

THE MAN WITH NO BOTTOM

Boris Johnson might see himself as a 'great man', but is an empty vessel without values says former Tory MP Harold Elletson

Imagine for a moment, my friends, that you and I are the subject of this great panegyric. We are none other than our hero, Alexander Boris de Pfeffel Johnson, lately of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, now of Downing Street in the City of Westminster.

Let us cast aside doubt, suspend our disbelief and let our minds wander, free of care, down the pleasant pathways of conjecture to whatever meadows of idle contemplation may take our fancy.

Here we are in the mind of our great leader in a place of watermelon smiles and grinning picaninnies. All is as it should be. The pygmy chieftains, having feasted on missionaries, are now cannibalising each other and merrily playing with shrunken heads. It is a land of deep fecundity where the women are 'large-breasted' and the enormous bananas, dangling from the trees and stirring our subconscious with their phallic impertinence, are all unassailably curvaceous.

POISON TOADS

This, my friends, is the land in which our hero, the World King himself, strides from glade to glade, towering over the forest canopy like a colossus. It is a land made for great deeds to be done by a Great Hero, perhaps the greatest the world has ever known: yes, gentle reader, a hero to slay giant poison-toads, blow back the fiery dragon's breath by the sheer force of his will, save countless damsels and, in the furnace of his raging libido and the crucible of their unquenchable desire, father innumerable bastards.

It is a land of towering mountains, dark valleys and roaring cataracts. Our Hero, as you can tell, is a romantic and he has claimed this place as his own but he is haunted by uncertainty. On the banks of the river, where the sunlight flickers in the placid water, he catches a glimpse of his own reflection.

And then, perhaps as so often in the past, he sees not Our Hero, not the flaxen-haired, chivalric knight of his imagination but the squat, scowling Saracen who haunts his darkest dread. He sees neither the thrusting jaw, nor the heroic pose for the sculptor, but the trembling, timid schoolboy, who stands alone and afraid, his secrets all uncovered.

Here he is, with watermelon tears, slope-headed, abandoned and alien. Here is "Johnnie Turk." Here is Boris Kemal. Here is Something of the East. Here is the Ottoman. Here is Our Delight-ful Little Friend. Here is where he doesn't like it up 'im.

For, like so many who call up the spirit of nationalism, who use it to cloak their own moral vacuity, he is unsure of himself. He is what he himself professes to despise. He is the Turk in power because of hatred and fear of the Turk, 75 million of them coming to a street near you. Get out and vote to stop

them. Don't let Dave let them all come and ruin Our green and pleasant land. All unsaid, or only said by dear Nigel, but never contradicted by our Great Hero. And the Facebook ads rolled on and on. They still roll on into the broad, sunlit uplands of fake news where Our Hero loves to run naked through the long grass.

So here we are, dear friends. Here we are in the mind of our great leader. And it's a dirty, depressing swamp of a place. It's not what you thought. It's not fun. It's not heroic. It's not even got the chill thrill of romanticism in politics. It's just lonely, insecure, anxious ambition. It's disgusting, really.

Its walls are dripping with sweat and fear.

Let's get out of here. Let's go somewhere and think about how we got here.

It's a sunny day. Let's go up the Thames to Windsor. Let's visit the College of Our Lady Mary at Eton beside Windsor.

Allow me to be your guide. Ah, but who am I? And what do I know of this place and these Great Ones?

Let me introduce myself. I was sent here shortly before Moggy and Dave and our Great Hero.

I, little lad from Lancashire, torn from the bosom of my cosy, coastal primary school, divorced from my friends and sent into this gilded prison system, I too stood in black, looking at the altar in the vaulted chapel, praying for Home.

And I listened to Them. I heard them talk of History. I saw them in their winged collars and embroidered waistcoats.

I heard about Great Men and How They Changed the Course of History.

But I heard the Irony too. I learned that History is fickle. She is no-one's mistress. She is never mastered, nor possessed.

And politics always ends in tears. Or political careers do, anyway.

What matters, my friends, my dear, sweet friends, is Lord Hailsham's bottom. Yes, the bottom of the late, great, Eton inmate, Lord Chancellor Hailsham.

And Our Great Hero, in all his time among the Great Ones and at the feet of the finest teachers in the land at the College of Our Lady Mary at Eton beside Windsor and afterwards at the University of Oxford, never heard tell of Lord Hailsham's bottom. Or, if he did, he never took note of it. And that is the great pity of it all.

I had meant to give you classical references, to tell you that Our Great Hero was like the child emperor Eligabulus or that, surrounded by a fawning chorus of Daily Telegraph commentators, he reminds me eerily of Peter Ustinov as Nero in 'Quo Vadis,' with his courtiers calling him 'Divinity' and telling him that his execrable singing as Rome burns is divine.

But I cannot get past Lord Hailsham's bottom. We are confronted, you and I, inescapably, by this bottom.

And I have to tell you that it is the most important thing of all.

The greatest standing rebuke to Johnson and all he represents, all he amounts to, is this bottom.

BANANA STORIES

Shortly before Boris Johnson went to Brussels to make up stories about bananas, a novel, a “fast-moving political thriller,” was published about a British journalist who arrives in Brussels to dig up the dirt and becomes involved in all sorts of adventures. The parallels are now obvious enough for a new edition to be published of this great work, which is entitled ‘The Man with No Face’ but there, my friends, the similarities cease, for Our Hero has a face. The problem is that he has no bottom.

He is The Man with No Bottom.

And, believe it or not, gentle reader, a man with no bottom is much more frightening than a man with no face.

This, my friends, Lord Hailsham knew. He realised that ‘bottom’ is what really defines a politician. If you have ‘bottom,’ you have values, a sense of purpose; a measured, weighted view of life. You have commitment. You have fundamental beliefs. You share interests with the people you represent. You are not playing a game. You are anchored.

The law and religious faith were at the core of Lord Hailsham’s bottom. Indeed, Shirley Williams remarked, in a beautiful speech she made on his death, that “sometimes he held a kind of dialogue with the Almighty and it was not clear whether or not they were speaking as equals.”

In the past, the Great Ones in the Tory Party were like Lord Hailsham. They knew why they were in politics, what they were there to do and who they were doing it for. The same was true of Healey or Callaghan, Grimond or Ashdown. Or, whether you like it or not, Mrs Thatcher.

They all had bottom.

Boris wants to be the World King. He is playing the game. He has been taught the ‘great man’ theory of history. This is how he sees himself and what he wants to become.

He has employed Dominic Cummings, who is cleverer than him and, like Lenin, a believer in the practice of Bismarckian ‘Realpolitik.’ Cummings, he supposes, will help him to succeed in his Heroic Tasks, solving the riddle of the Irish border, slaying the Eurocrats and liberating Britannia. Then, at last, he will be, if not World King, at least the Great Man and no longer the lonely little boy, unsure of his heritage.

Yet, there is a problem. Cummings will grow bored with his empty vessel and is probably already making notes about his time at the court of the King Clown, so that, like Procopius, whose ‘Secret History’ told the truth about the Byzantine Emperor Justinian and his depraved wife Theodora, he can reveal all when the time is right.

And there is an even bigger problem, the one his great grandfather, Ali Kemal, faced. He was not nationalist enough for the nationalists and so the mob,

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with the connivance of General Nureddin Pasha, hanged him from a tree.

What is the fate of the World King, the Man with No Bottom? The answer to this riddle, my friends, is wrapped in the question. For what is a World King, if not a King of Kings?

‘And on the pedestal, these words appear: “My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings. Look on my works, ye mighty and despair...”’

His fate, our fate unless we stop him, is told in Shelley’s

poem that he, I, Dave, Moggy and Lord Hailsham probably all learnt by heart at the College of Our Lady Mary at Eton beside Windsor.

“Nothing beside remains. Round the decay of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare, the lone and level sands stretch far away...”

Harold Elletson was Conservative MP for Blackpool North 1987-92 and joined the Liberal Democrats in 2002. Like Boris Johnson, he attended Eton

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