

which moved him most deeply, one was the point at which Gollum nearly repented. *The Battle of the Eastern Field* is a forerunner of Tolkien's later works in many ways, in the humour, the skill with language, the underlying themes, and the telling of an exciting story.

Maggie Burns is at Birmingham City Library

1. King Edward's School *Chronicle*, the school magazine written and edited by the boys, which appeared twice a term.
2. Macaulay, Thomas Babington, *Lays of Ancient Rome*. First published in 1842, quotations taken from the reprint edition issued by the Echo Library.
3. *Old Edwardians Gazette*: the magazine for old boys of King Edward's School.
4. King Edward's School *Lists*.
5. King Edward's School *Blue Book* – lists all the pupils in alphabetical order. Then issued twice-yearly in January and September.
6. Shippey, Thomas, *J.R.R. Tolkien Author of the Century*. London: HarperCollins, 2000.
7. www.troynovant.com/Stoddard/Tolkien/Horatius-at-Khazad-dum
8. Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Fellowship of the Ring*. London: George Allen and Unwin, 1954.
9. In rugby the ball may be carried as well as kicked. A try is when a player manages to touch the ground with the ball behind the line on which the posts stand, scoring 5 points. The player can then score 2 additional points by kicking the ball between the goal uprights. The scrum is formed to restart the match; three rows of the players in the opposing teams face each other and the ball is passed down the tunnel formed in the middle.
10. Hammond, Wayne, and Scull, Christina, *J.R.R. Tolkien Companion and Guide: Chronology*. London: HarperCollins, 2006.
11. Both of the King Edward's Foundation songs are still sung [2008]. The boys who told me this remembered that the grammar-school song said something about football and cricket, but did not appear to have registered the original underlying message.
12. King Edward's School Service Record, compiled by C.H.Heath, first published in 1919, Additions and Corrections 1931. Heath, a master at the school, prepared additional copies with interbound manuscript pages for the school library and for Birmingham Central Library. Those pages show the job of the father and suburb of residence. Given here are the occupations of the fathers of the boys mentioned in the poem, as this gives a good picture of the social mix of King Edward's School: Alabaster – manufacturing jeweller, Sands – Canon, Faulconbridge – linotype operator, Cottrell – secretary, Wiseman – Methodist minister, Payton – merchant, Higgins – foreman at Bournville [Cadbury's], Hill – doctor.

J. R. R. Tolkien: **The Battle of the Eastern Field**

(On Friday March 31st I found this curious fragment
in the waste paper basket, in the Prefects' room.
Much of it was so blotted that I could not decipher it.
I publish it with emendations of my own. G. A. B.)

I.

Ho, rattles sound your warnote!
Ho, trumpets loudly bray!
The clans will strive and gory writhe
Upon the field to-day.
To-day the walls and blackboards
Are hung with flaunting script,
From Atlas on the staircase
To Bogey's darkling crypt.
Each knight is robed in scarlet,
Or clad in olive green;
A gallant crest upon each breast
Is proudly heaving seen.
While flows our Yellow River,
While stands the great Pavil,
That Thursday in the Lenten Term
Shall be a beanfest still.

II.

Thus spake the Green-clad Chieftain
To the foe in Scarlet dight,
"Shall no-ne wrest the silver grail
"Nor dare another fight!"
And the doughty foeman answer'd –
"Ay, the goblet shall be won,
"And on a famous field of war
"Great deeds of progress done!"
So hard by Brum's great river
They bade their hosts to meet,
Array'd upon the Eastern Field
For victory or defeat!

III.

Now greyly dawns that fatal day
Upon the Eastern Field,
That Thursday in the Lenten Term
With honour ever seal'd

* * * * (!!! G. A. B.)

Nor without secret trouble
Does the bravest mark his foes,
For girt by many a vassal bold
Each mighty leader shows.
Around the Green-clad Chieftain,
Stands many a haughty lord,
From Edgbastonia's ancient homes,
From Moseley's emerald sward;
Towers Ericillus of the sands;
Glowers Falco of the Bridge.
But noblest stands that Chiefest Lord
From the Fountain's lofty ridge.
Among the blood-red ranks were seen
'Midst many and honour'd name
Great Sekhet and those brethren
The Corcii of fame.

IV.

Now straight the shrill call sounded
That heralds in the fray,
And loud was heard the clamour
Of the watchers far away.

* * * (bother !!! G. A. B.)

Swiftly rushed out that Chiefest Lord
And fiercely onward sped,
His corselet girt about his waist,
His close helm on his head.
Now round in thickest throng there pressed
These warriors red and green,
And many a dashing charge was made,
And many a brave deed seen.
Full oft a speeding foeman
Was hurtled to the ground,
While forward and now backward
Did the ball of fortune bound:
Till Sekhet marked the slaughter,
And tossed his flaxen crest
And towards the Green-clad Chieftain
Through the carnage pressed;
Who fiercely flung by Sekhet,
Lay low upon the ground,
Till a thick wall of liegemen
Encompassed him around.
His clients from the battle
Bare him some little space,
And gently rubb'd his wounded knee
And scanned his pallid face

* * * *

(The rest of this scene and most of the remainder of
the battle are blotted out. I hadn't time to put in any
of my own.

G. A. B.)

XIII.

* * * *

Meanwhile in the centre,
Great deals of arms were wrought,
Where Cupid ran on cunning foot,
And where the Hill-lord fought.
But Cupid lo! Outrunning
The fleetest of the hosts,
Sped to where beyond the press
He spied the Great Twin Posts:
He crossed the line

[he scored a try? G. A. B.]

And ... then

* * * fly

(bother these blots, G. A. B.)

XX.

Then tenfold from the watchers
The shouts and din arose,
Like the roar of the raucous signal
When the dinner-hour bull blows
(!!! G. A. B.)
Now backward and now forward,
Rocked furious the fray,
When sudden came the last shrill call,
That marked the close of play.

[G. A. B. This is unworthy of the poet: I
emend to:

"When sudden from the midmost host
The clarion called for peace."

[Ed. It wasn't a clarion, and "peace" does NOT
rhyme with "fray."]

XXI.

Then cried the king Mensura,
"Ho, henchmen lade the board,
"With tankards and with viands rare
"From out thy toothsome hoard:
"For never, I ween, shall warriors,
"Who have fought a noble fight,
"All thirsty and a hungering,
"Depart without a bite.

“So let the war-worn clansmen
“Of banner green or red,
“Sip my steaming cup of peace,
“And friendly break my bread.”
So at Mensura’s bidding,
Was straight a feast arrayed
And thither limped the men of war,
And thirst and hunger stay’d.
When so, they put forth from them
The lust of meat and drink (!!! Homer)
Though ne’er from food or foemen,

Did any ever shrink,
Before them many a king and lord
Held speech, and many a cheer
Was raised for all those men of heart
To whom brave war is dear.

* * * * *

The Ed. Won’t let me put any more in. Most of them
then went home to bed. G. A. B.

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