

# The Inglenook

## Alice in Wonderland.

On a golden Fourth of July afternoon in 1862, a little boat glided leisurely up the river Thames from Oxford, England, bearing a group of light-hearted voyagers: three little girls, Lorna, Alice and Edith Liddell, and a gentleman of thirty, Rev. Charles Lutwidge Dodgson.

Landing in a meadow by the river side they found rest and shade under a rock of new-mown hay. Then came a request from the child trio often made before and never refused. The story of this is told in the well-known lines with which Alice in Wonderland opens:

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

"Sometimes," Alice Liddell writes some years afterwards, "to tease us, and perhaps being really tired, Mr. Dodgson would stop suddenly and say, 'And that's all till next time.' 'Ah! but it is next time,' would be the exclamation from all three, and after some persuasion the story would begin afresh."

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

In this scene and hour began, as Alice Liddell well calls it, "The ever-delightful tale," one that has fascinated thousands on both sides of the sea, and become a children's classic. The story, the whole idea of which came like an inspiration to his mind, was told simply for the pleasure of his little friends; and especially for Alice, to whom he wrote years later: "My mental picture is as vivid as ever of one who was, through so many years, my ideal child friend." It was with no thought of publication, but to please her, and at her plea, that from memory he first wrote the story out as Alice's Adventures Underground.

His friend, George MacDonald, however, saw the manuscript and persuaded him to give it to the public, and three years from the day of that riverside loitering, Alice Liddell received the first copy of Alice in Wonderland.

The immediate popularity of the book was to its author a great surprise, as he had expected but a small sale and a money loss to himself. Though he long kept its authorship as far as possible a secret, it gave him great pleasure, as he once wrote: "That children love the book is a very precious thought to me, and next to their love I value the sympathy of those who come with a child's heart to what I have tried to write about a child's thoughts."

But we only half understand a book till we know the personality that lies behind it; the Lewis Carroll, who all through his sixty-six years of life carried the fresh child-heart, the wonderful sympathy with and understanding of child nature, the man, was more delightful, charming, lovable than anything he ever penned.

It is told that as a boy he made pets of the most odd and unlikely animals, and numbered certain snails and toads among his intimate friends; and also that he almost lived in that Wonderland through which he afterwards led the entranced Alice. One of the oldest of a numerous family, he early began to invent games and amusing stories for his brothers and sisters; and, as a schoolboy in a public school, he was known as a champion of those weaker and younger than himself.

Withal a strange union of gifts was his. Beside a current of whimsical humor, constantly bubbling up in verse and story, ran an equal talent for and enjoyment in the most abstruse mathematics. Few contrasts can be greater than that between C. L. Dodgson, for twenty-six years lecturer on mathematics at Christ Church College, Oxford, author of many volumes on his especial subject, noted among scholars for his exact and logical reasoning, and "Lewis Carroll," contributor to Punch, and author of Alice in Wonderland and Alice through the Looking Glass.

It is related that Queen Victoria, charmed with the first Alice, of which a presentation copy had been sent to Princess Beatrice, asked its author to send her his next book. In a few months, for both were published the same year, this arrived—a mathematical treatise on Determinants.

Perhaps it was shyness, but always the profound, serious scholar—who was so familiar with Euclid that he would often go through a whole book when weary at a night—shrank with almost morbid sensitiveness from any mention of his alter ego.

But his most marked characteristic was his love for children. "The man who loved little children," as some one named him, his power of attracting them to him, and of interesting them, was wonderful. Wherever he went, there children gathered round him, and "Next to what conversing with an angel would be, for it is hard to imagine it, comes, I think, the privilege of having a real child's thoughts uttered to you," he once wrote.

In return for this he gave them the best of his humor, his love, his sympathy. Many a time this last took a material and helpful form, for his generosity was as wide as it was modest, and to make others happy was the rule of his blameless life. With this thought, he distributed hundreds of his children's books to hospitals and convalescent homes, "wherever," as he wrote to a friend, "there are sick children capable of reading them, and though, of course, one takes some pleasure in the popularity of the books elsewhere, it is not nearly so pleasant a thought to me as that they may be a comfort and relief to the children in hours of pain and weariness."

It was his privilege to see his Alice translated into French, German, Italian and Dutch, and one poem, Father William, into Arabic, while a number of plays and operettas have been based on it. It was only last year that an English paper made inquiry as to the most popular children's book, and the verdict was for Alice in Wonderland.

There remains another and most beautiful side to his character, his deep and delicately reverent religious spirit, the perfect faith and trust with which, as simply as a child, he walked through life in the fear and love of God. To him one of the great attractions of childhood was its innocence and spirituality, and through the earthly love he was always gently seeking to lead the little ones to the heavenly love.

In his last book, Sylvia and Bruno, the ideals and beliefs which, as a Christian, he held dearest, found expression. He says: "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 this life; subjects which are so intimately bound up with every topic of human interest that it needs more effort to avoid than to touch on them."

Love was the keynote of his life; under everything he wrote lay the desire to make the world a brighter and happier place; his dread was always of giving pain, and his aspiration to follow humbly in the steps of Him who went about doing good. Thus, when one January in 1898, angel hands drew aside the veil, we cannot doubt that it was to give

him entrance to the fullness of the heavenly love that he had so long preached, and taught, and with true childlike spirit lived. Presbyterian Standard.

## The Green Ray at Sunset.

The existence of a "green ray," or "green flash," at the moment the sun disappears from view beneath the horizon, is unknown to many, but any careful observer can see the color, especially when the sun sets in the ocean. The phenomenon has been often noticed by physicists, and has been thought by some to be an optical illusion. The subject was recently discussed very fully in the French Physical Society. As reported in Science Abstracts (November), M. Guehard asserted that the green ray is "the gray shadow of the earth, feebly illuminated from the zenith and viewed by an eye far gazed for red; it therefore appears green." M. Pellat stated his belief, on the contrary, that "the setting yellow sun has a red lower and a green upper border, separately examinable in the telescope, and due to prismatic refraction by the atmosphere. The absorption which makes the sun's disk appear yellow, makes the violet upper rim appear green, or greenish-blue, instead of violet. When the sun sets, the upper green rim can be seen for a fraction of a second, but can be kept longer in view if the observer go up a slope as the sun sets." M. Guehard thought this was different from the green ray following the setting of a red sun. M. Kaveau said that he had seen "the sea colored green in a triangle with its apex at the point where the sun set; and the color seems to flow away towards the horizon."

## Training Shepherd Dogs.

The natives of New Mexico seem to have an original way of training shepherd dogs. A pup is taken from its mother as soon after birth as possible. The breed of the dog is immaterial. The young of a sheep or goat is taken away, and the pup is substituted. After the first few days the pup is never fed except just before the flock goes to pasture in the morning and just after the sheep are brought in at night. As soon as he can walk he goes out with the flock and stays with it all day. Whenever he begins to anticipate supper by trying to drive the flock in before sundown he gets punished. After he is about a year old he takes a flock out, guards it from other dogs and coyotes during the day, and brings it in at the proper time at night without supervision. I have tried all kinds of temptation on a dog that was encountered in the hills with his flock, but in spite of all he would remain faithful to his duty, driving his flock to a safe distance before venturing to make the acquaintance of my own dog.

## The Czarina's Private Fun.

The Empress of Russia is a very accomplished lady, speaking five languages, besides numbering among her recreations riding, painting, rowing, sketching, swimming, tennis, etc. But one of her favorite amusements is drawing caricatures.

Freed from the fear of the censor, she indulges with her pen and pencil in a way which makes even Russian ministers tremble, drawing them in caricature, which would mean death or Siberia to any other artist. She has drawn the Czar himself—a solemn, bearded but bald infant in long clothes, tied in an armchair, and surrounded by a host of grand dukes and grand duchesses armed with feeding bottles, all insisting on feeding him in a different way. No wonder the Czar is screaming at the top of his voice.

## Ready Beforehand.

"What are you doing now? I never saw a girl that was so continually finding something to do!"

"I am only going to sew a button on my glove."

"Why, you are not going out, are you?"

"Oh, no! I only like to get things ready beforehand, that's all."

And this little thing that had been persisted in by a certain girl until it had become a fixed habit, saved her more trouble than she herself had ever had any idea of; more time, too. Ready beforehand—ry it.—Christian Work.