

**LEWIS CARROLL AND HIS INTERPRETERS**

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# UNIVERSITY *of* DETROIT

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THE UNIVERSITY OF DETROIT

LEWIS CARROLL AND HIS INTERPRETERS

A THESIS

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## PREFACE

How did it happen that the Reverend Charles Dodgson, thirty years of age, lecturer on geometry at Christ Church, Oxford, hitherto remarkable chiefly for his precision, on a single July afternoon, while rowing up the Isis with a brother don and three little girls, parthenogenetically gave birth to one of the most famous stories of all time?

asks Florence Becker Lennon.<sup>1</sup> Yes, how did it happen that in the Victorian Age a reserved, formal college don surprised and delighted both adult and childish hearts with the nonsensical caprices of a little girl named Alice? This story of Alice was quite out of keeping with the times. In the nineteenth century, children's literature was devoted mostly to teaching dismal and fearsome morals. Little people were reading such moral treatises as "Useful Lessons for Little Misses and Masters", and "Paul Pennylove's Poetical Paraphrase of the Pence Table", and in the realm of verse they were compelled to gain inspiration from such as this:

When up the ladder I would go  
(How wrong it was I now well know)  
Who cried, but held it fast below?  
MY SISTER

1. Victoria Through the Looking Glass, p. 3.

Once too I threw my top too far,  
It touched thy cheek, and left a scar:  
Who tried to hide it from Mamma?

MY SISTER

Or children were compelled to learn awesome lessons like, "Oh, dear Mamma, if I had done as you bade me I should not have had all this pain," or, "But I cannot call her back; and when I stand by her grave, and whenever I think of her manifold kindness, the memory of that reproachful look she gave me will bite like a serpent and sting like an adder."

Now suddenly a new kind of story, called Alice in Wonderland, appears. It has no moral, but is brim full of fun, a real childish boy and girl fun. And this new kind of story is a success, a great success. Why? Probably the answer to this question lies in the author of the story, Lewis Carroll. The author was a man who delighted in doing things backward and even lived his life backward. Some writers say he never was a real little boy until he had become a grown man. Perhaps after he had become a grown man and began to be a little boy in heart he knew what real little children would want. Perhaps there was another reason why he succeeded in writing such a successful children's story. Let us study this Lewis Carroll,

examine his literary works, and find what others think of him. We ought to come to some conclusion about how a lecturer on geometry could produce some of the most famous stories of all time.



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CHAPTER I  
EARLY YEARS

Lewis Carroll was christened Charles Lutwidge Dodgson in the parish church of Daresbury, England, on January 27, 1832. He had come from a long line of literary parsons. His own father was curate in this village of Daresbury. Probably his most illustrious ancestor was his great-grandfather, the Reverend Christopher Dodgson. This English clergyman is noted for the letters he wrote describing the hardships of a rural parson. He was rewarded for his hardships when King George III bestowed upon him the See of Elphin.

Our Lewis Carroll was the oldest of eleven children, most of them girls. This abundance of sisters probably influenced Charles in his later desire for the companionship of girls, especially little girls.

The first eleven years of Charles' life were probably uneventful, as is the case in small towns. Nothing extraordinary happened in these years to indicate that Charles had a future in literature. However, in these early years we can see the first characteristics of the famous Lewis Carroll. Young Charles made special pets of caterpillars, snails, and

other queer insects. Most young boys are intrigued by these small creatures, but Charles was not content with the usual practices of keeping large beetles in a box, or carrying caterpillars about in his pockets. He endowed his insect friends with quaint personalities and tried to teach them to perform tricks. This may account for the frequent appearance of such passages as the following in the "Alice" books.

She [Alice] stretched herself up on tiptoe, and peeped over the edge of the mushroom, and her eyes immediately met those of a large blue caterpillar, that was sitting on the top with its arms folded quietly smoking a long hookah, and taking not the smallest notice of her or of anything else.<sup>1</sup>

Here is a caterpillar with a personality, a definite "caterpillarish" personality, with all his seriousness, placidity, and nonchalance. The caterpillar has such a personality that we feel compelled to call him "him" instead of "it".

The ingenuity of Lewis Carroll was manifested in the games he invented as a child. One of these was a toy railroad with "stations" built at various sections of their gardens. He made a rude train out of a wheel-barrow,

1. Lewis Carroll, Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, p. 58.

a barrel, and a small truck, and was able to convey his passengers comfortably from station to station, exacting fare at each trip.

Charles' later love for the theater could have been foreseen in his marionettes and toy theater. He made cardboard figures, mounted them on wood, and controlled them by means of wires. He also would dress in a wig and gown and amaze his friends with a great many "magic tricks".

So much for Charles Dodgson's life as a little boy. From this much we can see that those later gifts which marked Lewis Carroll were beginning to appear in the boy, Charles Dodgson.

Charles' first formal education began in the year 1844, when he was eleven years old. He was sent nine miles away to Richmond School. This was a private school run by a Mr. Tate. Here Charles had to learn how to defend himself from school bullies, and he gained the reputation of a champion of the weak and one who could use his fists in defense of a righteous cause. He wrote home to his sisters a rather pathetic letter telling of the tricks the boys at school played on him at first. However the tricks seemed to have done him no harm and probably proved

to be of much value in toughening him for later years at Rugby.

Education in that era was still primarily linguistic, and the languages were classic. This type of education was easy for Charles, for he had a natural facility for thinking in words. One of the letters his headmaster, Mr. Tate, wrote home is preserved.

He possesses, along with other excellent and natural endowments, a very uncommon share of genius. Gentle and cheerful in his intercourse with others, playful and ready in conversation, he is capable of acquirements and knowledge far beyond his years, while his reason is so clear and so jealous of error that he will not rest satisfied without a most exact solution of whatever appears to him obscure .... You may fairly anticipate for him a bright career.<sup>2</sup>

At Richmond, Charles excelled in mathematics and Latin, and began to develop a love for writing. He often contributed to the school magazine. One special story of his recorded was "The Unknown One". This title perhaps suggests the rather fantastic and unreal quality of his later works.

Charles stayed at Richmond for three years, after which he entered Rugby, one of the great public schools of

2. Quoted by Stuart Dodgson Collingwood, Life and Letters of Lewis Carroll, pp. 24-5. Hereafter this book will be referred to as "Collingwood".

the time. Here he began editing regularly a magazine called "The Rectory Umbrella". It contained a serial story of the most thrilling interest, entitled, "The Walking Stick of Destiny", some poetry, a few humorous essays, and several caricatures of pictures in the Vernon Gallery. The caricatures with Dodgson's explanations and footnotes are good examples of his humorous vein. Three famous paintings caricaturized by him are Sir Joshua Reynolds' "Age of Innocence", J. Herring's "The Scanty Meal", and Sir Wilkie's "The First Ear-ring". For "Age of Innocence" Charles draws a large hippopotamus contentedly sitting under a tree. In explanation of this picture, he says, "'The Age of Innocence', by Sir J. Reynolds, representing a young Hippopotamus seated under a shady tree, presents to the contemplative mind a charming union of youth and innocence."

For "The Scanty Meal" Charles depicts a family seated around the dinner table. Their conversation goes something like this:

The servant announces, "Please'm, Cook says there's only a billionth of an ounce of bread left, and must keep that for next week!"

The lady of the house answers, "Go and order a trillionth more at the baker's."

The father who is serving asks, "Which did you say, love? a thousandth or a millionth of an atom?"

One of the children complains, "Ma! ought Sophy to have another molecule? I saw the last she had distinctly."

There are two guests at the table. The lady guest is peering at an empty fork and remarking, "I must really get stronger glasses, this is the second nonillionth I've not seen."

The gentleman, holding up an empty glass, says, "I'm afraid there's more than half a particle of beer here. If so, I daren't drink it."

Dodgson's explanation of this caricature is as follows:

We have been unusually successful in our second engraving from the Vernon Gallery. The picture is intended, as our readers will perceive, to illustrate the evils of homoeopathy (the science of taking medicine in infinitely small doses.) This idea is well carried out through the whole picture. The thin old lady at the head of the table is in the painter's best style; we almost fancy we can trace in the eye of the other lady a lurking suspicion that the glasses are not really in fault, and that the old gentleman has helped her to nothing instead of a nonillionth, (1/00000000000000000000000000000000). Her companion has evidently got an empty glass in his hand, the two children in front are

admirably managed, and there is a sly smile on the footman's face, as if he thoroughly enjoyed either the bad news he is bringing or the wrath of his mistress. The carpet is executed with that elaborate care for which Mr. Herring is so famed, and the picture on the whole is one of his best.<sup>3</sup>

The caricature, "The First Ear-ring", shows a boy having his ear pulled, and a bedraggled cat, covered with ink, in the background.

In explanation, Dodgson writes,

The scene from which this excellent picture is painted is taken from a passage in the autobiography (a man's history of his own life) of the celebrated Sir William Smith (the author of "The Bandy-legged Butterfly") of his life when a schoolboy; we transcribe the passage:

'One day Bill Tomkins (afterwards President of the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) and I were left alone in the house, the old doctor being out; after playing a number of pranks Bill laid me a bet of sixpence that I wouldn't pour a bottle of ink over the doctor's cat. I did it, but at that moment old Muggles came home, and caught me by the ear as I attempted to run away. My sensations at the moment I shall never forget; on that occasion I received my first ear-ring (or a pulling by the ear). The only remark Bill made to me, as he paid me the money afterwards was, 'I say, didn't you just howl jolly?'

The engraving is an excellent copy of the picture.<sup>4</sup>

3. Collingwood, pp. 33-35.

4. For reproductions of these caricatures, see Collingwood, pp. 33 ff.



In works like these we can see more of the later Lewis Carroll's technique for giving personalities to animals and applying double meanings to certain expressions.

Also in his days at Rugby some of the other characteristics of the future Lewis Carroll began to appear. Young Charles Dodgson had very little liking for the company of boys, did not participate in athletics or rougher games, and was a model of good behavior. He gained top honors in mathematics, Latin, and divinity. Mr. Mayor, his mathematics instructor, wrote to his father in 1848 that he had never had a more promising boy at his age, since he had come to Rugby. Mr. Tait, Rugby's headmaster, wrote to Mr. Dodgson:

My dear Sir--

I must not allow your son to leave school without expressing to you the very high opinion I entertain of him. I fully coincide in Mr. Cotton's estimate both of his abilities and upright conduct. His mathematical knowledge is great for his age, and I doubt not he will do himself credit in classics. As I believe I mentioned to you before, his examinations for the Divinity prize was one of the most creditable exhibitions I have ever seen.

During the whole time of his being in my house, his conduct has been excellent.

Believe me to be, my dear Sir,

Yours very faithfully,

A. C. Tait 5

5. Quoted in Lennon, Victoria Through the Looking-Glass, p. 36. Hereafter this book will be referred to as "Lennon".

## CHAPTER II

### OXFORD AND ORDINATION

On May 23, 1850, Charles Dodgson matriculated at Christ Church, Oxford. He was just approaching his nineteenth birthday. On January 24, 1851, he took up residence there. At first young Dodgson lived in a section of the college called the Peckwater Quadrangle, but later when he became a "don", as the instructors were usually called, he moved into the Great Quadrangle. Here he remained for the rest of his life, becoming firmly imbedded in Oxford life.

Dodgson, during the first year, won a Boulton scholarship; the next year he took First Class honors in mathematics, and a second in classical studies, and on Christmas Eve, 1852, he was made a Student of Christ Church College. To be a Student of Christ Church was a great honor, and Charles' election to the Studentship greatly pleased his father. Archdeacon Dodgson wrote to his son:

My Dearest Charles--

The feelings of thankfulness and delight with which I have read your letter just received, I must leave to your conception; for they are, I assure you, beyond my expression; and your affectionate heart will derive no small addition of joy from thinking of the joy which you have occasioned to me, and to

all the circle of your home.<sup>1</sup>

A Student remained unmarried and eventually took Holy Orders. So Dodgson settled down to the serious business of preparing for his ordination. In his student days Charles showed a keen interest in children. His interest is well described in the following:

.... once his career was settled, Charles Lutwidge Dodgson dropped from his young shoulders-- he was only twenty--the mantle of over seriousness, and looked about for young companionship. He found what he needed in the households of the masters and tutors, whose homes looked out upon the Great Quadrangle. Here on sunny days the nurses brought the children for an airing; chubby little boys in long trousers and "roundabouts"; dainty little girls, with corkscrew ringlets and long pantalets and muslin "frocks" and poke bonnets, in the depths of which were hidden the rosebud faces. These were the favorites of the young Student, whose slim figure in cap and gown was often the center of an animated group of tiny girls; one on his lap, one perhaps on his shoulder, several at his knee, while he told them stories of the animals he knew, and drew funny little pictures, on stray bits of paper. The "roundabouts" went to the wall: they were only boys! .... alone with these chosen friends of his, his natural shyness left him, the sensitive mouth took smiling curves, the deep blue eyes were full of laughter, and he spun story after story for them in his quaint way.<sup>2</sup>

1. Collingwood, p. 53.

2. Belle Moses, Lewis Carroll, In Wonderland and At Home, p. 49. Hereafter this book will be referred to as "Moses".

On December 18, 1854, Charles Dodgson graduated, taking the degree of Bachelor of Arts, and the following year he was made a "Master of the House." This meant that under the roof of Christ Church College he had all the privileges of a Master of Arts, although he would not become one until two years later.

Now the young Student was free of college restraint and had more time for literary pursuits. However, he could not spend as much time as he perhaps would wish on these literary pursuits. He had to apply himself to something more practical. After graduation Charles took many private students and often lectured seven hours a day on philosophy and mathematics. He soon gained the reputation of being at one time a fun-making, fun-loving, story-telling nonsense rhymer; and at another time he would be a grave, precise "don", discoursing on rectangles, polygons, parallel lines, and unknown quantities.

Along the literary line the new Bachelor of Arts edited a magazine called Misch Masch, the title of which is the German equivalent of the English word "hodge-podge." Also he had been editor of the college paper, College Rhymes, and had written stories for the Oxonian Advertiser and the Whitby Gazette.

Then too, he wrote a series of "Studies from the English Poets", which he illustrated himself. One good drawing was of the following line of one of Keats' poems,

She did so,--but 'tis doubtful how or whence.

The picture represents a very fat lady perched atop a post marked Dangerous, in midwater. In her chubby hand is a basket with the long neck of a goose hanging out.

It was when Charles Dodgson became a regular contributor of poetry to a periodical called "The Train" that he decided to adopt a pen name. After much analyzing, translating, and transposing of letters, he decided upon Lewis Carroll. With the adoption of this new name, serious Charles Dodgson retired to the lecture halls and mathematics textbooks. Lewis Carroll made his appearance to the world and stayed there. I think from now on in this thesis Dodgson must be called Lewis Carroll, because his Carroll personality was so very prominent; it far outshone the serious, reserved Charles Dodgson, Oxford don. Lewis Carroll even appeared in the lecture halls and the textbooks despite Dodgson's trying to prevent it. However, we will discuss this matter in later chapters. We must get on with the biography of the author of Alice in Wonderland.

One of the early poems by Lewis Carroll printed in

The Train was "My Fancy":

I painted her a gushing thing,  
 With years perhaps a score.  
 I little thought to find they were  
 At least a dozen more.  
 My fancy gave her eyes of blue,  
 A curly auburn head.  
 I came to find the blue--a green,  
 The auburn turned to red.

She boxed my ears this morning,  
 They tingled very much;  
 I own that I could wish her  
 A somewhat lighter touch.  
 And if you were to ask me how  
 Her charms might be improved,  
 I would not have them added to,  
 But just a few removed!

She has the bear's ethereal grace,  
 The bland hyena's laugh,  
 The footsteps of the elephant,  
 The neck of the giraffe;  
 I love her still, believe me,  
 Tho' my heart its passion hides--  
 She is all my fancy painted her,  
 But, oh--how much besides!

This is an early work of Lewis Carroll, but it has much of the nonsense that flows, so easily, in poetry from the pen of the older Lewis Carroll.

Soon after college, in the year 1856, Lewis Carroll began a real acquaintanceship with Alfred Tennyson and John Ruskin. Also it must be mentioned that in these early years after graduation Lewis Carroll began to really develop his hobby, photography. He took pictures of such celebri-

ties as Tennyson, the Rossetti family, Ellen and Kate Terry, John Ruskin, George Macdonald, Charlotte M. Yonge, and Sir John Millais.

In 1858 Lewis Carroll had to make his big decision, whether or not he should take Holy Orders. It is true that the final step of every Christ Church Student was ordination as a clergyman. However, Carroll had some qualms about becoming a preacher. In the first place, he had an impediment in his speech that caused him a great deal of embarrassment. He stammered somewhat, especially in giving public speeches. Another qualm came from the rigid laws Christ Church set down for its preachers. Among these laws was one that said its clergymen could not attend places of amusement. Carroll loved the theater and the opera. He could not see how he would be doing much good to his fellow man by staying away from these places. After a battle with his conscience, Carroll was ordained, but he never became a regular preaching clergyman, nor did he relinquish his habit of attending the theater.

### CHAPTER III

#### CLERIC AND TEACHER

Now with ordination behind him, Lewis Carroll steps into the type of life he is going to live until the end of his years. Nothing outstanding, except the success and publication of his works, marked Carroll's life. His entire life is neatly summed up in Lennon's Victoria Through the Looking-Glass:

He traveled once to the continent, including Russia, with Canon Liddon, later Dean of St. Paul's; he took numerous vacation trips to his sisters' home in Guildford and to his aunt's home in Hastings; to Eastbourne, the Isle of Wight, the Lake Country, and Wales. He also rowed five miles up the Isis with the Liddell girls, told them the story of "Alice", and published his books.<sup>1</sup>

In order better to understand Lewis Carroll in this biography we shall observe him a little more minutely as a clergyman, a college professor, a traveler, a writer, a lover of children, a lover of the drama, and, as he has been often called, a great eccentric.

Stuart Dodgson Collingwood, Carroll's nephew, described him as an essentially religious man, and this description seems to be a true one. Lewis Carroll's religion and faith were manifest in many of his actions

1. P. 44.



throughout his life. He often preached at evening services for the College servants and students, and more often he delivered sermons to groups of children. Collingwood quotes from an article from The Guardian:

He knew exactly what he wished to say and completely forgot his audience in his anxiety to explain his point clearly. He thought of the subject only, and the words came of themselves. Looking straight in front of him he saw, as it were, his argument mapped out in the form of a diagram, and he set to work to prove it point by point, under its separate heads, and then summed up the whole.<sup>2</sup>

Some of these sermons to children, which he unified in an allegory, "Victor and Arnion", he intended to publish. Collingwood says that in these sermons Carroll put all his heart into his work and spoke "with such deep feeling that at times he was almost unable to control his emotion as he told of the love and compassion of the Good Shepherd."<sup>3</sup>

He is remembered especially for a talk he preached in the University Church on Eternal Punishment. He did not believe in eternal punishment, as he was under the impression it contravened the love of God.

He did not like to be complimented on his sermons,

2. Op. cit., p. 76.

3. Ibid., p. 78.

but he wanted to know if they had made any good impressions.

About this he wrote one of his sisters:

Thank-you for telling me that fact about my sermon. I have once or twice had such information volunteered; and it is a great comfort--and a kind of thing that is really good for one to know. It is not good to be told (and I never wish to be told), "Your sermon was so beautiful." We shall not be concerned to know, in the Great Day, whether we have preached beautiful sermons, but whether they were preached with the one object of serving God.<sup>4</sup>

Probably important to mention at this point is the fact that (although he did not wish it) Lewis Carroll often entered the lecture halls and logic and mathematics books under the guise of Rev. Charles L. Dodgson. His syllogisms in his logic textbook, Symbolic Logic, are an example of how entertaining he could make his potentially dry subjects:

A prudent man shuns hyaenas;  
No banker is imprudent.  
    No banker fails to shun hyaenas.

No ducks waltz;  
No officers ever decline to waltz;  
All my poultry are ducks,  
    My poultry are not officers.

Of his mathematical writings, Bertrand Russell, an

4. Collingwood, p. 77.

expert in the field of mathematics, said,

His works were just what you would expect; comparatively good at producing puzzles and very ingenious and rather pleasant, but not important. For instance, he produced a book of formal logic which is much pleasanter than most because, instead of saying things like "all men are mortal", which is very dull, it says things like "most hungry crocodiles are disagreeable", which is amusing, and that makes the subject more agreeable. Then he wrote a book of geometry which is pleasant in a way, but not important. None of his work was important.<sup>5</sup>

From July 12 to September 14, 1867, Carroll toured the continent with the Dean of Christ Church, Dr. Liddon. Both Lewis Carroll's and Dr. Liddon's diaries give a good picture of their impressions and adventures on the trip.<sup>6</sup> Their route lay through Germany and Russia chiefly. In Germany they stopped at Cologne, Danzig, Berlin, and Konigsberg. In Russia the important places they visited were St. Petersburg, Kronstadt, and Moscow. The diary of Lewis Carroll shows how he feasted on the beauties of the

5. Stated in one of a series of unrehearsed conversations broadcast weekly by the Columbia Broadcasting System. These broadcasts ran from November 16, 1941, through May 31, 1942. For a complete copy of this particular program about Lewis Carroll, see Mark Van Doren, New Invitation to Learning, pp. 206-220.

6. For a detailed account of their travels, see Lennon, pp. 140-151.

cathedrals, monasteries, and art galleries of these countries. Carroll's tremendous love for beauty can be seen in a statement of Dr. Liddon's.

Dodgson was overcome by the beauty of Cologne Cathedral. I found him leaning against the rails of the Choir, and sobbing like a child. When the verger came to show us over the chapels, he got out of the way. He said that he could not bear the harsh voice of the man in the presence of so much beauty.<sup>7</sup>

7. Quoted by Lennon, p. 144.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE WRITINGS OF LEWIS CARROLL

Now we can discuss that important phase of the biography of Lewis Carroll--his career as a writer. In this chapter we shall confine ourselves to biography and historical facts concerning Carroll's literary works. The interpretations and literary value of them will be considered in later chapters. Up to now we have mentioned Lewis Carroll's writings at Rugby and those completed during his college days. His next and most renowned work was Alice in Wonderland. The story of Alice in Wonderland's beginning is told over and over again in the various treatises concerning Lewis Carroll. There are a few stories existing as to the origin of Alice in Wonderland that are quite different from the most popular one.<sup>1</sup> However, at this

1. Walter De la Mare (Eighteen Eighties, pp. 242-247) lists these versions of the way Alice in Wonderland came to be published:

- a. Carroll, Canon Duckworth, and three Liddell girls went on a rowing trip. Duckworth persuaded him to have the story published after Carroll had told it in the boat.
- b. Alice Liddell claims she told him to have it published.
- c. Dr. Paget said he started it at a mathematical Reading Party at Whitby when Carroll was only twenty-two.
- d. He wrote "Wonderland" to amuse a sick little relative.
- e. George McDonald persuaded Carroll to publish the story.
- f. The wild applause of six-year-old Grenville McDonald persuaded him to publish it.

point, we will tell of the story that is accepted by most biographers of Lewis Carroll.

Among Lewis Carroll's many child friends at Oxford, probably those he saw the most were Dean Liddell's three young daughters. They were named, respectively, Lorina, Alice, and Edith, but Carroll liked to refer to them as Prima, Secunda, and Tertia. Of the three, from all appearances, it seems that Carroll was partial to Alice, or Secunda. It was she to whom he wrote the most letters and whom he photographed again and again in various costumes.

On July 4, 1862, a hot summer afternoon, Lewis Carroll, his friend Canon Duckworth, and the three Liddell girls went for a row up the river Isis. Carroll, as was his custom when in the company of children, was entertaining the girls with stories, most of them nonsensical. He would talk with plenty of animation at one time, and at another time he would let his voice die away, pretending he had fallen asleep. When it seemed that sleep had overtaken him, the little girls would excitedly awaken him and demand more stories. Alice always demanded nonsense stories, and with her requests he usually complied. Carroll uses this rowing trip as an introduction to Alice in Wonderland. He tells of it in the rhyme:

All in the golden afternoon  
 Full leisurely we glide;  
 For both our oars, with little skill  
 By little arms are plied.  
 While little hands make vain pretence  
 Our wanderings to guide.

Ah, cruel Three! In such an hour,  
 Beneath such dreamy weather,  
 To beg a tale of breath too weak  
 To stir the tiniest feather!  
 Yet what can one poor voice avail  
 Against three tongues together?

Imperious Prima flashes forth  
 Her edict "to begin it"--  
 In gentler tone Secunda hopes  
 "There will be nonsense in it"--  
 While Tertia interrupts the tale  
 Not more than once a minute.

Anon to sudden silence won,  
 In fancy they pursue  
 The dream-child moving through a land  
 Of wonders wild and new,  
 In friendly chat with bird or beast--  
 And half believe it true.

And ever as the story drained  
 The wells of fancy dry,  
 And faintly strove the weary one  
 To put the subject by,  
 "The rest next time"--"It is next time!"  
 The happy voices cry.

Thus grew the tale of Wonderland;  
 Thus slowly one by one,  
 Its quaint events were hammered out--  
 And now the tale is done,  
 And home we steer, a merry crew,  
 Beneath the setting sun.

Alice! a childish story take,  
 And with a gentle hand  
 Lay it where Childhood's dreams are twined  
 In Memory's mystic band.  
 Like pilgrim's withered wreath of flowers  
 Plucked in a far-off land.

Getting back to the story of the origin of Alice in Wonderland--the sun became so hot the five boaters sought refuge from its rays in the shade of a hay stack in a large meadow. Hardly giving the mathematics professor time to settle down and rest his back against the hay, the little girls began demanding, "A story--please."

So Lewis Carroll began.

Alice was beginning to get very tired of sitting by her sister on the bank, and of having nothing to do: .... when suddenly a white rabbit with pink eyes ran close by her.

There was nothing so very remarkable in that; nor did Alice think it so very much out of the way to hear the rabbit say to itself, "Oh dear! Oh dear! I shall be too late!" ....

And burning with curiosity, she ran across the field after it, and was just in time to see it pop down a large rabbit-hole under the hedge.

In another moment down went Alice after it, never considering how in the world she was to get out again.

Lewis Carroll did not tell the entire story at one sitting. He spread it out, telling them a chapter now, another chapter perhaps in his rooms, and another while on some walk he often took with the girls. After the whole of Alice's adventures had been told, Alice asked her Mr.



Dodgson to please write it down for her. Always obliging, he did write it down, and he added thirty-seven of his own illustrations. At the bottom of the very last page he pasted a photograph of Alice Liddell, one that he himself had taken. He presented the manuscript to Alice without much intention of ever having it published.

It could be stated here that sixty-six years later, in 1928, when Alice was the widow of Reginald Hargreaves, she sold the manuscript at auction in London for £15,400. The purchaser was an American, Dr. A.S.W. Rosenbach of Philadelphia.

Later, Carroll expanded the story and showed it to his friend, George MacDonald. MacDonald persuaded him to have it published. On June 6, 1864, he wrote his friend Tom Taylor and asked for advice on the title of his story. He listed an array of titles for Taylor to choose from:

Alice's Adventures Under Ground

Alice's Golden House

Alice Among the Elves (or Goblins)

Alice's Hour (Doings, Adventures) in Elf-land  
(Wonderland)

Of all these Taylor chose Alice's Adventures in Wonderland. Then Taylor advised Carroll to seek John Tenniel as his illustrator. Tenniel had previously been associated

with Punch. He was later to become a Knight and a famous cartoonist, but already he was well known as a humorist and as an illustrator. Here began a collaboration which was one of the most durable in literary history. There have been many other attempts to illustrate "Alice", but Tenniel's Alice is the one that has lasted, and it is a Tenniel illustrated edition of Alice in Wonderland that is usually requested in the book stores.

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland appeared early in July, 1865. The edition comprised two thousand copies. Only forty-eight of these were circulated, and these were immediately recalled because both the author and the artist were dissatisfied with the reproductions of the illustrations.

The new edition was published November 14, 1865. Its popularity was enormous. French and German translations were made in 1869. Since 1872 the story has been produced in Italian, Dutch, Russian, Hebrew, Spanish, Swedish, Chinese, Japanese, Irish, Braille, Esperanto, and shorthand.

Two years later Lewis Carroll started Sylvie and Bruno. This he wrote bit by bit, not completing it until 1893. Sylvie and Bruno was popular at first, chiefly because it came from the pen of the author of Alice in Won-

derland. Its popularity soon waned, however. Sylvie and Bruno is a story of two fairy children. Carroll wanted to do justice to the boys whom he neglected so in his previous work, so he created Bruno. However, Bruno is such an insipid, girlish boy, given to discussing points of logic, that the story soon lost its appeal.

In December, 1871, appeared Alice Through the Looking-Glass, which received just as much applause and perhaps even more than Alice in Wonderland.

March 29, 1876, the world became acquainted with Boojums in The Hunting of the Snark. This poem has attained almost as much fame as the "Alice" stories.

Before his death in 1898, Lewis Carroll wrote many mathematical and philosophical treatises, and miscellaneous essays. Three of the more noteworthy essays were: 1) "The New Method of Evaluation as Applied to  $\pi$ ". This was not, as it might have seemed to be, a serious dissertation on a given aspect of mathematics, but a highly impertinent and equally interesting discourse on one of the matters that were then roiling the university, the question of how large a stipend it was fitting to bestow on Professor Benjamin Jowett, one of the most famous masters of Oxford. 2) "The Dynamics of A Particle", which was a geometrical treatment of the contest between Gathorne Hardy and Glad-

stone for the University seat in the House of Commons.

3) "The New Belfry of Christ Church, Oxford", which was a criticism of an architectural monstrosity in the form of a bell built for Christ Church.

## CHAPTER V

### LEWIS CARROLL AND THE CHILDREN

No biography of Lewis Carroll would be complete without one picture of "Lewis Carroll and the children."

Children were a very important part of Carroll's life. In fact, often it seems they were his life. Those who knew him intimately say he was natural and unrestrained only when in the company of children. In the company of adults he was shy, stand-offish, and reserved. In delivering sermons to adults, he stammered and was generally uncomfortable during the ordeal, for it was really an "ordeal" for him. In delivering sermons to children he completely forgot himself and all his stammering.

The children, especially the little daughters of the Oxford professor, often found their way to Mr. Dodgson's suite of rooms in the Great Quadrangle. Here they would find an abundance of puzzles, games, and mechanical toys to intrigue them. Often when they came Lewis Carroll would photograph them. He loved to have certain little girls dress in various costumes to have their pictures taken. Probably Alice Liddell was photographed the most.

Whenever Lewis Carroll would go to the seashore for a holiday it was the children's company he would seek playing on the sands. When he would travel by rail he would find some little boys and girls on the train, and would entertain them throughout the trip with stories galore, funny drawings, and a miniature scissors with which he could work wonders.

Every little girl was Lewis Carroll's friend, but there were a special few who were his special companions at different phases of his life and theirs. A little girl would be his very good friend until she became old enough for him to tip his hat to. Then he said it was time for the friendship to cease.

Probably those best known as good friends of Lewis Carroll were the Liddell girls. The three sisters were very much at home in his rooms. They would storm his place, pull him over to his sofa, crowd around, and clamor for stories and drawings. Unfortunately they did not save any of these drawings or of the many letters which he wrote to them. They did not consider them important enough, at first, to save; and when he began to be really famous they were getting too old for him to send any more drawings or letters.

One of the few little girl friends with whom Lewis Carroll remained friendly all his life was Gertrude Chataway. His Hunting of the Snark was dedicated to her. He also made a double acrostic on her name in the beginning verses of the poem. He had a cottage next door to that of her family at Sandown, a summer resort. She wrote how,

he would come on to his balcony, which joined ours, sniffing the sea-air with his head thrown back, and would walk right down the steps on to the beach with his chin in air, drinking in the fresh breezes as if he could never have enough.<sup>1</sup>

Lewis Carroll and Gertrude Chataway used to sit for hours on the steps of their house which led to the beach, and he would delight the child with his wonderful stories, often illustrating them as he went along. Gertrude said that the great charm in these stories lay in the fact that some chance remark of hers would wind him up, and he would spread it out into a delicious, nonsensical tale.

Two of Lewis Carroll's prime favorites in earlier days were Ellen Terry, the well-known English actress, and her sister Kate. Lewis Carroll first saw Ellen Terry in 1856 when she took the child's part, Mamillius, in "The Winter's Tale". He immediately fell in love with the lit-

1. Quoted by Lennon, p. 198.

tle actress and it did not take long for him to become acquainted with her. Many a day at the seaside and many a frolic in his own rooms he had with the Terry sisters. There was much talk at that time about the harm in allowing children to act at night. Lewis Carroll believed there was no harm at all in the children's acting at night. He contended that acting comes naturally to children and that child actors take a great delight in their work. He reasoned that all children like to pretend, acting is just pretending, and pretending is the finest kind of play, not work.

Ellen Terry, also, was one of the few who proved to be Carroll's life long friend. He was one of her most ardent admirers in her adult life as an actress. He took many a little girl to see her perform in later years, and he thrilled that same little girl by an introduction to the famous Miss Terry, back stage, after the performance.

The girl who received as much attention, or even more, than Alice Liddell from Lewis Carroll was Isa Bowman. Isa came into his life in later years when all his other little friends were grown and married. She played "Alice" in the operetta "Alice in Wonderland". The acting version of "Alice" was first published in 1880. Eight years later it was revived. Carroll probably saw more of Isa than any of his child friends. Each year she would spend a few weeks



with him at Oxford or at Eastbourne, a summer resort.

Florence Becker Lennon, in her recently published Victoria Through the Looking-Glass, describes a typical day, the routine of which never varied, with Isa and Lewis Carroll.

Her bedroom door faced his at the head of the staircase; they used to get up very early indeed; but if Isa was up first, she waited in the hall until a newspaper under his door signalled that she might come in. Breakfast was followed by a chapter from the Bible, which Isa had to repeat in her own words to make sure she would remember it.

"Now then, Isa dearest," he would say, "tell me a story, and mind you begin with 'once upon a time.' A story which doesn't begin with 'once upon a time' can't possibly be a good story .... It's most important."

After the story they went to swim. Isa was learning to swim at the Devonshire Park baths, but her daily lesson depended upon her willingness to endure the daily visit to the dentist. He had great ideas upon the importance of a regular and almost daily trip to the dentist. He himself went to a dentist as he would have gone to a hair dresser's, and he insisted that all the little girls he knew should go too. He does seem to have retained his teeth to the end.

From the dentist's they returned for lunch, Carroll never having more than a glass of sherry and a biscuit. Lunch was followed by backgammon, a game of which he was passionately fond, and of which he could never have enough. They then took the long walk to Beachy Head. Even in his last days a walk of eighteen miles was not uncommon, and he records one of twenty-seven miles in inclement weather. Isa was bored and perhaps tired with the long walk, so he invented games and stories to amuse her.<sup>2</sup>

On these "walks" Isa reports that her Uncle Charles, although he did not like flowers, enjoyed beautiful scenery. She said,

Just as the sun was setting, and a cool breeze played around us, he would take off his hat and let the wind play with his hair, and he would look out to sea. Once I saw tears in his eyes, and when we turned to go, he gripped my hand much tighter than usual.<sup>3</sup>

Lewis Carroll took such a personal interest in Isa Bowman that he engaged the best possible teachers for her-- a swimming instructor, a Swedish singer, a Dutch language teacher, and, through his influence, Miss Ellen Terry gave her elocution lessons. He himself taught her geography by jig-saw puzzles, and sent her lessons in arithmetic, Euclid, and the Bible. When her mother took her to America he arranged a schedule of lessons supposed to last three hours every day, and mailed these to her.

His interest in her acting is shown in a letter he wrote Isa Bowman when she played the Duke of York in "Richard III"--

My Lord Duke--

.... Would your Highness like me to go on calling you the Duke of York, or shall I say 'My own darling Isa'? ....

Now I'm going to find fault with my pet about her acting. What's the good of an old uncle like me except to find fault?

3. Lennon, p. 201.

You do the meeting with the Prince of Wales very nicely and lovingly; and in teasing your uncle for his dagger and sword, you are very sweet and playful; and-- 'but that's not finding fault!' Isa says to herself. Isn't it? Well, I'll try again. Didn't I hear you say 'In weightier things you'll say a beggar nay,' leaning on the word 'beggar?' If so, it was a mistake. My rule for knowing which word to lean on is the word that tells you something new, something that is different from what you expected . . . .

One more thing. (What an impertinent old uncle! Always finding fault!) You're not so natural, when acting the Duke, as you were when you acted Alice. You seemed to me not to forget yourself enough. It was not so much a real prince talking to his elder brother and uncle; it was Isa Bowman talking to people she didn't care much about, for an audience to listen to--I don't mean it was that all through, but sometimes you were artificial. Now don't be jealous of Miss Hatton, when I say she was sweetly natural . . . .

My sweet pet, I hope you won't be offended with me for saying what I fancy might make your acting better?

Your loving Uncle  
Charles

x for Nellie  
x for Maggie  
x for Emsie

x for Isa 4

Nellie, Maggie, and Emsie were Isa's sisters.

Nobody knows how many girl friends Lewis Carroll had, but at any one time there would be a reigning favorite. Her reign would last until she reached about the age of fifteen; then she would be dropped incontinently.

Before we pass from our view of Lewis Carroll's life with children, a word or two must be said about the letters he wrote to his many child friends. They were mostly filled with nonsense, and especially appealing to children.

A typical example is one he wrote to Beatrice Hatch, the daughter of Reverend E. Hatch. It seems "Birdie", as Beatrice was called, had three dolls, named Emily, Mabel, and Alice. Birdie went on a visit away from home, taking Emily with her and leaving Mabel and Alice behind. So

Professor Dodgson wrote:

My Dear Birdie:

I met her just outside Tom Gate, walking very stiffly and I think she was trying to find her way to my rooms. So I said, 'Why have you come here without Birdie?' So she said, 'Birdie's gone! and Emily's gone! and Mabel isn't kind to me!' And two little waxy tears came running down her cheeks.

Why how stupid of me! I've never told who it was all the time! It was your own doll. I was very glad to see her, and took her to my room, and gave her some Vesta matches to eat, and a cup of nice melted wax to drink, for the poor little thing was very hungry and thirsty after her long walk. So I said, 'Come and sit by the fire and let's have a comfortable chat?' 'Oh, no! no!' she said, 'I'd much rather not; you know I do melt so very easily!' And she made me take her quite to the other side of the room, where it was very cold; and then she sat on my knee and fanned herself with a penwiper, because she said she was afraid the end of her nose was beginning to melt.

'You've no idea how careful we have to be--we dolls,' she said. 'Why, there was a sister of mine--would you believe it?--she went up to the fire to warm her hands and one of her hands dropped right off! There now!' 'Of course it dropped right off!' I said, 'because it was the right hand.' 'And how do you know it was the right hand, Mister Carroll?' the doll said. So I said, 'I think it must have been the right hand because the other hand was left.'

The doll said, 'I shan't laugh. It's a very bad joke. Why even a common wooden doll could make a better joke than that. And besides they've made my mouth so stiff and hard that I can't laugh if I try ever so much.' 'Don't be cross about it,' I said, 'but tell me this: I'm going to give Birdie and the other children one photograph each, whichever they choose; which do you think Birdie will choose?' 'I don't know,' said the doll; 'you'd better ask her!' So I took her home in a hansom cab . . . .

Your affectionate friend,  
Lewis Carroll<sup>5</sup>

We will end this section with a poem in honor of a doll, Matilda Jane, which Lewis Carroll dedicated to one of his small cousins.

Matilda Jane, you never look  
At any toy or picture book;  
I show you pretty things in vain,  
You must be blind, Matilda Jane!

I ask you riddles, tell you tales,  
But all our conversation fails;  
You never answer me again,  
I fear you're dumb, Matilda Jane!

Matilda, darling, when I call,  
You never seem to hear at all;  
I shout with all my might and main,  
But you're so deaf, Matilda Jane!

Matilda Jane, you needn't mind,  
For though you're deaf and dumb and blind,  
There's some one loves you, it is plain,  
And that is me, Matilda Jane!<sup>6</sup>

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5. Quoted by Moses, p. 233.

6. Ibid., p. 240.

Now we come to the end of the section of this article devoted to the life of Lewis Carroll. We saw him as an imaginative child, an industrious scholar, a sincere clergyman, an interesting college professor, and a lover of children, especially girl children.

Not to be disregarded is the fact that he is sometimes called "the great eccentric". He had many little eccentricities, of which we will mention a few here. He hated publicity, and letters of congratulations to C. L. Dodgson about "Alice". As C. L. Dodgson, the mathematics professor, he refused to be known as the author of Alice in Wonderland. He received and wrote almost volumes of letters. When he received a letter he would summarize the contents and then file it. He tried to answer all the letters in his file, even though it took five years before he got to some of them. He had a strong dislike for babies, dogs, and most little boys. If, when attending the theater, there was something said which was in any way irreverent, Carroll would get up and leave. He criticized Gilbert and Sullivan because one of their songs had the word "damn" in it. This probably offended him because he had a strong feeling for the precise, exact meaning of one word as distinguished from every other word.

Lewis Carroll built mousetraps of his own design with sliding doors and "humane" compartments for drowning. He kept boxes of notepaper in five different sizes for the letters he wrote. When he had company he would seat each visitor and then immediately draw a diagram of the room, showing where each person was seated. Ten minutes before tea he would walk up and down the room, swinging the tea pot back and forth. When he went on a journey every article in his trunk had to be packed in a separate piece of tissue paper. He never wore an overcoat, despite the coldest weather, and in all seasons wore a pair of gray and black gloves and a tall hat.

This was Lewis Carroll, the author of Alice in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass, on the surface. We will now try to peer beneath the surface. First we will discuss how his various works have been interpreted, and how he himself has been interpreted.

## CHAPTER VI

### EDUCATIONIST INTERPRETATIONS

Writers from all walks of life have pronounced views of what they think Lewis Carroll meant in his various works, and what they think of the works themselves. F.B.R. Hellems<sup>1</sup> comes out with the statement that Lewis Carroll was trying to teach children, and in trying to teach them he wanted to appeal to their playful and imaginative natures. Hellems says that by appealing to the play element in children in "The Lobster Quadrille", Lewis Carroll is teaching children a two-fold lesson. One lesson, in talking of whittings, soles, and eels, imparts valuable information as to marine life; and the other is a moral lesson about the "other shore". In the story Alice in Wonderland the Gryphon and the Mock Turtle sing and dance "The Lobster Quadrille", which goes like this:

"Will you walk a little faster?" said a whiting to  
a snail,

"There's a porpoise close behind us, and he's  
treading on my tail.

See how eagerly the lobsters and the turtles all  
advance!

They are waiting on the shingle--will you come and  
join the dance?

1. "Alice and Education," Atlantic Monthly CXI  
(February, 1913), 257-60. Hereafter referred to as "Hellems".



Will you, won't you, will you, won't you, will  
 you join the dance?  
 Will you, won't you, will you, won't you, won't  
 you join the dance?

"You can really have no notion how delightful it  
 will be

When they take us up and throw us, with the lob-  
 sters out to sea!"

But the snail replied "Too far, too far!" and  
 gave a look askance--

Said he thanked the whiting kindly, but he would  
 not join the dance.

Would not, could not, would not, could not, would  
 not join the dance.

Would not, could not, would not, could not, could  
 not join the dance.

"What matters it how far we go?" his scaly friend  
 replied,

"There is another shore, you know, upon the other  
 side.

The further off from England the nearer is to  
 France--

Then turn not pale, beloved snail, but come and  
 join the dance.

Will you, won't you, will you, won't you, will  
 you join the dance?

Will you, won't you, will you, won't you, won't  
 you join the dance?"

After the dance the Mock Turtle, Gryphon, and Alice  
 have a conversation about boots and shoes under the sea be-  
 ing made of soles and eels, and being kept clean with whit-  
ing. According to Hellems,<sup>2</sup> the play element is appealed to  
 because of the easy rhythm of the poem. The lessons are  
 taught because the poem has enough novelty in it to excite  
 curiosity and thereby insures mental growth.

Hellems says that Carroll wants to teach nature study in his stories of flowers, animals, and insects. He gives the flowers in "The Garden of Live Flowers" very distinct personalities. The tiger-lily is curt and domineering, the violet hardly dares show her face, and the daisy makes remarks on the order that the tree can bark and say bough-wough. In this way Carroll is supposed to teach that flowers have personalities and that they are not merely uniform entities of angelic temperament.

The chapter, "Looking-Glass Insects", is supposed to have two lessons in nature study. In this section of the story Alice meets a gnat balancing himself on a twig just above her head. The gnat shows Alice various insects in the forest like the Rocking-horse-fly, who lives on sap and sawdust; the Snap-dragon-fly, whose body is made of plum-pudding, its wings of holly leaves, and whose head is a raisin burning in brandy. The last insect the gnat points out to Alice is the Bread-and-butter fly whose wings are thin slices of bread-and-butter, its body a crust, and its head a lump of sugar.

About the bread-and-butter fly, Alice asked,

'And what does it live on?'

'Weak tea with cream in it.'

A new difficulty came into Alice's head.

'Supposing it couldn't find any?' she suggested.

'Then it would die, of course.'

'But that must happen very often,' Alice remarked thoughtfully.

'It always happens,' said the gnat.

This conversation, Hellems says, was written by Carroll to teach, "Nature, that is the universal creator, is the universal destroyer." <sup>3</sup>

Later the gnat begins to cry because of a joke he has made. He sighs and sighs until he has sighed himself away. This passage is supposed to show that all living things feel grief and joy.

Besides this view, that Lewis Carroll was trying to teach children morals and nature in a novel manner, Hellems<sup>4</sup> says that he was also making reflections on higher education. Hellems maintains that the Caucus Race can be compared with the "Elective System" used by colleges, with the distribution of diplomas at the end. We can recall that in the Caucus Race all the contestants were placed along the circular race course, here and there.

There was no 'One, two, three, and away,' but they began running when they liked, and left off when they liked, so it was not easy to know when the race was over. However, when they had been running half-an-hour or so, and were quite dry again, the Dodo suddenly called out, "The

3. P. 259.

4. Pp. 260-264.

race is over!" and they all crowded around it, panting, and asking, "But who has won?"

This question the Dodo could not answer without a great deal of thought, and it sat for a long time with one finger pressed upon its forehead, (the position in which you usually see Shakespeare, in the pictures of him), while the rest waited in silence. At last the Dodo said, "Everybody has won, and all must have prizes."

Hellems says Lewis Carroll is displaying his approval of original research in the chapter, "It's My Own Invention". This is the part when Alice meets the White Knight and he shows her all his inventions. A typical example is the knight's lunch box.

.... and he had a queer-shaped little deal box fastened across his shoulders, upside down, and with the lid hanging open. Alice looked at it with great curiosity.

"I see you're admiring my little box," the knight said in a friendly tone. "It's my own invention--to keep clothes and sandwiches in. You see, I carry it upside-down so that the rain can't get in."

Hellems says that Lewis Carroll was making a third reflection on higher education in the first part of the conversation between the Mock Turtle, the Gryphon, and Alice. He states that the Mock Turtle shows the strong humanistic tendency of the classics, while the Gryphon intimates a belief that such studies lead to 'progress backwards'. In Lewis' story the Mock Turtle sobs for the days when he was a real turtle and went to school in the sea. He used to call his old school-master Tortoise because as he said,

"We called him Tortoise because he taught us." In this school the Mock Turtle studied Reeling, Writhing, and the three different branches of Arithmetic--Ambition, Distraction, Uglification, and Derision. He also learned Mystery--ancient and modern, with seaography; then Drawling, Stretching, and Fainting in Coils. The Gryphon went to the Classical master, where he studied Laughing and Grief. Hellems probably conceived the idea that the Gryphon intimated the study of the classics was a step backward because he said they studied ten hours the first day, nine hours the next day, eight the next, and so on until on the eleventh day they had a holiday.<sup>5</sup>

So if we were to interpret Lewis Carroll's Alice books as Hellem does we would in our childhood learn from them lessons in morals and nature study; and in our adult life we could discover the views of Carroll on the elective system in colleges, the value of original research, and the value of teaching classics in the schools.

We have another educator's interpretation of Alice in Wonderland and her sequel, Through the Looking-Glass, which is quite different from that of Hellems. This is the interpretation of Harry Morgan Ayres, which he set forth in

his booklet, Carroll's Alice, written in 1932, the one-hundredth anniversary of the birth of Lewis Carroll. Ayres says that Carroll is presenting a satire on education from the point of view of the child. Ayres sets out to prove his point by first showing how Lewis Carroll makes Alice very poorly prepared to be thrust out into the world.

.... we are going to get close to see what Carroll at least believed a child's mental experience to be--let us take note of Alice, a child who is anxious to please, thrust forth from a nursery into a world with which she is obviously ill prepared to cope. On all sides she is betrayed. The geography that unrolls and dissolves before her is not the geography of the schoolroom. Her sums will not come right. The verses she has learned insist on saying themselves in exasperatingly erratic fashion. Space and time lose their homelike dependability--she finds herself moving downwards or backwards, time moving backwards or standing still in an eternity of tea, relative magnitudes suddenly and disconcertingly altering; now she is larger and now she is smaller than she has hitherto regarded herself to be with respect to the familiar surroundings of the nursery. Sometimes it almost seems like a dream, the way things shift about and babies merge into pigs and White Queens become sheep, but it is a highly intellectualized dream: its events are not merely entertainingly successive, they are disciplined; and demand, and in some measure bestow, discipline. For poor little Alice does not do very well when she tries to work it out for herself. When she has the golden key in her hand, the door is too small for her to squeeze through; when she is sufficiently diminished to enter, she has left the key out of reach on the glass table; then when ('curiouser and curiouser') she is tall

again, she waxes sentimental about her distantly retreating feet, is diverted by the appearance of the White Rabbit, speculates on her own identity, and then grows small again without ever having thought of the key. Clearly Alice has much to learn, and what she has been taught in her schoolroom is of precious little use to her--English history, for one thing--'the driest thing I know.' But after she has learned something of the world, come to know the Caterpillar and the Duchess and the Cheshire Cat, and, at the Mad Tea Party, learned to ask questions and speak up a bit for herself, she lays hold of the key and without difficulty enters the alluring little garden of further adventures.<sup>6</sup>

Secondly, Ayres goes on to show that Alice finds herself socially unfit for this new world into which she is thrust. Almost every word she utters gives offense. She talks with affection of Dinah, her cat, and commits her first social faux pas. Some of the animals to whom she speaks move away in agitation. The others order her about and shout sarcastic and impatient retorts at her throughout the book. Alice is confused and abashed by them,

till a matured, a discerning, a self-reliant Alice finds herself growing up and denounces them all for a pack of cards, or, herself a crowned queen, takes in hand the Red Queen, no less formidable a personage than that, and gives her a good shaking--<sup>7</sup>

6. Harry Morgan Ayres, Carroll's Alice, pp. 21-23.

7. Ibid., p. 27.

Next, Ayres interprets Carroll as satirizing the confusion language brings to children.

To him, at any rate, the child is encompassed by a din of speech, afloat on a roaring sea of language, lapped as in an element of it which takes to itself fantastic, puzzling, and even dangerously misleading shapes.<sup>8</sup>

In proof of this contention Professor Ayres gives several examples of conversation between Alice and the various creatures she met in Wonderland.

"Then you should say what you mean," the March Hare went on.

"I do," Alice hastily replied, "at least--at least I mean what I say--that's the same thing, you know."

"Not the same thing a bit," said the Hatter. "Why you might just as well say that 'I see what I eat' is the same thing as 'I eat what I see'!"

"Take some more tea," the March Hare said to Alice very earnestly.

"I've had nothing yet," Alice replied, in an offended tone, "so I can't take more."

"You mean you can't take less," said the Hatter: "it's very easy to take more than nothing."

"There's nothing like eating hay when you're faint," he remarked to her, as he munched away.

"I should think throwing cold water over you would be better," Alice suggested:--"or some salvolatile."

"I did not say there was nothing better," the King replied. "I said there was nothing like it." Which Alice did not venture to deny.

8. Carroll's Alice, p. 30.



"Who did you pass on the road?" the King went on, holding his hand out to the Messenger for some more hay.

"Nobody," said the Messenger.

"Quite right," said the King; "this young lady saw him too. So of course Nobody walks slower than you."

"I do my best," the Messenger said in a sullen tone. "I'm sure nobody walks much faster than I do!"

"He can't do that," said the King, "or else he'd have been here first."

In other words, according to Ayres, Lewis Carroll is saying that the educational systems must make children feel competent in the realm of language. They have to become lords of words and their meanings, and not their servants.

A fourth matter that Carroll is supposed to be satirizing is that the adults, the child's teachers, are, to the child, indifferent, worried, busy, incompetent, meddlesome, and distinctly disagreeable people. Carroll meant this to be a lesson to all grown-ups. They say such cruel remarks as:

"Your hair wants cutting," said the Hatter. He had been looking at Alice for some time with great curiosity and this was his first speech.

"You don't know much," said the Duchess, "and that's a fact."

"Look up, speak nicely, and don't twiddle your fingers all the time." (from the Red Queen)

Last of all, Ayres shows that Lewis Carroll is satirizing different characters found around a university cam-

pus. Tweedledum and Tweedledee are the eternal schoolboys, and Alice, after making their acquaintance, comes to the conclusion about them, "Selfish things!"

The old university graduates are disguised as the Gryphon and the Mock Turtle. These two graduates remember very well the games they used to play, but they have only the faintest recollections of their studies--Laughing and Grief.

In the field of education we can see that these two writers had distinctly different ideas as to what Lewis Carroll meant in his nonsense tales. Next we consider how Alice in Wonderland fared in the realm of philosophy and psychology.

## CHAPTER VII

### PHILOSOPHICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL INTERPRETATIONS

Lewis Carroll with all his animal creatures in Wonderland apparently does much philosophizing. To some it is nothing but pure, unmitigated nonsense, to others it makes real sense. Mr. Russell, in the radio conversation we mentioned before, says that Dodgson's jokes are oftentimes cloaks for philosophical, even metaphysical points.<sup>1</sup>

Hellems, in the article, "Alice and Education", finds definite symbols for philosophy in Carroll's works. He says that the Duchess symbolizes the metaphysical schools. This is indicated by her dignified vocabulary and stately, copious presentation, as well as by her contempt for lower mathematics, and for mere human affections. Next he says the Cheshire Cat represents the optimistic development of pragmatism. 1) The Cheshire Cat's grin remains after his body fades away. This demonstrates a philosophy that will have all well with the world, regardless of disharmonies and defects in the system of things. 2) The Cheshire Cat's conversation with Alice shows the essentials of pragmatism, viz. a) philosophy must be connected with

1. See footnote 5, p. 18.

actual needs; b) it must deal with actual conditions, and c) it must appreciate human limitations.<sup>2</sup>

Among the psychiatrists and psychoanalysts Lewis Carroll and his works did not fare so well. They consider the stories as morbid and horrible, and the works as eccentric and influenced by psychoses. Katherine Anne Porter made this statement about Alice in Wonderland:

It was a horror story to me; it frightened me so much .... It was a terrible mixture of suffering and cruelty and rudeness and false logic and traps for the innocent--in fact, awful. The difference between this and other fairy stories is this takes place in everyday life .... familiar things were dreadfully out of place and they frightened me.<sup>3</sup>

Dr. Paul Schilder, an eminent psychiatrist, said:

This is a world of cruelty, destruction, and annihilation .... One may be afraid that without the help of the adult the child may remain bewildered in it and may not find his way back to the world in which he can appreciate love relations, space, time and words.<sup>4</sup>

In regard to Lewis himself, Dr. Schilder states:

.... it ought to be evident that his nonsense, like so much nonsense and so much wit, was a device by means of which his intelligence protested

2. Hellems, loc. cit.

3. Quoted by Mark Van Doren, New Invitation to Learning, pp. 206-220.

4. Quoted by Joseph Wood Krutch, "Psychoanalyzing Alice," Nation CXLIV (Jan. 30, 1937), 129-130.

against various kinds of cant which his priggish and conventional temperament would not permit him to flout openly.<sup>5</sup>

For example he is inferring that queens are absurd puppets, and is protesting against the pompous procedure of the courts.

Dr. Schilder also says that "The Walrus and the Carpenter" shows the cynical conception of human nature in Carroll. This is the bit of the verse where the Walrus and the Carpenter play such a mean trick on the Oysters. They entice the little oysters away from their beds, promising them "a pleasant walk, a pleasant talk."

The eldest Oyster looked at him,  
But never a word he said:  
The eldest Oyster winked his eye,  
And shook his heavy head--  
Meaning to say he did not choose  
To leave the oyster-bed.

But four young Oysters hurried up,  
All eager for the treat:  
Their coats were brushed, their faces washed,  
Their shoes were clean and neat--  
And this was odd, because, you know,  
They hadn't any feet.

Four other oysters followed them,  
And yet another four;  
And thick and fast they came at last,  
And more, and more, and more--  
All hopping through the frothy waves,  
And scrambling to the shore.

5. Krutch, "Psychoanalyzing Alice," loc cit.

...

"The time has come," the Walrus said,  
 "To talk of many things:  
 Of shoes--and ships--and sealing-wax--  
 Of cabbages--and kings--  
 And why the sea is boiling hot--  
 And whether pigs have wings."

...

"A loaf of bread," the Walrus said,  
 "Is what we chiefly need;  
 Pepper and vinegar besides  
 Are very good indeed--  
 Now if you're ready, Oysters dear,  
 We can begin to feed."

"But not on us!" the Oysters cried,  
 Turning a little blue,  
 "After such kindness, that would be  
 A dismal thing to do!"  
 "The night is fine," the Walrus said.  
 "Do you admire the view?"

...

"O Oysters," said the Carpenter,  
 "You've had a pleasant run!  
 Shall we be trotting home again?"  
 But answer came there none--  
 And this was scarcely odd, because  
 They'd eaten every one.

In regard to Lewis Carroll's fondness for little girls, various analyses have been given. From Dorothy Van Doren we have:

It would not take a psychiatrist to perceive that there was something a little queer about it all. Mr. Dodgson's desire was to be neat, methodical, decorous, and safe. Above all, safe. From a world . . . . that demanded momentous decisions about living and perhaps loving, he

escaped to the chaste and mannerly affections of demure little girls.<sup>6</sup>

On this same subject of Lewis Carroll and the little girls, Florence Lennon probably goes into the most detail.<sup>7</sup> The following will be taken from her discussion. Carroll preferred little girls because his emotional clock had been jammed. He loved little girls but he had no intention of marrying them. When his child friends reached adolescence, put away childish things, and had more mature interests, Carroll dropped them abruptly. Carroll dropped them at the dangerous age after profusely kissing them and embracing them in childhood. So many of his letters revolve about hundreds and thousands of kisses. He wrote one letter to Gertrude Chataway in which the doctor prescribed rest from kissing and Carroll complains, "But what am I to do? because, you see, I owe her a hundred and eighty-two more!" Another fantastic letter he wrote her was on the weight of kisses she had sent him and the excess postage he had paid on them.

Miss Lennon states the theory that "children's play prepares for adult activity, but adult play may be either

6. Dorothy Van Doren, "Method or Madness," Nation CXXXVIII (April 4, 1934), 395.

7. Pp. 186-218.

temporary recoil for another spring, or an index of permanent arrest at a childish level. He never reached the stage of adult love. It seems likely that he once made an effort to grow up and marry, but perhaps he was psychologically doomed to fail. It has been suggested that he was in love with Alice Liddell, even though he was twenty years her senior. The family of Alice say that her mother disliked Lewis Carroll and made her burn his letters to her. Alice Liddell says she burned the letters because she considered them unimportant at the time. Perhaps because he was disappointed in his love for Alice, he never married her, but she became his "dream child".

.... he was so much in love with his dream Alice-- not necessarily the real Alice at all--that he cultivated her attributes more and more, and partially became the real Alice in Wonderland.

Miss Lennon goes on to say that Lewis Carroll wrote Alice in Wonderland during the period of his greatest flowering, and at this time his art and probably his life maintained a balance. If he had married then, he might have retained enough unity to ward off the disintegration which occurred toward the end of his life. This disintegration is especially evident in his book Sylvie and



Bruno.

Another theory of Miss Lennon's, along another channel, however, is that Lewis Carroll was employing an escape mechanism in Through the Looking-Glass. Charles Dodgson wanted to revolt against his parents, but his sense of loyalty blocked him. His father had really been the head of his household, and his mere lifted eyebrow was enough to exact immediate obedience from any member of the family. He is supposed to have exercised tyranny over his son Charles to influence him to accept ordination. Charles had a conflict in his nature, one side of him wanting to revolt from the tyranny of his father, the other side too loyal to do anything but submit to his father's demands. He displays this conflict in his nature by having Through the Looking-Glass a chess game, the characters being divided into Reds and Whites. The Reds are fierce and irritable, the Whites are gentle and sheepish. To his father, the Red King, Charles submits everything except his sense of humor. He depicts his own self in the poems "Jabberwocky" and "The Hunting of the Snark". The latter does not occur in Through the Looking-Glass, but the two poems are somewhat connected because Carroll says, "The 'Hunting of the Snark' is laid in an island frequented by

the Jubjub and Bandersnatch--no doubt the very island in which the Jabberwock was slain."

In "Jabberwocky", the youth kills the horrible Jabberwock, and with its head goes home and is greeted by the outstretched arms of his father. The reader can better get the tone of "Jabberwocky" by reading it for himself:

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves  
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:  
All mimsy were the borogoves,  
And the mome raths outgrabe.

"Beware the Jabberwock, my son!  
The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!  
Beware the Jubjub bird, and shun  
The frumious Bandersnatch!"

He took his vorpal sword in hand:  
Long time the manxome foe he sought--  
So rested he by the Tumtum tree,  
And stood awhile in thought.

And, as in uffish thought he stood,  
The Jabberwock, with eyes of flame,  
Came whiffling through the tulgey wood,  
And burbled as it came!

One, two! One, two! And through and through  
The vorpal blade went snicker-snack!  
He left it dead, and with its head  
He went galumphing back.

"And hast thou slain the Jabberwock?  
Come to my arms, my beamish boy!  
O frabjous day! Callooh! Callay!"  
He chortled in his joy.

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves  
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:  
All mimsy were the borogoves,  
And the mome raths outgrabe.

In "The Hunting of the Snark" the hero is killed by the Snark who turns out to be a Boojum. Miss Lennon informs us that Carroll is trying to tell us that the youth's feat of conquering the Jabberwocky was a disastrous victory. Applying it to his own life, Carroll is saying that he conquered the temptations of his own desires and accepted ordination for his father's sake. For this slaying he is not welcomed by a beautiful maiden as all heroes should be, but by his father. He ends up with being eaten by the monster after all.

Miss Lennon sees Lewis Carroll as a frustrated, disappointed individual whose emotional clock was stopped at a childish level. However, she does not picture him as being entirely child-like in his make-up. He was an adult who understood thoroughly what went on in the child's mind, for no child could have written Alice in Wonderland. She says that Lewis Carroll has discovered "the rich mine of the subconscious and dream world." This dream world is "more richly ornamented by the mathematical mode of thinking and the left-handed or looking-glass technique."

## CHAPTER VIII

### RELIGIOUS, ECONOMIC, AND LITERARY INTERPRETATIONS

In a previous chapter we have discussed the Reverend Charles Dodgson as a clergyman. Now we can come to the various interpretations of the clergyman and his works in regard to religion. About the only religious interpretation of Alice in Wonderland and Through the Looking-Glass is Shane Leslie's article, "Lewis Carroll and the Oxford Movement".<sup>1</sup> This article is really more of a translation than an interpretation. It is too lengthy and involved to go into at this point, but we can give a few snatches of it. Leslie says that he believes that Lewis Carroll used Alice in Wonderland as symbols for people and events in the Oxford Movement. For example, some of the characters are translated as the following: Tweedledum--High Church; Unicorn--Convocation of the Clergy; White Queen--Dr. Newman; Red Queen--Archbishop Manning; Humpty Dumpty--Verbal Inspiration.

Through the Looking-Glass is supposed to represent supernatural life. Leslie even translates Carroll's

1. London Mercury, 28 (1933), 233-239.

poetry to mean what he desires. Here is an example. He translates the Jabberwocky:

Beware the Papacy, my son  
 The Jaws that Bite, the claws that catch!  
 Beware the Jesuit bird and shun  
 The Benedictine batch!

Lewis Carroll's major works, with the exception of Sylvie and Bruno, contain no evident religious material. As a result we find few religious interpretations of them. In regard to Lewis Carroll, himself, Miss Lennon, whom we have quoted before and who seems to be quite agnostic, says:

Alice is the critical intelligence and the loving heart passing naively through the life of her time, making quiet comments on war, politics, the academic spirit, education, human relations, the arts and sciences--everything except religion. Carroll, like Kingsley and Macdonald, withdrew there. All three were committed to the Church of England; where in other fields their criticism hews to the line, the Rock of Ages stands without a chip. Their incurable gentility and belief in the fatherhood of God kept them from completing the revaluation of all values that Nietzsche advocated, and that the major satirists, from Aristophanes to Shaw, have dared. How much of Carroll's and Kingsley's stammering came from their incomplete revolt against their fathers and their fathers' God?<sup>2</sup>

Miss Lennon also goes into great details of how Lewis

Carroll was tormented by religious doubts and how his life was affected because he could not escape from the "shackles" of his religion.

"The Hunting of the Snark" and the "Jabberwocky" have been translated to have a special meaning in the business world. These translations were made by Dean Wallace B. Donham of the Harvard School of Business Administration.<sup>3</sup> Dean Donham intended in his Dodgsonian mind for the Snark to represent Business, while the Boojum represented general Economic Crisis such as hit the world in 1933. One of these crises also hit England a few years before Carroll wrote "The Hunting of the Snark". The Snark turned out to be a Boojum before which the searchers, when they met him, "softly and suddenly vanished away."

The titles and characters in "The Hunting of the Snark" are translated as follows:

The Snark.....	Business
Bellman.....	Leaders of Business personified
Crew.....	Miscellaneous business men and laborers
Boots.....	Unskilled labor
Makers of Bonnets and Hoods.....	Style manufacturers for retail trade
The Barrister.....	A radical agitator

3. Arthur Ruhl, "Finding of the Snark," Saturday Review of Literature 9 (March 18, 1933), 490-491.

Broker.....	Middleman dealing in commodities
Billiard Maker.....	A speculator
Banker.....	Commercial bankers personified
Beaver.....	A skilled textile worker
Baker.....	A retailer in a luxury trade
Butcher.....	A textile manufacturer
Boojum.....	A Panic
Jubjub.....	Disraeli
Hyaenas.....	Stock-brokers
Bears.....	Bears in the stock market
Judge.....	A judge wholly controlled by business
Jury.....	A jury wholly controlled by business
Bandersnatch.....	Bank of England

The Beaver, according to Donham, might be regarded as a handicraft worker, a fish out of water in industrial England, yet someone to fall back on in time of need. Here is one of the verses about the Beaver:

.... that paced on the deck  
 Or would sit making love in the bow:  
 And had often (the Bellman said) saved  
 him from wreck  
 Though none of the sailors knew how.

Mr. Donham translates many of the stanzas for us. Two of them are given below:

"What's the good of Mercator's North Poles and  
 Equators,  
 Tropic Zones and Meridian Lines?"  
 So the Bellman would cry: and the crew would  
 reply  
 "They are merely conventional signs!"

Translation: What's the good of accounting, statistics, economics, and science?

"For although common Snarks do no manner of harm,  
 Yet I feel it my duty to say  
 Some are Boojums"--The Bellman broke off in alarm  
 For the Baker had fainted away.

Translation: The Baker is a small luxury dealer  
 terrified at the thought of economic depression.<sup>4</sup>

Donham's business interpretation of "Jabberwocky" is quite different from Miss Lennon's psychological and Leslie's religious interpretations. Donham contends that the Jabberwock is intended to represent the Corn Laws. Carroll had personal as well as political reasons for admiring Peel and approved of his fight, against the bitter opposition of Disraeli, for the repeal of the Corn Laws. It is the Queen who, in verses, warns of the political trouble involved, in the lines:

Beware the Jabberwock, my son!  
 The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!  
 Beware the Jubjub bird and shun  
 The frumious Bandersnatch!

Translation: Beware the Corn Law controversy, Disraeli's opposition, and the financial questions bound up with the controversy over the Bank of England.<sup>5</sup>

And when Peel, facing the issue nevertheless, accomplished the repeal of the Corn Laws, the Queen gives him her praise and he exults:

4. As quoted by Ruhl, "Finding of the Snark," pp. 490-1.

5. Ibid.



"And hast thou slain the Jabberwock?  
 Come to my arms, my beamish boy!  
 O Frabjous day! Callooh! Callay!"  
 He chortled in his joy.

Last, but not least, are the views of Lewis Carroll as given by literary men. J. B. Priestley sees Humpty-Dumpty as a solemn literary critic.<sup>6</sup> He is a prophetic figure, and Lewis Carroll in drawing him was satirizing a race of critics that did not then exist. He is a master-stroke of satire in anticipation. Humpty-Dumpty is described as a stuffed figure sitting on a high wall so narrow that Alice wondered how he could keep his balance. He shows a contempt for Alice. All these are very characteristic of modern critics--narrow, stuffed, contemptuous. Humpty-Dumpty and critics also have that characteristic reluctance to come to terms with reality, that love of fixed standards, rigidity and arrested development, and that hatred of change and evolution. The satire reaches its climax when Humpty-Dumpty cries, "Impenetrability! That's what I say!" According to Priestley, the critics are impenetrable with their talk of "planes" and "dimensions", of "static" and "dynamic", of "objective correlative". Other critics discuss Lewis Carroll's works, and all say about the same

6. "Note on Humpty-Dumpty", I For One, pp. 191-199.

thing, that Alice in Wonderland was his best work and Sylvie and Bruno probably his worst. He is a genius in using nonsense and a wonder in manipulating words.

...

These are some of the ways in which human beings have understood Lewis Carroll. Some have regarded his literary works as nothing but nonsense. Others have taken permission from Lewis Carroll to put their own meanings into his stories, for he once said, "Words mean more than we mean to express when we use them: so a whole book ought to mean more than the writer mean. So whatever good meanings are in the book, I'm very glad to accept as the meaning of the book."

In the field of education, Lewis Carroll has been understood as teaching children, and as making sarcastic criticisms against certain systems in the schools of his day. Philosophers have found metaphysical points hidden in his nonsense. Psychologists have had a grand time analyzing Lewis Carroll's personality, and pronouncing him an excellent example of a psycho-neurotic.

Religiously, and in the business world, there have been some very involved translations concerning the Alice books and "The Hunting of the Snark". Among the literati Lewis Carroll has been called sardonic in his inferences and a genius in his use of words.

## CHAPTER IX

### CONCLUSIONS

What of all this? Just what kind of a man was this Lewis Carroll? Was he perfectly sane? Or are modern psychiatrists correct in their analyses of him? Was he subtly trying to teach in his works? Or did he mean nothing but sheer nonsense in his fanciful tales?

As to Lewis Carroll himself, he must have been a very good, and a very lovable personality, or the children would not have loved him as they did. Any woman who writes of her childhood friendship with Lewis Carroll remembers only pleasant things about him. He had a magnetic personality with children, and was very kind to them. He would confer his kindest affections on the most shy and ill-at-ease little girls. If there was something that proved to be embarrassing to a child, he would tell a funny story or smooth things over so that she could forget herself entirely. He understood children, and from the record of his personal life, he was a good example for them to follow.

It is true that, had contemporary psychiatrists flourished in the Victorian Age, Lewis Carroll would have needed

their help. He was eccentric, to say the least. His fondness for the company of little girls indicates something lacking in his development, or else something there that should not be. It is certainly abnormal for a grown man to have children for his favorite companions, to take them to the dentist every day, or to take twenty-seven mile walks daily with a tired child by the hand. His emotional clock may have been jammed as Miss Lennon is prone to believe. However, it seems that this "jamming" came about because he was disappointed in love in his youth. His family keep some parts of his diary secret, and there seems to be nothing much said about his personal life in his late teens and early twenties. Most biographers seem to think there was some shadow hanging over these years. Also, Carroll's poem "My Fancy", given in an earlier part of this thesis, shows a certain bitterness against someone who may have disappointed him. Being a sensitive person, this may have had a life-long effect upon him, so that when little girls began to reach the age of adolescence he was no longer their close friend.

The theory that he was employing an escape mechanism seems in one sense justified. Lewis Carroll stammered and was self-conscious in the presence of adults. Also, he was scrupulous and sensitive. He sought refuge in the company

of children, whom he understood and who had no difficulty in understanding him. He wrote his books to please his child friends, and at the same time to get away from the world that made him uncomfortable.

We cannot call Lewis Carroll mad, but we can call him "different". His various eccentricities could not help but make him so. However, it is somewhat sad that there were not more Lewis Carrolls in the nineteenth century, and we could use a few more now. Lewis Carroll deserves credit for devoting so much time to children, with his kindly understanding and solicitude for them. He also opened the world's eyes somewhat to the fact that children are individuals, not "to be seen and not heard" creatures. He started a flow of children's literature that has dispensed with the theory that in order to be good for children the literature has to teach a dark and fearsome lesson.

As to the various interpretations of Lewis Carroll's works, none of them seems to be truly what Lewis Carroll meant. Also the fact that there are so many conflicting opinions on one article shows that readers merely try to interpret Carroll to suit themselves.

Now the theories that Carroll's stories are cloaks for putting across philosophical points, that Alice in Wonderland is really his way of talking of the Oxford Movement,

and that "The Hunting of the Snark" and "Jabberwocky" refer to business and social conditions, seem entirely out of keeping with the personality of Lewis Carroll.

In the first place, Carroll's life had mostly to do with children and he wrote his stories for children. He was supposed to have invented Alice in Wonderland as he went along, telling it to the three Liddell girls, and the story runs along in that manner also, as if it did not have any detailed plan at first. Alice meets adventure after adventure. One moment she is little, the next moment large; new animals and new places keep arousing Alice's curiosity; babies turn into pigs; croquet mallets into flamingoes and croquet balls into hedgehogs. There is unity, but the reader is unconscious upon first reading that Lewis Carroll is trying to put across a certain philosophy or theory. Lewis Carroll's works seem just plain nonsense for nonsense's sake. He was writing for the children and he tried to keep it on their level. The philosophical, Oxford Movement, and economic depression theories require too much translation and transposition to sound in any way logical. Also, there is nothing in the biographies of Lewis Carroll to indicate that he was especially interested in the religious, philosophical, and social problems of the Victorian Age. He took no part in pleas for social improvement. In fact, he

would try to avoid any occasions where he would be obliged to be face to face with poor conditions of the working class. He may have had the opportunity to talk over business conditions with his colleagues at Oxford, but his biographers all say he mingled with the other professors very little. Also his main interests were children, and that left little time for him to become so interested in economics that he would take the time to invent all those business symbols that Dr. Donham sees in "The Hunting of the Snark".

It is true that there are philosophical points in the Alice books, but they were probably set in unconsciously by Lewis Carroll. He was a logician and a mathematician, and since these sciences were part of him they could not help but seep into his stories. The idea about the Cheshire Cat being a representative of pragmatism sounds like nothing more than a pragmatist trying to read his philosophy into another man's work.

The Oxford Movement theory seems erroneous for the reason mentioned above, that Lewis Carroll was not enough interested in the main issues of the day to write about them. Also, his religion seemed to be a simple one. He never seemed to take the interest to make an investigation of the Oxford Movement. He was satisfied with the Church

of England as it was. The fact that he could not accept the fact of eternal punishment shows he did not do much probing for truth, and he did not seem to go into any deep study about religion. His personal life was spotless. He had deep faith, but his religious practices were imbued with childish simplicity. They were filled with such simplicity that he was not bothered with the investigations and searchings of the Oxford Movement.

In the educational field, F.B.R. Hellems says that Carroll is trying to teach children nature study and morals.<sup>1</sup> These lessons do not appear at all evident in the story. In fact, Alice in Wonderland is noted for its lack of moral teachings. Instead of trying to teach nature study, it seems more likely that Lewis Carroll is using what children already know about insects and flowers to delight them with his nonsense. Children know about dragon-flies and horse-flies, about the bark and boughs of trees, about daisies and violets; and when Carroll twists their names about, and makes puns, and gives the flowers personalities, he is giving the children a sort of intellectual enjoyment that adults experience.

Hellems next says that Lewis Carroll is criticizing

1. See Chapter VI, p. 39.



the elective system in colleges and praising the desires of some students for original research. There is no basis for statements like these. The Caucus Race, which he finds to be critical of the elective system, could be interpreted as standing for any of the senseless doings of human beings. The White Knight, who Hellems says is Carroll's model researcher, could just as easily be a representative of many different kinds of individuals.

Hellems' third statement that Alice's adventure with the Mock Turtle and the Gryphon shows a conflict between the classics and more practical education also seems inaccurate. This chapter is nothing more or less than a fine play with words. It is a chapter of puns, and would delight children because of its comical reference to subjects they study in school--Reeling, Writhing, and the different branches of Arithmetic, Ambition, Distraction, Uglification, and Derision.

Harry Morgan Ayres, in his theory that Carroll is presenting a satire on education from the point of view of the child, is probably the most accurate of any.<sup>2</sup> The characters in this new fairyland treat Alice just as so many adults treat children: She is screamed at, scoffed, ignored,

2. See Chapter VI, pp. 44 ff.

insulted, criticized, and her serious questions of "Why?" receive the unconcerned answer, "Why not?"

Also there is constant reference to our poor use of words, as Ayres pointed out.<sup>3</sup> Carroll probably did see a need for a more thorough training in language and grammar in a child's earlier school years--since he himself was so precise with words.

All in all, however, Alice in Wonderland seems very much as if Lewis Carroll meant nothing else but nonsense. He was writing for children and used all these strange creatures--Mock Turtle and Mad Hatter--and used all these strange words--Laughing and Grief--because he knew they would contribute more to the wonder and hilarity of his story. His whole personality shows that he was more interested in children than in anything else. Putting all these facts together, it seems more than likely that all these translators of Lewis Carroll were putting their own philosophies and ideas into another man's work.

When all is said and done, the writings of Lewis Carroll owe their continued popularity not to some recondite symbolic value but rather to their sheer comic absurdity and to their delicate fanciful fun. Their author accom-

3. See Chapter VI, p. 46.

plished a new thing in writing--a persuasive yet rollicking madness that by its drollery fascinates children and by its cleverness their elders. Further, these writings are animated with a charm, a humanity, and an imaginative quality which makes them immortal. In the words of Hugh Walker:

The author of The Walrus and the Carpenter and Jabberwocky, the creator of Alice and the White Rabbit, the White Knight, the Red Queen, the Duchess, the Dodo, the Cheshire Cat, and a hundred other strange creatures, is as safe from oblivion as the author of Gulliver's Travels.<sup>4</sup>

4. Hugh Walker, The Literature of the Victorian Era, p. 815.

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