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Lewis Carroll

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland *and* Through the Looking-Glass

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ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND

AND

THROUGH THE LOOKING-GLASS

LEWIS CARROLL was the pseudonym of the Revd Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, born 27 January 1832 at Daresbury, Cheshire. He went to Christ Church, Oxford, in 1851, where he became a Senior Student, and lived there for the rest of his life. He was Mathematical Lecturer (1855–81) and was admitted to deacon's orders in 1861, although he did not proceed to priest's orders. He was a noted photographer, especially of children, a prolific diarist, letter-writer and pamphleteer; although in some ways reclusive, he had a wide range of acquaintances in literary and theatrical circles. His many mathematical publications include *Euclid and his Modern Rivals* (1879) and *Symbolic Logic* (1896). His two most famous books, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There* (1872), were initially inspired by his friendship with Alice Liddell, the daughter of the Dean of Christ Church. He also published a facsimile of the original manuscript of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, *Alice's Adventures under Ground* (1886), and an adaptation for young children, *The Nursery Alice* (1890). *The Hunting of the Snark* (1876) is widely regarded as a surreal masterpiece, but his other works of fiction, *Sylvie and Bruno* (1889) and *Sylvie and Bruno Concluded* (1893), were not successful. He died at Guildford on 14 January 1898, and is buried there.

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LEWIS CARROLL

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland
and
Through the Looking-Glass
AND WHAT ALICE FOUND THERE

Edited with an Introduction and Notes by
PETER HUNT

With illustrations by
JOHN TENNIEL

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

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UNIVERSITY PRESS

Great Clarendon Street, Oxford OX2 6DP

Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford.
It furthers the University's objective of excellence in research, scholarship,
and education by publishing worldwide in

Oxford New York

Auckland Cape Town Dar es Salaam Hong Kong Karachi
Kuala Lumpur Madrid Melbourne Mexico City Nairobi
New Delhi Shanghai Taipei Toronto

With offices in

Argentina Austria Brazil Chile Czech Republic France Greece
Guatemala Hungary Italy Japan Poland Portugal Singapore
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Published in the United States
by Oxford University Press Inc., New York

Editorial material © Peter Hunt 2009

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First published as a World's Classics paperback 1982
Reissued as an Oxford World's Classics paperback 1998
This edition published 2009

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Data available

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Data available

Typeset in Ehrhardt
by RefineCatch Limited, Bungay, Suffolk
Printed in Great Britain
on acid-free paper by
Clays Ltd., St. Ives plc

ISBN 978–0–19–955829–2

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

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INTRODUCTION

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland (1865) and *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There* (1871, dated 1872) are two of the most famous, most translated, and most quoted books in the world. They have some claim to be the most influential children's books ever, which is to say, possibly the most influential works of literature ever—as children's books often have a more profound and lasting influence on their audiences than adults' books.

Alice (or Alis, Alisa, Alenka, Elsje, and many other variations) has had her adventures im Wunderland, du pays des merveilles, and I eventyrland, and in almost every country from Iceland to Australia—where the native peoples who live around Uluru, or Ayer's Rock, and whose language is Pitjantjatjara, can read about *Alitjinja ngura tjukurtjarangka* (*Alitji in the Dreamtime*). The book was translated into Russian by Vladimir Nabokov (as V. Sirin), a link that has not escaped critics: an Italian edition in 1962, *La meravigliosa Alice*, was subtitled *Una lucida invenzione, la creazione poetica di una 'lolita' vittoriana*.[1] Like other great pieces of popular culture, the books are highly adaptable: Alice has been everywhere from Blufferland to Debitland, and she has been borrowed by feminists (Maeve Kelly's *Alice in Thunderland*, 1993), satirists (Latham R. Reid's *Frankie in Wonderland: With Apologies to Lewis Carroll, the Originator and Pre-Historian of the New Deal*, 1934), and propagandists (James Dyrenforth's *Adolf in Blunderland*, 1940).

Several words that first appeared in the books, such as 'chortled', have entered the language, and phrases have become axioms: 'The rule is, jam to-morrow and jam yesterday—but

[1] See Pompeo Vagliani (ed.), *Quando Alice incontrò Pinocchio: Le edizioni italiane de* Alice *tra testo e contesto* (Torino: Trauben Edizioni, per Libreria Stampatori, 1998); Beverly Lyon Clark, *Reflections of Fantasy: The Mirror-Worlds of Carroll, Nabokov and Pynchon* (New York: Peter Lang, 1986), 43–52.

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never jam *to-day*'. The words 'Alice' and 'Wonderland' appear in everyday media relating to economics, politics, literary theory, sociology, and a hundred other topics thought worthy of scorn. Interestingly, 'Wonderland' is not used to equal 'stupid' or 'idiotic': as in the books, Wonderland is the place where everyone *else* is mad, blindly playing absurd, solipsistic games; *we* are invited to identify with the outsider, the sane and clear-eyed Alice, and to regard the others (as she does) with astonishment or pity. And *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* has even become a yardstick for other books: Flann O'Brien's surreal masterpiece, *The Third Policeman* (1967), was described by the *Observer* as 'comparable only to *Alice in Wonderland* as an allegory of the absurd'. And, one might add, as funny, and as chilling.

The author is almost as famous as the books: there have been at least fifteen biographies in English alone of Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, who wrote a small number of his books under the name of Lewis Carroll. It seems that all the minutiae of his life have been examined: quite apart from the twelve volumes of his diaries and two volumes of his letters, recent works have included *Lewis Carroll in His Own Account: The Complete Bank Account of the Rev. C. L. Dodgson*, and 'The Illnesses of Lewis Carroll'.[2] Even Alice Liddell, the little girl who initially inspired the books, has been the subject of *two* biographies.[3] Parts of the story of Dodgson and Alice Liddell have been fictionalized in Katie Riophe's novel *Still She Haunts Me* (2001), and Donald Thomas's crime novel *Belladonna: A Lewis Carroll Nightmare* (1983). Dodgson's life and its intricate connections have been explored exhaustively in the graphic 'entertainment' *Alice in Sunderland* (2007) by Bryan Talbot.

In short, Dodgson, 'Lewis Carroll', and the 'Alice' books are international phenomena, and British national institutions.

[2] Jenny Woolf, *Lewis Carroll in His Own Account: The Complete Bank Account of the Rev. C. L. Dodgson* (London: Jabberwock Press, 2005); Selwyn H. Goodacre, *The Practitioner* (August 1972), 209, 230–9.

[3] Anne Clark, *The Real Alice: Lewis Carroll's Dream Child* (London: Michael Joseph, 1981); Colin Gordon, *Beyond the Looking Glass: Reflections of Alice and Her Family* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1982).

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There are *Alice in Wonderland* rides at Disneyland in Paris and California, a White Rabbit Statue (unveiled by Lloyd George in 1933) at Llandudno (where Dodgson never actually visited); 2,525 items on Dodgson-Carroll are held at the University of Texas at Austin, and James Joyce's ultimate experiment in fiction, *Finnegans Wake* (1939), is suffused with Carrollian allusions.

But what exactly *are* the 'Alice' books? What gives them their global, perennial fascination? Are they harmless, innocent children's stories, simple fantasies with eccentric characters and nonsense verses? Or are they studies of Victorian female repression, stories that take place in nightmare worlds of aggression and godlessness, allegories of Victorian and Oxford society, intricate textures of mathematical, philosophical, and semantic puzzles, or symbolic explorations of 'some of the deepest existential problems in a light-hearted way'?[4] Or gifts of love (or possibly lust) from a frustrated academic to a young girl?

Much of this confusion stems from the fact that they are, or at least *were*, books for children—and because they are perhaps now more accessible to, and interesting for, adults. They pivot on the clash between the idealized view of what a children's book should be and what childhood should be, and the often uncomfortable fact that the relationships between adults, childhood, and stories are rarely pure and never simple. As a result of these deep-seated attitudes to children's books, questions are asked of the 'Alice' books that would not be considered particularly interesting if they were 'adult' books: are they 'suitable' for their audience, do children enjoy them, can children see what adults see—and, especially, was Dodgson the kind of man that should have been *allowed* to write for children? The need to protect an idea of innocence comes up against the difficult realities of the books.

Of course, the 'Alice' books were popular with children when they were first published: they were not only witty and inventive,

[4] David Holbrook, *Nonsense Against Sorrow: A Phenomenological Study of Lewis Carroll's 'Alice' Books* (London: Open Gate Press, 2001), viii.

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but they were subversive, parodying pious nursery verses, and, almost for the first time, having a narrative voice that is soundly on the side of the child. In one of the most-quoted remarks on the books, F. J. Harvey Darton described *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* as 'the spiritual volcano of children's books . . . the first unapologetic . . . appearance in print, for readers who sorely needed it, of liberty of thought in children's books . . . Henceforth . . . there was to be in hours of pleasure no more dread about the moral value . . . of the pleasure itself.'[5] This has usually been taken to mean that the 'Alice' books are free of the moralizing that had marked the majority of children's books since their beginnings in the mid-eighteenth century, and that is true enough. But what Dodgson replaced it with was not, as so many critics have assumed, some kind of light-hearted freedom: the books are actually concerned with discipline, logic, life and death, passion, and a ruthless critique of the adult world. And that does *not* mean that they are therefore *not* for children. For, unlike the vast majority of both his predecessors and successors, Dodgson had no doubts as to what children could and should be capable of dealing with. The most important, most neglected, fact about 'Wonderland' is that it is not a 'land of wonders', but rather 'a land where one wonders'.

When *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* was first published, Dodgson noted in his Diary nineteen reviews, which used words such as 'glorious', 'original', 'charming', and 'graceful'. The *Athenaeum*, however, demurred: 'We fancy that any child might be more puzzled than enchanted by this stiff, overwrought story' (16 December 1865)[6] and it has not been alone. A Canadian critic, Michelle Landsberg, omitted it from her compendious guide, *The World of Children's Books* (1989), on the grounds that it 'terrified me so much as a child (particularly those sinister, surrealistic Tenniel drawings) that it is the only book that I have ever defaced; the nightmare of shrinking and stretching held a

[5] F. J. Harvey Darton, *Children's Books in England: Five Centuries of Social Life*, rev. Brian Alderson (3rd edn., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 260.

[6] Quoted in Morton N. Cohen, *Lewis Carroll: A Biography* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995), 131.

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fevered horror for me'.[7] Peter Coveney thought that it had 'the claustrophobic atmosphere of a children's Kafka'.[8]

Readers have often found themselves tempted into complex analyses of the books—and with good reason, for, as we shall see, Dodgson's literary method was to embed intricate allusions into his texts, and to play with both the language and his readers. However, some of the interpretations of the books may seem more probable than others: Richard Wallace, for example, 'proves' that Dodgson was Jack the Ripper, and that 'these crimes began as a caper, fuelled by rage, boredom, anti-establishment feelings, and emboldened by years of successfully hiding Victorian smut in his children's works'.[9] At the other extreme is Virginia Woolf, no less, who wrote (perhaps a little unguardedly) in 1939: 'Only Lewis Carroll has shown us the world upside down as a child sees it, and has made us laugh as children laugh, irresponsibly. Down the groves of pure nonsense we whirl laughing, laughing—'.[10] However, with that comment, she was perpetuating a myth that had been carefully developed by Dodgson, who described his books as 'innocent and healthy amusement . . . for the children I love so well'. And yet there is actually very little 'nonsense' in the books—but plenty of satire and parody, and, as Walter de la Mare wrote, 'all satire and most parody in themselves are mortal enemies of true Nonsense, which is concerned with the joys of a new world not with the follies and excesses of an old'.[11] The 'Alice' books are never quite what they seem, and they relate in a complex way to the complex personality of their author, and to a rapidly changing world. Juliet Dusinberre notes that 'cultural change was both reflected and pioneered in the books which children read. Radical experiments in the arts in the early modern period began

[7] Michelle Landsberg, *The World of Children's Books* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989), 5.

[8] Peter Coveney, *The Image of Childhood* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967), 246.

[9] Richard Wallace, *Jack the Ripper, 'Light-hearted Friend'* (Melrose, Mass.: Gemini Press, 1996), 262.

[10] Virginia Woolf, 'Lewis Carroll', *Collected Essays* (London: Hogarth Press, 1966), 2. 255.

[11] Walter de la Mare, *Lewis Carroll* (London: Faber and Faber, 1932), 13–14.

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in the books which Lewis Carroll and his successors wrote for children.'[12] Similarly, Humphrey Carpenter notes that *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* 'was published just as the two great religious spearheads of the nineteenth century, the Evangelicals and the Oxford Movement, were losing their original force, and in its anti-religious sentiments it heralded the coming of an era of scepticism'.[13]

And yet the idea of the innocence of the book persists, and it is rooted in another myth, of how the book was written. On 4 July 1862, an idyllic 'golden afternoon', a shy, stuttering Oxford mathematician-clergyman, Charles Dodgson, and his friend the Revd (later Canon) Robinson Duckworth, took three little girls, the daughters of the Dean of their college, for a picnic on the River Thames or Isis. As they rowed, Dodgson made up an impromptu story about one of the girls, Alice, and at the end of the day, she begged him to write it down. He wrote it out and illustrated the story, *Alice's Adventures under Ground*, and gave it to her on 26 November 1864, later expanding it as *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. It is an attractive story, perhaps none the worse for the fact that it is only partially true; but, like other myths about books supposedly written for specific children—Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows* or A. A. Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh*—it is culturally important that it *should* be true.

The Life

Dodgson has been described as 'One of the great Victorian eccentrics'[14] but his background was more than respectable. His great-grandfather Charles Dodgson (1722?–1795 or 1796)—who was grandfather of both his parents—was bishop of Elphin, in Ireland (part of United Diocese of Kilmore, Elphin and

[12] Juliet Dusinberre, *Alice to the Lighthouse: Children's Books and Radical Experiments in Art* (London: Macmillan Press, 1987), 5.

[13] Humphrey Carpenter, *Secret Gardens* (1985; London: Unwin, 1987), 68–9.

[14] Derek Hudson, *Lewis Carroll: An Illustrated Biography* (1954; rev. edn., London: Constable, 1976), 25.

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Ardagh, since 1841). His grandfather Captain Charles Dodgson (1769?–1803) was killed in an ambush by Irish rebels near Phillipstown in Ireland. His father, the Revd Charles Dodgson (1800–68), took a double first in classics and mathematics at Christ Church, Oxford, and married his cousin, Frances Jane Lutwidge (1803–51) in 1827, thus failing to comply with the requirement for Christ Church scholars to remain single. He was granted the curacy at Daresbury, an isolated village in Cheshire in 1827; in 1843, he moved to St Peter's church, Croft, and later became a canon of Ripon cathedral, and archdeacon of Richmond. Although a witty man, his 'reverence for sacred things was so great that he was never known to relate a story which included a jest upon words from the Bible'.[15]

Charles Lutwidge was born 27 January 1832 at the parsonage at Daresbury; he was the third child and eldest son of a family of eleven (seven girls and four boys) all of whom lived to old age—two of the boys, Skeffington and Wilfred, and one of the girls, Mary, married. His brother Edwin became a missionary on Tristan da Cunha and later on the Cape Verde Islands.

Given that almost all biographies of Charles Lutwidge Dodgson contain an element of hagiography, it does seem that he was brought up in a pious, loving family atmosphere. When he was 12 he was sent to Richmond Grammar School for two terms, and then in January 1846 to Rugby School—of which he wrote in his Diary in 1855: 'I cannot say that I look back upon my life at a Public School with any sensations of pleasure, or that any earthly considerations would induce me to go through my three years again.' (There is a school book, dated 13 November 1846, with Dodgson's name in it followed by the words, in a different hand, 'is a muff'.) But he was academically successful, and a survivor.

He and his siblings produced a series of family magazines, beginning with *Useful and Instructive Poetry* in 1845, followed by *The Rectory Magazine* (while he was at Rugby), *The Rectory*

[15] Stuart Dodgson Collingwood, *The Life and Letters of Lewis Carroll* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1899), 8.

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Umbrella (all his own work), and *Mischmasch*, and Dodgson shows a taste for lively comedy, reminiscent of Edward Lear, and a talent for parody.

His life at Christ Church, Oxford, began sadly: two days after he arrived on 24 January 1851, his mother died. The following year he was nominated to a Studentship (Fellowship) which allowed him to live at Christ Church for the rest of his life, on condition that he did not marry, and that he proceed to Holy Orders. He took a first class in mathematics, and in 1855 was appointed mathematical lecturer (a post that he held, giving, by his own account, uninspiring lectures which his students sometimes openly mocked, until 1881). Although a deeply religious and pious man, he felt himself unsuited to work in a parish (possibly because of his speech impediment); he was admitted to deacon's orders on 22 December 1861, 'as a sort of experiment', as he wrote in his Diary, and regarded himself 'as *practically* a layman'. He did not proceed to priest's orders, although he did occasionally preach long 'plain, evangelical sermon(s) of the old-fashioned kind'.[16]

He took his responsibilities as head of his family seriously, after his father died in 1868, and took a lease on 'The Chestnuts', Guildford, for his unmarried siblings. He continued to support them throughout his life—his recently published bank-accounts suggest that this may have put a great strain on his finances (although he makes no mention of this in his Diary). He often spent time with his cousins in the Sunderland area, and was involved in nursing his godson at Guildford in 1874; from 1877, he spent his summers at Eastbourne.

For a man in such an apparently sheltered situation, Dodgson led an obsessively hard-working and varied life. He produced several works on mathematics, notably on Euclid, which have been highly regarded. And he wrote endlessly. In 1853 he began his Diary; his Register of letters sent and received, maintained for thirty-seven years, recorded 98,721 items, not counting his extensive correspondence from 1882 to 1892 when he was

[16] Cohen, *Biography*, 294.

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curator of Christ Church common room. (This appears to have been a particularly lively period, producing a flood of letters, pamphlets, and notices.) In 1856 he bought his first camera; this used collodiol wet-plate techniques (invented in 1855) which tended to stain the hands—hence Dodgson's habit of wearing gloves when in society. He was a pioneer photographer, especially of children, and was noted for the naturalness of his compositions: 'Very few amateurs from Dodgson's period constantly photographed for so many years. [He was] a polymath of remarkable talent.'[17] It was a hobby that brought him into contact with many distinguished contemporaries, notably the Tennysons and the MacDonalds; Dodgson and MacDonald were both members of the Society for Psychical Research, and shared interests in homeopathy and anti-vivisection.

Dodgson was an avid theatregoer, making the acquaintance of Ellen Terry and her family, and took a vocal interest in national issues. For example, he had some influence in bringing about the Net Book Agreement (1900–97) which regulated the prices at which booksellers could sell books. W. T. Stead's campaign against child prostitution in the *Pall Mall Gazette* in the 1880s, which led in 1885 to the raising of the age of consent to 16, provoked Dodgson into a passionate response: he wanted Stead to be prosecuted for obscene libel for the graphic way in which he presented his findings.

In Oxford, he settled down to a life of local controversy, publishing dozens of privately printed pamphlets generally on the conservative side of arguments, and often in conflict with Henry George Liddell who became Dean of Christ Church in 1855. He also used the talent for versification which he had shown in his 'domestic' writings, and in 1855 he contributed pieces to the *Comic Times* and its successor, *The Train*. Its editor, Edmund Yates, asked him for a pseudonym, and Dodgson noted in his Diary for 11 February, 1856: 'Wrote to Mr Yates sending him a choice of names: 1. *Edgar Cuthwellis*

[17] Roger Taylor and Edward Wakeling, *Lewis Carroll, Photographer* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 110, 111.

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(made by transposition out of "Charles Lutwidge"). 2. *Edgar U. C. Westhill* (ditto). 3. *Louis Carroll* (derived from Lutwidge . . Ludovic . . Louis, and Charles). *Lewis Carroll* (ditto).' On 1 March, he added the note: '"*Lewis Carroll*" was chosen'.

As 'Lewis Carroll', apart from the two highly successful 'Alice' books, he published verse: *Phantasmagoria and Other Poems* (1869), his surreal nonsense masterpiece, *The Hunting of the Snark* (1876), and *Rhyme? And Reason?* (1883). His other sizeable attempts at fiction for children, *Sylvie and Bruno* (1889) and *Sylvie and Bruno Concluded* (1893), are, as his biographer Morton Cohen puts it, 'overburdened by seriousness, calculated messages, ponderous cogitations, and fulminations that reflect the map of Charles's aging mind and broken heart. They are at one and the same time his *apologia pro vita mea* and his *consolation philosophiae*.'[18] They resemble another solipsistic epic, Charles Kingsley's *The Water Babies* (1863)—which at least had a rather stronger narrative to support its many digressions and eccentricities—and their religiosity is quite alien to the world of Alice. In 1892, Dodgson wrote to the Revd C. A. Goodhart, Rector of Lambourne, Essex: 'In "Sylvie and Bruno" I took courage to introduce what I had entirely avoided in the two "Alice" books—some reference to subjects which are, after all, the *only* subjects of real interest in life, subjects which are so intimately bound up with every topic of human interest that it needs more effort to avoid them than to touch on them; and I felt that such a book was more suitable to a clerical writer than one of mere fun.'[19] His final collection, of 'serious' poems, *Three Sunsets and Other Poems*, was published in February 1898.

He died, still working hard on his sermons and on Euclid, on 14 January 1898 at 'The Chestnuts' in his sixty-sixth year; he is buried at the Mount cemetery in Guildford. In his will (his effects were sold for £729. 2*s.* 6*d.* at Holywell Music Room, Oxford, on 10 and 11 May 1898) he divided his estate between his siblings, and requested a plain funeral: 'simple and inexpensive, avoiding all things that are merely done for show, and

[18] Cohen, *Biography*, 455. [19] Collingwood, *Life*, 308–9.

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retaining only what is . . . requisite for its decent and reverent performance'.

After his death, it was suggested, following the example of a project run by *Aunt Judy's Magazine* from 1868, that a subscription be got up to endow a cot at Great Ormond Street Hospital in his name. Subscribers included not only the 'original' Alice, Alice Pleasance (Liddell) Hargreaves, Canon Duckworth, and Sir John Tenniel, but a galaxy of eminent Victorians, including George Meredith, George MacDonald, Jerome K. Jerome, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Anthony Hope Hawkins, R. D. Blackmore, Holman Hunt, Walter Crane, Sir Henry Irving, Sir Walter Besant, Alice Meynall, and the Princess Alice.

And what was the man who led this life of detail like? The American writer Mark Twain, who met him at the MacDonalds' in July 1879, described him as 'the stillest and shyest full-grown man' he had ever met.[20] The Revd W. Tuckwell in his *Reminiscences of Oxford* (1900) regarded him as 'austere, shy, precise, absorbed in mathematical reverie, watchfully tenacious of his dignity, stiffly conservative in political, theological, social theory, his life mapped out in squares like Alice's landscape, he struck discords in the frank harmonious *camaraderie* of College life'.[21] John Goldthwaite has an even less flattering view:

> His own piety made him a public nuisance. His illustrators were forbidden to illustrate on Sundays. Upon discovering that a stage production of *The Water Babies* contained a burlesque of a Salvation Army Hymn, he campaigned to have the theatre's licence revoked. The infamous Bowdler edition of Shakespeare was a scandal to the prudish don . . . He doted on maudlin songs, the pathetic in drama . . . Unembarrassed by his own bad taste, he was a snob and a lion hunter, chasing after celebrities with his camera.[22]

Certainly he tried to keep the lives of Charles Dodgson and Lewis Carroll separate—although he denied that there was any

[20] Cohen, *Biography*, 295.

[21] Hudson, *Illustrated Biography*, 175.

[22] John Goldthwaite, *The Natural History of Make-Believe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 80.

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truth in the story that when Queen Victoria wrote to him, having read *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, asking for his next book, he sent her *An Elementary Treatise on Determinants*.[23]

But one aspect of his character has tended to overshadow everything else—Dodgson was devoted to 'child-friends', little girls for preference, whom he liked to entertain, photograph, and sketch. For several of these, his friendship extended into adulthood, and there is no record of any of them having anything but praise for his care and kindness. Rather, he was remembered with much affection—and certainly there was no hint of any impropriety. However, some of the parents of these children did have their objections, and it seems that there was some gossip in Oxford, which may well have been the reason that he gave up photography in 1880. In a letter of 7 June 1894 to the actress Ellen Terry, he wrote: 'Now that I have entered on the stage of being a "lean and slippered pantaloon", and no longer dread the frown of Mrs Grundy [a byword for propriety] I have taken to giving tête-à-tête dinner-parties—the guest being, in most cases, a lady of age varying from 12 to 67.'

But many modern readers have found it difficult to accept that the photographs that Dodgson took of undressed or partly dressed young girls are not salacious, or that his letters to parents negotiating in detail whether the girls could or could not wear drawers while he photographed them are anything less than excruciatingly embarrassing. The famous, or notorious, picture of Alice Liddell posing as a beggar-girl, in carefully revealing rags, has seemed to make the case against Dodgson as a latent paedophile incontestable. The question is, whether this is actually relevant to the reading of his books? (Roger Taylor points out that the 'beggar-girl' portrait is almost always judged out of context: it is one of a contrasting pair, the other showing Alice 'in her best outfit'.)[24]

It is, however, as well to remember that times change: for example, until 1885 the age of consent was 12, and at the end of

[23] Robin Wilson, *Lewis Carroll in Numberland* (London: Allen Lane, 2008), 101.
[24] Taylor and Wakeling, *Carroll, Photographer*, 64.

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the century the average age of menarche was about 16. As Kimberley Reynolds points out, 'it was not uncommon in the nineteenth century for grown men to be attracted to young girls—girls too young to be sexually demanding or threatening' and she cites the examples of Swinburne, Ruskin, Mayne Reid, 'E. W. Benson (who became Archbishop of Canterbury) [who] fell in love with an eleven-year-old to whom he proposed when she was twelve'—and Queen Victoria's daughter, Beatrice, who was engaged at 13.[25]

Equally, as Anne Higonnet observed, attitudes to certain images differed, too: 'To [Dodgson's] contemporaries . . . Alice's beggar portrait did not look prurient at all . . . In their time [such pictures] were . . . seen as . . . images of natural innocence and therefore naturally innocent themselves . . . Carroll was absolutely convinced that the innocence of the child was a natural quality.'[26] James Kincaid's pioneering *Child-Loving: The Erotic Child and Victorian Culture* also places the Victorian fascination with the child in its context, suggesting, of the 'Alice' books, that they are characteristic of 'a paradigm of play [that] is not seeking fulfilment, wants not even to construct a seduction drama but to stand on the threshold of such a drama. It is an erotics of temptation and flirtation . . . because, in the catching, the world would collapse and desire would end.'[27]

Nevertheless, it seems unlikely that an unbiased observer in the twenty-first century could read the following account of Dodgson without, at the very least, a raised eyebrow. Written by the founding editor of Puffin Books, Eleanor Graham, it is aimed at children, and appeared in the 1946 Puffin edition of the 'Alice' books, under the title 'How the Story Was Told'. The Revd Dodgson, Graham wrote, without any perceptible irony, was

[25] Kimberley Reynolds, *Radical Children's Literature* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2007), 52.

[26] Anne Higonnet, *Pictures of Innocence* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1998), 125, 110.

[27] James R. Kincaid, *Child-Loving: The Erotic Child and Victorian Culture* (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), 196.

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