



JACK

A LIFE OF C.S. LEWIS

GEORGE SAYER

Foreword by Lyle W. Dorsett

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*To my wife
Margaret*

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Acknowledgments

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I have made every effort to trace the present-day holders of the copyrights to the material that I have used. If the copyright holders will let me know of any errors or omissions, I shall be happy to rectify these in subsequent editions.

Foreword

It has been nearly a quarter of a century since I first met George Sayer. In the early 1980s I decided to write a biography of Joy Davidman, wife of C. S. Lewis. Part of my research involved interviewing people who knew Joy and could shed light on her life with Mr. Lewis. Mr. Sayer not only granted an interview—he insisted that my wife, Mary, our daughter, Erika, and I join him for dinner and spend the night in his lovely home in Malvern, England. George Sayer did more than offer gracious hospitality; he proved to be an unexpectedly valuable source of information. He and his late wife Moira, not only knew Joy—they became two of her friends in England. Although my goal was to gather information on Joy Davidman and her relationship with C. S. Lewis, it quickly became apparent that Mr. Sayer probably knew Lewis better than any other living person. Sayer had been one of Lewis's students at Magdalen College, Oxford, and subsequently Lewis encouraged Sayer as a teacher and scholar. Over the years the two men became close friends, and before and after Joy's death in 1960 Jack spent holidays almost every summer visiting the Sayers and hiking the mountains of the Great Malvern area with George. Because George Sayer was intimately acquainted with Lewis's work of life and letters, it occurred to me as well as to several others who knew George that he should write a biography of C. S. Lewis. Eventually he agreed.

Although there are numerous books on C. S. Lewis, and while some of the Lewis biographies are useful—in particular the one by Roger Lancelyn Green and Walter Hooper, and the ones by Charles Walsh and William Griffin respectively—this one by Sayer is superior to all the others for several reasons. First, he knew Lewis better and for more years than other biographers. Second, he knew Lewis in a variety of contexts. And finally he knew Joy and her sons, as well as many of the famous writer's relatives and friends.

Jack is an important book that deserves to be released in a new edition after nearly twenty years in print. At once a major interpretive and narrative work, it is also a primary source replete with the reminiscences of one who knew Lewis well. This book should be required reading for anyone who wants to understand Lewis the man.

Lyle W. Dorsett
Beeson Divinity School
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Note on the Primary Sources

Much of the material for a biography of C. S. Lewis is easily available to the student. It has been assiduously collected for the Bodleian Library, Oxford, by the Reverend Walter Hooper; and for the Wade Collection, Wheaton College, Illinois, by Professor Clyde Kilby. Thanks to a sharing arrangement, nearly all manuscripts can be consulted in either library. The important exception is the complete text of the diary kept by Major W. H. Lewis, which is at present available only at Wheaton.

The student should be warned that the following sources were edited before reaching these libraries.

The Lewis Papers, 11 volumes (Leeborough Press). This collection of family papers was assembled by Albert Lewis, the father of W. H. and C. S. Lewis, edited and typed by Warren after his father's death, and bound in Oxford. The original documents were then destroyed. Many letters and other documents of great interest, such as C. S. Lewis's school reports, were never included at all. There is no reason to suppose that some letters were cut or altered before being included.

Letters of C. S. Lewis, edited with a memoir by W. H. Lewis (Bles, 1966). This is a short version of a manuscript entitled "C. S. Lewis: A Biography" by W. H. Lewis, which was edited and much reduced in size by Christopher Derrick on behalf of the publisher. Even in the original version, some of the letters were considerably edited, often to the extent of altering their meaning. Now there is a revised and enlarged edition of C. S. Lewis's numerous and excellent letters, edited by Walter Hooper (Collins, 1988).

All My Road Before Me: The Diary of C. S. Lewis, 1922–1927, edited by Walter Hooper (HarperCollins, 1991), was also helpful.

They Stand Together: The Letters of C. S. Lewis to Arthur Greeves, 1914–1963, edited by Walter Hooper (Collins, 1979).

This is a splendid book, quite admirably edited, with the deletions made by Greeves restored. However, not all the letters written by Lewis to Greeves are here. Some were deliberately destroyed by Greeves during his lifetime and by Lisbeth Greeves, a cousin by marriage, after his death.

I am greatly indebted to Green and Hooper's *C. S. Lewis: A Biography* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974); to the Reverend Walter Hooper's admirable bibliography of the writings of C. S. Lewis, as revised and printed in *C. S. Lewis at the Breakfast Table*, edited by James T. Como (Macmillan, 1979); to the bibliography by Joe R. Christopher and Joan K. Ostling entitled *C.S. Lewis: An Annotated Checklist of Writings About Him and His Works* (Kent State University Press); and to the bibliography *Farther Up and Farther In: C. S. Lewis as Reflected in Recent Secondary Sources*, by Lois Larson and D. W. Krummel.

No words of mine can express adequately my gratitude to Professor Clyde S. Kilby and my debt to the magnificent collection of "Lewisiana" he has built up in the Wade Collection at Wheaton College. I am grateful to Walter Hooper for much kindness and for being the first to suggest that I might write something about C. S. Lewis. Nothing could have exceeded the generosity of Stephen Schofield, editor of *The Canadian C. S. Lewis Journal*, except his energy in showering me with information and articles of all sorts about C. S. Lewis. I am grateful to Humphrey Carpenter for advice and for giving me a copy of the then unpublished series of letters written by C. S. Lewis to his brother between 1930 and 1941. I have also derived much help from his splendid volume *The Inklings* (Allen and Unwin, 1978). I have received valuable help from Paul Ford, author of the encyclopedic *Companion to Narnia* (Harper & Row, 1980); Neville Randall; Jane Gaskell; Mary Neylan; Dr. R. E. Havard; Professor Lyndal W. Dorsett, author of *And God Came In: An Extraordinary Love Story; Joy Davidman, Her Life and Marriage to C. S. Lewis* (Crossway, 1991); and especially Lady Dunbar of Hempriggs and Leonard

Blake. I have often felt that the friends of C. S. Lewis cannot help being friends of each other.

Preface: Our First Meeting

“Mr. Lewis, sir?” said Kirby, the omniscient head porter of Magdalen College, Oxford. “New Buildings, third staircase, third set of rooms.”

I slipped on the sleeveless and buttonless black cloth gown that ordinary undergraduates wore in 1934 on formal occasions (and still do), and walked diagonally across the front quad past the open-air pulpit where sermons have been preached since 1480, through dim cloisters scarcely altered since the fifteenth century, and emerged at the edge of the great lawn in front of the stately Palladian block of twenty-two bays still called “New Buildings,” though built in 1733.

I inhaled the rich scent of the wisteria that grew on the vast arcaded south portico. Up and down the arcade I walked until I found an archway with the figure 3 above it. As I looked at the list of occupants of the rooms, someone walked briskly past me and up the stairs. Yes, here it was, MR. C. S. LEWIS, the third name from the bottom. I found the name again, painted in white over a doorway on the first floor. Standing outside was a neat, gray-haired man with a pipe in his mouth and a puckish face. “Are you a pupil come for a tutorial?” he asked.

“No. But Mr. Lewis is going to be my tutor next term. I’ve come to find out what he wants me to read during vacation.”

“You’re lucky in having him as your tutor,” he said.

Just then the door opened. A young man in a scholar’s gown came out and went rapidly down the stairs. The puck-faced man asked if he could slip in before me. “I only want to retrieve a manuscript,” he said. He left the door open. Through it I could hear a strong, rich voice.

“Splendid, Tollers. Just the man I wanted most of all to see. I’ve read what you gave me with great pleasure. When can we talk about it? Can you stay now and have some lunch in college? Give me fifteen minutes with a new pupil. Then I can be with you.” The puck-faced man said he would sit in the study until Lewis was ready. I went in and sat next to the fireplace opposite Lewis.

He was a heavily built man who looked about forty, with a fleshy oval face and a ruddy complexion. His black hair had retreated from his forehead, which made him especially imposing. I knew nothing about him, except that he was the college English tutor. I did not know that he was the best lecturer in the department, nor had I read the only book that he had published under his own name (hardly anyone had). Even after I had been taught by him for three years, it never entered my mind that he could one day become an author whose books would sell at the rate of about two million copies a year. Since he never spoke of religion while I was his pupil, or until we had become friends fifteen years later, it would have seemed incredible that he would become the means of bringing many back to the Christian faith. Astonishing, too, that this almost unknown academic should become a popular broadcaster whose talks would play a valuable part in sustaining British morale during the darkest hours of the war.

“Tell me, Sayer, why do you want to read English?” he asked.

“I suppose it’s mainly because I enjoy reading, especially poetry.”

“Well, that’s a good answer. What poetry do you like?”

“Oh, lots. Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, and, of course, Shakespeare.”

“Have you read any long poems, such as *The Prelude*?”

“No, I haven’t read that,” I said. (In fact, I did not know who had written it.) “But I’ve read some of *The Revolt of Islam* and the whole of *The Ballad of the White Horse*.”

“Good. What can you quote from that?”

I quoted the one verse that had stuck in my memory:

*“The great Gaels of Ireland
Are the men that God made mad.”*

I got no further on my own, for with gusto and a glowing face he declaimed the next lines with me:

*“For all their wars are merry,
And all their songs are sad.”¹*

“Marvelous stuff, isn’t it? Don’t you like the way Chesterton takes hold of you in that poem, shakes you, and makes you want to cry? I think I like best of all the last part. What’s it called? ‘Ethandune’ Here and there it achieves the heroic, the rarest quality in modern literature.” His face glowed with delight as he declaimed:

*“‘The high tide!’ King Alfred cries,
‘The high tide and the turn!
As a tide turns on the tall grey seas,
See how they waver in the trees,
How stray their spears, how knock their knees,
How wild their watchfires burn!’”²*

“Let’s get down to business,” he said after a pause. He dictated a list of books for me to read in the weeks ahead. It included the study of an Anglo-Saxon primer and the reading of most of Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*.

As I walked away from New Buildings, I found the man that Lewis had called “Tollers” sitting on one of the stone steps in front of the arcade.

“How did you get on?” he asked.

“I think rather well. I think he will be a most interesting tutor to have.”

“Interesting? Yes, he’s certainly that. You’ll never get to the bottom of him.”

The following term, when I went to one of his lectures, I learned that the man with whom I had been talking was actually J. R. R. Tolkien. But who was he? We undergraduates came to know him only as a lecturer in Old English. Nothing could have seemed more improbable than that he should become world famous as the author of *The Lord of the Rings*, the heroic romance selling millions of copies all over the world.

Tolkien was right. Although I became a friend of Lewis, I never got to the bottom of him. My objective in this book is to present the factual background to the motivation and character of a remarkable man who has had, and is having, a profound effect on the modern world.

1: Very Different Strains

“Two very different strains had gone to our making.”

C. S. LEWIS,

SURPRISED BY JOY

Although he regarded Ulster as his homeland, Clive Staples Lewis denied being Irish. “I’m more Welsh than anything,” he once said to me, “and for more than anything else in my ancestry I’m grateful that on my father’s side I’m descended from a practical Welsh farmer. To that link with the soil I owe whatever measure of physical energy and stability I have. Without it I should have turned into a hopeless neurotic.” During the disappointments and emotional difficulties of his twenties, the link with the land gave him self-confidence. It was a quality he badly needed, for it was then his conviction that, as he wrote to his friend Arthur Greeves, “we hold our mental health by a thread.”¹

But, in fact, the last Lewis ancestor to till the soil as his main occupation was his great-great-grandfather Richard, who was born about 1775. He was also the last to live in Wales or to be entirely Welsh. His farming was done at Caergwrle in Flintshire, not far from the English border. There was one unusual thing about him. In a country in which most small farmers were “chapel,” he and his wife were “church.” This gave to his children the advantage of being able to learn to read and write at the little church school in the village, and a faith to which the family for the next one hundred years remained unswervingly loyal.

Joseph, his fourth son and Clive Lewis’s great-grandfather, moved across the English border to a small holding at Saltney, then a separate village, now a suburb of Chester on the river Dee, southwest of the city. He seems soon to have quarreled with the vicar of the parish because he felt he was not given sufficient prominence in the church services. He left, joined the Methodist church, and became its minister. He kept on the small holding to supplement the necessarily small amount of money he was given by his flock, but his heart was in the ministry and especially in preaching, which, in the highly emotional style then common, was powerful. It made such an impression that even now it is possible to find elderly men and women who have heard of him from grandparents. From him Clive inherited three qualities far more important than Welshness: religious enthusiasm, a fine resonant voice, and real rhetorical ability.

Joseph was the father of eight children. His fourth son, Richard, was Clive’s grandfather. The ablest and most ambitious of the children, Richard worked hard to educate himself. He attended night school while a workman on Merseyside and acquired some elementary knowledge of ship’s engineering. In 1853 he married a woman named Martha Gee, probably a Liverpudlian and English. Soon afterward he moved to Cork, where he worked as a boilermaker in a ship repair yard. All of Richard’s six children—Martha, Sarah Jane, Joseph, William, Richard, and Albert—were born there within eleven years. Albert, Clive’s father, was born in 1863. A year later, the family moved to Dublin when Richard took a better job as foreman, or “outside manager,” for the shipbuilding firm of Walpole, Webb, and Bewly. Here he met and impressed John H. MacIlwaine, a rather older ship repairer who had saved a little money. In 1868 they moved to Belfast, the great bustling shipbuilding metropolis of the country, and went into partnership as “MacIlwaine and Lewis: Boiler Makers, Engineers, and Iron Ship Builders.”

The business prospered, with a bad effect on Richard’s character. He soon came to love wealth and became arrogant and snobbish. He moved from the rather humble Mount Pottinger area of Belfast to the higher-class Lower Sydenham, where, with the help of a mortgage, he bought a house called Tyissa. His prosperity did not last long. From about 1884, there was disagreement between the

partners. The causes are obscure. MacIlwaine is said to have been harsh and Lewis a little unscrupulous in a dispute about responsibility for a defective boiler. The result was that Richard left the firm in 1886 and soon afterward got a job with the Belfast harbor board at a salary of £150 a year, about £4,000 or £5,000 of current English money. During the last years of his life—he died at age 72 in 1908, a year that turned out to be calamitous for Clive—he was helped with money by his sons, especially by Albert. He was a difficult man to live with, his moods alternating violently between the heights of optimism and the extremes of depression, a characteristic inherited by three of his sons, including Albert. Although a snob, Richard's table manners were appalling. He insisted on being served first at meals, even if there were visitors, and ate rapidly and greedily.

Of his four sons, the eldest, Joseph, born in 1856, was the uncle that Clive and his brother, Warren, liked best. Described in *The Lewis Papers* as “lacking the spasmodic generosity of Albert, the irascibility and prodigality of Richard, and William's morose ostentation, he was the best balanced and most uniformly kindly of the four brothers.”² Joseph, a marine engineer, had a strong sense of family and the ties of blood. He took an interest in Clive and Warren, but unfortunately died in the same year as his father and their mother, before he could know them well.

The second son, William (1858—1946), “was the least amiable of the three brothers—the most easily depressed and the most rarely elated. . . . His mind was heavy, commonplace, and self-centred. With him sentimentousness took the place of sentiment.” He married a woman of higher social class “in whom few but himself could detect any attractions . . . enjoyed the pleasures of the table, and though not intemperate, was fond of the bottle.” We are told that “he succeeded in making his house so uncomfortable to his children that they successively revolted.”³

In one respect he had an influence on Clive's father. His desire to enhance his social self-esteem caused him to be the first member of the family to send his sons to somewhere thought more gentlemanly than an Irish school. He sent them to public schools in England. The example was followed by his younger brothers, including Albert. It had the common result of producing boys who despised their own parents.

William had a business in Glasgow that sold rope and felt, and he was joined in it by Richard. Born in about 1861, Richard was of mercurial character, given to outbursts of sudden anger, but often happy, thanks to a simple sense of humor that included an appreciation of the fantastic and a liking for practical jokes, especially if they were at Albert's expense.

Albert James was born in 1861. He was “dogmatic, loquacious, and sensitive on the point of dignity,” and therefore particularly vulnerable to teasing. He has recorded that it was Richard's teasing and temper (“We can't stand this fellow James any longer”)⁴ that caused his father to send him to a boarding school instead of to the national school where the other children had gone, as a matter of course. He had the good luck to have in W. T. Kirkpatrick a headmaster with whom he got on exceptionally well. As soon as he left school, he was apprenticed to a solicitor, qualified with distinction, and, after a brief partnership, set up in practice on his own in Belfast. He was a success thanks to an excellent memory, great industry, a quickness of mind that included a gift for telling repartee, and a fine resonant voice, all gifts that Clive inherited. He was an attorney of complete integrity, finding it hard to represent a cause or client he did not believe in. His managing clerk, and following him, both sons, liked to tell the story of his way of dismissing clients of doubtful integrity. They told me he would almost shout, “In fact then you want me to use my legal knowledge to help you to commit a swindle. Get out of this office.” The effect was that of a kick from a boot.

He often appeared for the prosecution in the Belfast police court, and, although he was fair, he had the reputation of being severe in cross-examination. A cartoon published in a local paper shows Albe

as a man of commanding presence, formally dressed, good-looking, but with a disapproving and slightly sulky air.

He was a kind man all the same, generous to the poor and unfortunate, both in gifts and money and in legal work, which he would often undertake without payment. Clive had the same generosity and perhaps learned it from him. Both father and son practiced it in spite of a fear of being bankrupt. Both were inept in the investment of money and both, as we shall see, could be miserly.

Albert had ambitions outside the law. He was a member of Belfast literary societies and quite a practiced political speaker. His purely literary work, nearly all unpublished, consists of poems and short stories. The poems are a little like those of Charles Lamb, mildly romantic or whimsical and humorous. The short stories are much better and reveal his dramatic sense, humor, and gift for dialogue. It is quite possible that, if he had persevered, he would have become a successful novelist.

In the opinion of his sons, he might also have become a successful politician, but he was handicapped by a lack of private means and a “fine” sense of honor. His speeches show a real rhetorical gift. He spoke in admirably rhythmic sentences, was shrewd in his attack on his opponents, convincing in his show of moderation and, above all, had the gift of presenting a complex argument in convincingly simple terms. Both his sons inherited the gift of simple exposition. They owed far more to him than either realized and, in fact, shared most of his good and bad qualities.

The boys tended to despise their father’s family, but were proud of their mother’s. Flora Hamilton had on her father’s side “many generations of clergymen, lawyers, sailors, and the like behind her. On her mother’s side she was a Warren, descended from a Norman knight who was buried at Battle Abbey in Sussex.

Flora’s father, Thomas Hamilton, was vicar of Saint Mark’s, Albert Lewis’s local church in the Belfast suburb of Dundela. Clive usually referred to the family as southern Irish, but this needs qualification. The Hamiltons were not in race Irish at all, but descended from a titled Scottish family that was planted—that is, allowed to take over land—in County Down in the reign of James I. In the eighteenth century, Thomas’s grandfather was a fellow of Trinity College, Dublin, and then an Irish bishop. Thomas himself, born in 1826, graduated at the top of his theology class at Trinity College, Dublin. In his subsequent career, he showed himself both exceptionally brave and exceptionally foolish with a stubborn devotion to principle characteristic also of his grandson. His health was poor yet he volunteered to serve as a naval chaplain during the whole of the Crimean War and in addition volunteered for duty in camps where deaths from cholera took place every day. Because of his belief that swearing was a deadly sin, he was most unsuited to life in the navy. He went so far as to publicly reprimand officers who swore at their men, and it is not surprising that he did not last long. He was an extremely emotional man who preached with so much feeling at Saint Mark’s that he often wept in the pulpit, to the amusement of some children and the intense embarrassment of others, including the children in his own family. One of the themes of his sermons is still current in Belfast today: that is his extraordinarily violent attacks on Roman Catholics, whom he regarded as literally possessed by the devil. He does not seem at all to fit the description of the Hamiltons in Clive’s autobiographical *Surprised by Joy*: They “were a cooler race. Their minds were critical and ironic, and they had the talent for happiness in a high degree.”⁶ Nor is this comment true of Clive’s mother or of any other members of the family.

Thomas’s wife, Mary Warren, was a far more intelligent woman, yet, especially by northern Irish standards, an incompetent and disorganized housewife. In the eyes of Clive and Warren, she was aristocratic. She came from an Anglo-Norman family that had been planted in Ireland in the reign of Henry II and had been landowners ever since. She introduced into Saint Mark’s rectory the free and

easy, disorganized way of living common among the Anglo-Irish gentry of southern Ireland. The house was untidy and dirty, but had some very good old furniture and plate, much of it in dilapidated condition. Animals were everywhere except in the master's study: "The house was typical of the woman: infested with cats (which were however rigorously excluded from the study); their presence was immediately apparent to the nose of the visitor when the slatternly servant opened the front door. . . The hand which his hostess extended to him would gleam with valuable rings, but would bear too evident traces of her enthusiasm as a poultry keeper."⁷

There are many descriptions of such rooms in Anglo-Irish literature, for instance, in Somerville and Ross or in Flora Shaw's delightful novel, *Castle Blair*. All his life, Clive Lewis preferred them to rooms that he called "uncomfortably tidy"; indeed he did not mind if the wallpaper hung loose from the walls or if it had been stripped off so that the bare plaster showed. His own house, the Kilns, was for years in this state, but his study, the room in which he worked, was always clean and tidy.

Mary Warren Hamilton's main interest and subject of conversation was politics. She was a Liberal and a supporter of home rule for Ireland, a proposal that would give the whole of Ireland (not just the southern part) a parliament of its own, so that it would be self-governing without, however, ceasing to be part of the British Empire. This and her habit of employing southern Irish servants caused her to be unpopular with many Belfast people.

The Hamiltons were bad parents with no talent for making their children happy. They openly and obviously favored two of their children, Lilian and Cecil, and almost ignored Flora and the young boy, Augustus. The members of these pairs had nothing in common with each other except the determination to oppose the other pair. Lilian and Cecil were "at perpetual and sarcastic discord. Cecil was insolent. Indeed, he would have to have been to hold his own against Lilian, a clever, eccentric, handsome girl of "extremely quarrelsome disposition" who enjoyed being at war with as many members of the family as possible. (She once said of Albert, in his presence, and in regard to a legal matter, "for poor Allie is so ignorant.") After the death of her husband, who spent most of his short life in a mental hospital, a cook sorely tried by her vegetarianism and other dietetic theories retorted after a sharp verbal exchange, "Sure, didn't your husband, poor man, get himself put into a lunatic asylum to get away from you?"⁸ Perhaps when he came to write *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*,* Clive took her as his model for Alberta Scrubb, Eustace's unpleasant feminist and vegetarian mother.

After her husband's death, Lilian devoted herself to feminism, the suffragette movement, eccentric theories about food, and her collection of cats. She also wrote long pseudophilosophical letters to Clive and, worse still, sometimes visited him at Oxford.

Augustus, or "Gussie," as he was always called, was as a boy academically backward and almost illiterate. Because his father, who disliked him, refused to spend money on his education, it was not discovered until he was middle-aged that he had great mathematical ability. He left school early and after an apprenticeship with MacIlwaine, Lewis and Company, went to sea as an engineer. After some years of this (Albert was horrified at the way in which he would set off for, say, Calcutta, without saying goodbye to his equally unconcerned mother), he left the sea, settled in Belfast, and founded the marine engineering firm of Hamilton and McMaster. He is described in *The Lewis Papers* as "thoroughly selfish and mean,"⁹ yet with a sense of humor and an original mind that made him an interesting person to know. He sponged on Albert Lewis, yet somehow managed also to be one of his closest friends.

The youngest child, Flora, was a slim girl with fair hair and pale blue eyes. She had nearly as much

mathematical ability as Gussie, enjoyed reading, was good at English, and therefore managed to secure a college education. She read mathematics and logic at Queen's University, Belfast, at a time when its reputation for these subjects was extremely high. In her first public exam in 1880 she got first in geometry and algebra, and in her finals in 1881, a first in logic and a second-class honours degree in mathematics.

She did not really make any use of her academic ability, perhaps because a teaching job would have required her wildly inefficient mother to employ an extra maid. Nor did having a degree make her happier; it meant that she was dubbed a bluestocking and teased a good deal. One would think that she would have leaped at any opportunity, including marriage, to leave so unhappy a home. It says much for her high principles and for the coolness of her disposition that for years she refused to marry a man she did not love deeply.

She was courted first by Albert's eldest brother, William, but soon told him that she could never love him. He was a dull man whose conversation she must have found even more boring than her father's harangues against the Roman Catholic church and her mother's endless talk of the necessity of home rule. She regarded Albert's later courtship differently. While she did not love him enough to marry him, she wanted to keep him on the hook.

He therefore charged her with being cold and heartless, an accusation she strongly denied. She wrote in a letter that she knew she was not demonstrative, but when she thought of the many nights she had cried herself to sleep and the way every day since their parting "had been saddened by the memory of what is past," she felt that she did not "deserve to be thought of as heartless." This is the most emotional sentence to be found in what we have of her correspondence. It was surely prompted by her fear of losing his friendship. She knew that she often said "sharp, unkind things." She hoped that this fault, which had left her with very few friends, would not come between them, and that in a few years "when you have forgotten your love for me, a friendship such as I feel for you will always remain."¹⁰ And so it went on for a few years, with Flora concerned with maintaining a rather cool friendship and Albert going as far as he dared without provoking rejection.

She was not Albert's first love. From the time he was sixteen until he was twenty-two, he carried on a most affectionate correspondence with a girl called Edie Macown. His letters, carefully written usually with the aid of a preliminary draft, are suspiciously flowery. Thus on one occasion he assured her that until he returns "that little lock of golden hair and that little bunch of forget-me-nots," he will be "the truest and most loving friend" she has on earth. He thanks her a thousand times for her last letter which he would cherish until it dropped "to pieces with continual reading."¹¹ About this passage Warren Lewis wryly commented that "the letter in question is as fresh and unfrayed as the day the paper was first folded."¹²

All Albert's letters tended to have a literary quality. He seemed to regard them more as compositions that might one day be published than as spontaneous expressions of his thoughts and feelings. His relationship with Edie lasted nearly five years. At the end of it, each accused the other of flirting with someone else.

It is not surprising that the correspondence on Albert's side contains much sentiment that does not ring true. What is surprising is that he kept Edie's letters and his own draft replies for the rest of his life, entirely unaware of their frequent falsity and absurdity. "He saw life in terms of a stage play, sometimes a melodrama-in which it behooved him to give of his best in whatever role chance or his own inclinations had temporarily cast him. . . ."¹³ His feelings about the role he should play in relation

to particular people crystallized early and then hardly ever altered.

Albert's role in his relationship with Flora was that of the devout lover who would wait forever. Her offers of only friendship rebuffed him not at all. He managed to keep in close contact with the family by making himself useful to Flora's parents and later to Flora herself.

Flora's mother eagerly took up Albert as a listener apparently interested in her political views. This was an exciting period. Not only was there fierce opposition to Irish home rule from the House of Lords (home rule was abhorred by the English upper classes), but there was also a split in the Liberal party that resulted in the balance of power being held by the Irish members of Parliament. The sensational adultery of their leader, Charles Stewart Parnell, added to the ferment. Since the members of her own family were uninterested in her endless political conversation, Flora's mother frequently invited Albert to the house so that she could air her views.

Flora's father also found a way to make use of Albert's love for his daughter. He had Albert arrange and pay for a series of short holidays that he felt he needed, probably as a change from the unhappy and untidy life at the vicarage. As for Flora, she used her admirer to praise and criticize the articles and short stories she wrote for two or three years from 1889. In spite of Albert's help, not one was published.

Her feelings for him did not change, but after seven years she came to believe that it was unfair to make use of his friendship without agreeing to be his wife. Perhaps, too, the fact that she was now in her thirties may have had some influence. Albert, who was—or thought he was—rather short of money at the time, suggested that it might be as well to postpone their marriage for a year or so. She agreed with an enthusiasm that suggests no strong desire to marry him at all and in addition prudently asked for the engagement to be kept secret for a few months. There was nothing to prevent them from changing their minds if they saw any reason for doing so.¹⁴

She is touchingly honest about herself and her own lack of feeling. She wishes she had more to give in return for his devotion. He won't be getting much from marrying someone who has neither beauty nor money "nor anything else." But she is sure that she is very fond of him and hates the prospect of ceasing to see him, which she would have to do if she refused to marry him. It would be unfair to let the relationship drift on for any longer. She fears that love has blinded him to her faults. It will be "rather a pity" if he discovers that she is no better than other people.¹⁵

Nearly all her letters show anxieties of some sort. She wants to live simply and thinks luxuries little more than social display. She fears she may be inadequate as a housewife, for she knows nothing about cooking and little about household management—certainly she could not have learned this at home from her mother. She is a little worried about her health—she is already suffering from the headaches that were to pain her for the rest of her short life. She is self-conscious at being two years older than Albert and looking it. She addresses him as "my old bear" or "my poor boy."

On August 29, 1894, Albert and Flora were married. He gave her as a present a piece of diamond jewelry that cost him between £70 and £80, the equivalent of \$4,000 modern currency, a large sum for those days for anyone in his position but an expense indicative of his character, for all his life he vacillated between great generosity and almost equally great meanness. The ceremony was performed by the bride's father at his church, Saint Mark's, Dundela.

Their honeymoon tempted Albert to do something most uncharacteristic. He very nearly neglected an important client, the duke of Abercorn. The matter is worth recording for the light it throws on the political state of Northern Ireland.

The duke of Abercorn had represented Donegal in Parliament from 1860 to 1880 and was now involved in political sessions aimed at revising the list of those qualified to vote in elections. In fact

it was a fight between paid partisan lawyers, who would do their best to get as many as possible of the voters who “were not of the right way of thinking” struck off the list. Albert was a supporter of the Unionist party, led by Lord Salisbury, and an opponent of the Gladstonian party, now led by Lord Roseberry, which was in favor of home rule for Ireland and (how modern!) the abolition of the House of Lords. The duke of Abercorn, desperate for Albert’s support, sent three insistent telegrams reminding him that he had promised to appear at the revision sessions. Albert seems in the end to have given way to this pressure and cut short his honeymoon. He used to tell a story about one of the revision courts in which the presiding officer, after listening to arguments by the solicitors about whether or not a particular voter was qualified, cut the proceedings short by remarking, “Ah, well, he’s a nasty fellow anyway; we’ll strike him out.”¹⁶ Such gerrymandering seems to have been taken for granted in the north of Ireland, and there is no reason to suppose that Albert or his sons ever felt indignant about it.

2: Good Parents, Good Food, and a Garden

Flora started housekeeping in Dundela Villas with the two servants common in middle-class families of those days, a cook and a housemaid. That both were Roman Catholics from southern Ireland irritated certain neighbors and local Protestants. Disparaging messages were occasionally chalked on the walls of the house or scrawled on notes pushed through the mail slot; Warren told me one read “Send the dirty papists back to the Devil where they belong.” The cook was paid £15 a year, the housemaid £12, generous wages for those days.

With two servants and a small house, it might appear that Flora had little to do. Her tasks, however, were many. To quote from the copy of Mrs. Beeton’s *Household Management* that she received as a wedding present, her role resembled that “of the general of an army or the manager of a great business concern.” It was her responsibility to “see that all runs smoothly, that meals are to time, and well cooked, the house kept clean and tidy, and the general well-being of each member of the family considered.”¹ It was her task to engage the servants, to organize their work, and to pay them. She would plan the meals, keeping detailed accounts of every item of food and drink prepared. Once or twice a week, she would walk to the shops and order food from the butcher and the greengrocer, telling them what to send and on which days—middle-class women in those days did not carry shopping baskets. Each month she would settle the accounts with the shops.

In raising her sons, Flora undoubtedly followed the customs of the period. Both boys would have been born at home; breast-fed every four hours during the day, but not at night, even if they cried; and carefully protected from exposure to drafts and bright light indoors and out. By the time Clive was one month old, Flora had engaged three more servants—a gardener, a governess, and a nursemaid, the latter named Lizzie Endicott from County Down, “in whom even the exacting memory of childhood can discover no flaw—nothing but kindness, gaiety, and good sense.”² Though her household had grown—she now had five servants to supervise—Flora probably had more spare time after Clive’s birth than before. She spent it engaged in the only leisure activity that she and Albert shared—voracious reading. After dinner the couple would settle down in armchairs and read for a few hours. This is a custom that Clive would later follow. It is no exaggeration to say that the general structure of his Oxford life was formed during his years in Belfast.

An entirely artificial city, Belfast was formed early in the seventeenth century by the deliberately planned colonies of English and Scottish settlers after the defeat of Hugh O’Neill and the Ulster chieftains who fought under him. There were important differences of race, language, and religion between the two groups of settlers. The English worshiped in the manner of the denomination that would later be called Church of England; the Scottish were usually Presbyterians. Both groups were aware of living in a foreign country among people of different race and religion. They thought of the Irish rather as they thought of the Indians native to America and considered ruling them an attractive challenge. Sir Arthur Chichester, to whom Belfast was first granted, declared that he would “rather labour with my hands in the plantation of Ulster than dance or play in that of Virginia.” The words *dance* and *play* suggest that he thought “that rude and irreligious corner of the North,” by which he meant Northern Ireland, the tougher proposition of the two.

King James I gave Belfast a charter in 1613, but his motive was purely political. To be sure of a Protestant majority in the parliament that he intended to call in Ireland, he decided to create forty new boroughs, each with the right of returning two members to that parliament. There were many protests against some of the “poorest villages in the poorest country in Christendom” being given charters, b

the move was of great economic benefit to Belfast, making it a free port, exempt from paying customs and tolls. It prospered to such an extent that by the end of the century it had become the fourth port in the kingdom. Trade was mainly agricultural, but exports of textiles, especially linen, had already begun. Many more Scottish settlers arrived during the later years of the century, so that, by the end of it, Presbyterians outnumbered Episcopalians, and feeling between the two groups became rather sharp. There were few Roman Catholics; a return made in 1708 stated that there were not above seven papists in the town and not above 150 in the whole barony. At this time, an enormous impetus was given to the linen industry by French Huguenot refugees settling in Ulster. Irish exports of linen rose from less than two hundred thousand yards in 1701 to seventeen million in 1773. Two-thirds of these exports went through Belfast, often in the ships of Belfast merchants.

In the nineteenth century, the growth of the city accelerated. Because of a shortage of hand-weaver power looms were introduced in the linen industry. The harbor was extended, the port improved by the digging of new channels. In the 1850s, the great firm of Harland and Wolff was founded, which created a need for labor. Irishmen, often from the southern part of the country, were imported for heavy manual work. As a result, the Roman Catholic population increased rapidly, and a bitter hostility between Catholics and Presbyterians came into being. The population doubled between 1830 and 1850, and then increased fourfold to 350,000 by the end of the century.

Until the end of the First World War, Belfast enjoyed stable prosperity. The city was given its character by the enterprise and energy of its citizens, who were clannish, conservative, rather intolerant, abrasive in speech, and proud of their city and its surroundings. At times Belfast people were too enterprising, an example of this being the Garden City scheme in which Albert Lewis invested and lost money. Houses were to be sold at cost, from £240 each for the cheapest, in a complex that would have included gardens, a cricket field, playgrounds, a teahouse, and a bandstand. Ten thousand shrubs were to be planted, and the tree-lined streets were to have garden names such as Hollyhock, Daffodil, and Aster. Sadly, but not surprisingly, it was uneconomical, and the plan failed.

Belfast was a city of strongly held political views. Because all the raw materials for the great shipyards were imported, usually from England, a close relationship with England was economically essential. It is not surprising, therefore, that the wealthier Belfast men were Unionists opposed to home rule. Belfast was also a city of churches and churchgoers. Nearly everyone went to church on Sunday, but never to each other's churches. For protection and mutual support in the frequent riots of the working-class Catholics and Protestants tended to live near their own churches. To this day, there are entirely Catholic and entirely Protestant parts of the city, and the hostility between the two groups is still intensely bitter.

For a boy with an interest in the sea and ships, a house with a view of Belfast Lough was the most fascinating place in the British Isles. There were ships of all sorts, liners and warships alike, and surrounding them a forest of cranes and gantries. The view, Clive records, was "a delight to both boys, but most of all to my brother."³

The surroundings were beautiful. The city was ringed by green hills, and to the northwest there were "interminable summer sunsets behind the blue ridges."⁴ Such surroundings formed Clive's passion for fine scenery.

In spite of these many advantages, Belfast was not a healthy city. There was serious overcrowding in the center, an inadequate sewer system, and a shortage of good water. Outbreaks of such diseases as cholera, typhus, and typhoid had reduced the average life expectancy in 1851 to only nine years. In 1897, the year before Clive was born, an outbreak of typhoid fever affected 27,000 people. The prevalence of typhoid was enough to make any Belfast parent cautious and apprehensive, but

understand the nervousness of Clive's parents, the modern reader must also remember that many diseases that have mysteriously become mild or rare today were then common and real killers. The medicine then available could treat only the symptoms of such diseases as diphtheria, scarlet fever, and tuberculosis, and the infant mortality rate was alarmingly high.

Fear of these diseases caused middle-class Belfast parents to move from the center of the city into the higher, and far healthier, suburbs. Far more attention than now was paid to the coughs and colds from which children inevitably suffer.

There is no evidence that Clive had more coughs and colds than other children, but Flora and Albert, both anxious parents, very quickly jumped to the conclusion that he had "a weak chest." This fear had important consequences. He was kept indoors when it was cold and damp outside. As Warrenton put it:

To be caught out in a shower without an overcoat was a minor disaster which entailed changing all your clothes the minute you got back to the house; on threatening days you were allowed to use the garden, but only on the strict understanding that you came indoors at the first spot of rain; and on wet days it was forbidden to leave the house on any pretext whatever. The prospect of being thus penned in until bedtime became almost unendurable; literally penned in, for on wet days the nurse would leave the door was left open and a sort of half gate was inserted in the door jambs and bolted on the outside, at a height to which you could not reach.⁵

These long wet days, however, were to pay a handsome dividend in the years to come. The indoor pursuits that Clive was forced to follow hastened his intellectual development. It could even be argued that the precautions taken against exposure to the elements and to the unsanitary conditions of Belfast provided the impetus for his literary career. They also had much to do with his passion for the sea.

Because fevers such as typhoid are more common in warm weather, it was usual for middle-class mothers to take their children away to the seaside for up to three months of the year. Flora, accompanied by a nursemaid and one or two other servants, took the boys to a furnished house at Castlerock, a small north coast bathing resort in County Derry. She wrote long letters to Albert, expressing anxiety at being away from him while he was in London (she lay awake at night "hearing noises and imagining things"), sharing worries about her own ill health (she suffered from headaches and asthma), and telling him of the children's health and growth (atop a piano stool, Clive played and sang "in the most approved style," revealing his precociousness and an early talent for mimicry).⁶

For the boys, the seaside holiday was the great delight of the year from the moment the packing began. The first thrill was the ride to the station in a real horse-drawn cab. This was a most special event because in those frugal days no one except the very extravagant ever took a cab in Belfast if it were possible to walk or go by tram. To sit behind the horse was a luxurious novelty as well as a delight in itself. It was followed by "the glorious excitement of the train journey and, supreme bliss, the first sight of the sea."⁷

Trains and the sea would remain great pleasures for the brothers. The first toy that Clive asked for was a little wooden railway engine, price one penny. To the end of his life he enjoyed traveling by train, the slower the better, and, if possible, in the front carriage.

However, he took the greatest delight in the sea. At the age of two he enjoyed watching the waves and wanted to go into the water. But Flora, worried by his cough, did not allow it. The minor diseases of childhood—coughs, colds, cut knees, and skin rashes—were far more of a concern to her than to them. That summer and every summer for years after, they were completely happy playing in the sand, looking for crabs and small fish in the rock pools, paddling, and watching the waves and boats. Clive was quite fearless, dashing into the water when allowed to paddle, and filled with delight when after a month he was allowed to bathe. It was some years before he was able to swim, but that mattered little. It was the immersion in the water, bathing rather than swimming, that was his lifelong

pleasure. As a man he delighted in physical contact with water and would plunge boisterously into whatever body of water happened to be near.

His love for Castlerock and the little rocky bays of the north Irish coast was lifelong, too. Probably the seeds of his romantic love of “northernness,” one of the most important of his feelings, were sown during these seaside holidays.

While on holiday Flora wrote frequently to Albert. It is of social interest that she thought her sister Lily would go bankrupt for paying a servant as much as £24 a year and that she objected to having to share a pew in church on Sundays. Their pew was full of “those horrid boys.” She was sorry she had not stayed at home. They really must do something about getting a pew to themselves.⁸ She chastised Albert for his fits of depression. They were not good for him. He excited himself far too much and then let himself get miserable too easily. She was worried about her own health as well as that of the children, and even about money, although their expenses were extremely modest by modern standards. While on holiday she could just make do on Albert’s quarterly allowance. In two months she used £200 of which £5 went on the wages of Martha and two other servants. There was actually a little left over. This shows that Flora was a frugal housekeeper, but suggests that she did not get a fair share of Albert’s income, which, judging from a financial statement that he drew up, entitling it rather grandly as his “map of life,” must have been about £800 a year, the equivalent today of at least \$80,000.

As a baby Clive was a dainty feeder, but by the age of four, he seems to have acquired the hearty appetite he maintained most of his life. “Babs takes a fine dinner now, vegetables, soup and everything, and comes up from it with a satisfied air of repletion that is very funny.”¹⁰

At about this time he suddenly announced that his name was “Jacksie” and refused to answer to any other. Shortened to Jack, this was the name by which he was always known to his close friends.

It is surprising that Flora does not seem to have read to her children, taught them nursery rhymes, or told them bedtime stories. Her closest contact with Jack (as I shall now call him) was when she took him into her bed at night if he was unwell, frightened by thunder, having a nightmare, or could not get to sleep. The reading and storytelling was done by Lizzie Endicott. When he was two and a half, we are told that she read “The Three Bears” to him. She read many more fairy tales and also told him the stories she had heard in her own childhood in County Down—stories of leprechauns and crocks of gold hidden at the foot of the rainbow; of Becuma of the White Skin; or of Fionn, Morgan, and Cuchulain.

The Irish country notion that a crock of gold is buried at the foot of each rainbow once got the boys, especially Jack, into serious trouble with their father. The story illustrates a permanent trait of his character—the tendency not just to think an idea, but to act it out. While out on a walk away from the house, they imagined that the rainbow ended in the front garden, in the middle of the path from the gate to the front door. Jack persuaded Warren that they must dig there.

It was late afternoon, but by the time it was dark they had made quite a big hole. Their father, on his way home from the office and wearing his best office clothes, fell into it. After he had collected his hat and gathered up the scattered legal papers, he accused the two boys of making a booby trap for his discomfiture or even injury while he was out earning a living for them. Not for one moment could he accept Jack’s explanation that they really were searching for a crock of gold. He was convinced that they were only making the crime worse by lying, and lying very badly at that.

It is hardly fair of Jack to quote this as an example of his father’s unreasonableness. One can hardly blame a man for getting angry if, after a tiring day at the office, he falls into a hole dug by his sons in his garden path. It seems odd that no one in the house noticed what they were doing. Miss Harper, the

governess, had given them lessons only in the morning. Flora might have been deep in a novel by Meredith; the cook and the housemaid would not have thought it part of their job. As for Lizzie—must have been her afternoon off.

There is no doubt that the brothers were left on their own on most afternoons. As they did not go to school, they met few other children. Fortunately, they got on very well together. Jack tells us that Warren was not only his brother, but his best friend. By the standards of present-day England and America, they spent “an extraordinary amount of time indoors.”¹¹ This is according to Warren, who gives too much credit for the confinement to the Belfast weather (after all, Belfast is on the average not as wet as Bristol and has only two inches more rain a year than Torquay) and too little to Flora’s anxieties, but describes brilliantly the results:

We would gaze out of our nursery window at the slanting rain and the grey skies, and there, beyond a mile or so of sodden meadow, we would see the dim high line of the Castlereagh Hills—our world’s limit, a distant land, strange and unattainable. But we always had pencils, paper, chalk and paint boxes, and this recurring imprisonment gave us occasion and stimulus to develop the habit of creative imagination. We learnt to draw: my brother made his first attempts at writing; together we devised the imaginary country of “Boxen” which proliferated hugely and became our solace and joy for many years to come. And so, in circumstances that might have been merely dull and depressing, my brother’s gifts began to develop; and it may not be fanciful to see, in that childhood staring out to unattainable hills, some first beginnings of a vision and viewpoint that ripened through the work of his maturity.¹²

The ships in Belfast Lough became for Warren a lifelong passion, and Jack, too, loved to visit the docks. Sometimes their father would carry one of them there on his back. All three drew many pictures of ships. Jack, who in his early years fancied himself quite as much an artist as an author, drew a large diagram showing one in minute detail from topmast to keel.

This picture of Albert sharing the activities of his sons and drawing pictures with them will come as a surprise to those who have read only the account of him that Jack presents in *Surprised by Joy*. Albert always took an interest in what Jack wrote and tried to help him. Indeed, if any one person besides Warren encouraged Jack to write stories, it was Albert.

But in other ways he was remote. He never went away with the boys on their summer holiday. He was happily wedded to his office routine and hated change of any kind. He was miserable if he had to spend a single night away from his own house. On a holiday or away from home, he had not the slightest idea what to do or how to amuse himself. “I can still see him,” wrote Warren in 1965, “on his occasional flying visits to the seaside, walking moodily up and down the beach, and every now and then giving a heartrending yawn and pulling out his watch.”¹³ The really remarkable thing was that Flora, who did not think Dundela Villas good enough for a family in their social position, got him to move to another house in 1905. It must have taken years of tactful diplomacy.

Sometime then the boys began to call Albert the “pudaita” or the “pudaitabird” or just “Pudaita,” nicknames that arose from their father’s Irish way of pronouncing “potato.” Many of their father’s friends, who tended to be staid, correct, conventional, and obsessed by a sense of duty, spoke with the same Irish accent that the boys had been taught to despise; they were also dubbed “pudaitas.” The boys, on the other hand, who went their own way and lived for pleasure, called themselves “pigiebothams.” Warren was the “Archpigiebotham” or “APB,” Jack the “Smallpigiebotham” or “SPB.” The names arose from Lizzie Endicott drying, and later on threatening to smack, their little “piggiebottoms” when they were young. Jack used these nicknames to the end of his life, and after Jack’s death Warren sometimes referred to him as his “beloved SPB.”

Their new house was called Little Lea. It was built on a plot of land that Albert bought about two miles away from Dundela Villas on the outskirts of the city off Holywood Road, near what is now the Craigavon Hospital, and not far from open farmland. It was a large house, three stories high, built

brick, with dressed-stone bay windows and porch. Part of the upper part was faced with stucco, and there were impressive chimney stacks, vaguely Tudor in style. The large bay windows (which made some of the ground-floor rooms exceptionally bright and sunny) were at the front of the house, the side nearest to the street. The front door and entrance porch were at the back, so that visitors had to walk around the house to get to them. There was plenty of room for parents, children, the cook Martha, the maid Lizzie, and the governess Miss Harper. Later on Albert's father came to live in a room on the first floor. As at Dundela Villas, there were animals: a Yorkshire terrier called Tim, perhaps a cat, certainly a black-and-white mouse called Tommy, and a canary called Peter. The family had always had animals, and Jack (and, to a lesser extent, Warren) acquired a lifelong love of them.

Warren describes the house as atrociously uneconomical in design, but, for romantic boys, this was an advantage. There was, for instance, an attic running underneath much of the roof, and, higher still, just under the ridge tiles on the roof, there were tunnel-like passages through which they could crawl. There was room for great quantities of books, many in handsome leather bindings: works of the great poets, essayists, and novelists; works of history, philosophy, art, and music. There was also a His Master's Voice gramophone with a large horn, and the boys soon became keen collectors of records.

The brothers were their own best friends, but they had interesting neighbors, too, including the cousin Joseph Taggart Lewis, who eventually became one of the leading blood specialists in the north of Ireland. Few girls their age lived near them, and in later years Warren suggested that this was possibly the main reason why they had remained single, Warren for life and Jack until near the end of his life. (However, as we shall see, there are more probable explanations.)

Among their neighbors were the Ewarts, cousins of Flora and wealthy Belfast linen manufacturers. The boys loved to go to their big house, Glenmachen, and the well-wooded glen in which it was situated. They were always made welcome. When the boys were young, the Ewart girls—Hopedale, Gundreda, and Kels—who were older, would come and take them out in a donkey trap pulled by a recalcitrant animal named Grisella. Jack, even then sensitive to feminine beauty, said that Gundreda was the most beautiful woman he had ever seen, with “a radiant and infectious, almost childlike gaiety which was always bubbling over into delighted and delightful laughter.”¹⁴ She could mimic very well the broad County Down accent, an accomplishment Jack admired and set out to imitate, with considerable success.

Both boys had bicycles and, in good weather, were allowed off on their own. Endless bliss seemed ahead of them, but, alas, this joint exploration of the countryside could only take place during school holidays for, within a month of their move to Little Lea, Warren, then aged ten, was sent off to endure four years of utter misery at Wynyard School, Watford, Hertfordshire, as bad a school as could have existed in England during any period.

They had time, however, in those few weeks to discover “the secret dark hole upstairs” and to claim it for their own. It was a large attic below the ridge tiles, with little, very low rooms separated from each other by small cupboardlike doors. Here they had “glorious privacy, never invaded by officious tidying maids.”¹⁵ An unfinished story written later by Jack suggests what the “hole” looked like after a year or two. It was a narrow room where trunks and suitcases were stored, where spiders hibernated or spread their webs and dead flies littered the windowsills. Another little room contained a wobbly three-legged table, and still another room, a pile of torn canvas and stacks of old newspapers. But the real treasure of the place, according to Jack's story, was a knee-high “miniature mountain” of poems, plays, stories, and songs that the hero of Jack's story had written, and, with them, dusty pictures that he had drawn long before, “only because he did not know how to write.”

“This pile of rubbish,” the story goes on, “was my treasure, my religion, for it was my past, and the

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