when Hunt published his book, The Religion of the Heart. 'One other sweet fervid voice' is probably a reference to Vincent Hunt, the poet's favorite child, who died in 1852.]*

From the *London Mercury*, November  
(LITERARY MONTHLY)

BELOVED Shelley, friend, immortal heart,  
Whose name so long has been shut up in mine,  
Which could not speak for tears; oh most belov'd  
And divine soul, scarcely less visible  
Or more a spirit now (so strong has love  
Stamp'd thy warm image) than when heretofore  
Thou satst beside our hearth, half lifted up  
On pinions of seraphic will, and breath'dst  
Fires of sweet faith, and beauteous scorn of scorn:

Oh now thou seest (out of that orb, where souls  
Of martyrs go, to rest till the day come)  
What golden hours await this yearning globe,  
By hope at last, and honied breath like thine,  
Spun like a starry bee. Which thought, and one  
Other sweet fervid voice, which late I heard,  
Forth pouring to it as I stood, in tears,  
Strong in their weakness, and for infinite wants  
Felt heav'n ordaining infinite supply,  
Move me to utter what I heard, in words,  
And stretch the stormy sweetness, far as breath  
Is giv'n me, chaunting to thy spirit, friend,  
And dim-seen angels, and desiring man.

# CHRISTMAS CAKES AND CHRISTMAS PARTIES

## A YORKSHIRE VILLAGE SKETCH

BY J. FAIRFAX-BLAKEBOROUGH

From the *Spectator*, December 17  
(CONSERVATIVE WEEKLY)

IN rural England the making of the Christmas cake and the subsequent 'tastings' are both something of a religion — an integral part of the festival, and inseparable from much of its custom and tradition. For weeks ago our village ladies have compared recipes, discussed the mysteries of cake-making and baking, and flitted to and fro from one another's houses on those anxious and fateful days of egg-breaking, mixing, and stirring.

The event — for it *is* an event — looms large in the rural calendar, ranking in importance as it does with a birth, a funeral, a wedding, a threshing, or a pig-killing day. At stated intervals neighbors will congregate and peer, skewer in hand and with bated breath, into the recess beyond the cautiously opened oven-door. They are tense moments these, and even the most stolid, calm and collected matrons will betray more than a passing flutter of excitement. For the nonce the yet anæmic-looking cake is as a king seated upon a threatened throne, with his courtiers around him hoping for the best, but ever fearful that the worst may happen. Doubts, assurances, and reassurances are exchanged in whispers as the assembled ladies fan themselves with spotless white aprons, donned to do honor to the occasion.

One might imagine that the whole Yuletide happiness of each family, together with the good name and reputation of the housewife, depended upon

the success of the matter in hand. One of our old village dames once put into concrete form something of the feelings of those responsible for producing a Christmas cake. 'Some has one thing,' she whined to the vicar, 'and some has another. The Lord gives us all a cross of some sort. Now there's Christmas a-coming on and I have n't got the cake made yet, and I'm sure as each year comes round I feel my cross growing heavier and my trust in the Lord growing less so far as cakes goes.'

In our village the Christmas cake may not be cut till the eve of the great festival, though the small 'taster' — made specially to know the worst — may be sampled by the anxious dames in solemn conclave, for it has no tradition or sentiment surrounding it. Final criticism and a reopening of the whole discussion in calmer frame of mind are postponed till the Christmas parties, at which those who sighed and panted, shook their heads and clasped skewers in one hand as with the other they flapped apron-borne air to their faces, can afford to laugh at what for the nonce was such a tremendously serious undertaking.

These Christmas parties are not easy to arrange. Mrs. Brown or Mrs. Jones, in the neighboring town, may invite a few friends for an evening at Yuletide without even her next-door neighbor being aware of the fact either before or after the event. Not so in our village. No sooner has Mrs. Thompson, Old