Charles Lutwidge Dodgson

Lewis Carroll

A BIOGRAPHY

by

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Portrait of Charles in his study at Christ Church

CHAPTER NINE

The Man

A man so various that he seem'd to be Not one,
but all mankind's epitome.

JOHN DRYDEN

The telephone, the sound recorder, and even motion pictures were all invented in Charles's lifetime, and he was fascinated by them, but we have to rely entirely upon the written word and our own imaginations to see and hear him in action. Fortunately we have numerous descriptions of what he looked and sounded like in conversation, from the lecture platform, in tutorials, and from the pulpit; how he behaved in adult society, with children, to his pupils, and to his colleagues; what his likes and dislikes were, his eccentricities, and his mannerisms. Despite inherent contradictions, they help illuminate the man.

He wore no spectacles, and when he was fifty, he recorded that he weighed 10 stone 3½ (143½ pounds). He wore his hair longer than others did. He wrote mostly at a stand-up desk and could do so, by his own calculation, for "10 hours."[1] He was not fond of cut flowers. He had a tolerably good singing voice and was not shy to use it. He talked to himself: "*Talking* is a wonderful smoother-over of difficulties," he wrote in the introduction to *Symbolic Logic.* "When *I* come upon anything—in Logic, or in any other hard subject that entirely puzzles me, I find it a capital plan to talk it over, *aloud,* even when I am alone. One can explain things so *clearly* to one's self! And then, you know, one is so *patient* with one's self: one *never* gets irritated at one's own stupidity." He liked chess and spoke of it as the family occupation.

Alice recalled that he "always wore black clergyman's clothes in Oxford, but, when he took us out on the river, he used to wear white flannel trousers. He also replaced his black top-hat with a hard white straw hat on these occasions, but of course retained his black boots, because in those days white tennis shoes had not yet been heard of. He always carried himself upright, as if he had swallowed a poker."

A niece mentioned his blue or gray eyes—all the family had blue or gray eyes—and that Charles was about six feet tall.[2] "He had a pale, clean-shaven face and his thin mouth seemed almost quivering with delight at the prospect of playing with four or five little girls," another recalled. ". . . He talked delightfully, and I remember how exasperating it was to be asked whether I would like another piece of cake when I was trying so hard to hear what he was saying at the other end of the table."[3]

Still another told of coming upon him suddenly: "I caught sight of him standing at the door, waiting to be let in. . . . He held himself stiffly, one shoulder slightly higher than the other; in his almost overemphasised erectness there was an old-fashioned seriousness, an air of punctiliousness."[4]

"He was thin, and very pale," writes an Oxford lady artist. "His face presented the peculiarity of having two very different profiles; the shape of the eyes, and the corners of the mouth did not tally. He sometimes hesitated in his speech . . . and I fancied he would often deliberately use it to heighten expectancy by delaying the point of his stories." He was "the pink of propriety."[5] Another artist, Gertrude Thomson, painted this picture:

> I always had a mysterious feeling, when looking at him and hearing him speak, that he was not exactly an ordinary human being of flesh and blood. Rather did he seem as some delicate, ethereal spirit, enveloped for the moment in a semblance of common humanity. . . . His head was small, and beautifully formed; the brow rather low, broad, white, and finely modelled. Dreamy grey eyes, a sensitive mouth, slightly compressed when in repose, but softening into the most beautiful smile when he spoke. He had a slight hesitancy sometimes, when speaking . . . but though Mr. Dodgson deplored it himself, it added a certain piquancy, especially if he was uttering any whimsicality.[6]

The dramatist A. W. Dubourg has recalled him as "a quiet, retiring, scholarlike person, full of interesting and pleasant conversation, oftentimes with an undercurrent of humour, and certainly with a sense of great sensitiveness with regard to the serious side of life."[7]

H. L. Thompson, a friend and colleague, wrote of him as "one of the most delightful of companions, whose keen intellect and playful fancy, united to a guilelessness and purity almost childlike in their simplicity, gave a rare and unique charm to a friendship . . . to be cherished. . . ."[8] The chemist A. S. Russell recounted: "Provided he knew you so that his shyness was not involved, provided you kept your statements and your stories on a high plane, he could be the most genial and welcome of companions, a brilliant talker, quick, witty and entirely without malice."[9] Another colleague, Frederick York Powell, remembered

> the quiet humour of his voice, the occasional laugh. . . . He was not a man that often laughed, though there was often a smile playing about his sensitive mouth. . . . All those that knew him remember . . . his kindly sympathies, his rigid rule of his own life . . . his dutiful discharge of every obligation that was in the slightest degree incumbent on him, his patience with his younger colleagues, who were sometimes a little more ignorant and impatient . . . his rare modesty, and the natural kindness which preserved him from the faintest shadow of conceit, and made him singularly courteous to every one, high or low. . . . He was an exceptionally good after-dinner speaker, but it was rarely one could get him to undertake the unthankful task, and then he would only do it when *inter amicos.* The whimsical thought, the gentle satire, the delicate allusions to the various characteristic ways of his hearers, the pleasant kindness that somehow showed through the veil of the fun, made his few post-prandial orations memorable.[10]

Another Oxford don, Lionel A. Tollemache, recorded two contrasting impressions of Charles's style of conversation. One of Charles's "intimate" friends told him that:

> Of his brilliancy there can be no manner of doubt; but it was at the same time very difficult to define or focus. . . . All he said, all his oddities and clever things, arose out of the conversation . . . of an ordinary everyday sort. . . . It was *Alice,* all kinds of queer turns given to things. You never knew where he would take you next; and all the while there seemed to be an odd logical sequence, almost impelling your assent to most unexpected conclusions. He had a great fund of stories; these again were never told independently, they were fished up from his stores by some line dropped down in ordinary talk. . . . He never told

stories against people, was never bitter or cruel, never attempted to "score off" others.

The other friend, "a man of science," told Tollemache that "Dodgson was not a brilliant talker; he was too peculiar and paradoxical; and the topics on which he loved to dwell were such as would bore many persons; while, on the other hand, when he himself was not interested, he occasionally stopped the flow of a serious discussion by the intrusion of a disconcerting epigram."[11]

T. B. Strong, Student and later Dean of Christ Church, observed Charles at close range and offered still another view:

> He talked readily and naturally in connection with what was going on around him; and his power lay, as so often in his books, in suddenly revealing a new meaning in some ordinary expression, or in developing unexpected consequences from a very ordinary idea. . . . Mr. Dodgson was always ready to talk upon serious subjects; and then, though he restrained his sense of humour completely, he still presented you with unexpected and frequently perplexing points of view. If he argued, he was somewhat rigid and precise, carefully examining the terms used, relentless in pointing out the logical results of any position assumed by his opponent, and quick to devise a puzzling case when he wanted to bring objections against a rule or principle.[12]

Charles was an inveterate gadgeteer and, like the White Knight, brimming with his own inventions—except that Charles's worked. He invented his "*in statu quo*" chessboard for use when traveling,[13] and his *Memoria Technica,* as we shall see, was a great advance on the standard memory aids available for learning and remembering dates and formulae.

His inventions were legion: on July 11, 1888, he ordered a writing tablet to use in the dark, which probably led to his inventing the Nyctograph for taking notes under the covers at night. Charles explains in his diary (September 24, 1891): "An inventive day. It has long been a 'desideratum' . . . to be able to make short memoranda in the dark, without the unpleasant necessity of having to get up and strike a light. . . . Today I conceived the idea of having a series of *squares,* cut out in card, and devising an alphabet, of which each letter could be made of lines along the edges of the squares, and dots at the corners. I invented the alphabet, and made the grating of sixteen squares. It works well." He published his discovery in the *Lady* (October 29,

1891): "I do not intend to patent it," he wrote. "Anyone who chooses is welcome to make and sell the article. All I have to do, if I wake and think of something I wish to record, is to draw from under the pillow a small memorandum book, containing my Nyctograph, write a few lines, or even a few pages, without even putting the hands outside the bed-clothes, replace the book, and go to sleep again." Those who have lived in college rooms at Oxford, even in the days after electricity came to the university, will appreciate Charles's preference for remaining under the covers during winter nights. No one, it appears, took up his offer to commercialize his invention; like other inventions of his, it worked well for him, but mere mortals found the instructions too complicated.

He invented card and croquet games, an early form of what we know as Scrabble, a variety of other word games, *Doublets, Syzygies,* games of logic, *Lanrick* and other games that use a chessboard, a game of circular billiards; a rule for finding the day of the week for any date; a means for justifying right margins on a typewriter; a steering device for a velociman, a tricycle; new systems of parliamentary representation; more nearly fair elimination rules for tennis tournaments; an ingenious *Wonderland Postage-Stamp Case;* a new sort of postal money order; rules for reckoning postage; rules for a win in betting; rules for dividing a number by various divisors; a cardboard scale for Common Room, which, held next to a glass, insured the right amount of liqueur for the price paid; a substitute for "gum, for fastening envelopes . . . , mounting small things in books, etc.—viz: paper with gum on *both* sides"[14]; a device for helping a bedridden invalid to read from a book placed sideways; and at least two ciphers. On May 19, 1871, he wrote Macmillan:

> The other day I gave a little dinner-party of 8, and tried an invention of mine. . . . It is simply to draw up a plan of the table, with the names of the guests, in the order in which they are to sit, and brackets to show who is to take in whom; . . . one should be given to each guest. . . .[15]

"Now for the advantages of this plan," Charles wrote:

> (1) It saves the host the worry of going round and telling every gentleman what lady to take in.
>
> (2) It prevents confusion when they reach the dining-room. (The system of putting names round on the plates simply increases the confusion. . . .)

(3) It enables everybody at table to know who the other guests are—often a *very* desirable thing.

(4) By keeping the cards, one gets materials for making up other dinner-parties, by observing what people harmonise well together.

Charles tirelessly collected gadgets, toys, games, puzzles, and mechanical and technological inventions, for his own use and for the use, delight, and amusement of friends and family. From his youth onward he was an accomplished conjurer, and he added pseudomagical tricks to his repertoire: he could make paper stars, paper boats that sailed, and paper pistols that exploded; he taught children to blot their names in creased paper. He owned a machine for turning music over; six traveling inkpots; artist models of a hand, a foot, a human skull, and the skeleton of a hand and a foot; boxes of mathematical instruments and geometrical solids; a printing press; two Whiteley Exercisers, elastic appliances anchored to the wall and the floor; two pairs of dumbbells; two boxes of homoeopathic medicines; Dr. Moffatt's Ammoniaphone, which claimed to strengthen, enrich, and extend the range of the voice; a mechanical toy called "Bob the Bat" that whirred as it flew about, powered by a wound-up elastic band (once it inadvertently flew out the window, and landed on a bowl of salad a scout was carrying, causing him to drop and shatter it); a mechanical walking furry black bear; cupboards full of music boxes (he sometimes played the music backwards to amuse his friends); an American orguinette, a predecessor of the player piano; numerous Ferrometers, a friend's invention for purifying water. He collected fountain pens and pencil sharpeners; ordered five different sizes of notepaper so as to have the right size for each letter.[16]

On journeys he always took a little black bag full of games, puzzles, medications, and other items that helped break the ice with strangers and assist in an emergency; when he traveled with trunks, he wrapped each article in them separately. Discoveries and inventions fascinated him. On November 24, 1857, he described a means of cataloguing information that anticipated modern-day computers. On January 27, 1867, having heard or read that Charles Babbage had invented a new calculating machine, Charles called on the inventor "to ask whether any of his calculating machines are to be had. I find they are not. He received me most kindly," he added, "and I spent a very pleasant ¾ of an hour with him, while he showed me over his workshops, etc." On April 12 Charles bought "a calculating machine that adds up to £1,000,000." In June 1877 he acquired an "electric pen," recently invented and patented by Edison:

[It] . . . seems to me to be quite the best thing yet invented for taking a number of copies of MSS, drawings, or maps. The "pen" consists of a needle, in a holder like a pencil: the needle is worked in and out with enormous rapidity by electricity [the batteries sat in a container on his desk] and projects just far enough to go through a thin sheet of paper. The result is that every line . . . consists of a row of minute holes. . . . The paper thus prepared (. . . the "stencil") is placed in a frame with blank paper underneath, and an inked roller is passed . . . over it. . . . Copies are easily worked off at the rate of 2 a minute. . . .

On July 30, 1879, Charles recorded that he tried, "with tolerable success, the new copying 'Hektograph,' " and the device appears under its second name, the Chromograph, on August 14 of that year, when Charles did "with the Chromograph a page of a Mod[eration]s Algebra paper." On numerous occasions thereafter he entertained visitors with the duplicating device that relied upon a "master" made of special paper from which copies could be produced either by a spirit or gelatin process.

In May 1888 he acquired an early model of the "Hammond Type-Writer," set to work to improve it, and used it for letter writing and other purposes, not least of all to amuse his child visitors. On August 11, 1890, he recorded that he went to the London exhibition of " 'Edison's Phonograph' . . . a marvellous invention. As heard through the funnel, the *music* (particularly trumpet-music) was flat: the singing and speaking were better, though a little inarticulate." Two days later he returned "to hear the 'private audience' part. Listening through tubes, with the nozzle to one's ear, is far better and more articulate than with the funnel: also the music is much sweeter. It is a pity that we are not fifty years further on in the world's history, so as to get this wonderful invention in its *perfect* form. It is now in its infancy—the new wonder of the day, just as I remember Photography was about 1850."

One of his sisters wrote: "To get rid of mice in his rooms, a square live trap was used, and he had a wood and wire compartment made which fitted on to the trap whose door could then be opened for the mice to run into the compartment, a sliding door shutting them in, and the compartment could then be taken from the trap and put under water; thus all chance of the mice having an agonized struggle on the surface of the water was removed."[17]

Children saw him differently than adults. In adult society, Isa Bowman thought him "almost old-maidenishly prim."[18] But over and over again others testify that when they were children, he was as completely at ease with

them as they were with him, that they found him fluent, kind, open-minded, and openhearted. He did not invariably lose his stammer in their presence, as some claim; too many of his child friends testify to the impediment and even describe its precise form. May Barber, a friend at Eastbourne, probably captured it best: "I have seen him a lot with children, and they liked him. But . . . those stammering bouts [were] rather terrifying. It wasn't exactly a stammer, because there was no noise, he just opened his mouth. But there was a wait, a very nervous wait from everybody's point of view: it was very curious. He didn't always have it, but sometimes he did. When he was in the middle of telling a story . . . he'd suddenly stop and you wondered if you'd done anything wrong. Then you looked at him and you knew that you hadn't, it was all right. You got used to it after a bit. He fought it very wonderfully. . . .[19]

T. B. Strong tells us that Charles was a "laborious worker, always disliking to break off from the pursuit of any subject which interested him; apt to forget his meals and toil on for the best part of the night, rather than stop short of the object which he had in view."[20]

He was an indefatigable record keeper. His diary, letter register, photograph register, the register of correspondence when he was Curator of Common Room are only tips of the iceberg. He kept other registers and lists, among them separate lists recording the meals he served guests and offers of hospitality that he might one day take up. "I have a book in which I write the birthdays of my little friends," he wrote (January 24, 1895). An observer remembered that "everything he did was done systematically and tidily. He was fastidious in mind and body. . . . He always appeared to have emerged from a hot bath and a band box."[21] T. B. Strong puts it differently: "He had a deep conviction of the importance of rigid processes of thought and inference. . . . It was clear that he was one man not two, and that in his mind the two elements of whimsical imagination and the love of rigid definition and inference were always present."[22]

When Charles embarked on a journey, even if it was only from Oxford to London or Guildford, he mapped out the route, distance, and time for the various legs of the trip. Then he determined how much money he would need at each stage and put the correct coins in successive pockets of his purse, ready to pay for the railway fare, his cab, his porter, and whatever newspaper, food, or drink he planned to purchase along the way. Beatrice Hatch recalled: "If you went to see Mr. Dodgson in the morning you would find him, pen in hand, hard at work on neat packets of MS. carefully arranged around him on the table, but the pen would instantly be laid aside, and the most cheerful of smiles would welcome you in for a chat as long as you liked to stay. He was always full of interest, and generally had something fresh to show: an ingenious invention of his own for filing papers, or lighting gas, or boiling a kettle!"[23] His niece Violet Dodgson wrote: "The sternest rebuke I ever received from him . . . was for leaving an open book face downwards on a chair."[24] His compulsive orderliness obviously reached into others' lives, sometimes officiously. Early on he set himself the task of bringing up to date scrapbooks of newspaper cuttings in Common Room; he supplied Common Room with blank albums and inserted loose Common Room photographs in them. He wrote in the suggestion book of the Oxford Union's library a note on how better to arrange the Union's books.[25] On January 27, 1865, he wrote to the manager of Covent Garden suggesting how to improve the arrival and departure of carriages at performances. He was troubled while seeing the play *Claudian* when a character was thrown off a bridge but his fall was not accompanied by an audible splash. He immediately wrote (May 12, 1884) to the leading man, Wilson Barrett, suggesting that "a little bit of realism . . . would be very welcome" and drawing a sketch of a "barrel half full of water," adding that "a stick ending like that in a churn, plunged into the water at the right moment, would I think produce the effect. . . ." After arriving at the Tom Taylors' before breakfast (October 3, 1863) to make their home his photographic headquarters for some days, Charles had the temerity to mention "a few little defects in [Taylor's play] *The Ticket-of-Leave Man*—two of them arithmetical ones: that Sam continues fifteen years old for nearly three years, and that May Edwards during that time appears to have saved two pounds at the rate of a shilling a week!"

Other eccentricities dominated his personality. He had his own way of making tea: Isa Bowman recalls him walking up and down his sitting room swaying the teapot to and fro for precisely ten minutes in order to achieve the desired brew.

Eating and drinking play an important role in the *Alice* books, just as they did in Victorian society. Charles was ever conscious of his child friends' needs, but he himself survived on simple food and small portions. He abjured midday meals: "Even when I *have* time," he wrote to Mrs. Mayhew (December 19, 1878), "I always decline luncheons. I have no appetite for a meal at that time, and you will perhaps sympathise with my dislike for sitting to watch others eat and drink." Planning a theater outing for three of

his child friends, he wrote to the grown-up Ethel Hatch in London (October 25, 1897) inviting her to join them: "Could you give . . . the 3 girls . . . something to eat before we go? To be *very* hungry lessens one's enjoyment of a play." About to pay a visit to the headmaster of Marlborough School, he wrote (November 13, 1882): "*Please* don't make any difference, for me, in your family bill of fare. Dinner parties have too many courses for me. Even our daily High Table is much more than *I* care for."

Expecting Polly Mallalieu to come to stay at Eastbourne, Charles wrote to her mother (July 5, 1892) detailing his

> usual plan for meals when I have a child-guest. . . . Breakfast at 8-½. I have tea or coffee: Polly can have cocoa. . . . I always have meat or fish; and, when a child is with me, there is usually *jam*. . . . Luncheon about 1-½. This is *dinner* for my guest (i.e., 2 courses, meat and sweets). Polly could have ginger beer, or milk, to drink with it. . . . Tea about 5. (Cocoa for Polly.) . . . My dinner is about 7. My child-guest usually helps me with it (having, in fact, *two* dinners a day). . . . I have nothing more but milk and water and biscuits, about 10. But more could be provided, if necessary.

Charles took walks, alone and with companions. Evelyn Hatch wrote: "Walks were the special privilege of little-girl friends and he preferred to take only one at a time, considering 'three the worst possible number for a party.' During the walk he entertained his small guest with stories, riddles and jokes. . . ."[26] On July 9, 1865, at thirty-three, he recorded "a walk of twenty-one or twenty-two miles." On February 12, 1887, aged fifty-five, he took "a 25-mile walk." On March 17, 1888, he reassured a distant relative: "So long as I have the blessing of perfect health, as I have now, it is most enjoyable to take a rapid walk, in the teeth of the North or East wind. I don't mind which it is—the colder it blows, the warmer I get and the more I like it."[27] On July 29, 1897, aged sixty-five, he walked over to Hastings from Eastbourne: "altogether about twenty miles walking. I was hardly at all tired and not at all foot sore." And two days later: "Again walked over to Hastings . . . in five hours and twenty-two minutes."

"L.C. used to take me out for walks," wrote Mrs. E. L. Shute. ". . . By all the laws of right and justice, *I* should have walked with my 'good' ear to him; but no! His 'bad' ear was also the right one, and if I managed for a little to dodge round and get on the side I wanted, he always circumvented me, and it would end in my giving up the struggle, and returning home with a crick in my neck from twisting my head round to bring my hearing ear into play. . . . The walks were well worth the cricks!"[28]

Charles did not smoke and a child friend reported that he "used to say that he spent . . . [on photography] what other men spent on smoking."[29] An Oxford colleague recorded that when Thomas Gibson Bowles, editor of *Vanity Fair,* was staying with Charles at Christ Church and asked whether he might have a pipe, Charles replied, "You know that I don't allow smoking here. If I had known that you wanted to smoke, I would have ordered the Common Room Smoking Room to be got ready for you."[30] Although Charles was certainly capable of a testy remark, such rudeness was not really true to his character, and his own utterances on the subject belie the colleague's allegation. On October 14, 1890, he sent over to Common Room some cigarette samples and inquired whether the Smoking Room Committee would like to order more: "I have never tasted better!" And he wrote to the dramatist Henry Savile Clarke (November 12, 1886): "If you give me the pleasure of seeing you here, please bring the wherewithal for smoking with you. I'm not a smoker myself, but I always allow my friends to smoke in my rooms."[31]

Christopher Hussey, who occupied Charles's rooms some years later, wrote about their atmosphere in Charles's time, as reported to him by T. B. Strong, who remembered Charles's

> horror of draughts. . . . The [large sitting] room is a draughty one, as it has four doors. . . . His theory was that there could be no draughts if the temperature was equalized all over the room. Accordingly he had a number of thermometers about the room, and near each one an oil stove. Periodically he made a round of the thermometers, adjusting the adjacent stove according to the reading. All cracks under doors were boarded up with coats, rugs, etc. . . . He had a very elaborate gazolier hanging from the ceiling, and elaborate instructions for lighting it pasted on the door of his room, though I gather he allowed no one to light it but himself.[32]

Seeing Charles in the pulpit as he struggled with his ideas and against his infirmities must have been memorable. "Undergraduates flocked to hear him . . . ," Michael Sadler, Christ Church Steward, wrote. "He wept when he came to the more serious parts of the sermons."[33] Claude M. Blagden, later Bishop of Peterborough, recalled that when Charles was to preach at St. Mary's, "word was passed round the University . . . and the church was

thronged, but those who expected fireworks were doomed to disappointment. What they did hear was a plain, evangelical sermon of the old-fashioned kind. . . ."[34] Gertrude Corrie, who summarized the sermon that Charles preached in Oxford on January 2, 1886, also recorded her impression of him: "We liked him immensely; he has a fine face, especially profile . . . a sweet face, seen full. He began without a text, saying how the service had altered in fifty years, and the danger of our coming for what we got—outside accessories—for people spoke of liking and enjoying, just as if it were a musical act, or the opera. . . . We were to look on him as a fellow wanderer in the garden—a fellow traveller hoping for light. . . ."[35]

"His sermons were picturesque in style," wrote T. B. Strong, "and strongly emotional. . . . They came from real and sincere devotion: he delivered them slowly and carefully, and he held his audience."[36] When Charles died, H. L. Thompson wrote: "Some will remember his sermon at St. Mary's last Lent Term; the erect, gray-haired figure, with the rapt look of earnest thought; the slow, almost hesitating speech; the clear and faultless language; the intense solemnity and earnestness which compelled his audience to listen for nearly an hour, as he spoke to them of the duty of reverence, and warned them of the sin of talking carelessly of holy things."[37]

"He has often told me that he never wrote out his sermons," Beatrice Hatch remembered. "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."[38]

May Barber accompanied him to some of his sermons: "I think for him to go and preach was a very plucky thing to do. . . . He liked to take somebody with him and put them in the back seat of the church, and then, walking home, you had to tell him what you remembered of the sermon."[39]

Howard Hopley, Vicar of Westham, Hastings, recalled that on the Sunday that Charles preached in his church, "our grand old church was crowded, and, although our villagers are mostly agricultural labourers, yet they breathlessly listened to a sermon forty minutes long, and apparently took in every word of it. It was quite extempore, in very simple words, and illustrated by some delightful and most touching stories of children."[40]

When Derek Hudson was working on his life of Charles, he spoke to an old man at Guildford "who used to sit in the choir when . . . [Charles] preached there. He told me," wrote Hudson, "that the choir-boys were rather sorry when Mr. Dodgson preached because he took such a long time about it. And he added that he was 'the most terribly thin-looking man he had ever seen. He looked as if he could have done with a good dinner.' "[41] Collingwood emphasized his uncle's "shy and sensitive nature";[42] T. B. Strong insisted that Charles's "ministry was seriously hindered by native shyness";[43] H. A. L. Fisher, Warden of New College, wrote that his "intense shyness and morbid dislike of publicity made him a figure apart";[44] and Mark Twain, meeting Charles at the MacDonalds (July 26, 1879), found him "only interesting to look at, for he was the stillest and shyest full-grown man I have ever met except 'Uncle Remus.' "[45] A good many of Charles's child friends concurred. "With grown-ups he was shy," wrote Enid Stevens, ". . . he was obviously terrified of my mamma."[46] And he himself made the point from time to time: "If people are shy with me, I generally feel so too" he wrote Mrs. Rix (June 7, 1885). Inviting a young friend to dine with three other young ladies in his rooms at Christ Church, he wrote (May 24, 1882): "Do come as soon as you can. I will begin to expect you about 6-½. Then I shall have time to get over the shyness produced by meeting so many ladies at once." "It always makes me a *little* shy to have to talk with several people (strangers) looking on and listening, and I feel obliged to keep to the most *general* topics of ordinary 'small-talk,' of which material my supply *soon* comes to an end," he explained to Mrs. Stevens (May 4, 1891) after she threw him in with a group of her lady friends. ". . . And I was made *doubly* shy by your beginning to talk about my 'books'! I am quite sure you had not the least idea how I *hate* having my books, or myself, *en évidence* in the presence of strangers."

Indulging in a double standard, as he did, did not trouble him. He disliked having uninvited visitors show up at his door but defended his right to make unannounced calls on others. Consider, too, his attitude about giving and collecting autographs. His photograph albums were his special art treasure, and when he deemed a photograph worth including, he trimmed and mounted it artistically, found for some an appropriate literary quotation or legend to help the viewer grasp his dramatic intent, and often, especially with portraits, had the sitter autograph the page the portrait appeared on. He also solicited autographs for child friends. He captured one from "*the* Kate Terry" for Lily MacDonald (May 19, 1868); he sent one of Tenniel for a friend of a friend (June 12, 1876); he got Liddon and Ruskin to sign a child friend's autograph book (November 11, 1883); and Ellen Terry obliged him

by sending autographs and notes to any number of child friends (October 30, 1885). On July 14, 1893, he sent one young friend sixteen autographs.

But he staunchly objected to giving his own autograph to anyone. On May 11, 1883, he pleaded with Mrs. C. A. Heurtley, the wife of a professor of divinity, not to give away any "specimen of my handwriting" and explained: "My constant aim is to remain, *personally,* unknown to the world; consequently I have always refused applications for photographs or autographs, as my features and handwriting belong to me as a private individual—and I often beg even my own private friends, who possess one or the other, *not* to put them into albums where strangers can see them."[47]

He was relentless in adding to his own collection photographs of the famous and the attractive, but he adamantly refused to give his own photograph. He had many photographs of himself taken and gave them to cherished friends, but he refused to send any to casual acquaintances or collectors. He confesses to a friend (December 10, 1881) that "I so much *hate* the idea of strangers being able to know me by sight that I refuse to give my photo. . . ."

He set his sights even beyond the famous in the art world, the theater, and letters: he tried to snare aristocrats and, to a degree, succeeded. He was less successful with royalty. We know that he managed interviews with the Prince of Wales and succeeded in photographing Queen Victoria's youngest son and the Crown Prince of Denmark. During a visit to Hatfield House he encountered the Duke of Albany's widow and her two children and pursued them for years through their governor. He got within striking distance of the Queen at the deanery in December 1860 and recorded that Lady A. Stanley, wife of the Dean of Westminster and Resident Bedchamber Woman to the Queen, "has shown my photographs to the Queen, and is commanded to say that 'Her Majesty admires them very much.' " But the Queen chose not to keep any. He sent Princess Beatrice, the Queen's youngest daughter, a specially bound presentation copy of *Alice;* and once, when walking in Windsor Park (July 1, 1865), he "met the Queen driving in an open carriage" and fancied that he "got a bow from her all to myself."

Charles never made it to either Buckingham Palace or Windsor Castle, but on two separate occasions at least, he wittily feigned acquaintance with the Queen in letters to child friends. Replying to Maggie Cunnynghame (April 7, 1868), who had requested a better photograph of himself, he wrote: "How *can* you ask for a better one of me than the one I sent! It is one of the best ever done! Such grace, such dignity, such benevolence, such ——— as

a great secret (please don't repeat it) the Queen sent to ask for a copy of it, but . . . [I was obliged to answer:] 'Mr. Dodgson presents his compliments to Her Majesty, and regrets to say that his rule is never to give his photograph except to *young* ladies.' I am told she was annoyed about it, and said, 'I'm not so old as all that comes to.' " He also composed a fake letter from the Queen inviting him to a garden party and sent it to the three Drury sisters, but, alas, the idea, while amusing, was all air.

Charles's fake letter from Queen Victoria purporting to invite him to a garden party, which he sent to the Drury sisters, whom he had met on a railway journey

Although he lionized the great and the desirable, he resented any efforts to lionize him. "Perhaps your book of poetry has not brought on you all the annoyances of one who, having been unlucky enough to perpetrate two small books for children, has been bullied ever since by the herd of lion-hunters who seek to drag him out of the privacy he hoped an 'anonym' would give him," he wrote to a friend (December 10, 1881). "I have had to keep a printed form ready, and constantly use it, in answer to such people, stating that I acknowledge *no* connection with books not bearing my name," he wrote (August 17, 1892). The printed form is *The Stranger Circular,* copies of which he had printed in 1890:

> Mr. Dodgson is so frequently addressed by strangers on the quite unauthorised assumption that he claims, or at any rate acknowledges the authorship of books not published under his name, that he has found it necessary to print this, once for all, as an answer to all such applications. He neither claims nor acknowledges any connection with any pseudonym, or with any book that is not published under his own name. Having therefore no claim to retain, or even to read the enclosed, he returns it for the convenience of the writer who has thus misaddressed it.

Believe me, dear Madam,
faithfully yours,
C. L. Dodgson
[alias "Lewis Carroll"]

A rare instance when Charles signed both his real name and his pseudonym to a letter

But Charles's efforts to keep his two identities separate were motivated by more than his wish for privacy. He realized that if the world knew that Charles Dodgson and Lewis Carroll were one, professional pundits might shrug off his mathematical works; indeed some reviews of his serious books fell into that superficial mode when the writers linked the two names.

Other inconsistencies arose. He vented his displeasure (April 16, 1855) over an editor who had taken liberties in interpolating Euclid, insisting that no editor had the right "to *mangle* the original writer. . . ." But in a letter to his sister Mary (August 23, 1854), he advised her to improve a poem by William Cullen Bryant by altering a line before writing it into the family magazine. Even more remarkable, he repeatedly advised Ellen Terry and Henry Irving to modify passages in Shakespeare to improve both the material and their stage performance. He also put in train the idea of publishing an expurgated Shakespeare for girls, not content with available texts.

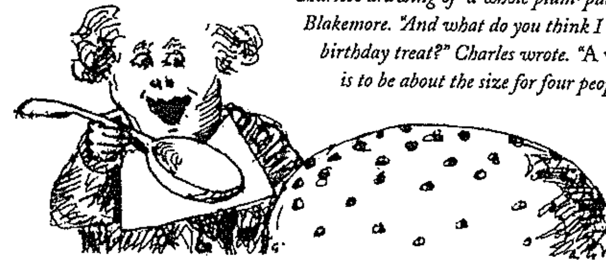
He drew caricatures of himself, one depicting what he looked like when he lectured, his hand over his mouth;[48] another showing a gross creature eating a whole plum pudding;[49] a third, after he had made friends with a real live princess at Hatfield House, showing his head held so high that he would not be able to see his correspondent were they to meet (see page 477). He composed verbal portraits of himself too. "Are you gradually making up your mind to the catastrophe of a call from me?" he wrote (March 5, 1877) to a new friend who has sent him a fan letter. "For I really think you will see me some day soon. Please picture to yourself a tallish man (about 6 feet 4 inches), very fat, with a long white beard, a bald head and a very red face—and then, when you see me you will be agreeably disappointed." Yet, when he caught Isa Bowman, to whom he sent the raised-head sketch, making a caricature of him, he flushed, snatched up her drawing, and tore it to bits.[50]

In his prime he was an agreeable social creature, attending all sorts of

public events, traveling hither and thither to the homes of mere acquaintances, attending dinner parties. As time went by, however, he grew more restrictive, more particular, even irascible. One of his young friends reported that he "disliked parties, especially dinner-parties—'bandying small talk with dull people' was his description of them—and if he did not talk it was not from shyness but from boredom."[51] In early years he was happy to give tea and take it with friends; later he grew to abhor it as "that unwholesome drug" (April 29, 1880). He decided to shun dinner parties altogether, but before he did (May 30, 1882), dining at his friends the Faussetts', during "a good part of the evening, I read *The Times,* while the party played a round game of spelling words—a thing I will never join in: rational conversation and *good music,* are the only things which, to me, seem worth meeting for. . . ." But he enjoyed parties at Hatfield House and sat up until one in the morning talking to fellow guests in the smoking room.

"No carte has yet been done of me that does real justice to my smile," Charles wrote in 1868 to his child friend Maggie Cunnynghame, "and so I hardly like, you see, to send you one. . . . Meanwhile, I send a little thing to give you an idea of what I look like when I'm lecturing. The merest sketch, you will allow—yet still I think there's something grand in the expression of the brow and in the action of the hand."

He certainly shied away from parties where there was a danger of his being lionized, and as he grew older, he shunned groups of people and came to prefer individuals. "Please let me know if you are one of the ladies who are 'At Home' on a fixed day each week," he asked Mrs. Henderson (April 12, 1891), ". . . that we may *avoid* such a day!" On April 30, 1881, writing to the editor of the *St. James's*



Charles's drawing of "a whole plum-pudding" in a letter to Edith Blakemore. "And what do you think I am going to have for my birthday treat?" Charles wrote. "A whole plum-pudding! *It is to be about the size for four people to eat: and I shall eat it in my room,* all by myself! *The doctor says he is 'afraid I shall be ill'; but I simply say* 'Nonsense!'"

Gazette on "The Purity of Elections," Charles dreamed publicly of a utopia without dinner parties. On November 18, 1881, he dined with the Bonamy Prices: "An excellent host," Charles observed, "but the noise was too great for comfort. I weary more and more of dinner-parties and rejoice that people have almost ceased to invite me." He then begins to decline "all visits, parties, etc." (June 26, 1887).

Not quite all, however, for, as he wrote to the novelist Anne Isabella Thackeray (October 24, 1887), "every law has its exceptions." He continued calling on some friends and giving his special brand of dinner parties, but almost unconditionally rejected invitations. He even resisted the lure of Hatfield House, but, as he explained to Lord Salisbury (June 7, 1897), he was not cutting himself off from the Cecils: "Although I was boorish enough to decline . . . Lady Salisbury's last kind invitation to Hatfield, yet I do not consider communications with your family to have *ceased.* I still occasionally venture to appear in Arlington Street [the Cecils' London home] and I *frequently* take advantage of the always-ready hospitality which [Lady] Maud [the Cecil daughter married to the Earl of Selborne] provides, for me and any friend I happen to bring, in Mount Street. Once, not long ago, she gave luncheon, on *four* consecutive Saturdays, to me, her *old* friend, and to a new *young* friend each time!"

He was tightly bound up in Victorian values and decidedly class-conscious. Recounting to his brother Edwin an extraordinary backstage visit at the Haymarket Theatre to watch a group of child actors prepare for a performance, he wrote (March 11, 1867): "There was not much real beauty [in the little actresses], but 2 or 3 of them would have been much admired, I think, if they had been born in higher stations in life." Commenting to Miss Thomson (January 24, 1879) on some draft sketches she had sent him, he objected to "the diameter of the knee and ankle" of one of the children she had drawn. "Still," he added, "you *may* have got those dimensions from real life, but in that case I think your model must have been a country-peasant child, descended from generations of labourers: there is a marked difference between them and the upper classes—especially as to the size of the ankle." Again he wrote Miss Thomson (September 27, 1893), after the Moberly Bells (Mrs. C. F. Moberly Bell was Gertrude Chataway's older sister) agreed to allow her to use their children as models, asking her "to put them into a few pretty attitudes, and make a few hasty *sketches* of them. . . . These you could *finish,*" he added, "with the help of hired models. But hired models," he insisted, "are plebeian and *heavy;* and they have thick ankles, which I do *not* agree with you in admiring. *Do* sketch these two upper-class children. One doesn't get such an opportunity every day!"

On September 29, 1881, Charles made a new child friend on the beach, one Julia Johnstone, "who proved very pleasant and quite free of shyness. . . . The mother is pleasant, but hardly looks a lady. I fancy the father is in business . . . but of course I shall not drop her acquaintance for that." Weighing the wisdom of publishing a cheap edition of *Alice,* he concluded (March 4, 1887) to Edith Nash: "It isn't a book *poor* children would much care for." And writing to a lady friend in Oxford from Eastbourne, he complained (July 27, 1890): "The children on the beach are not the right sort, *yet.* They *are* a vulgar-looking lot! I should think there's hardly any one here, yet, above the 'small shop-keeper' rank."

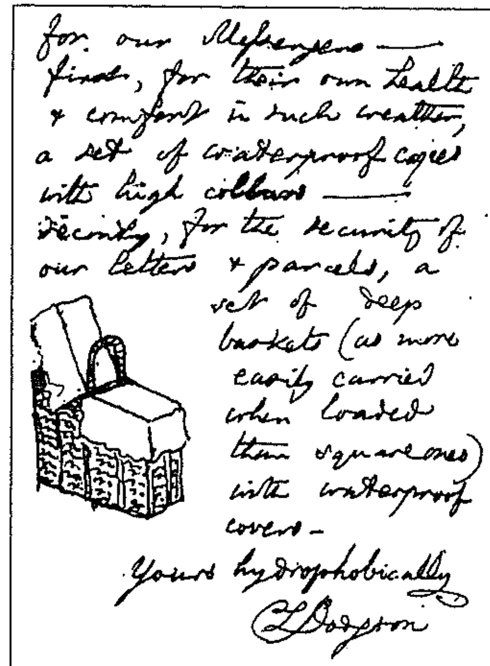
On the day after telling an assembly of fifty or sixty girls "Bruno's Picnic" and other stories at a school where Beatrice Hatch was teaching, he wrote her (February 16, 1894): "I should like to know . . . who that sweet-looking girl was, aged 12, with a red nightcap. . . . She was speaking to you when I came up to wish you good-night. I fear I must be content with her *name* only," he added; "the social gulf between us is probably too wide for it to be wise to make *friends.* Some of my little *actress*-friends are of a *rather* lower status than myself. But, below a certain line, it is hardly wise to let a girl have a 'gentleman' friend—even one of 62!"

Insensitive in some social situations, he could also be rude, rigid, and off-putting. His niece Violet Dodgson reported that "many . . . found him difficult, exacting, and uncompromising in business matters and in college life." And, she continued, he "had undoubtedly his foibles. For instance . . . he had a disconcerting way (on becoming aware that the informal tea which he was settling down to enjoy was a real *party,* with people invited to meet him) of rising and departing with polite but abrupt excuses, leaving an embarrassed hostess and a niece murmuring scared apologies."[52] On July 25, 1891, he preached to the mother of a child friend about the syntax of her letters. After he gave a firm permission to produce a *Looking-Glass* biscuit tin and they undertook to send the tins to the hundreds of names and addresses he provided, he complained (September 7, 1892) about an advertisement pasted inside the tins: "What is an even greater annoyance to me, and a more unwarrantable liberty, they have [made] me responsible, not only for the vulgarity of a piece of bad English, but also for being the sender of 'kind regards' to my friends. There is not a single one, on the whole list I sent you, to whom I should dream of sending such a message."

He frequently wrote stinging letters of complaint: letters to the Steward of Christ Church were often officious and, alas for Charles, sometimes make him sound ridiculous. On February 7, 1881, "devoured . . . with anxiety for the fate of a paper parcel" he had sent by messenger, he suggested that Christ Church provide its messengers with waterproof capes with high collars and "for the security of our letters and parcels" a set of deep baskets with waterproof covers. On November 19, 1886, he protested that more milk than he had ordered arrived each morning at his door; on December 11 he was troubled by the outbreak of a fire in the scout's chimney: "The Scout here, and his assistant, are, I should think, stupid enough and forgetful enough to cause *any* amount of accident," he wrote. On February 13, 1887, he detected "a dangerous effluvium, caused by some defect of drainage, arising from somewhere under the Scout's room"; on March 28 he requested that the scout engage a competent assistant: "I have suffered so much, in breakage of glass and china from the clumsiness of the last assistant. . . ." On April 14 he wrote for a colleague and himself because they had agreed that

> it is about time to make a formal representation to you as to the very inferior cookery now prevalent. During the last 10 days or so, we have had
>
> (a) Beefsteak almost too tough to eat.
>
> (b) Mashed potatoes that were a mere sop.
>
> (c) Portugal onions quite underboiled and uneatable.
>
> (d) . . . Baked apple-dumplings. Their idea of that dish seems to be this: "take some apples: wrap each in the thinnest possible piece of pastry: bake till nearly black, so as to produce the consistency of—say pasteboard."
>
> (e) Cauliflowers are always sent with no part soft enough to eat except the top of the flowers. . . .
>
> (f) Potatoes (boiled) are *never* "mealy," as cooked here.

On February 27, 1888, he worried about the arrangement of bells summoning the porter in case of need or in an emergency; on April 19 he recommended a Ferrometer for Christ Church water closets; on December 23, 1889, he objected to the messengers clearing the postbox before the appointed time, not allowing for last-minute additions; and on February 24, 1890, he insisted that the messenger did not pick up the post on time. On April 13, 1891, he wrote: "On Saturday morning, just after I had got out of bed, a ladder was reared against the bedroom window, and a man came up


for our Messengers — first, for their own health & comfort in such weather, a set of waterproof capes with high collars — secondly, for the security of our letters & parcels, a set of deep baskets (as more easily carried when loaded than square ones) with waterproof covers —

Yours hydrophobically

C L Dodgson

Charles's drawing of a basket for delivering the post, in a letter to the Steward of Christ Church. "Devoured as I am with anxiety for the fate of a paper parcel I sent by a messenger this morning," Charles wrote, "which I fear will arrive wet through . . . it occurs to me to suggest . . . [that you] provide for our Messengers . . . a set of deep baskets . . . with water-proof covers."

to clean it. As I object to performing my toilet with a man at the window, I sent him down again, telling him 'You are not to clean it now,' meaning, of course, that *that* window was to be left till I was dressed. [But] . . . they went away, and have not returned. So the bedroom-window, the 2 windows of the sitting-room, and the window of the pantry, are not yet cleaned. . . ."

Mind you, his fastidiousness stood Christ Church in good stead during his more than nine years as Curator of Senior Common Room. He kept efficient records, conducted business on an impersonal, professional level, established a wine committee, held wine tastings, expanded the wine cellars, and filled them with valuable vintages to slake the dons' thirst for many years to come. The acerbic tone of his letters to merchants arose from his desire to maintain proper relationships with them and to schoolmaster their behavior. His stern need for privacy provoked a third-person letter to one vintner: "Mr. Dodgson . . . understands . . . that . . . wine-merchants . . . are in the habit of calling periodically on the Curator. This practice he hopes he may, without giving offence, request may be discontinued."

His search for information about wine and determination to maintain decorum often merged. In deciding to shift some sherry to another location, Charles asked whether the move would harm the wine, and if not, how long it would take the wine to settle and be drinkable after the move. On November 25, 1888, he sought advice from a wine merchant about the most effective way to use port of different vintages. On December 24, 1889, he wrote a rather un-Christmaslike letter to Messrs. Snow and Company: "Mr. Dodgson has given directions to return to Messrs. Snow the box of Portugal fruit. . . . He would have thought it hardly necessary to point out that the Curator, whose duty it is to try to procure the *best* goods he can for Common Room, cannot possibly accept *presents* from any of the tradespeople concerned. . . . He thinks it only fair to warn Messrs. Snow that any repetition of such attentions may seriously affect their position as Wine-merchants dealt with by Common Room."

Charles's relationship with his publisher, Macmillan, has provoked a good deal of comment, almost all unfavorable to the author, declaring him compulsively fussy and obdurate, and picturing the publisher as long-suffering. But just as the myth about Charles's relationship with Tenniel vanishes before the evidence, so do these accusations. True, Charles made incessant and uncompromising demands upon the publisher. He was, particularly in the production of his books, a perfectionist who wanted his readers to have the finest possible quality he could provide. Not only did he require Macmillan to suppress the first edition of *Alice* in 1865, but in 1886 he also instructed him to dispose of an inferior edition of *The Game of Logic*. In 1889 he condemned the entire first run of ten thousand copies of *The Nursery "Alice"* because, as he wrote Macmillan (June 23, 1889), the pictures "vulgarise the whole thing"; and in 1893, when he found that a later run (the sixtieth thousand) of *Looking-Glass* had come from the presses with the illustrations not well printed, he ordered Macmillan to scuttle them as well.

In condemning Charles, however, critics overlook his role as sole provider. He, not Macmillan, paid for all production costs: he paid the illustrator, the engraver, the printer; he paid for advertising. While his books bear the Macmillan imprint, Macmillan functioned more like contractor and distributor than publisher, and in a complete reversal of what we would expect of a publisher-author arrangement today, Macmillan got a 10 percent commission on sales and transmitted the balance to Charles. Publishing a book involved a huge investment of capital for an Oxford don and, given Charles's uncompromising standards, made for an almost endless exchange of correspondence and some acerbity.

Some of Charles's least attractive behavior occurred in response to what he considered violations of religious rectitude. According to Ethel Arnold, his "sense of humour . . . failed absolutely when any allusion to the Bible, however innocuous, was involved. The patriarchs, the prophets, major and minor, were as sacrosanct in his eyes as any of the great figures of the New Testament; and a disrespectful allusion to Noah or even to Nebuchadnezzar would have shocked and displeased him quite as much as any implied belittlement of St. Paul. . . . I shall never forget the snub administered to one unfortunate acquaintance . . . who ventured to tell him . . . [a story] which, in his opinion, treated religious matters with levity."

In early May 1887 Charles heard the Bishop of Ripon, William Boyd Carpenter, deliver the Bampton Lectures at Oxford. At one point Carpenter employed the analogy "of a domestic quarrel, wherein you find the father and mother in absolute antagonism to each other upon the origin of the passionate nature of their child, and each says to the other, 'This is the fault of that terrible temper which you know belongs to *your* family.' " Charles reacted instantaneously and sent Carpenter a rebuke (May 8): "I write, as one of the large University congregation who listened this morning to the Bampton Lecture, to make one single remark—that I feel very sure that the 2 or 3 sentences in it, which were distinctly *amusing* (and of which *one* raised a general laugh) went too far to undo, in the minds of many of your hearers, and specially among the *young* men, much of the good effect of the rest of the sermon. Feeling profoundly (as who can fail to do?) what enormous powers have been given to your Lordship for influencing large bodies of men, I feel an equally profound regret that anything should occur likely to lessen their influence for good."[53]

In the mid-1880s Charles conducted a friendly transatlantic correspondence with the editors of a student newspaper called *Jabberwock* at the Boston Latin School for Girls. The editors looked upon Charles as a special friend, a sort of patron, and sent him copies of their paper, to which he contributed a three-stanza verse entitled "A Lesson in Latin." But then he received a copy of their paper that contained a limerick ascribed to a Unitarian minister:

There was an old deacon of Lynn,
Who confessed he was given to sin,
When they said, "Yes, you are,"
Oh, how he did swear!
That angry old deacon of Lynn.

Again Charles reacted instantaneously and, as the girls' newspaper reported, "he sat down and with a quill of wrath stopped the *Jabberwock* once for all, saying that he never wanted to see a copy again, and that he was deeply disappointed that the young editors could allow anything in their columns which made light of so solemn a subject as the confession of sin!"[54]

He even wrote to the Duchess of Albany on July 1, 1889, about some remark one of her children made "on a scene in the life of Our Lord—a remark which . . . gave a humorous turn to the passage. . . . Is it not a cruelty (however unintentionally done)," he asked, "to tell any one an amusing story of that sort, which will be for ever linked, in his or her memory, with the Bible words, and which *may* have the effect, just when those words are most needed, for comfort in sorrow, or for strength in temptation, or for light in 'the valley of the shadow of death,' of robbing them of all their sacredness and spoiling all their beauty?"

He dealt mercilessly with the parents of a twelve-year-old actress friend, Polly Mallalieu, who visited him at Eastbourne in June 1891. When he measured the child's height, she reported that her parents insisted that she was an inch shorter than she actually was in order to secure acting engagements for her. Charles wrote accusing the parents of committing "a sin in God's sight" and of teaching the child "to think lightly of sin."

Did his role as minister enable him to sit in judgment on the actions of others and to intrude so blatantly into other people's lives? The answer is probably complex. He had a fiercely religious cast of mind, a faith worked out by his own stern rules of logic. To compromise it in any way would have been to abandon it altogether and to find himself in a spiritual desert. His devotion to the rigid laws of logic led to a rigid, uncompromising set of rules that governed his life and spilled over into the lives of others. The fixed rules were essential, too, for him to enjoy the friendship of children with a free conscience. Surely he knew that his uncompromising approach pained others, despite his effusive apologies, disclaimers, and sympathetic language. But he had to turn a blind eye to the hurt he caused: his obdurate principles had to prevail at all cost.

On more than one occasion Charles stalked out of a theater in the middle of a performance because the playwright had violated his idea of religious sanctity. He also wrote about occasions when stage performances offended his conscience. In his essay "The Stage and the Spirit of Reverence," he takes W. S. Gilbert to task for violating the principles he holds sacred: "Mr. Gilbert . . . seems to have a craze for making bishops and

clergymen contemptible." He had seen *H.M.S. Pinafore,* with a considerable cast of youngsters, and, as he puts it, "as performed by *children,* one passage in it was to me sad beyond words. It occurs when the captain utters the oath 'Damn me!' and forthwith a bevy of sweet innocent-looking little girls sing, with bright, happy looks, the chorus 'He said "Damn me!" He said "Damn me!"' I cannot find words to convey . . . the pain I felt in seeing those dear children taught to utter such words to amuse ears grown callous to their ghastly meaning."

His criticism once offended Ellen Terry:

> Mr. Dodgson . . . once brought a little girl to see me in *Faust.* He wrote and told me that she had said (where Margaret begins to undress): "Where is it going to stop?" and that perhaps in consideration of the fact that it could affect a mere child disagreeably, I ought to alter my business! . . . I had known dear Mr. Dodgson for years and years. He was as fond of me as he could be of any one over the age of ten, but I was *furious.* "I thought you only knew *nice* children," was all the answer I gave him. "It would have seemed to me awful for a *child* to see harm where harm is; how much more when she sees it where harm is not." . . . But I felt ashamed and shy whenever I played that scene.[55]

The actress's generosity enabled their friendship to survive. In fact, she, through the years, was extremely kind to Charles. At his behest, she gave elocution lessons to at least one of his child friends, procured walk-on parts for others, provided him and his child friends with choice theater seats. Charles was, of course, enchanted by the mystique of the theater and the people connected with it, but in the early years, he idolized Ellen Terry above all. For him, she personified the theater itself, and he worshiped her as his thespian goddess. His diaries contain eighty-three entries about her. He saw virtually every play she acted in and frequently went backstage to visit her.

Then, suddenly, a dramatic change occurred. All at once, no visits are recorded, no letters exchanged. The cause of the abrupt cooling off was Ellen Terry's private life. In 1868 Charles learned that she had left her husband, G. F. Watts, and gone to live, out of wedlock, with Edwin Godwin, an architect, by whom in time she bore two children. Charles broke with her completely and for almost twelve years shunned her. "I felt that she had [so] entirely sacrificed her position that I had no desire but to drop her acquaintance," he wrote (April 12, 1894). Then, when Godwin abandoned Miss

Terry and their two children and she married in 1877 the actor C. C. Wardell (stage name Charles Kelly), Charles sought her out again. "It was a most generous act, I think, [for Mr. Wardell] to marry a woman with such a history," Charles wrote. In any case, she was again a true wife in Charles's eyes, and he could resume the friendship.

Gone, however, was the old adulation; she was still a tainted woman. In 1894 the nineteen-year-old Dolly Baird confided to him that she wanted to try the stage. Charles wanted to help, and he knew that Miss Terry would take an interest in Dolly if he requested it. But, in person and in a letter he sent Dolly's mother (April 12, 1894), he warned Dolly's parents about Miss Terry's past. Mrs. Baird was less censorious and allowed Charles to appeal to the actress on behalf of her daughter, and Dolly, with Ellen Terry's help, went on to become a leading West End actress.[56]

Charles's uncompromising moral stance, his harsh judgments of others, his occasional priggishness would be even more objectionable were it not leavened by sincere and abject humility and extraordinary generosity. We have seen that even as a young man, as he approached his twenty-fourth birthday, he yearned to shake off all pride and selfishness. On August 6, 1865, he preached at Croft on "*self-sacrifice.*" In a letter to Ellen Terry on March 20, 1883, he thanked her for her kindness to one of his protégées: "I think you have learned a piece of philosophy which many never learn in a long life—that, while it is hopelessly difficult to secure *for oneself* even the smallest bit of happiness, and the more trouble we take the more certain we are to fail, there is nothing so easy as to secure it *for somebody else.* . . ."

He wrote to Edith Rix (July 29, 1885): "May you treat me as a perfect friend, and write anything you like to me, and ask my advice? Why, *of course* you may, my child! What else am I good for? But oh, my dear child-friend, you cannot guess how such words sound to *me!* That any one should look up to *me*, or think of asking *my* advice—well, it makes one feel humble . . . rather than proud—humble to remember, while others think so well of me, what I really *am* in myself. 'Thou, that teachest another, teaches thou not thyself?' . . . Anyhow, I like to *have* the love of my child-friends, though I know I don't deserve it."

His generosity was boundless. One child friend recalled that during a London outing she and Charles were in a pastry shop buying some cakes when Charles noticed "a small crowd of little ragamuffins . . . assembled" outside staring hungrily through the window at the cakes. He piled up seven of the cakes on one arm and took them out to the seven hungry little youngsters.[57]

He undertook heavy social burdens on behalf of his child friends. He got the artist Hubert von Herkomer to examine Ethel Hatch's work and give a professional opinion of her talent; he solicited similar advice from Joseph Noël Paton for Heartie Hunter. He composed and sent to numerous friends a circular letter recommending they attend a violin concert to be given by Angela Vanbrugh. He got Ellen Terry to provide a box for young Lottie Rix to see her in *King Lear*, and again for his cousins, the Quin girls, and yet again for Dolly Baird. He offered his Eastbourne lodgings to distant relatives and friends and paid their railway fare down to the sea.[58] He gave each of his nieces a watch when they reached an appropriate age. A veritable legion of children benefited from his untiring attentions. One of them, Edith Alice Litton, records the warm afterglow of her friendship with Charles. Her father, E. A. Litton, Fellow of Oriel College and Vice-Principal of St. Edmund Hall, Oxford, and Charles were well acquainted. Charles took the daughter fishing and brought her a kitten named Lily.

> I always attribute my love for animals to the teaching of Mr. Dodgson; his stories of animal life, his knowledge of their lives and histories, his enthusiasm about birds and butterflies, passed many a tiresome hour away. The monkeys in the Botanical Gardens were our special pets, and oh! the nuts and biscuits we used to give them! He entered into the spirit of the fun as much as . . . [I] did. . . . [Christ Church and Merton meadows] were remarkable then for the quantity of snails of all kinds that, on fine days and damp days, came out to take the air, and to me they were objects of great dislike and horror. Mr. Dodgson so gently and patiently showed me how wonderfully they were made, that I soon got over the fright and made quite a collection of discarded shells. . . .[59]

His generosity extended beyond children. After his father's death, he was the constant mainstay of his Guildford family. He regularly allotted funds to the widow of his cousin William Wilcox. His nephew wrote that he "was always ready to do one a kindness, even though it put him to great expense and inconvenience. The income from his books and other sources, which might have been spent in a life of luxury and selfishness, he distributed lavishly where he saw it was needed, and in order to do this he always lived in the most simple way. . . . In several instances, where friends in needy circumstances have written to him for loans . . . he has answered them, 'I will not *lend*, but I will *give* you the £100 you ask for.' "[60]

He was charming about birthday presents. In *Looking-Glass*, the White

King and Queen give Humpty Dumpty a cravat as an *un*birthday present, of course, and Humpty Dumpty tells Alice that he prefers unbirthday presents to birthday presents because you can get 364 of them a year as opposed to only one birthday present. Charles himself insisted that he never gave birthday presents. "You see," he explained to his young actress friend Polly Mallalieu (September 7, 1892), "if once I began, *all* my little friends would expect a present *every* year, and my life would be spent in packing parcels." But he liked to give presents and treats to child friends on his own birthday. "He brought me a present one day," wrote Ruth Gamlen, ". . . a copy of *Alice's Adventures Under Ground* in facsimile. . . . 'How lovely,' I cried, 'and it's my birthday.' 'Oh dear, that won't do at all,' said Mr. Dodgson. 'I don't approve of birthdays and I never give birthday presents and so I can't give you this book.' I must have looked very disappointed. 'Never mind,' he said, 'you shall have it as an *un*-birthday present and that will make it all right,' and that is what he wrote with my name inside the book with his fountain pen. . . ."[61]

To help people searching for work or advancement, Charles printed and sent out circulars. One concerned T. J. Dymes, classical scholar and schoolmaster, and his large family. After Charles learned in 1883 that they were poverty-stricken, he sent "about 180 copies of a letter (printed) about the Dymeses." Charles wrote about Dymes as "a friend of mine . . . in great distress" who had lost his post as under-master at a boys' school and sought employment for him and other members of the family. "Mr. Dymes has settled with his landlord for a payment of £219.7*s*. . . . ," Charles wrote Frederic Harrison, another friend of Dymes (October 4, 1883). "This sum I have lent him. Also I sent him some while ago £200 (which, though nominally a loan, was really meant to be a gift until he should be able, with perfect convenience to himself, to repay it): and for this debt of £419.7*s*. . . . I am to have a Bill of Sale on his furniture, thus saving it from all risk of being seized by other creditors." Dymes must have found work and resolved his problems, and Charles later called on and dined with the Dymeses, then comfortably settled in London.

Other circular letters sought an appropriate governess for his nieces, situations for two acquaintances, a teaching post for a cousin-godson, an assistant curate to help his brother-in-law, and an appointment for his brother Wilfred.

Charles gave many copies of his books to children's hospitals. He printed *Circular to Hospitals* in 1872 and again in 1890 and *Letter and Questions to Hospitals* in 1876, all offering copies of the *Alice*s and other books. He gave copies also to mechanics institutes, village reading rooms, and other worthy establishments. He turned over the profits from the facsimile of *Alice's Adventures Under Ground* to children's hospitals and convalescent homes for sick children. "You are most welcome to print for the use of the blind anything I have published," Charles wrote (January 5, 1890) to a stranger.

On January 29, 1880, he produced with his electric pen thirty copies of a testimonial to the Christ Church cook. When Charles mysteriously disappeared from his usual Christ Church haunts for two whole days, some learned that he was nursing a poor, friendless man—a minor college servant—stricken with typhoid fever in his lodgings in an obscure part of the city.[62]

Charles and Jowett had reason enough to be at loggerheads. Yet on March 1, 1883, after Jowett became Vice-Chancellor of the university, Charles called on him "at his request, to speak about the backs I wish to give to the seats in the gallery at St. Mary's." The seat backs with iron supports, costing £145, were duly installed.

Some of those who knew him sought to capture his unique charm in words. One of his young friends wrote of a visit that she, her father, and Charles paid to a friend, a Fellow at Magdalen, who was "very much interested in the study of the big drum. . . . With books before him and a much heated face, he was in full practice when we arrived. Nothing would do but that all the party must join in the concert. Father undertook the 'cello, Mr. Dodgson took a comb and paper, and, amidst much fun and laughter, the walls echoed with the finished roll, or shake, of the big drum. . . . All this went on till some other Oxford Dons (mutual friends) came in to see 'if anybody had gone suddenly cracked.' "[63]

Another youngster, Lottie Rix, whose older sister was already a friend of Charles, wrote (May 31, 1885) to her mother from her school in London after a surprise visit from Charles:

> The first thing he did after shaking hands with me and asking if I was Miss Rix, was to turn me round and look at my back. I wondered what on earth he was doing, but he said that he had been made to expect a tremendous lot of hair, and that he hadn't had the *least* idea what I was like, except that he had a vague vision of *hair.* We sat down and talked for a few minutes, and then he wanted to know if I should be allowed to come out with him, and if we were allowed "to go forth" with

Lottie Rix, a child friend whom Charles introduced to Ellen Terry, went on to become an actress herself; here she appears in a masculine stage role.

friends. I said we were, so then he said, "Well then, would you go and ask the lady principal (or dragon, or whatever you call her) if you may come now?" I went and after a little questioning from S. Louisa got leave.

Charles took Lottie to visit Harry Furniss's studio in St. John's Wood. On the journey, she reported, "we talked and he sent me into fits over one thing and another pretty well all the way. At the studio the starry-eyed youngster saw art in the making. "The whole time I was there, I had to keep saying to myself '*That*'s an artist who has a picture in the Academy, *that*'s Mr. Furniss and *that*'s Lewis Carroll'!" . . . It is quite absurd how fond he is of children—at least of *girls* . . . and whenever he saw the picture of one he flew to it." Lottie continued:

> He said that he had been talked to sometimes about himself; and that once when he was staying at Eastbourne he made friends with a little girl on the sands, and after he had known them a little time, asked her

> if she knew a little book called *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland.* She hadn't got it so he promised to give it to her. Her Mother said to him "Ah, have you heard about the author of the book? He's gone *mad!*" He said "Oh really, I had never heard it," and I think he added that he knew something about him. She stuck to it though and said "Oh yes, it was *quite* true," she could *assure* him. She had it from a friend at Lincoln who knew it for certain. . . . "He had written 3 books . . . and now he had gone mad." Two or three days afterwards he sent the little girl the book and put in it, "For So and So/From the Author." Soon afterwards he met the girl's mother, and when she saw him, she threw up her hands and said "Oh Mr. Dodgson. . . . I'll *never* say anything about anybody *to* anybody again!" To which he cheerfully replied "Oh yes Mrs.———you will."[64]

We get other glimpses of Charles in action in September 1876. Sir John Martin-Harvey, the actor-manager, gives an account of Charles's meeting with a child who would later become Martin-Harvey's wife. Little Nellie de Silva

> had watched with growing anger the way in which Bates, the man who kept the bathing-machines [at Sandown], treated the old horse that drew them up the shore from the water's edge, and suspected that the animal was insufficiently fed. She had also noticed that Bates kept his midday luncheon, carefully wrapped in a newspaper, tucked away . . . in a boat drawn up on the sands. Seeing an opportunity—she snatched the luncheon from its hiding place and fed it to the old horse. Then, armed with a stick, she deliberately smashed the glass in all the little peep-holes of the machines she could reach. This, of course, attracted the outraged holiday-folk upon the shore. The culprit was held up to popular indignation and Bates demanded full recompense for the damage done to his property. Then, from the crowd which had gathered upon the sands a meek little gentleman stepped forward, paid for the damage, and lifting the naughty little girl on to his shoulder, bore her away.[65]

The Curate of Christ Church, Eastbourne, remembered that Charles chose to attend services at his church "because the prayers were said more slowly there than anywhere else in Eastbourne; he, being deaf, liked to join in the congregational parts at a slow pace and not be left behind." Charles, he added, "rented two pews: one for himself and one for his silk hat."[66]

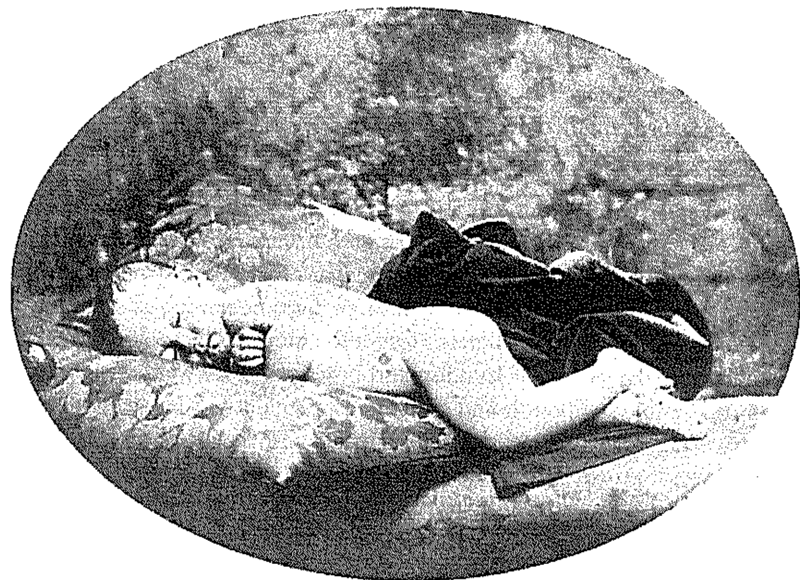
Along with his eccentricities went his belief that Tuesdays were his lucky days and his penchant for interleaving the number 42 and elements of it in his works and letters.

As the years passed, Charles complained more and more about an imperfect memory, an attribute he shared with the King in *Looking-Glass.* "Your bag was got back from Scotland Yard," Macmillan wrote Charles (August 26, 1876), after some forgetfulness. Langford Reed told of Charles dining with a man to whom he had recently been introduced. The following morning, while walking, the very same man stopped Charles. " 'I beg your pardon,' " Charles was reputed to have said, " 'but you have the advantage of me. I do not remember ever having seen you before.' " " 'That is very strange,' " came the reply, " 'for I was your host last night!' "[67]

A nephew recalls that Charles, having been invited to a children's party, went one afternoon to the house where he believed the party was taking place.

> He had no sooner been admitted than he dropped on his hands and knees and crawled into a room where a hubbub of voices suggested the party was in progress. Both his attitude and his ululation were intended to suggest a bear, but, unfortunately for his make-believe, instead of entering his friends' house he had mistakenly selected the one next door, where a conference of serious females was taking place in connection with some reform movement or other. The spectacle of an elderly, growling clergyman entering on all-fours created an immense sensation, which was increased when the embarrassed Mr. Dodgson suddenly rose to his feet and, without attempting any explanation, fled from the house with a celerity considerably more equine than ursine.[68]

Eccentric he was, like many dons, but there was something magical about him, too, particularly with children. In the summer of 1860 he encountered two of the MacDonald children in Alexander Munro's studio, Mary and her brother Greville, who was posing for Munro's *Boy with the Dolphin,* still to be seen at the fountain in Hyde Park. "I . . . began at once to prove to the [six-year-old] boy . . . that he had better take the opportunity of having his head changed for a marble one. The effect was that in about two minutes they had entirely forgotten that I was a total stranger, and were earnestly arguing the question as if we were old acquaintances." Collingwood added that Charles "urged that a marble head would not have to be brushed and combed. At this the boy turned to his sister with an air of great relief, saying, 'Do you hear *that,* Mary? It needn't be combed!' " Charles then argued



Charles's photograph of Bertram Rogers, his godson

"that a marble head couldn't speak, and as I couldn't convince either that he would be all the better for that, I gave in."[69] Greville himself later remembered Charles as "very dear to us. We would climb about him as, with pen and ink, he sketched absurd or romantic or homely incidents, the while telling us their stories with no moral hints to spoil their charm. . . . Then again he would take us to . . . the Polytechnic, to see the 'dissolving views' of Christmas Fairy Tales. No pantomime or circus ever gave me the same happiness. There was a toy-shop in Regent Street where he let us choose gifts, one of which will remain my own as long as memory endures . . . an unpainted, wooden horse. I loved it as much as any girl her doll."[70]

Charles frequently insisted that he did not like boys as a breed, but he often befriended individual boys. A good many Greville MacDonalds entered his life and he was kind and avuncular to them. Bert Coote, the ten-year-old actor, "a wonderfully clever little fellow," Charles wrote of him (January 13, 1877), was another who cherished Charles's friendship. "Mr. Dodgson often came behind the scenes," Bert wrote, "and all the children in the show adored him. I well remember my sisters, Carrie and Lizzie, and I

spending a day with him at Oxford and being vastly entertained by his collection of elaborate mechanical toys. The autographed copies of his books and photographs which he gave me are among my most cherished possessions." Bert also recorded that although he and his sister mimicked the mannerisms of grown-ups,

> we never gave imitations of Lewis Carroll, or shared any joke in which he could not join—he was one of us, and never a grown-up pretending to be a child in order to preach at us, or otherwise instruct us. We saw nothing funny in his eccentricities, perhaps he never was eccentric among children. . . . I shall never forget the morning he took my sister and I over the Tower of London and how fascinated we were by the stories he told us about it and its famous prisoners. . . . He was a born story-teller, and if he had not been affected with a slight stutter in the presence of grown-ups would have made a wonderful actor, his sense of the theatre was extraordinary.[71]

Wilfred Hatch as Cupid, taken by Charles. Wilfred, later in life a curate, was the brother of Charles's three friends whom he christened BEE—that is, Beatrice, Evelyn, and Ethel Hatch.

Charles's nephew Maj. C. H. W. Dodgson reminisced about his uncle: "When I was a little boy of about six [in May 1882] he would give me pick-a-back rides, and I remember that as I hung on with my arms round his neck, his chin and cheeks were rough. You see, he shaved in cold water with a blunt razor."[72]

Charles repeatedly gave parents advice on the schools and universities where they should send their sons and offered the boys help in preparing for Oxford examinations. He took genuine interest in his nephews' careers and paid for the schooling of at least one cousin.

Gertrude Thomson contributes an anecdote that illustrates Charles's quaint charm. Having admired her Christmas cards with fairy designs, Charles wrote her and arranged to meet her at the Victoria and Albert Museum. She recalled:

> A little before twelve I was at the rendezvous, and then the humour of the situation suddenly struck me, that *I* had not the ghost of an idea what *he* was like, nor would *he* have any better chance of discovering *me!* . . . Just as the big clock . . . clanged out twelve . . . a gentleman entered, two little girls clinging to his hands, and as I caught sight of the tall, slim figure, with the clean-shaven, delicate, refined face, I said to myself, "*That's* Lewis Carroll." He stood for a moment, head erect, glancing swiftly over the room, then bending down, whispered something to one of the children; she, after a moment's pause, pointed straight at me. Dropping their hands he came forward, and with that winning smile of his that utterly banished the oppressive sense of the Oxford don, said simply, "I am Mr. Dodgson; I was to meet you, I think?" To which I as frankly smiled and said, "How did you know me so soon?" "My little friend found you. I told her I had come to meet a young lady who knew fairies, and she fixed on you at once."[73]

On September 4, 1868, at Whitby during the summer vacation, Charles encountered the Bennie family. Mrs. Bennie later described the meeting:

> At the *table d'hôte* . . . I had on one side of me a gentleman whom I did not know, but . . . a very agreeable neighbour, and we seemed to be much interested in the same books, and politics also were touched on. After dinner my sister and brother rather took me to task for talking so much to a complete stranger. I said, "But it was quite a treat to talk to him and to hear him talk. Of one thing I am quite sure, he is a genius." My brother and sister, who had not heard him speak, again laughed at me, and said, "You are far too easily pleased." . . . Next morning nurse took out our two little twin daughters in front of the sea. I went out a short time afterwards, looked for them, and found them seated with my friend at the *table d'hôte* between them, and they were listening to him, open-mouthed, and in the greatest state of enjoyment, with his knee covered with minute toys. I, seeing their great delight, motioned to him to go on; this he did for some time. A most charming story he told them about sea-urchins and Ammonites. When it was over, I said, "You must be the author of 'Alice's Adventures.' " He laughed, but looked astonished, and said, "My dear Madam, my name is Dodgson,

> and 'Alice's Adventures' was written by Lewis Carroll." I replied, "Then you must have borrowed the name, for only he could have told a story as you have just done." After a little sparring he admitted the fact . . . and thus I made the acquaintance of one whose friendship has been the source of great pleasure for nearly thirty years. . . .[74]

Having heard the voices seeking to capture the man, what, in the end, are we to make of him? Some generalities are permissible. His religious, conservative upbringing marked him deeply, and he remained, through the years, traditional, nostalgic, although not regressive. He did not approve of what man had made of society, nor altogether how man sought to change it. He was forced to work with undergraduates with inadequate preparation and lackadaisical attitudes to learning. He struggled against lowering standards of education at Oxford, but at the same time was in the vanguard in demanding reforms aimed at governing his college more democratically. He was forward-looking in matters mathematical, logical, scientific, mechanical, technological. But he retreated from social involvements as he grew older, being happy, most of the time, to dwell within Tudor walls pursuing his occupations. When he ventured forth, it was not as a wanderer or a seeker after new adventure; he preferred to return to tried and tested haunts, to the Royal Academy, to theatrical citadels, to the soothing seashore. Wherever he went, he looked out for the natural child, the unsocialized angel, who, he knew, would enable him to glimpse what he considered heaven on earth and to recapture the innocence of his own childhood. He devoted himself to searching out the Elysium of childhood, the purity he himself had once known. The mystery of childhood lay at the core of his being; it was magical for him, and he valued it beyond most things; he sought it relentlessly and found it, and with it came a transcendent joy. Such was the nature of the man.