

tobacco, all of which he grew in his own garden, giving much time and consideration to every stage of its development, from seedling to drying rack. In holding his attention tobacco almost divided honours with cider.

Cider, however, was Christopher's pet lamb. Of it he was a connoisseur. And well so. For he had an ample orchard, and the cider mill was on the corner of his farm, next to the village. From fresh cider in autumn he had this cheering beverage in several degrees of potency up to five years in wood. And it was his delight to produce a jug of it every time anyone appeared at his door, and nothing gave him greater joy than the manœuvres of the one who would dare to imbibe freely of the five-year-old extract. It was his boast that he could drink a quart of his hardest cider and never feel it and that there wasn't another man in those parts who could drink even a pint and remain upright.

Cider affected greatly the momentum of Christopher's life. For with it he seemed to be perpetually saturated. He sat down to breakfast always with a jug of it at his elbow. A stone jar accompanied him to the fields. At noon he drank freely of it before eating and again after eating. He kept cider by him during the afternoon; and in the evening, when the chores were done, especially in winter, he loved to stretch his huge legs in front of the open fire, dreaming or cajoling or cursing, according to his humour and the character of his audience. If his audience consisted of his wife and two sons and two daughters or any fraction or combination of the five, cursing was in order as an appropriate indulgence. And what opportunity he had on the rare occasions when his pipe and tobacco were not in place, when the cider was not nipping hot, when the log was not roaring behind the dogs! But, oh, whenever a stranger graced the hearth, whenever two little boys, permitted to pass the night under that roof, found themselves at last cuddled close against that great paunch and listening with ever-increasing interest to the tale of the Hairy Man or of the two bear cubs that found a nest of honey in an old hollow log.

Hollow, indeed, are all the stories told by all the great writers of the world when they are compared with the stories hiccoughed by Christopher Drake as he sat before his fire, sipping betimes from an earthen jug and sending blinding whiffs of smoke between the boys and the tall tallow candle that flickered wistfully in the brass stick upon the mantel. For you could see the Hairy Man in his den away down in the ground and hear him roar should anyone be so bold as to

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