

Gothic, Aldous Huxley

GOTHIC

SHARP spires pierce upwards, and the clouds are full of tumbling bells. Reckless, breakneck, head over heels down an airy spiral of stairs run the bells. "Upon Paul's steeple stands a tree."

Up again and then once more to the bottom, two steps at a time. "As full of apples as can be."

Up again and down again: centuries of climbing have not worn the crystal smoothness of the degrees.

Along the bellying clouds the little boys of London Town come running, running as best they may, seeing that at every step they sink ankle-deep through the woolly surface into the black heart of thunder beneath.

The apples on the trees are swaying in the wind, rocking to the clamour of bells. The leaves are of bright green copper, and rattle together with a scaly sound. At the roots of the tree sit four gargoyles playing a little serious game with dice. The hunch-backed ape has won from the manticore that crooked French crown with a hole in it which the manticore got from the friar with the strawberry nose; he had it in turn as an alms from the grave knight who lies with crossed legs down there, through the clouds and the dizzy mist of bell-ringing, where the great church is a hollow ship, full of bright candles, and stable in the midst of dark tempestuous seas.

The end