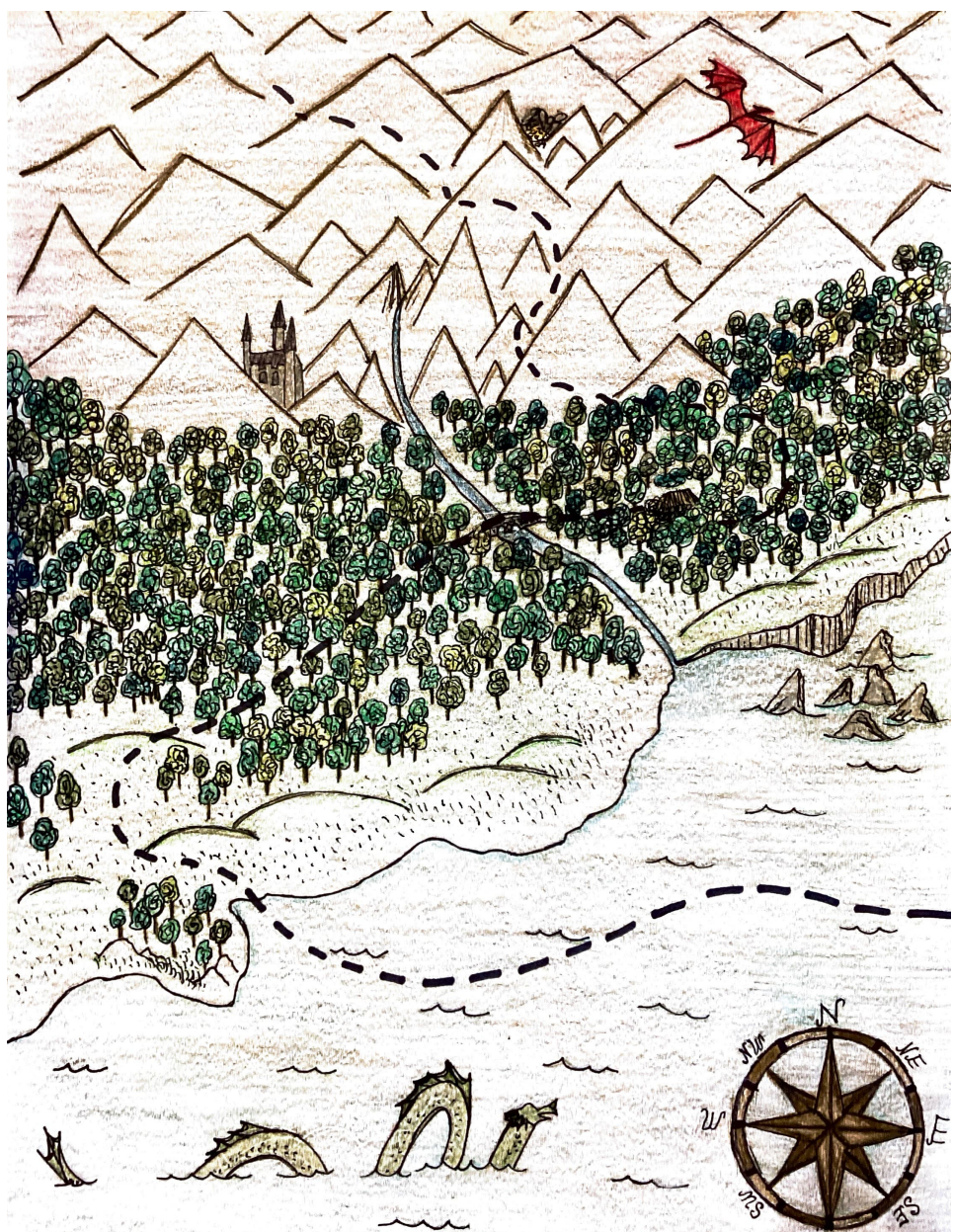
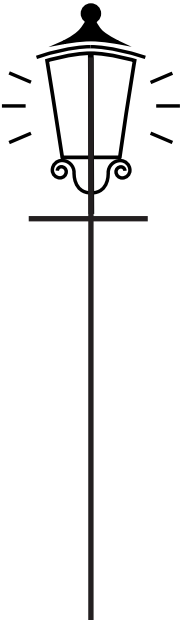


# The Peaks



The Lantern  
November 2025





# The Lantern

***The Lantern**, begun in 1932, is Houghton University's student-run literary journal that exists to illuminate the thoughts and expressions of students and the greater Houghton community through works of literary and visual art.*

*The Lantern began as an offshoot of a literary competition that existed for over a decade before 1932. After that date, the Lantern, previously known as the Lanthorn, began printing the works of students and has continued to do so ever since.*

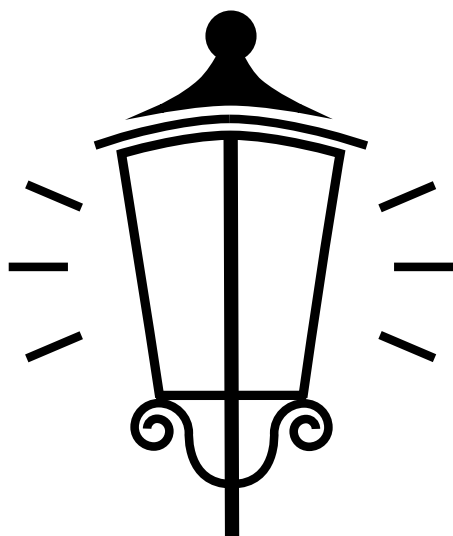
*Front Cover:*

**Peak after Peak**, Evelyn Dainty

Photo

# The Peaks

November 2025



# Letter from the Editors

*He has founded his city on the holy mountain.*

*The LORD loves the gates of Zion*

*more than all the other dwellings of Jacob.*

*~Psalm 87:1-2*

Dear Readers,

You have crossed the wide sea, passed under the verdant forest, and now begin your climb up into **The Peaks**. On the gentler slopes you felt confident, your strong legs firm and steady, but that was hours ago. Now your hiking boots seem full of stones, not digging into your weary feet (though *is* that a bit of gravel caught in your right sock?), but weighing each step down. Sluggishly you force yourself to lift first one leg and then the other from the dragging ground. Seeing a rock ahead, you wonder if you can possibly heave your feet over its grey bulk.

Can you reach the top? That depends. What is pressing you onward? How much do you want to gain that vantage point? What is at the top, for that matter? A soul-soaring view? A giant or dragon? A great accomplishment? A waiting God?

Join us as we, too, climb these peaks, pressing onward toward that towering goal, that lofty adventure, that almighty God. You will not climb alone, for can you see all these others who are climbing, too—urging us onward in word and color? Can you hear that heavenly voice calling us to enter the beloved gates of Zion?

Yours for lighting up the world,  
Keiryn, Jonathan, Emma, and Warren

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# Out of the Valley, Up to the Sky

Grace Kellum

*The golden glow of endless day  
Beats on weary traveler's face,  
And strengthens him  
As he starts to climb  
Up the mountain, leaving shade behind.  
Out of the valley,  
Up to the sky!*

*Once in darkness, thick and fast,  
Watching shifting shadows pass.  
No peaceful rest,  
No virtue high,  
Down in the valley, under the pine.  
Out of the valley,  
Up to the sky!*

*A tiny ray of shining sun,  
Through the blackened branches won  
The right to shine  
On forest ground,  
To seek a traveler; him it found.  
Out of the valley,  
Up to the sky!*

*And so he left his shadowed home  
To seek the King on His Glorious throne  
To follow the light  
To flee and to fly  
Up, up, up where the dragons roam,*

*Out of the valley,  
Up to the sky!*

*As he climbed that peak so bright  
The laws he was taught by the beam of light.  
And joy he learned,  
And peace he gained,  
His eyes from the summit never strayed.  
Out of the valley,  
Up to the sky!*

*But as the climb became arduous,  
And the wind howled 'round, merciless,  
He began to remember,  
Began to desire  
The cool of the shade of the forest,  
Down in the valley,  
Far from the sky.*

*And soon his eyes backward strayed,  
Towards that endless, gloomy night  
Of the forest,  
Away from the light.  
And his mind was consumed with longing.  
Back to the valley,  
Far from the sky.*

*No sooner had he turned his back  
On the light which from the mountain flowed,  
Then lost he joy,  
And lost he peace,  
And sent was he to his shadowed home,  
Back to the valley,  
Far from the sky.*

*My child, take heed,  
Turn your back to the valley,*

*Seek out the sky and the good King's throne.  
Turn your eyes to the light,  
And let them not waver.  
For he who forgets,  
And he who desires  
A world that is not ablaze with the fires  
Of goodness and peace and joy's golden glow  
Loses the good and is cast down low.  
So come, my child, and let us fly,  
Out of the valley  
And into the sky!*

*Opposite:*

**Farther up and Farther in**, Emma Dainty

Photo

Italian Alps, May 3, 2023



# Home

Lukas C. Thompson

The peak is ever above me. So many times I have thought I was nearly to its summit only to realize another lay beyond it, a bit higher and a bit more desolate. It looks down upon me, upon the world, with ancient pride. The eagles make their homes upon your flanks, in your nostrils, and in your hair, oh mighty one, but my fists shall grip your crown ere the day ends. Looking up to this final peak, I know it is the last one as I have circled it now fully. It is elegant but somewhat small, like the bell tower on a large building, and I shall reach it shortly. I will ring that bell in no time.

A short distance below the summit, I am surprised to still find tall trees growing on both sides of the path. Through them, I can see naught but the grey cap of the rocky spire above me set against the bright blue sky. It has been an entire day since I have seen anything through the trees and the thorns beneath them. But to my delight, I see some blue sky between the trees now. Yes! I can even see the sun sinking into the ground. In curiosity, I have taken a short detour through the trees. My lungs need the break from going uphill, and a trail has been provided by the deer and goats who daily walk through this wood. I follow until the bushes and brambles clear, letting out onto a grassy slope spilling steeply over the edge. I cannot get close enough to see the side of the mountain, but I can see the lowlands at its base far away and the sea beyond that.

Beyond the sea, only golden light. The light before dusk graces everything the eye can see. The trees, the grass, and the air carry the burden of sunlight, nearly doubled over with it, yet it gives them power and vitality, and they look stronger for it. A breeze lifts my burden off my feet, and something truer than an ethereal bliss rubs my weary eyes till they can see the world again. I have never seen something more real in my life. Looking out over the world far below I can see not only all the space but also all the time that has passed between me and my garden gate. I look out as

if expecting to see it swing open in the wind and crash closed in that familiar sound, but I don't. Alas, perhaps I shall see it someday again. I have made it farther than I had originally expected to.

By this thought, I am reminded that it is now evening, and my errand of reaching the peak must take priority. Still, I will oblige myself with this respite a few minutes longer, to sit upon this mossy log, worn out and bone tired. My traveler's comfort is that, though I am in someone else's home, on someone else's log, upon the evening of someone else's night, I may make my use of their belongings until I move on. I am miles away from kith and kin but someone has dropped this tree for me to sit on, and I thank them for it. I wonder if the inhabitants of this slope thank someone for me being here. If they do, it is misplaced, for I am here not by anyone else's desire, but my own.

Somewhere out there is the thing I had to leave to get here, and as I look out there, it seems to me that what I left feels more like a home than it ever has. Out there suddenly does not feel very far away. In fact, I find it to be quite invasive. My eyes well up with tears to my surprise. I hadn't expected to be so moved when first I walked through the shrubs, but I also had not expected to intrude on what I perceive to be a song sung by the stone and the grass and the daylight. It is greater than I and perhaps directed to someone more important than I, but I also detect a familiar melody within it. The song is as tragic as death, but as wholesome as my own vegetable garden. In fact I think it's coming from beyond my garden and even behind my front door. Somewhere in my house itself Someone has sent out a melodic thread that is woven into all the other threads. This thread has made it's way here somehow, and perhaps it's been here forever. But surely not from my own small household does this sound come? I can imagine the evening preparations of my household, and suddenly I want more than anything to be a part of them. I want to be at the table when someone spills a glass of water and we all stand up in astonishment to remedy our small disaster. I long to see sunlit rain wash my garden, my windows, and the clothesline. But my mind searches the house for the source of the melody.

I remember a time when I walked through my living room

on a winter night and had this same subtle realization. My mind was still in awe of the darkness that closes the house in, though the light of the lamp on the front porch lit the curtain and the back of the couch a hue of the angelic. Who can describe the mystery of a starlit curtain blowing in the breeze or the wonder of a warm bed at night with crisp sheets? While I lay awake just before sleep, home works its magic. The song of the furnace and the creaking wood floor, the silent furniture and the dance of the moonlit glass, for all of these, how can I thank you, you who sang me to sleep every night with safety. You are a fortress beneath an old, friendly hat—a castle with a view from my bedchamber of the sea, yet you are no more than an old wooden porch on an older summer night. I fear your power is too subtle to guard against or to thank you for.

My stunning home was adorned in a black ballroom gown with white peals that night, and I wanted to spend the night awake getting to know the home I'd never noticed. But it was only a passing clarity, and soon my stormy dreams lulled me back to sleep. I awoke the next morning with the passion that brought me here.

There are times like this when home grabs your shoulders and shakes you. It slaps you across the face with a fat, familiar hand and says, "I've been right here the whole time; how have you not seen me?" But I am a thousand miles away, and I know this clarity will be lost upon me when I come back down.

I cry tears bought with regret, before standing and strapping up my bag. One last look at the world I gained, one last look at this vast field, and then I will go back down. I'll run back the way I came, down this mountain, through the forest, and across the sea.

I start back up the path to the winding road. But what of the peak? It stands so close at hand, the summit of the world. Darkness settles in, but I want to see the world while there is light in it.

Finally I decide, and begin the same march again. The trees finally clear, and the path ends where I realize I am now at the top. There is more space here than I thought there would be. I take in my surroundings. There is horizon a few yards away in every direction. In the East the sky is pale and looming; the West however is lost in dysphoria, gazing at the spot where the sun once

was. I see in that direction a knoll on the crest of the peak. Perceiving this to be the highest point, I climb it. Carved into the ground in front of me I see a wide circle about nine feet deep with a stair case descending into it through the near wall. Along its northern and southern ends are houses made of stone set into the wall. There are chunks of stone where it seems that the carving of the houses has been left undone. The far end of the hollow tapers down so that there is no wall but a well-framed outlook of the sky, a stunning view of the world for endless miles, so high that I can see the curvature of the still glowing earth.

Down I climb the stairs into the courtyard where there is a table set for a hearty supper.

“Sit down and eat,” calls an elderly gentleman coming from one of the stone houses.

Obligingly, I sit down but do not eat.

“What is it you seek?”

“I want to get down from here as quick as possible,” I tell him.

“Is that what you came here to do?”

“No. I came here before I knew what I wanted.”

“And what do you want?”

“Home,” I tell him. “I want to return to my family. The only miracle I have ever been a part of was my family, and I want to return to them.”

“What did you want before that?”

“To do something great.”

“I congratulate you, man, you have climbed the greatest height in our world.”

“Thank you, but now how do I get down as quickly as possible.”

“Falling is the quickest way; the eagles do it.”

“Yes, but they catch themselves in the air before they reach the bottom, whereas I cannot.”

“Fair conjecture. The deer and the goats are a bit slower, but they run straight down the mountain and seem to do so quickly.”

“Can I learn to do that?”

“Hard to say. All that have tried seem to resort to the method of the eagles in the end. I bring the remains back up and build them a house here where they are to this day, quite dead. Please pass the preserves, if you would.”

“Is the safest way to take the same road I took but reverse?” I ask as I passed the jam.

“Backwards?”

“Forward and down.”

“Yes, but that is mighty slow-going.”

“What else can I do?”

“You’ll find that losing the mountain is harder than gaining it. But tell me, what makes you so sure you don’t want to keep that which you’ve gained. You have a view superior to the most lordly kings: food, water, and shelter, and autonomy. What more do you want?”

“I told you. I want my home—the one I left.”

“When came you to want this thing?”

“When I looked out over the world from the side of the mountain, I noticed the one thing I wanted to see but could not. My home. I am afraid I have left behind the one thing that matters most to me, and I really couldn’t be detained here by anything.”

“Surely, I tell you, the home you knew died the day you left it. No road could ever take you back to the same door that you opened every day or to the same family as you knew it. Everything is different after you do something that is designed to change your life. If you wish for home, you must go back and rebuild it. You must make amends with the very road you walked, not undoing your steps hither, but taking new ones thither. As for being detained, I suppose we shall let time justify or nullify your claim.”

I rise, thanking him kindly, and leave the table to take to the road. Standing at its beginning, I look out one last time. The stars shine white in waves of blue amidst an endless blackness that neither competes with nor bows to the light of the stars. The sea also is lit in thin lines of blue where the waves break, though it is otherwise opaque with blackness. Somewhere past all this, the sun has not yet set on my home. Silently I thank the sky, land, and sea.

“Is there no way I can have my home and this view?” I ask.

“It is a wise man indeed who can bring his home with him on so perilous a journey, but he that does is blessed beyond recognition, though by the view of all mortals, he is the weakest for the trouble he endures in such an endeavor.”

I left with sorrow to find my way along the face of the giant I had set out to conquer. I wondered if I would make it back or fall and be carried back to a prison cell awaiting me. At least, it is a cell with a view, but as I reflect on the view, it only haunts me, and I wonder how I would ever endure it.



# The Meeting

Morley Sharpe

Sergeant Hank Lyod stared into the skies above. It was a mild day, one of those ones where the clouds are covering the sun but there is no sign of rain. Those clouds unnerved his soul. After all, what if they were an omen? Could the coming task be all messed up? Could the greatest moment in human history be ruined by a blunder? Could this meeting with the unknown cause a war of the worst kind, and he would be responsible? He gulped and thrust his head back toward the grassy ground outside the mountain base behind him.

It had all started a week ago for him. He had been summoned to the Pentagon to an emergency conference. There, he at first believed that he had landed in the middle of a massive prank. The colonel was known to do that. But no, it had been true: NASA had picked up a message from deep space, a message from another race on another planet.

The message's senders, from what it said, were the people of the planet Graxterfos, and they had discovered Earth with a device equivalent to Earth's Voyager craft and, being a friendly, curious people, wanted to make contact with the human race. Excited by this news, Congress told the Pentagon to give a reply: we must make contact. Afterwards, another message from Graxterfos came, asking for a time and place to meet. It had been decided that the meeting place would be outside the mountain base of Mount Stevens in Colorado at 3:00 pm Earth-time. But there still needed to be the person to make contact with the visitors. To accomplish this, votes were cast. Hank found himself the lucky man.

But why him? Probably because the others knew he was a big science-fiction nut and would do anything to meet a man from space.

That was true. But honestly, now it was terrifying. He did not want to be the man who could end the world.

“Sarge! They’re here!” a trooper behind him shouted.

Hank looked up to see the massive shield-shaped vessel swoop down right in front of him and the whole fort. He sighed and straightened himself up. He suppressed his gasps when the hatch opened and the cow-sized creatures that resembled anglerfish with the lower half of a slug and the arms of a monkey slid down the ramp and headed towards him. He extended his hand to give a handshake, which the lead Graxterfosian took with pleasure. He listened as they explained how they wanted to see if Earth could aid them with the issue of hunger on their world (as it turns out, Earth’s atomic missiles would be an excellent source of food for them, as they dieted on radioactive material) and wondered if Earth could trade them some of their nuclear missiles for some of the Graxterfosians’ communication technology, which the humans could use to contact other races. Hank assured them, with as steady a voice as he could, that he would see what he could do. The extraterrestrials thanked him very much and began to head back to their ship. As they did, their leader turned to Hank.

“To be frank, I am quite relieved about this affair,” he declared.

“Is that so?” Hank asked, startled.

“Yes, I was worried that I would ruin the whole thing!”



**Dream Rotter - Pen and Marker, Angel Sherman**

Pen and alcohol marker

# Of Callach the Terrible

Emma Dainty

*Of gold we sing,  
And dragon wing,  
And bold dwarf's cunning work.  
Of hoarded gold  
In cavern cold  
And vengeance-hungry Derk.*



Long ago, when Men were newly awakened and shadows had not yet come to the World, an alliance and friendship was forged between Men and Dwarves. Yet after the Fallen Son came to the World and the sun first rose in the sky, greed and pride severed them.

In the east lie the rough and rugged Jagged Mountains. It was here Hardock, which the Dwarves call Gekrâchys or Stoneburg, was hewn, the great halls where Men and Dwarves dwelt in fellowship for many long years. Men taught Dwarves writing and song. Dwarves hewed rock and forged many things for Men, but taught little, for the Dwarves prefer to keep their knowledge secret. Here was stored a great measure of gold and jewels that the Dwarves mined and crafted and both Men and Dwarves used and delighted in.

But when shadows fell over the World, the friendship within Hardock grew strained. The Men grew prideful, calling the Dwarves ignorant and coarse and claiming all the gold and gems for their own. The Dwarves' anger waxed hot, for much of the precious metals and stones had been mined and crafted by themselves.

Then Ferrin son of Derrin, who was accounted lord among the Men, spoke insolently to Quâz Dâk-son, who was lord of the Dwarves, saying thus, "Your greatness comes only because of us. Without Men the Dwarves would have been nothing more than

mere beasts upon the earth, for it was we who brought you language and learning. Therefore, no longer shall I share the lordship of Hardock with you, but I shall take it unto myself and be a lord to you and your people.”

Quâz replied, “Nay, for without us Hardock would be nothing more than a mere cave, lacking both beauty and comfort. Nor would the treasures which abound here delight your eyes, for the Dwarves were the crafters and miners of much of the splendor here.”

Ferrin was angered at the truth in Quâz’s words. Therefore, he drew his sword in anger, crying, “A Man should not suffer such words from a mere Dwarf!”

Quâz also drew his sword, replying, “It is Men who flung the first insult.”

Then Ferrin would have struck at Quâz with his naked blade, but Mella, Ferrin’s wife, clutched his arm, pleading, “Nay, lord, stay your hand. Dwarves have done much for Men, and Men have done much for Dwarves. Do not slay one another. Save your weapons for the Fallen Son’s minions.”

Ferrin shoved her roughly from him, flinging her against the wall so she struck her head sharply. “Nay! Lordship of the whole of Hardock I shall have!”

Whereupon, he strode against Quâz with uplifted sword, and Quâz stepped forward to meet him.

Now in the Ghost Mountains, which the Elves call the Cloudwreathed, to the north and west of the Jagged Mountains, lived many dragons. Greatest among them was Callach the Terrible. Many tales have been sung of Callach’s deeds by Men, Dwarves, and Elves, who call him Ñēcäelsh, that is Blackheart. No servant of the Fallen Son was he, but his heart was as black with evil in its own degree as the Fallen Son’s himself. Greedy for gold and hearing of the growing discord between the Men and Dwarves of Hardock, Callach flew to the Jagged Mountains, certain of victory since the Men and Dwarves were separated by anger and mistrust.

Thus was the impending battle between Men and Dwarves forestalled, and Ferrin and Quâz fell before dragon teeth rather

than each other's blades. Few escaped Callach's fire. The great halls and pillars of Hardock were broken. When all living things were burned or driven from the mountain halls, Callach gathered the gold and jewels together and rested upon them, surrounded by the smoking ruins of the great cavernous city and the charred bones of its inhabitants.

For many years Callach dwelt in the ruined halls of Hardock. A shadow of fear fell over the Jagged Mountains. Those who once dwelt nearby slowly melted away from the vicinity. The Jagged Mountains began to be whispered of as the Haunted Mountains of the Black Dragon, the very name of which sparked terror in the hearers.

But Dwarves do not forget. They live long and their memory of gold and hate do not fade. Derk Sterryk-son was one who escaped the flaming rapacity of the Black Dragon. A great smith was he. He fled before Callach's fiery breath and escaped, but the back of his head was scorched so badly that hair never grew there again. Therefore, Derk the Bald some called him, although his black beard was as thick as any Dwarf's, and his hairy eyebrows were dark and grim.

Then did Derk leave off his hate of Men, turning it rather to the dragon who had destroyed the halls of his handiwork, stolen the treasure of his finding and craft, and killed most of the Dwarves of his blood.

He swore a grim oath. "By the beard of my father, who was slain by the Black Thief," (so the Dwarves called Callach) "and the gold my hands have mined and crafted, I shall kill Trík-Vauzh or be killed by him."

Derk was not hasty to rush into Callach's den and confront death itself, for he knew his vengeance would come to nothing did he so. He worked slowly and craftily to learn more of the dragon and how he might overcome him. Many dragons, so it is said, are unarmed below. It was not so with Callach. His dark plated scales covered his belly as thickly as his back. No weapon had been known to pierce Callach's armor, though many had come against him with sword, spear, and arrow.

The few Dwarves who had escaped the ravage of

Callach made their way to Chûkâd-Kîdhs, the Delving Halls of the Dwarves. Derk, however, remained aloof from the Dwarves, nursing his hatred. In the midst of the westernmost edge of the dark pine forest under the shadow of the Ghost Mountains he dwelt. Here he set up a smithy and mined and forged in secret, for there was much gold in the nearby foothills of the Ghost Mountains.

Often he would leave his lonely anvil to journey far afield, searching ever for knowledge of great power. One such venture took him to Cazarat Pass. Here he learned in stealth many things from passing goblins and fell creatures. News reached him of a great Elf, who was wreaking havoc among the servants of the Fallen Son. It was whispered that much of the Elf's power came of a marvelous spear which he wielded, said to have been blessed by one descended from the Hýlæl.

"I shall seek this Elf," Derk decided, "for if anything can pierce Trík-Vauzh's hide, this weapon can."

When Derk heard of a battle between goblins and Elves in the Darkling Fells, he hastened there.

\*\*\*\*\*

Shānpësh was accounted among the Naiadan Elves although Nābwýshen his father was a Sylvan Elf. A mighty warrior was he, second only to Pināhish, the greatest of all elves that were or are to come, some say. After winning a great battle in the Darkling Fells, he was resting in his camp across the River of Guard.

"Much work you have accomplished, Blessed Steel, and more shall you achieve tomorrow, for the Fallen Son does not bear such defeats with good humor."

Then Shānpësh left his tent to walk among the starlit trees, beloved to him for his father's sake, for Elves do not sleep.

But the next morning Ñäsoshä was gone, and none knew whence it had gone. Then were Shānpësh and his Elves vanquished and driven across the Aquaglass to the very edge of the Twilit Peninsula. Many died that day and Shānpësh himself was badly wounded. Much evil came of that fell thievery.

\*\*\*\*\*

Now Derk with his stolen weapon returned to his home in the eastern pine forest. Still he would not make a bold attack but planned cunningly.

To Callach's den he made his way with great caution. Up the great steps and through the lofty gate he crept. Through many vaulted halls he walked until he came to the great central hall of the lost city. Here Callach lay upon the heaped treasure, his yellow eye ever watchful.

Creeping forward, Derk cried, "O great Callach, Lord of Dragons!"

Callach turned his burning eye upon the Dwarf. "How dare you approach me within my very halls, little Slinker?" A curl of flame flickered about his mouth.

"I have come to gaze upon your beauty and marvel at your strength."

"Flattery shall avail you nothing to save your paltry life, Slinker. Those who enter my home never return to their own."

"But I bear you news of golden fortune."

"Of substance or of thought?"

"Treasure there is for you in the forest that lies west of your mighty realm in these Haunted Mountains of the Black Dragon, treasure with supernatural power."

Callach's great eye burned, and he shifted his great wings. "Of what does this power consist?"

"If a dragon's living scales once touch it, it shall multiply whenever he speaks his name aloud. Such is its power."

"Where can this treasure be found?"

"In the western part of the forest within a small smithy. There it lies, unguarded, for the first dragon's taking."

Callach laughed, and the sound rang like alarm bells in the stony vaults. Then spreading his great wings, Callach flew from the hall. His voice echoed back, "Steal not from a dragon's hoard, for death lies in such a deed."



\*\*\*\*\*

Callach leveled Derk's small smithing shed with a swipe of his spiked tail. There lay the gold, shining in the sunlight. With a blast of hot breath, Callach melted the skilled craftsmanship into a pooled lump. Then did the steel spear jut through its gold covering.

Callach's laughter rang through the forest, and the Dwarves mining in the Ghost Mountains failed in their work, looking up in amazed fear. "Foolish dwarf! Do you think thus to end Callach the Terrible? If Dwarf strength avails not, dragon strength may accomplish your purpose? Not so! Crafty Dwarves may be, but craftier still are dragons."

Plucking forth the steel dart, Callach flew back to Hardock, carrying his newly found gold.

Dragons have keen senses. Their smell excels the bloodhound's, and their sight the eagle's, for many can see into the hearts of mortals and even Elves. Once a treasure has entered their hoard, whether single coin or tiny jewel, they do not forget it. Neither can a thief escape detection, for even without counting, a dragon knows when his treasure becomes less.

Thus it was when Callach brought the golden lump to his hoard that he knew a thief had been there. Knew he also that no living thing besides the dwarf had entered, and the dwarf still hid within his halls.

"You cannot hide, Slinker! I shall find you and roast you!"

"O Terrible Callach! Spare me! An evil fey has done this and buried me beneath your hoard," a small voice answered. "Do not burn me, for the wonders of your treasure shall be scorched also."

Callach roared in anger and began digging through his gold. "Foul-mouthed liar! You have done this and think to hide from me!"

Close over his hoard the dragon panted, his mouth eager to snap upon the dwarf. But it was not so. As Callach's claws raked away the gold, Derk sprang up and flung Ñāsoshā into Callach's maw. Callach the Terrible choked and reared back, writhing in an agony.

Derk sprang away from the pile and watched the dragon

coiling and uncoiling in his final struggle against death. “Thus do you die for the destruction of these halls. Thus do you die for the theft of gold my hands have mined and crafted. Thus do you die for my father’s death!”

Then Derk looked about and at the gold. “Thus do you lose your gold to me. This I shall take as repayment and fulfillment of my vengeance.”

Callach’s eye gleamed through slitted lids. “Dwarf’s hate is strong, but dragon’s hate is stronger. Dragon’s greed is strong, but Dwarf’s greed is stronger. This gold I curse, and dragon’s curse never leaves his hoard, ’tis said.”

Then did Callach the Terrible die, slain by Derk Sterryk-son’s hand.

\*\*\*\*\*

Derk retrieved the golden crown he had hidden outside Callach’s den, but the silver sword he could not find. Angrily, he returned within Hardock’s halls.

Setting the crown upon his head, Derk declared, “Under no Man’s lordship shall Hardock be, but under mine, a Dwarf!”

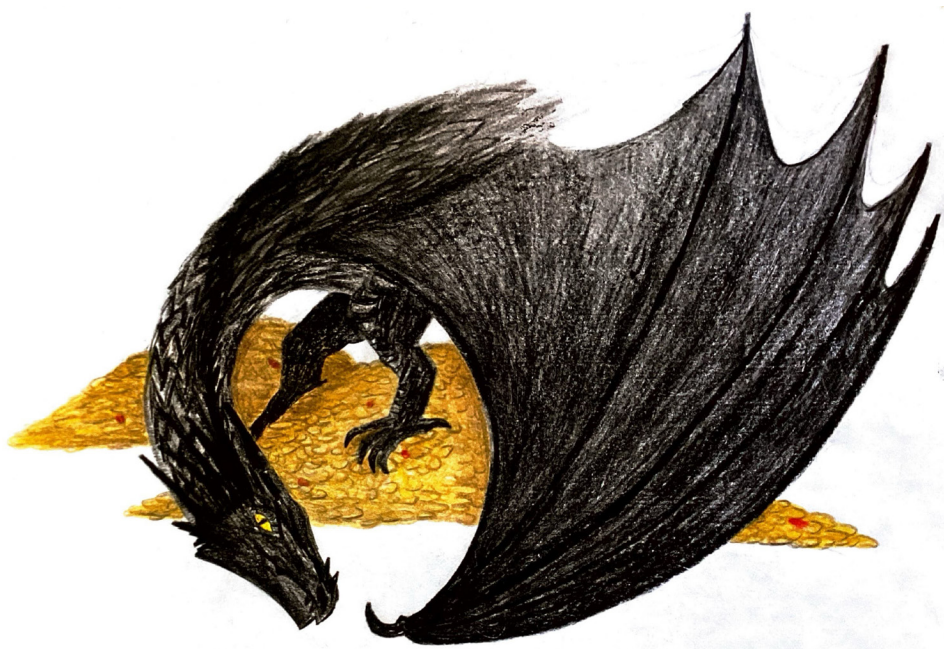
For long years Derk dwelt in Hardock and brooded over the gold. At first he forged the melted gold, but at last he did nothing but gaze over his treasure, stroking the gold with loving hands. His mind became consumed with wealth, and the mere thought of theft drove him mad.

Those who ventured into Hardock to learn whether Callach still lived were slain swiftly, silently, secretly by Derk. People feared the Jagged Mountains, unsure whether Callach the Terrible still dwelt there or whether some new terror killed those who ventured near.

Dwarves rarely live beyond two hundred years, but for three hundred years Derk sat hunched over the gold. His thick beard and eyebrows thinned and fell away. His stout muscles wasted away. His teeth one by one dropped out. His skin shrank and pulled tight over knobby bones. Only his eyes remained the same, burning and mad, not stirring from his fixed stare upon the treasure. It is said Derk finally faded to nothing, becoming a wraith whose burning eyes ever watch over the accursed gold.

Few climb the Jagged Mountains now. If Pýlsisho the Foresighted speaks truly, one shall come who shall break the dragon's curse and send Derk's foul spirit away.

*Fierce dragon's fire,  
Fell Dwarven ire,  
Cursed hoard in carven rock.  
The haunting dread  
Of Dwarf undead,  
The slayer of Callach.*





# Take This Moment

Jonathan Stacy

*Wait,  
though the air may chill  
and frost nip your nose.  
Watch,  
as snow drifts along the path  
as these people, your friends so hastily pass.  
Rest,  
though the journey has made you weary,  
the storm now fades away.  
Come,  
even if lost  
a path still resides.  
Home has never looked so bright.*

*Opposite:*

**Fireweed on Lake Eklutna, Evelyn Dainty**

Photo

# The Mountain of Success

D. A. Bythe

I stood on top of the mountain and breathed the deep, clear air of success. Scores of peaks surrounded me, rising above the clouds. They were no longer frosted with snow, as they had been on my ascent. These were colors I had never seen, rich hues of green grass and radiant anemones. The sky was a bright shade of sapphire. Crystal clear rivers poured across brilliant gems bedded in their banks. Deerlike creatures poked their heads between mossy tree trunks and squirrels played between the branches. Nothing was frantic or dirty. I had found eutopia. I had found heaven.

I wandered through the forest atop this mountain and thought about my success. The struggle to reach the top seemed nonexistent compared with this unsurpassable beauty and serenity. I could easily forget the long hours of work, the late nights of toil, the rejection, the tears, the hunger. All that was behind.

And yet I could not forget faces. Any expression of my mother's that I could recall was precious to me. I smiled to think of my sister's laughing face. The young man whose eyes once looked so penetratingly into mine. The friends who joined me on our galivants through life, looking for innocent trouble. The meals and walks we once shared. The professor who took the time to notice my distress and offer support. The sheer pleasure of being in a room with people I loved on a weeknight. The grateful look of a homeless woman, who received food from the hands of my friends.

How could I yearn for that dirty struggle of earth in this pristine paradise? Still, I found myself peering through the clouds, looking desperately for a glimpse of that which I loved, but I was blinded by success.

And suddenly, I realized I had not found eutopia, for I was alone.

For what had I struggled, to reach this peak, to make this

my all-consuming goal? Surely, this also was vanity, for I had missed the point. As I gazed earnestly down from that mountain peak, I had found success dissatisfying without those I loved. Yes, I would rather struggle with them than succeed without them. And if I never achieve success, never again set foot on this forsaken mountaintop, I may still achieve a success that does not fail.

For when I do reach heaven, the real one that God made perfect, I will surely know it, for I will not be alone.



# Picturesque Peaks

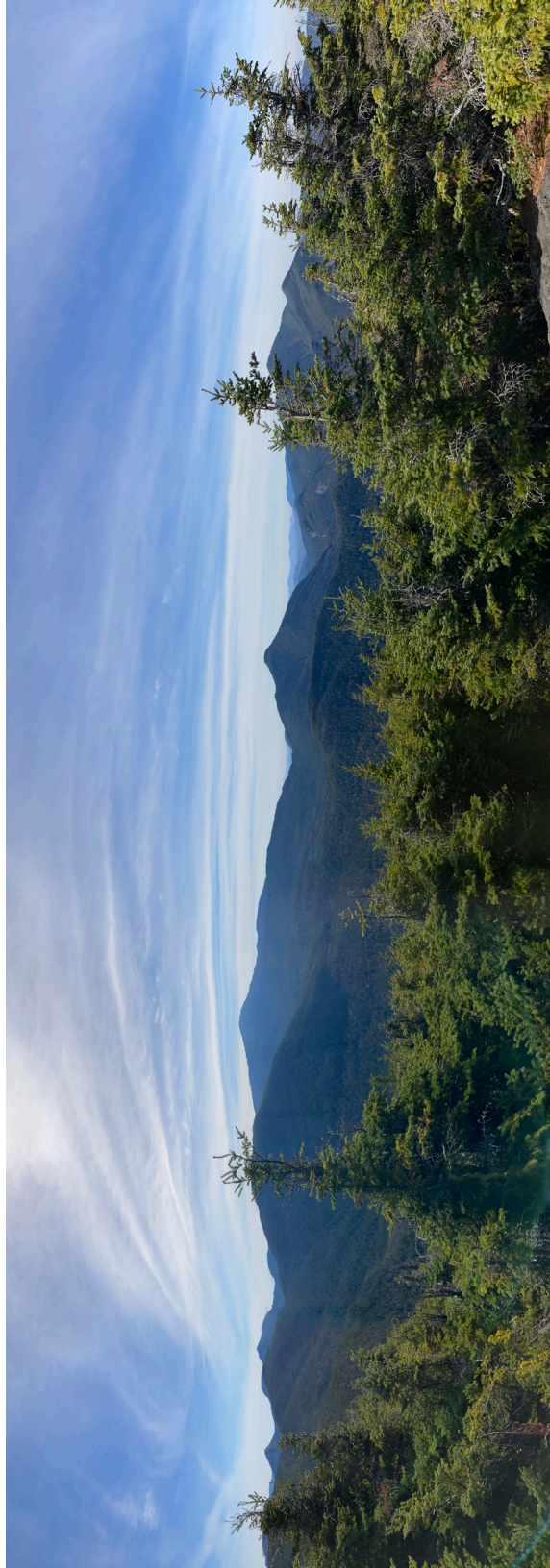
Naviana Sullix

*Mountain peaks can be difficult to navigate.  
You get excited at reaching the top,  
Just to then realize that it's barely a baby peak you've reached.  
Looking into the distance  
All you see is a bigger uphill climb  
What if we didn't get discouraged looking off in the distance?  
What if we looked at how far we've come?  
What if we stopped and admired the view  
Instead of focusing on the painful trek?  
Take a moment to stay on your current peak;  
Admire how far you've come  
And look with expectation at what views are to come.  
Be grateful for the people who've brought you this far  
And for those standing by your side.*

*Opposite:*

**Azure Peaks**, Madi Fleury

Photo



**To the High Sweep of the Sky, Emma Dainty**  
Photo

Adirondacks (from Phelps Mountain), October 9, 2025

# Oh, Mountain High!

D. C. Grey

*A glamorous peak, a glisten of ice.  
Exemption, devotion, a light to Christ.  
In a whirl of snow, a leap of faith.  
I look, I see, the wandering Wraith.*

*His eyes are open, yet somehow closed.  
His lifted finger, remaining posed.  
Pointing to the top of the peak.  
I am made humble as he begins to speak.*

*“Child, my child, why don’t you see?  
The tiding of peace spirited in thee.  
Upon the rock, the light is growing.  
Why, I ask, must you insist on towing?”*

*I opened my lips, to argue myself.  
Yet, again, He lifted a finger with sudden wealth.  
I looked to see, rather sourly, the finger’s destination.  
It laid upon the mountainous imitation.*

*“What do you want, O curious Wraith?”  
I pleaded, my sound a wail of faith.  
“Have I not gone far enough?  
My legs are defeated, my armor not tough.*

*Yet The Wraith, the spirit, still pointed.  
I sighed, I growled, but my feet anointed.  
I began to walk.  
All the while, The Wraith began to talk.*

*“Climb up high! Most curious youth.  
Search forever, the meaning to sooth.*

*Only the peak, the top of the mountain.  
Leads to you the endless fountain.”*

*So, most regrettably, I found myself climbing.  
The Wraith followed with no aid in timing.  
I fell, a million times, my feet colder than ice.  
My brain a fog, a bobcat there, I was no longer “nice.”*

*“When am I there?”  
I snapped, the cruel words a dare.  
“Wait, O wait, little youth,” The spirit said,  
“My faith in you is not yet dead.”*

*And so, I climbed, a million years did pass me by.  
A child born, a Devil sworn, a war ended in a sigh.  
All the while, I kept climbing, the mountain high, and still rising.  
The Wraith followed, silent now, his feet with little sizing.*

*“Nearly there,” I heard him say, after many years.  
I fall, a soaking mound of blood and tears.  
I am surprised, I must admit, when the spirit falls to me.  
He picks me up, no longer watching, His face a silent sea.*

*He carries me, this strange Wraith, His arms forever steady.  
The bobcat, I see, runs beside in eddy.  
We make it up, the peak no longer visible.  
I see, O how I see, the sudden sensible.*

*“You brought me here, to see the heights.  
I have never seen the sights.  
The world is large, the mountain high.  
I finally see the blue of sky.”*

*Upon this, I turned around, astonished to see.  
The Wraith, He’s gone, He has left me.  
Somehow, however, I know he’s still there.  
I look up, again, wind in my hair.*

*I raise my arms to praise deliverance here.  
To see the sky, my eyes no longer sear.  
A sudden blur, the bobcat near, his eyes no longer jeer.  
Revelation, realization, my mind somehow clear.*

*“Oh Mountain High!” I cry in sound.  
I fall in rest, a final mound.*



# To the Mountain

Peter Murray

*How can you be so strong, serene  
So steadfast, by so many seen?  
In each new day when world awakes,  
And dawn upon this earth-throne breaks  
There stand you as you've always been*

*And yet through seasons you can change  
Through snow-clad chill, 'neath spring's sweet rains  
In summer's buzz of dusty green  
And robed in sighs of dying leaves  
All these you are, yet you remains*

*So why can I not do the same?  
Not stand undaunted without blame?  
To die and grow in shifting hues  
Yet with no part of me to lose  
When did my strength become my shame?*

*Opposite:*

**Matterhorn**, Emma Dainty

Photo

Monte Cervino (the Matterhorn), May 4, 2023

# Mount Sinai's Crown

## Musa

*Mount Sinai's crown's concealed in cloud  
Where glory from the Lord of light  
Touched tree-tops, clothed and overwhelmed.  
Moses ascended, cold but bright.*

*Oh, Moses, take my staff, my land,  
My gold and silver drenched in sod.  
Climb up that frightful mountain nigh,  
And bring my weary gifts to God.*

*Mount Sinai's peak, divinely clothed,  
Exchanged the voice of God and man,  
Looked out across the swirling world,  
Pierced into God's immortal hand.*

*Oh, Moses, we've forgotten you  
And your communion with your God.  
Could you expect an indifference  
To weariness of faithful trod?*

*Mount Sinai's jutting rocks are sharp,  
Piercing the path of Moses down.  
He trips on our scattered bodies  
And breaks the giving Father's crown.*



**High on the Paramo**, Emma Dainty  
Photo

Pichincha, Quito, May 28, 2024

# Your Love Remains

Musa

*Though we've planted seeds in concrete, though we've  
Filled the Heav'ns with smoke, smog, smothering life—  
Your love remains, buzzing in wires that weave  
Across phone polls, hiccupping in the strife,  
The invisible Web. Your love remains,  
Matching the height of scrapers, speed of light, low  
As the mines and long as the borderlines.  
In prisoners' death, Your love stands in the row.*

*But escaped, out into the open air,  
Beyond the pining, anguish, and despair,  
Your love o'erwhelms the valleys, peaks, seas, soil,  
Dwelling nearest to man in simple toil.  
Yet nearer still are we at end, at rest,  
When Your great (perfect!) love would fill us best.*



# *Author, Artist, & Musician Bios*



## **Emma Dainty**

I am Emma Dainty, member of the 2023 London Cohort, editor on the Lantern staff, consultant at the Writing Center, amateur birder, expert on all things Tolkien and Star Wars, and proponent of the Oxford comma.

## **Madi Fleury**

My freshman year of high school, my graduating class climbed Azure Mountain, located in the Adirondacks. Our memories and experience were adventurous but the view was even more breathtaking!

## **D. C. Grey**

I am a freshman, and I enjoy the mountains.

## **Angel Sherman**

Angel is a freshman at Houghton studying studio art and is a lover and composer of music.

## *Music QR Code*

Follow this QR code to visit our YouTube channel with music that has been published in previous Lantern issues. Listen and enjoy!



# *Do YOU want to submit something to the Lantern?*

Whether you are a skilled writer, artist, or musician with many years of experience, or a brand new writer, artist, or musician who wants to share their work for the first time, we are delighted to see your work!

## *Be on the lookout for the first submissions email for Spring 2026!*

Additionally, if you are interested in following the Lantern's story throughout this year (and years to come), join our group on Campus Groups, visit our website [hulantern.wordpress.com](http://hulantern.wordpress.com), or follow us on Instagram at [@h.u.lantern](https://www.instagram.com/h.u.lantern).

Also, please visit our Campfire bulletin board past Java 101 to read poetry and pin up your own. The submissions prompt will also be posted here.

Yours for lighting up the world,  
The Lantern Editors



**The Lantern; November 2025**