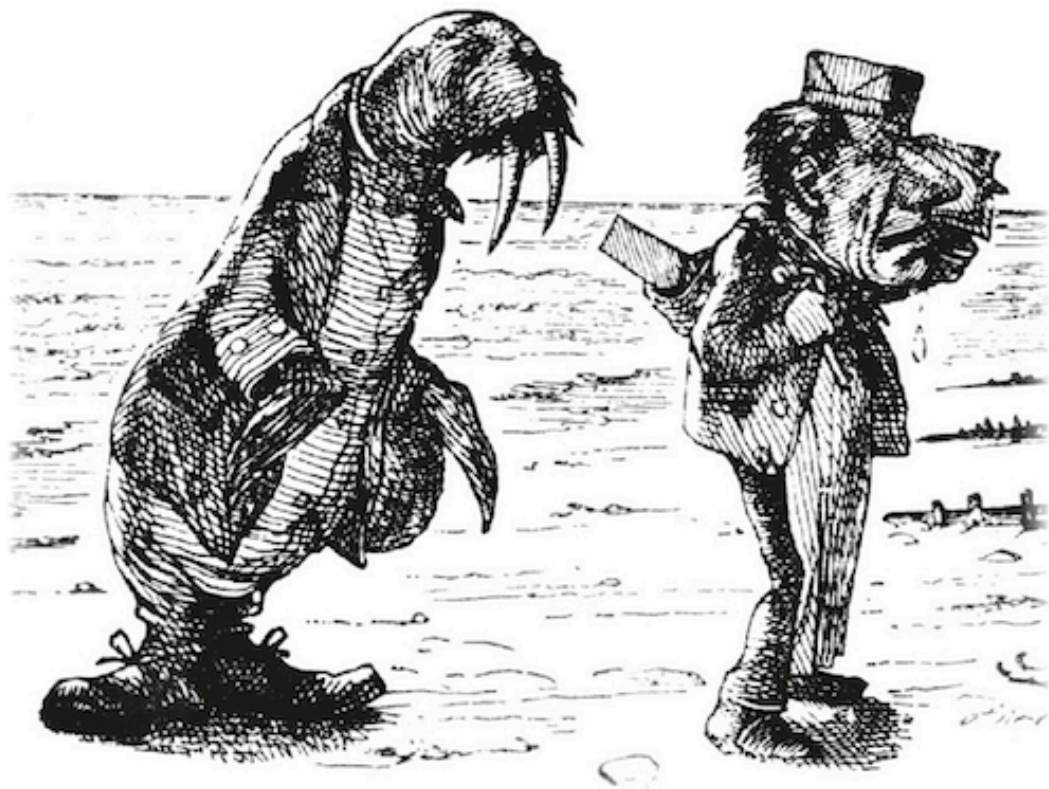


The Powys Society



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The Editors (while reserving the right to select and edit) welcome suggestions and contributions from all members. Please send contributions to both editors.

Letters of general concern to the Society will be shared with the Committee as a whole, who will act as advisers. Will anyone writing to the Editors and Committee and not wishing for publication, please make this clear.

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FRONT COVER: The Walrus and the Carpenter *by John Tenniel* from Alice Through the Looking Glass, 1871. See *News and Notes*.

BACK COVER: Article about JCP's poem The Avenue, *The Chicago Examiner*, 16 December 1913

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List of Contents and Index to The Powys Journal Vols I-XX (1991-2000) £1.80

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John Cowper Powys

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T.F. Powys

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A.R. Powys

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Poet Powys' Wail of No Violets Stirs Chicagoans

City Beauty Planners Working for Higher Aims

Judge J. B. Payne Sees No Chance for Flowers in December, but Has Visions of Healthy Playgrounds for City's Children

BY RICHARD HENRY LITTLE.
 "N OT one white violet in Great Park to see."
 Oh, Fort Powys, you should remember
 That violets, white or green, need sun and warmth
 And this—this is December.

There are many people, especially those with poetry in their souls, who were very much pleased yesterday with the wail of John Cowper Powys, the English bard and protégé of Andrew Carnegie, who is now in Chicago.

There were others who were not so delighted. Notable among the opposites were Judge John Burton Payne, the president of the South Park Board, and

John Cowper Powys.



Charles H. Wacker, author of Chicago Beautiful Plan, Expects a Lake Front Park Far Superior to Dream of the English Bard.

what chance has a violet? I ask you, what chance has a violet?"

Judge Payne stopped suddenly. He was thinking bitterly of the 1,200 beautiful trees that died in their infancy. Then he resumed.

"Can a poet understand that there is a place for everything and everything should be in its place. There are no white violets in Great Park, but in other parks of the South Park system we have tons of violets. But it is December and the violets are under glass. But if he means for violets we will show them to him. Can he see of violets. But not in Great Park."

"Great Park is the breathing ground of Chicago. I expect to see it the greatest athletic ground in the world. We



John Burton Payne.

because Judge Payne is president of the South Park Board, and the South Park Board has charge of Great Park, and if there are no white violets in Great Park it is manifestly the fault of the South Park Board.

Therefore Judge Payne was wroth when he read the poem of John Cowper Powys. Judge Payne indicated to begin with that the South Park Board would not grow white violets in Great Park because the people who love to roam in the park would eat them.

"But what about the labyrinthine shell?" I demanded of Judge Payne.

"Why have you as president of the South Park Board neglected to have labyrinthine shells strewn along the shore of Great Park?"

"What do you mean labyrinthine shell?" demanded Judge Payne.

Only Peanut Shells.

"I don't know. Nobody knows except John Cowper Powys. But I went down to Great Park yesterday to see if Fort Powys was right, and he was. There were no labyrinthine shells in Great Park. Nothing but peanut shells and Illinois Central trains and a tramp asleep on the Logan monument. But not one single labyrinthine shell nor a white violet."

Judge John Burton Payne is intensely devoted to the South Park system and he was so annoyed by the criticism of John Cowper Powys that at first he declared he would not say one single word. He looked at the photograph of John Cowper Powys published at the head of the poem and he said that if John Cowper Powys looked like that he would be hanged if he would answer him.

"But," I persisted, "will you explain to the people of Chicago, Judge Payne, why there are no white violets growing in Great Park in the middle of December?"

No Violets Planted.

"The drift of this poem," said Judge Payne solemnly as he read it through for the third time, "is that Great Park is a very dismal, forbidding sort of a place and that Mr. Powys is displeased because in glancing down from his room he sees no white violets or non-colored labyrinthine shells. I don't know who gave Fort Powys the idea that Great Park is maintained by the state for the edification of hotel guests, but he seems to have overlooked this serious somewhere. He should not complain in verse. Why doesn't he make his protest to the management of the hotel?"

"It is quite true there are no white violets in Great Park. We have never planted any. But seven years ago we did plant 1,200 trees in Great Park. We dug a hole twelve feet long and six feet wide and five feet deep for each tree and every hole was filled with rich black earth. We watered over those trees and watered them with our tears.

Does John Cowper Powys know how many of those trees are being today? Not one single tree. What killed them?"

"If I wanted to be mean and personal I could say that the poem was slept in the park and there, but that is not true. The smoke from the engines of the Illinois Central, from the downtown chimneys and from the pipes of the articles in the CNE Dwellers' Club descended on those trees and the soil that comes down is a great, thick black cloud in Chicago settled on those trees and they died. If the strong pine and the mighty oak and the noble elm cannot stand the stern conditions of city life



Charles H. Wacker.

are going to build a stadium in Great Park that will be the greatest stadium theater ever erected. I love white violets but I love more to see boys and young men playing baseball or football and reading about enjoying themselves. That is what you will see in Great Park in place of white violets. I believe health is the biggest thing of all. All of Great Park plan the lot facilities to Randolph street is given up to games and I am glad of it.

There are twenty-seven parks in the South Park system and not a "top off the gross" sign in a single one of them. I wish John Cowper Powys knew that. We are hard at work on Great Park. In a few years it will be quite different and very beautiful. If John Cowper Powys will only keep looking out of his window for the next five years he will see a wonderful transformation slowly taking place. But he will never see white violets in the park in December. There are a few things outside the power of the South Park Board."

May Find Shell.

Charles H. Wacker, who works night and day for the "Chicago Beautiful," smiled when he read the sonnet of Fort Powys and said that if the fitting bard of England was to wander down to Great Park he would find some labyrinthine shells, all right, and that one of them would have a pea under it and a man would bet him \$5 that he couldn't tell which shell covered the lucky pea.

"Great Park," said Mr. Wacker, "is to be carried 200 feet farther into the lake. The Field Museum is to be moved in Great Park. The Crown Library will, I hope, be built on Randolph street as a sort of a gateway to the park. The Illinois Central is going to erect a magnificent station.

"The tracks are to be lowered. Electric trolleys will come. The new harbor plan will be completed. These things are being worked out now. Until they are completed we cannot do much in the way of temporarily beautifying Great Park. Meanwhile it is at least slightly, and the people see and enjoy it, even if poets do not."

So much in defense of Great Park. But great apprehension was felt by many patriotic citizens of Chicago yesterday. If John Cowper Powys can represent us so sternly because he cannot find a white violet in Great Park, what will he say when he discovers the stock yards?

THE AVENUE.

As I See It From My Blanketcase Window.

It is impossible that the same earth
 Which breeds the honeysuckle, trails the
 hedge,
 With lily-pads along the river's edge,
 Bridges yellow-throated life-forms to
 birth,
 Should spawn a class of such Cypriotean
 girls
 As this huge city! From the utmost
 ledge
 Of the round world to dress as true
 wedges
 Into eternity. Yet, Gods! What death
 Of the exquisite, the delicate, the rare!
 Not one white violet in Great Park to
 see!

Not one non-colored labyrinthine shell
 Can up battle these waters! But what
 one!
 Violets and shells have little use for me
 When I stand staring—between heaven
 and hell!

—John Cowper Powys.

People who were afraid to be interviewed talked much about Fort Powys and his poem, but they didn't want their names published. They were afraid that Fort Powys might write a poem about them. But they said that in the first place anybody that expected to see a white violet blooming in Great Park in the middle of December had another guess coming. They allowed that there were no white violets in Great Park in December, nor were there jaguars, or lions, or alligators. It is not that kind of a park.

There are no white violets blooming in Great Park in December, nor are there white violets blooming in Washington Park in December—that is, out of Chicago and Washington Park is much further south than Great Park. Also there were many who scoffed at Fort Powys and said he was not a poet, because if he were a poet he would not be sleeping at the Blanketcase. Poets do not sleep at the Blanketcase and snore at Great Park. Poets sleep in Great Park and snore at the Blanketcase.

Judge John Burton Payne took Fort John Cowper Powys very much to heart,

\$1.85

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