

foundation of cullerne had subscribed in older and richer days. yet these were but the children of a later birth. round about them stood elder brethren, for cullerne minster was still left in possession of its seventeenth century music books. a famous set they were, a hundred or more bound in their old black polished calf, with a great gold medallion, and tenor: decani, or contra tenor: cantoris, basso, or sopra, stamped in the middle of every cover. and inside was parchment with red ruled margins, and on the parchment were inscribed services and verse anthems and full anthems, all in engrossing hand and the most uncompromising of black ink. therein was a generous table of contents mr batten and mr gibbons, mr mundy and mr tomkins, doctor bull and doctor giles, all neatly filed and paged; and mr bird would incite singers long since turned to churchyard mould to bring forth the ye timbrell, ye pleasant harp and ye violl, and reinsist with six parts, and a red capital letter, ye pleasant harp and ye violl. it was a great place for dust, the organ loft dust that fell, and dust that rose; dust of wormy wood, dust of crumbling leather, dust of tattered mothly curtains that were dropping to pieces, dust of primæval green baize; but mr sharnall had breathed the dust for forty years, and felt more at home in that place than anywhere else. if it was crusoes island, he was crusoe, monarch of all he surveyed. here, you can take this key, he said one day to westray; it unlocks the staircase door; but either tell me when to expect you, or make a noise as you come up the steps. i dont like being startled. be sure you push the door to after you; it fastens itself. i am always particular about keeping the door locked, otherwise one character. you also have to consider that the doorkeeper seems to be friendly by nature, he isnt always just an official. he makes a joke right at the beginning, in that he invites the man to enter at the same time as maintaining the ban on his entering, and then he doesnt send him away but gives him, as it says in the text, a stool to sit on and lets him stay by the side of the door. the patience with which he puts up with the mans requests through all these years, the little questioning sessions, accepting the gifts, his politeness when he puts up with the man cursing his fate even though it was the doorkeeper who caused that fate all these things seem to want to arouse our sympathy. not every doorkeeper would have behaved in the same way. and finally, he lets the man beckon him and he bends deep down to him so that he can put his last question. theres no more than some slight impatience the doorkeeper knows everythings come to its end shown in the words, youre insatiable. there are many commentators who go even further in explaining it in this way and think the words, youre insatiable are an expression of friendly admiration, albeit with some condescension. however you look at it the figure of the doorkeeper comes out differently from how you mite think. you know the story better than i do and youre known it for longer, said they were silent for a while. and then said, so you think the man was not cheated, do you dont get me wrong, said the priest, im just pointing out the different opinions about it. you shouldnt pay too much attention to peoples opinions. the text cannot be altered, and the various opinions are often no more than an expression of despair over it. theres even one opinion which says its the doorkeeper whos been cheated. that does seem to take things too far, said this i had frequently quitted it full of deep contempt, for among the imprisoned christians, there were too often lazy vagabonds, who had loudly confessed the saviour only to be fed by the gifts of the brethren; there i had seen accursed criminals, who hoped by a martyrs death to win back the redemption that they had forfeited; there i had heard the woeful cries of the faint hearted, who feared death as much as they feared treason to the most high. there were things to be seen there that might harrow the soul, but also examples of the sublimest greatness. men have i seen there, aye, and women, who went to their death in calm and silent bliss, and whose end was, indeed, noble more noble than that of the much lauded codrus or decius mus. among all the prisoners there was neither man nor woman who was more calmly self possessed, more devoutly resigned, than magdalen. the words, there is more joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth than over ninety and nine that need no repentance, strengthened her greatly, and she repented yea and verily, she did. and for my part, god is my witness that not an impulse as from man to woman drew me to her, and yet i could not leave her, and i passed