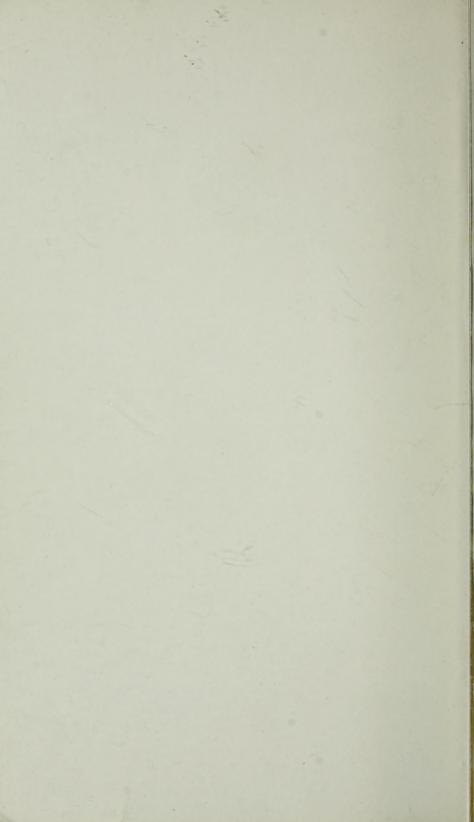
THE NARNIAN CHRONICLES OF C.S.LEWIS PAST WATCHFUL DRAGONS

HOW THEY CAME TO BE WRITTEN

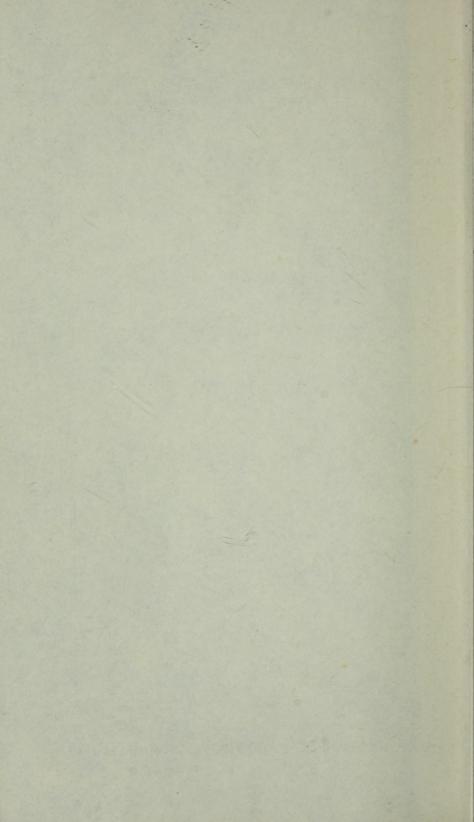
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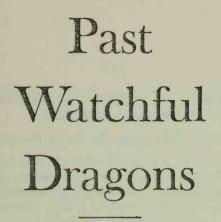
HOW THEY MAY BE INTERPRETED

WALTER HOOPER



PAST
WATCHFUL
DRAGONS





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The Narnian Chronicles of C. S. Lewis

BY WALTER HOOPER

Collier Books

A Division of Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc.

NEW YORK

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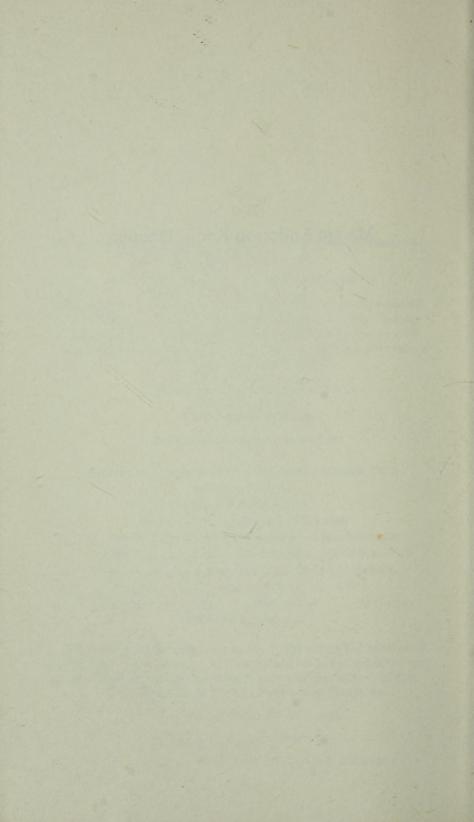
Past Watchful Dragons is a revised and expanded version of the essay of the same name that appeared in Imagination and the Spirit, edited by Charles Huttar and published in 1971 by William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

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PREFACE

In 1967 Professor Charles A. Huttar of Hope College, Michigan, was compiling a volume of various essays. And so it was at his request that I wrote a piece on C. S. Lewis. Indeed, it was a fine opportunity, for there were two good reasons that I should take as a subject the Chronicles of Narnia. First of these was that I love the books perhaps more than any other writings of Lewis's, itself a good enough reason. Secondly, I was worried that those who talked about "teaching" the stories as Christian "theology" might by such efforts frustrate the spell of Lewis's clearly worked illusion. As he himself explained:

I thought I saw how stories of this kind could steal past a certain inhibition which had paralysed much of my own religion in childhood. Why did one find it so hard to feel as one was told one ought to feel about God or about the sufferings of Christ? I thought the chief reason was that one was told one ought to. An obligation to feel can freeze feelings. And reverence itself did harm. The whole subject was associated with lowered voices; almost as if it were something medical. But supposing that by casting all these things into an imaginary world, stripping them of their stained-glass and Sunday school associations, one could make them for the first time appear in their real potency? Could one not thus steal past those watchful dragons? I thought one could.

Believing, as I still do, that it is possible to endanger the success of the Narnian stories by rousing those "watchful dragons," I set out to explain how I thought such damage might be avoided. However, much as I admire brevity in others, I soon discovered that I have not much talent for it myself. And so, while I began with the near certainty that I should never be able to extend what I wanted to say to the usual span, I was well into this work but not halfway through the task. And yet, as Professor Huttar seemed pleased with things, there was encouragement for the whole project to be concluded. The idea of calling my contribution an "essay" caused my friend Owen Barfield to remark with justifiable humour that, considered as an essay "the chief trouble about Past Watchful Dragons is that, like a real dragon, it is too long." Anyway, Past Watchful Dragons was, despite its length, accepted by Professor Huttar and published by Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. in a book entitled Imagination and the Spirit (1971). This work has since gone out of print.

I wouldn't usually quibble with Mr. Barfield's criticism, but I felt that to the seventh and final Narnian story, The Last Battle, I hadn't said all that was needed. Then, when Dr. Francelia Butler asked me a few years later to write a general essay on the Narnian tales for Children's Literature, Vol. III (1974), I saw for once that these previous discrepancies could be made complete. That essay was published under the title "Narnia: The Author, the Critics, and the Tale," and has since been reprinted in The Longing for a Form: Essays on the Fiction of C. S. Lewis, edited by Peter J. Schakel (Kent State

University Press, 1977).

Now we are at the essay's maturity. We should be grateful to Henry William Griffin, senior editor of Macmillan Publishing Co., who was pleased to

reprint the original work with whatever additions I should care to make. The new material included will be of interest to all Lewis admirers.

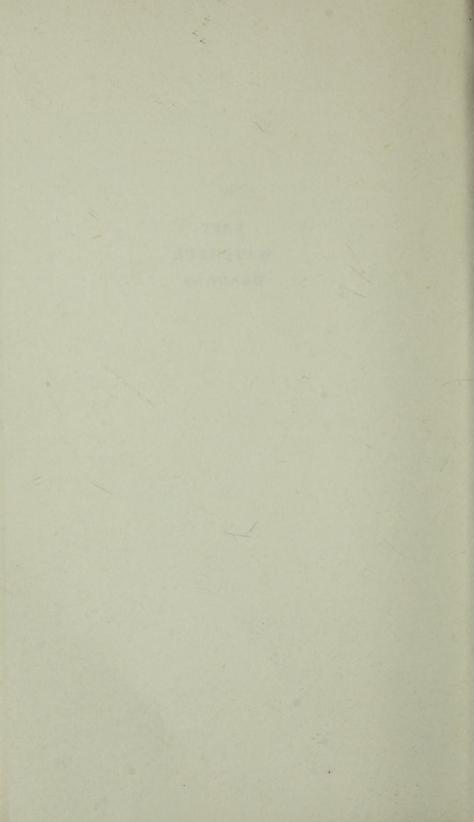
This new material in fact has to do with the time when Lewis gave me his "Outline of Narnian history so far as it is known," and, again, afterward when his brother, Major W. H. Lewis, gave me the few surviving manuscripts of Narnia. I published the "Outline" and quotations from some of the other Narnian fragments in the original essay, but two of them were too long to quote in full. On the other hand, they do not seem a word too long to quote in this book, so regardless of the quality of my own work, I am pleased that I have been able to include in this book Lewis's Narnian fragments in their entirety.

I am grateful to Professor Huttar, Dr. Peter J. Schakel and Kent State University Press for permission to revise and reprint the two essays which form the basis of this book. Only Owen Barfield and I know how much I have benefitted from his comments about my revised *Dragons*. I am further indebted to Mr. Barfield, my fellow Trustee of the C. S. Lewis Estate, for permitting me to quote the unpublished manuscripts of C. S. Lewis here.

W.H.

Oxford
12 December 1978

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The Inconsolable Longing

"When I was ten," said C. S. Lewis, "I read fairy tales in secret and would have been ashamed if I had been found doing so. Now [that was in 1952] that I am fifty, I read them openly. When I became a man I put away childish things, including the fear of childishness and the desire to be very

grown up."1

Readers of Lewis's fairy tales are not likely to understand simply from reading his Chronicles of Narnia, how deeply his imagination slept as a boy, or how momentous was his escape in losing "the desire to be very grown up." His boyhood was, nevertheless, a period of great fecundity: he wrote many stories about his invented world of Animal-Land at the time, and was, without knowing it, training himself to be the future chronicler of Narnia. Yet grown-up matters, which were all-in-all to Lewis when he wrote about Animal-Land, find no mention whatsoever in the Narnian books.

In Lewis's autobiography, Surprised by Joy,² we get the impression of two lives—the "outer" and the "inner," the life of the intellect and the life of the imagination—being lived over against each

2. Surprised by Joy: The Shape of My Early Life (London,

1955; New York, 1956).

^{1.} C. S. Lewis, "On Three Ways of Writing for Children," Of Other Words: Essays and Stories, ed. Walter Hooper (London, 1966; New York, 1967), p. 25.

other, albeit at the same time. The "outer" life is chiefly concerned with those things which he spoke and wrote about openly: namely, Animal-Land. The "inner" life—and this is what Surprised by Joy is mainly about—is essentially the story of Joy (i.e., intense longing) working on his imagination. Narnia would never have come into existence had Lewis not come to understand the meaning and purpose

of Joy.

What drove Lewis to write was his extreme manual clumsiness from which he always suffered: he had only one joint in his thumb. This disability kept him from taking up the hobbies and sports that interest most young boys. (I have seen him try to remove the cellophane wrapping from a pork pie, first with his fingers, then with a knife, then with a fork, then with both, until he finally handed it over for me to unwrap.) When his family moved into their new house, "Little Lea," on the outskirts of Belfast, in 1905, he staked out a claim to one of the attics and there he wrote his first stories, stories that combined his chief literary pleasures—"dressed animals" and "knights in armour." He was, from the first, a systematizer: a characteristic that caused him eventually to become a historiographer of his invented world of Animal-Land. When his brother Warren was home from his school in England it was necessary that it become a country shared with him. "India" (his brother's contribution) was lifted out of its real place in the world and became geographically related to Animal-Land. In time they became the single state of Boxen.

The earliest piece of juvenilia, The King's Ring, is about the theft of the crown jewels of Animal-Land in the reign of Benjamin I. This is very early Boxoniana indeed, for Benjamin I succeeded

Bublish I in 1331 and the last Boxen stories take us down to 1903 (Boxen time). When these as yet unpublished stories come out the year 1856 will give Boxonologists occasion for much celebration: Lord Big is born in that year. He is that frog of powerful personality who as Little-Master (i.e., the Prime Minister) carries on his shoulders not only great matters of state, but responsibility for the

young kings, Benjamin VI and Hawki IV.

Some of the Boxen stories are very good and one cannot help boggling at the sheer invention and patience that went into the creation of seven hundred years of Boxoniana. Yet, contrary to what readers of Lewis's Narnian Chronicles might expect, the juvenilia are surprisingly prosaic. There is not the slightest hint of faerie or other worlds. The dominant theme is politics: to get into the "Clique" is the ambition of almost every character. Yet none of the characters, to say nothing of the author, seems to have a clear idea of what the "Clique" is. Ambitions run high and are almost solely concerned with money and political power. The daily newspaper is of major interest.

When you consider that romances and fairy tales were the young Lewis's favourite reading, it seems odd that so much interest and energy went into stories about matters that Lewis was later to detest. Yet politics and money, Lewis told me, were the chief topics of conversation among Lewis's father and his friends. Doubtless, the young Lewis wanted his stories to reflect as nearly as possible the words that fell from the lips of grown-ups and the things that to them seemed important.

I think I can best illustrate this by quoting a passage from a "novel" entitled *The Locked Door*. It is rather late Boxoniana—written, it is my guess,

when Lewis was about twelve. Although there are obvious traces of grown-up conversation and nights out at parties and the hippodrome, it illustrates the ease and pleasure he found in writing. James Bar, a "hock-brown" bear, and Captain Samuel Macgoullah, a horse, are on their way to a ball given by Their Majesties, Benjamin VII and Hawki V (both rabbits). I have retained Lewis's spelling and punctuation:

Great was the preparation of Bar and Macgoullah when the eventful evening arrived. Bar had hired a handsome to be ready for them both outside the 'Schooner' where they had arranged to meet.

As they drew near the palace, Regency Street became a mass of moving lights dancing to the music of horses' hoofs and the powerful purr of motors: and it was not without difficulty that the hireling Jehu navigated them to the portals of Regency St. Palace. Stepping out they were conducted by suave domestics to the cloak room, which, as is usually the case on these occasions, was crowded with knots of whispering guests fiddling with their gloves. There of course is Puddiphat immaculately clad; there is Reginald Pig the Shipowner dressed in solid and plain evening dress; there is Quicksteppe looking finer than ever as the electric light catches his glossy curling locks; there is Colonel Chutney, formerly head of the war office, but now removed to give place to Fortescue who is also present. After some time of nervous fumbling and hushing, Pig, the most couragious person present, led a sort of forlorn hope to the salon where their Majesties were recieving their guests and where stout domestics dispensed tea etc. The two kings were throwing all their histrionic powers into an imitation of enjoyment, and behind them stood the Little-Master

looking rather worried. The boys kept up a continual flow of conversation:—

"Good evening, My dear Pig! How are the ships? Ah, Viscount Puddiphat, very glad you came."

"Good evening Your Majesties. Ah my dear Little-Master I see you've been having busy times in the Clique" "Yes" said Big drily

The Duchess of Penzly came up, a heavy woman whom they all abominated.

"Good evening Duchess. Hasn't Miss Penzley—oh! Influenza? I am very sorrey to hear that" The Duchess passed on to Big.

"Ah, Lord Big, this is a pleasure. How delighted I was to hear you had had some excitement in politics, it does liven things up so, doesn't it?"

"It certainly does", responded the frog brusquely, and engaged a dance.

By way of contrast, it is important at this point to say something about Joy. In his autobiography Lewis defines Joy by first recording three experiences from his early childhood. While standing by a flowering currant bush on a summer day there arose in him the memory of a yet earlier morning in which his brother had brought into the nursery a toy garden. The memory of this memory caused a sensation of desire to break over him. Before he could know what he desired, the desire itself was gone and he was left with a "longing for the longing that had just ceased" (Surprised by Joy, ch. I). The second glimpse of Joy came through Beatrix Potter's Squirrel Nutkin. This little book troubled him with the "Idea of Autumn" (ibid.), and again he was plunged into the experience of intense desire. The third glimpse came to him while reading Longfellow's translation of Tegner's Drapa. When he read

I heard a voice that cried, Balder the beautiful Is dead, is dead—

his mind was uplifted into huge regions of northern sky. At the very moment he was stabbed by desire, he felt himself falling out of that desire and wishing he were back in it.

Lewis tells us that Joy, the quality common to these three experiences, is an unsatisfied longing which is itself more desirable than any other satisfaction. The authentic Joy vanished when he was sent to Wynyard School in Watford, Hertfordshire. A few years later he was a pupil at Cherbourg School in Malvern, Worcestershire. It was there, while glancing through the Christmas number of The Bookman for 1911, that his eyes fell on the words Siegfried and the Twilight of the Gods and one of Arthur Rackham's illustrations to the book, and it returned. In a single moment he was plunged back into the past of Balder and sunward sailing cranes, and felt the old inconsolable longing. The memory of his own past Joy and the Twilight of the Gods "flowed together," he said, "into a single, unendurable sense of desire and loss, which . . . had eluded me at the very moment when I could first say It is."3

The young Lewis made many mistakes in his pursuit of Joy. As the old thrill became less and less frequent, he attempted most desperately to "have it again." In his impatience to snare it, to tear the

^{3.} Ibid., ch. V.

veil, and be in on the secrets of the universe, he turned from one medium of Joy to another, hoping always to find permanent satisfaction. He shifted from Northerness (a frequent and early transmitter of Joy) to erotic pleasure, only to find that the hounds had (again) changed scent and that though "Joy is not a substitute for sex, sex is very often

a substitute for Joy."4

Lewis lost his virginity while a pupil at Cherbourg House, but it was the "potent, ubiquitous, and unabashed"5 eroticism of William Morris's romances which chiefly persuaded him that sex might be the substance of Joy. Interestingly enough, it was a romance of a very different sort that served as a check for this mistake. Almost everyone knows the book I refer to: George MacDonald's Phantastes: a faerie Romance, which he bought at Leatherhead station when he was the pupil of William T. Kirkpatrick at Little Bookham in Surrey. Lewis was as smitten by MacDonald as many people are by Lewis. Hitherto, each visitation of Joy had momentarily left the common world a desert. But from the pages of Phantastes there emerged a "bright shadow" (later known to be holiness) that transformed all common things—the bread on the table and the coals in the grate—without itself becoming changed. His imagination was, he said, "baptised," and he was carried one step closer to that which he had so long desired.

At about the same time that Lewis was beginning to understand the nature of Joy, he was losing interest in his political stories of Boxen. His inter-

^{4.} Ibid., ch. XI.

^{5.} C. S. Lewis, "William Morris," Selected Literary Essays, ed. Walter Hooper (Cambridge, 1969), p. 222.

ests were now mainly poetical. Before going to Little Bookham he began writing Loki Bound, a pessimistic Norse tragedy. Commenting later on the contradictions in this poem, he said: "I maintained that God did not exist. I was also very angry with God for not existing. I was equally angry with Him for creating a world." It is perhaps a bit surprising that he failed to notice the contradictions at the time, for he was even then quick to spot illogicalities. Still, one meets people every day who, though they have no actual knowledge of Christianity, are nevertheless convinced that whatever they say about God must be true. Lewis may have been enjoying the mood, if not the fact, of infallibility.

It was while Lewis was at Little Bookham—the village adjoining Great Bookham—that he began a weekly correspondence with Arthur Greeves, his Belfast friend. Though very different in many ways, both were enthusiastic letter-writers and each was anxious to share with the other the discoveries he was making. One of their first quarrels was about Christianity. Lewis did not like to talk about this but Greeves forced him to state his position. Writing on 12 October 1916, Lewis said:

You know, I think, that I believe in no religion. There is absolutely no proof for any of them, and from a philosophical standpoint Christianity is not even the best. All religions, that is, all mythologies to give them their proper name, are merely man's own invention—Christ as much as Loki. Primitive man found himself surrounded by all sorts of terrible things he didn't understand . . . Thus religion, that is to say mythology grew

^{6.} Surprised by Joy, ch. VII.

up. Often, too, great men were regarded as gods after their death—such as Heracles or Odin: thus after the death of a Hebrew philosopher Yeshua (whose name we have corrupted into Jesus) he became regarded as a god, a cult sprang up, which was afterwards connected with the ancient Hebrew Jahweh-worship, and so Christianity came into being—one mythology among many . . . Of course, mind you, I am not laying down as a certainty that there is nothing outside the material world: considering the discoveries that are always being made, this would be foolish. Anything MAY exist.⁷

In truth, between Lewis's imaginative life and that of his intellect-what I term his "inner" and "outer" life-there yawned a great chasm. And there did not appear to be any way of bridging the two. His imagination, over which brooded his "immortal longings," was peopled with nymphs, fauns, satyrs, giants, paradises. His intellect -and especially now that Boxen with its friendly "dressed animals" had dropped out-was stark and practical. As he himself described it: "The two hemispheres of my mind were in the sharpest contrast. On the one side a many-islanded sea of poetry and myth; on the other a glib and shallow 'rationalism.' Nearly all that I loved I believed to be imaginary; nearly all that I believed to be real I thought grim and meaningless."8

When he went up to Oxford after serving in the trenches during World War I, Lewis was determined

^{7.} They Stand Together: The Letters of C. S. Lewis to Arthur Greeves (1914-1963), ed. Walter Hooper (London; New York, 1979).

8. Surprised by Joy, ch. XI.

that there were to be no flirtations with the idea of the supernatural. All the images he associated with Joy were, he concluded, sheer fantasies. He had at last "seen through" them. The important thing was to get ahead with the "good life" without the Christian "mythology." But he could not be left alone. In almost every book, in nearly every conversation, a chance reference to Christianity threatened to unsettle his solid philosophical position. Early in 1926, when he was the Fellow of English Language and Literature in Magdalen College, he entertained in his rooms a man whom he considered the "hardest boiled of all the atheists." He was thus amazed when the atheist remarked on what surprisingly good evidence there was for the historicity of the Gospels. He was shattered when the man went on to say, "Rum thing. All that stuff of Frazer's about the Dying God. Rum thing. It almost looks as if it really happened once."9

It is not necessary to recount here how, one by one, Lewis's reservations about accepting the Christian faith were swept away (it is all in Surprised by Joy). But so they were. After long searching, yet with much reluctance, he was brought to his knees in the summer of 1929 and forced to admit that God was God. He who is the Joy of all men's desiring came upon him and compelled him by divine mercy to surrender a long-besieged fortress. His surrender, however, was to what seemed at the time a purely nonhuman God. He became a Theist. The next step occurred in 1931 while Lewis was riding to Whipsnade Zoo in the sidecar of his brother's motorcycle. When they left Oxford he did not believe that Jesus was the Son of God; when they

reached the zoo he did. After that, the old bittersweet stabs of Joy continued as before. But he could not now give them the same importance they once had. That would have been impossible: he knew to what—or, rather, to Whom—they pointed.

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The Parts Come Together

Now, what is the relevance of all this to the Chronicles of Narnia? In order to understand them better it was important to consider those things—"dressed animals," mythology, Joy—which played an especially significant part in C. S. Lewis's youth and which, in various ways and degrees, contributed to his conversion to Christianity. There was, however, a stretch of a good many years between his conversion and his writing of the Narnian stories. So, before jumping prematurely into a discussion of the fairy tales, I think it right to show how Lewis's conversion led him to reconsider these same elements before they appear transformed and regenerate in the world of Narnia.

During the writing of the Animal-Land stories, Lewis seemed to have had little understanding of the true nature of beasts. This may not have been so much his failure to observe as the general ignorance or unconcern of some of the writers whose stories he read. When he wrote about Animal-Land, the only animals with which he had any real intimacy were a pet mouse, Peter, and his dog Tim. If one were not told in advance, I wonder how many of us would have guessed that it is animals and not just ordinary human beings who are speaking in the passage quoted from *The Locked Door?* I have read Lewis's juvenilia, but even then my

knowledge of who is what is partly derived from the pictures Lewis drew to illustrate his Boxen stories.

His old childhood fear of pain and his later, more astute observations of wild and domestic animals led Lewis to devote a chapter to "Animal Pain" in his book The Problem of Pain. His thoughts on the matter are these:1 As beasts are incapable of either sin or virtue, they can, therefore, neither deserve nor be improved by pain. On the other hand, we must not allow the problem of animal suffering to become the centre of the problem of pain because God has not given us data about the suffering of beasts. As animals presumably preceded man in the order of creation, Satan should be thought to have corrupted the brutes first. After man's own creation, it may have been one of his functions to restore peace to the animal world. This he might have done to an almost unimaginable extent had he himself not joined the enemy and, in his fall, furthered Satan's malice towards the animal kingdom. Lewis believed that animals have consciousness, though not as we know it in ourselves; and this leads to the question of whether they are, like men, immortal creatures. The answer in a nutshell is: "We don't know." As the doctrine of human immortality comes late in the history of Judaism, it seems unlikely from what we can discern of God's method of revelation that He would have revealed whether animals are, or are not, immortal.

The greatest difficulty about supposing all animals to be immortal, Lewis went on to say, is that im-

^{1.} The Problem of Pain (London, 1940; New York, 1943), ch. IX. See also the essays on "Vivisection" and "The Pains of Animals" in Lewis's God in the Dock, ed. Walter Hooper (Grand Rapids, 1970). This last title was published in London as Undeceptions (1971).

mortality has almost no meaning for a creature that has no unity of consciousness. If, for instance, the life of a newt is no more than a succession of sensations, it is anyone's guess whether the newt that died today would, if it were recalled to life by God, recognise itself as the same newt. Lewis believed that there is no question of immortality for creatures like newts that are merely sentient. The survival of higher animals he felt to be a more open question.

He believed that the beasts are to be understood only in their relation to man and, through man, to God. As man is appointed by God to have dominion over the beasts, those animals that man tames become the only "natural" animals—that is, the only ones that occupy the place God intended for them if men and animals had not fallen. If a tame animal has any real self or personality, Lewis believed that it owes this almost entirely to its master. If it is raised to life eternal, its identity will reside in its relation to the master or to the whole of humanity of which it was a member. That is, as the personality of the tame animal is largely the gift of man, then their mere sentience would be reborn to soulhood in us as our mere soulhood is reborn to spirituality in Christ.

One of the most interesting speculations in the chapter on "Animal Pain" is that which seems to anticipate the character of Aslan, King of Narnia. Lewis thought that creatures so remote from us as wild beasts may have no separate selves or sufferings but that each species may have a corporate self. He uses the lion as an example.

Lewis by no means always thought of the animal kingdom as a whole collectively. He had an uncanny eye for their specific traits. In his poem "Impenitence," he speaks of the cool primness of cats, or coney's
Half indignant stare of amazement, mouse's
Twinkling adroitness,
Tipsy bear's rotundity, toad's complacence . . . 2

His eyes were also open to those physical similarities that men and beasts have in common. This is why he felt that Kenneth Grahame in The Wind in the Willows made the right choice when he gave his principal character the form of a toad.³ The toad's face, with its fixed "grin," bears such a striking resemblance to a certain kind of human face that no other animal would have suited the part so well. Lewis saw these physical similarities as extending even further: some animals can be most interestingly used in pictures and literature as representing the actual archetypes of some human and animal characteristics. If they do not rise to the archetypal level, many at least, as he says in the poem quoted above,

cry out to be used as symbols,
Masks for Man, cartoons, parodies by Nature
Formed to reveal us.

To correct the possible impression that Lewis was drily intellectual about animals I offer this small digression about his relation to his own pets. When I was living at the Kilns (his home in Oxford), Lewis was affectionately termed "The Boss" by everyone there: his brother (temporarily absent at this time), his two stepsons, secretary (myself), housekeeper, and gardener. Yet I never remember

3. "On Stories," Of Other Worlds, pp. 13-14.

^{2.} C. S. Lewis, *Poems*, ed. Walter Hooper (London, 1964; New York, 1965), p. 2.

him speaking a sharp word or giving an order. It was his house, but he was "Boss" by virtue of his unfailing kindness and courtesy. The Kilns "family" also included two cats, an old ginger Tom (a mighty hunter of mice when he was young, but then living on a pension of fish) and Snip (a Siamese which Lewis inherited from his wife and referred to as his "step-cat"). There was also a young boxer pup

named Ricky.

They recognised Lewis as the undisputed head of the house, but he never made an elaborate fuss over them. He greeted Tom in the morning, stroked Snip when she jumped in his lap, and passed the time of day with Ricky. Live and let live; just what they wanted. If the door to his study was open, they knew they were welcome within: otherwise not. One summer morning when Lewis was writing at his desk by the open window, Snip took a great spring and shot through the window. She landed with a great thump on top of his desk, scattering papers in all directions, and skidded into his lap. He looked at her in amazement. She looked at him in amazement. "Perhaps," he said to me, "my stepcat, having finished her acrobatics, would enjoy a saucer of milk in the kitchen." I opened the door for poor Snip and she walked slowly out, embarrassed, but with the best grace she could manage.

In one of Lewis's many notebooks, which his brother later gave to me, I found this definition of myth: "A Myth is the description of a state, an event, or a series of events, involving superhuman personages, possessing unity, not truly implying a particular time or place, and dependent for its contents not on motives developed in the course of action but on the immutable relations of the

personages." Stories such as those of Balder, Osiris, and Orpheus are examples of what he means. They are not dependent on fine details, or eloquent language, although they usually reach us in story form. In enjoying great myths, Lewis believed we come nearest to experiencing as a concrete what could otherwise only be understood as an abstraction. For example, when we read or hear the myth of Osiris, we have a concrete experience. In other words, concrete reality flows into us as we listen to the myth-rather like the passing of food from the mouth of a mother bird to its chick. When we attempt to "taste" it—to know the meaning of it what we taste turns out to be truths, or universal principles. Or put another way, myth is a mountain from whence streams flow down into the valley. What reaches us down here in the valley is truth.4

I have already quoted Lewis's early letter to Arthur Greeves in which he equates Christ with other gods such as Odin and his own Loki. He then believed that Christianity was only one of many mythologies-a belief he held up to the time of his conversion. How on earth, he wondered, have Christians the cheek to claim their mythology true and the others false? In The Pilgrim's Regress he attempted to explain not only why the Pagan mythologies are not (totally) false, but how the truths in all of them cohere. History (an allegorical character) explains to the Pilgrim that God sent "pictures" which stir up "sweet desire" to both the ancient Jews and Pagans. The Jews were given not only pictures but Rules (the Law of Moses) as well. Both the Jews' and the Pagans' pictures contained the divine call, but the Pagans made up untrue

^{4.} C. S. Lewis, "Myth Became Fact," God in the Dock.

stories about the pictures. They sought the end of "sweet desire" (i.e., Lewis's Joy) in one thing after another, trying to believe that what they found was what they wanted. There was no absurdity that they did not commit. And just when their own stories seemed to have overgrown the original message, God would send a new message and their fanciful stories would look stale. If they grew contented with lust and "mystery-mongering," a new message would arrive and the old desire would sting them again. They were, as it were, attempting eloquence before they had learned grammar.

The Jews, on the other hand, were too narrow. Of course the thing they had charge of was narrow: the Road. Once they found it, they kept it clear and repaired and signposted: but they did not follow it. The Jew was only half a man, and the Pagan was only half a man, so that neither was well without the other, nor could either be healed until Christ came into the world.⁵

It was, then, no longer a matter of finding the one true religion among many, but rather finding where religion had reached its true maturity. "Paganism," he saw, "had been only the childhood of religion, or only a prophetic dream. Where was the thing full grown? or where was the awaking?" The whole matter is summed up in an invaluable footnote in Lewis's book on Miracles:

As, on the factual side, a long preparation culminates in God's becoming incarnate as Man, so, on the documentary side, the truth first appears in mythical form and

6. Surprised by Joy, ch. XV.

^{5.} The Pilgrim's Regress: An Allegorical Apology for Christianity, Reason and Romanticism, 3rd ed. (London, 1943; New York, 1944), Bk. VIII, ch. viii.

then by a long process of condensing or focusing finally becomes incarnate as History. This involves the belief that Myth...is... as its best, a real though unfocused gleam of divine truth falling on human imagination. The Hebrews, like other people, had mythology: but as they were the chosen people so their mythology was the chosen mythology—the mythology chosen by God to be the vehicle of the earliest sacred truths, the first step in that process which ends in the New Testament where truth has become completely historical.⁷

Although the Gospels have what has been called the mythic "taste," they are themselves History. They are the end of the focusing. As myth transcends thought, so Incarnation transcends myth. We pass, thus, from a Balder and an Osiris, dying we know not when or where, to the great myth becoming Fact when the Virgin conceived.

I believe there is an important connection between Lewis's personal experience of intense longing and the Narnian Chronicles. Surprised by Joy is the story of how this longing led to Lewis's conversion. But one of his reasons for writing the book is that he felt it to be a common experience, easily misunderstood, difficult to bring to the forefront of consciousness—and of immense importance. The Pilgrim's Regress, which is partly autobiographical, is the story of the Pilgrim's quest for a far-off island, the vision of which has stung him with sweet desire. When Lewis realised that the word Romanticism in the subtitle was misunderstood, he wrote a preface to the third edition (1943) explaining the meaning he gave the word. It means Joy—as in

^{7.} Miracles: A Preliminary Study (London; New York, 1947), ch. XV.

Surprised by Joy. Indeed, the same Joy, or longing, that you and I feel for our own far-off country: "the secret we cannot hide and cannot tell." A longing which, though painful, is felt to be somehow a delight. A hunger more satisfying than any other fullness; a poverty better than all other wealth. A desiring which, if long absent, is itself desired so much that the new desiring becomes an instance of the original one.

A peculiar mystery hangs over the *object* of this desire. We feel we know what it is we desire, but in the final achievement of that desire—when it is actually in our hands—we know the real object of our desire has moved farther afield, eluding us like the cuckoo's voice or the rainbow's end. *All* I want, someone will say, is a university degree, or a happy marriage, or a steady job, or to get the book that has been in my head for years onto paper. But when he is married or settled into the right job, or gets whatever it is he wants, it proves itself to be a cheat. It is not *enough*. It is not what he is actually looking for.

Lewis reasoned that we are not born with desires unless satisfaction for those desires exists. And if we find in ourselves a desire that no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that we were made for a different world. A happy marriage, a successful career—these things were never intended to satisfy our desire for the far-off country: more likely they were meant to arouse it, to suggest the real thing. That far-off country is of

^{8.} C. S. Lewis, "The Weight of Glory," Transposition and Other Addresses (London, 1949), p. 23. This same book was published in New York as The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses (1949), p. 4.

course Heaven. Not indeed that our desire for Heaven proves that you or I shall enjoy it—we can of our own free wills reject it—but it is a good indication that it exists and that nothing other than God can be our ultimate bliss.

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A Defence of the Fairy Tale

As has been suggested, there is, I believe, a connection between our longing for Heaven and fairy tales such as those of Lewis. At the same time, I am aware that it is difficult, and becoming more so, for the ordinary person to recognise in himself a desire for Heaven. I think this is mainly because most people nowadays are very badly educated theologically and thus have very vague notions as to what Heaven-or indeed life-is all about. Almost every aspect of modern life fixes our minds on this world, and the desire for Heaven has got jumbled up with and camouflaged by such things as "social consciousness" and the like. We are encouraged to seek all our good in "this dim spot." While the tide appears to be turning from the so-called realistic literature, so prized in the 1950s and 1960s, to more imaginative works, we are not yet out of the swamp of deceptive and hideous "realism." To bring up the subjects of Heaven and fairy tales in some quarters is to be howled down as nostalgic, romantic, sentimental, or adolescent—all meant in a contemptuous sense. In short, those still enamoured of the "swamp" accuse those of us not in it of being obsessed with Pie-in-the-sky-by-and-by and they usually equate fantastic literature with "escapism" and wishful thinking. It is clear that our critics see—but without fully understanding it—a connection between our desire for the far-off country and fantastic

literature. I am convinced they are right. I think there is one.

Lewis said that marvellous literature evoked his desire for Heaven; but at the same time he believed that no literature is less likely to give a person a false impression of the world than are fairy tales. His thoughts on the subject are clearly expressed in his essay "On Three Ways of Writing for Children." In it he first of all draws our attention to a point made earlier by his friend Professor J. R. R. Tolkien¹ that fairy tales were not originally written for children, but gravitated to the nursery when they became unfashionable in literary circles. Some children and adults like them; some children and adults do not. So-called realistic stories, Lewis maintained, are far more likely to deceive than are fairy tales because, though the adventures and successes in them are possible (e.g., they do not break the laws of nature), they are almost infinitely improbable. It is possible to become a duke or a millionaire with a yacht and rooms in a posh hotel, or to be the idol of irresistible beautiesanything is possible—but things of that sort are for most of us improbable. On the other hand, no one expects the real world to be like that of the fairy tales.

As for the popular charge of escapism and wishfulfillment, school stories and fairy tales both arouse and imaginatively satisfy wishes. In one we long to go through the looking glass and reach fairyland (or through the wardrobe to Narnia?). In the other we long to be a rich, popular, successful schoolboy

^{1.} In "On Fairy-Stories," Essays Presented to Charles Williams, ed. C. S. Lewis (Oxford, 1947). The essay is reprinted in Tolkien's Tree and Leaf (London, 1964; Boston, 1965).

who discovers the spy's plot or rides the horse that none of the cowboys can manage. The two longings are, however, very different. The one directed on something so close as school life is, Lewis argued, ravenous and deadly serious. On the level of imagination it is compensatory and we run to it from the disappointments and humiliations of the real world: and we return to the real world "undivinely discontented," for it is all flattery to the ego. One has been, all along, picturing oneself as the object of admiration. The longing for fairyland is a different sort of longing, for it cannot be supposed that the boy who longs for fairyland really longs for the dangers and discomforts of a fairy tale. "It would be much truer," wrote Lewis,

to say that fairyland arouses a longing for he knows not what. It stirs and troubles him (to his life-long enrichment) with the dim sense of something beyond his reach and, far from dulling or emptying the actual world, gives it a new dimension of depth. He does not despise real woods because he has read of enchanted woods: the reading makes all real woods a little enchanted. This is a special kind of longing.²

I have before me one of Lewis's notebooks containing a fragment of a story about a boy who, in his garden, has been having an imaginary joust in the "uncharted forests of Logres." It was written, I believe, before Lewis's conversion, and is a good illustration of the point made above: fairyland, even when it has no conscious connection with Heaven, throws a little enchantment upon the

^{2. &}quot;On Three Ways of Writing for Children," Of Other Worlds, pp. 29-30.

present, actual world. The joust ended, the boy is returning home:

To remember suddenly that this was all a game was like hearing the voice of a friend: all the details of that "real" world that lay behind the game—the holidays just begun, the lighted, carpeted rooms, and, presently, the sound of teacups . . . It was the strangest systole and diastole—no sooner was home regained, than that other world of desert hills and distant, ominous castles enisled in haunted woods, rose up, clothed in its turn with all the alluring colours of the long-lost. And so one swung backwards and forwards. Each world was best just as you left it for the other, as if to blow out these cloudy worlds and then to suck them in again were as functional as the rising and falling of the breast in sleep.

But to return to Lewis's defence of the fairy tale—it is perhaps inevitable that stories so very popular as Lewis's will find objectors, and they have. As far as I can tell, most adverse criticism of the Narnian stories has been the work of schoolmistresses and professional educators for whom the delicate unreality which they call the "whole child" seems to bear little resemblance to the children most of us meet. They claim that the Narnian battles and wicked characters frighten children and give them nightmares. I believe there is no better answer to these charges than that given by Lewis himself in the essay "On Three Ways of Writing for Children." While agreeing that we must not do anything (1) "likely to give the child those haunting, disabling, pathological fears against which ordinary courage is helpless," he was strongly opposed to the notion that we must keep out of the child's mind

(2) "the knowledge that he is born into a world of death, violence, wounds, adventure, heroism and cowardice, good and evil":

The second would indeed be to give children a false impression and feed them on escapism in the bad sense. There is something ludicrous in the idea of so educating a generation which is born to the Ogpu and the atomic bomb. Since it is so likely that they will meet cruel enemies, let them at least have heard of brave knights and heroic courage. Otherwise you are making their destiny not brighter but darker. Nor do most of us find that violence and bloodshed, in a story, produce any haunting dread in the minds of children. As far as that goes, I side impenitently with the human race against the modern reformer. Let there be wicked kings and beheadings, battles and dungeons, giants and dragons, and let villains be soundly killed at the end of the book. Nothing will persuade me that this causes an ordinary child any kind or degree of fear beyond what it wants, and needs, to feel. For, of course, it wants to be a little frightened. (p. 31)

The most hostile piece of criticism which I have seen—attacking the Narnian stories from a completely different angle—is an article entitled "The Problem of C. S. Lewis" and found in *Children's Literature in Education*, No. 10 (March 1973), pp. 3–25. I withhold the name of the author as I cannot bear that it should appear on the same page with that of C. S. Lewis. The article has convinced me that while there is a problem, it is most certainly not Lewis's. It is perhaps enough to say that the author is an educator who is active in some anti-pornography campaign, but who, by the imagined

use of Freudian symbolism, has created a hideous sexual phantasy where he meant to warn us against one.

Lewis, of course, never read the article, but I recall a conversation we had about the same kind of thing. The difficulty, he said, about arguing with such Freud-ridden sheep is that whatever you say to the contrary, no matter how clear and obvious to a sensible man, the Freudian uses it to support what he's already decided to believe. Or, as Lewis says elsewhere, they argue in the same manner as a man who should say, "If there were an invisible cat in the chair, the chair would look empty; but the chair does look empty; therefore there is an invisible cat in it."3 It may be a very unorthodox approach to literary criticism, but if the author would accept my challenge of undergoing a liedetector test to discover whether or not he believes what he has written, I am sure that it will be found that he doesn't.

Happily, children are for the most part oblivious to literary criticism of any sort, and I can say with certainty that, while I have met some adults who consider Lewis's fairy tales too "violent" for children, I have never met a child who did not love the Narnias intensely. Further, the children I have met or heard from have, on an average, read the stories six or seven times over. During his lifetime Lewis received thousands of fan letters from children, and it is perhaps of some historical interest to record that even now—fifteen years after the author's death—it is my responsibility to answer the numerous fan letters which children from all over the world

^{3.} The Four Loves (London; New York, 1960), ch. IV.

continue to address to Lewis. Recently I answered a flood of letters from children in Australia telling Lewis that they had elected him, on the strength of his Narnian tales, their "favourite Australian writer." And so it continues.

Watchful Dragons

Asked how he came to write the first Chronicle of Narnia—The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe—Lewis said: "All my seven Narnian books, and my three science fiction books, began with seeing pictures in my head. At first they were not a story, just pictures. The Lion all began with a picture of a Faun carrying an umbrella and parcels in a snowy wood. This picture had been in my mind since I was about sixteen. Then one day, when I was about forty, I said to myself: 'Let's try to make a story about it.'"

Though Lewis had probably forgotten it, there is some evidence which would seem to indicate that the initial impetus behind his Narnian stories came from real children.

At the outbreak of World War II in 1939 four schoolgirls were evacuated from London to Lewis's home on the outskirts of Oxford. It was his adopted "mother," Mrs. Moore, who mainly looked after the evacuees, but Lewis shared the responsibility of entertaining the young visitors. On the back of another book he was writing at the time, I found what I believe to be the germinal passage of the first story of Narnia. It says:

This book is about four children whose names were Ann, Martin, Rose, and Peter. But it is most about Peter who

^{1. &}quot;It All Began with a Picture," Of Other Worlds, p. 42.

was the youngest. They all had to go away from London suddenly because of the Air Raids, and because Father, who was in the army, had gone off to the War and Mother was doing some kind of war work. They were sent to stay with a relation of Mother's who was a very old Professor who lived by himself in the country.

I have talked with a neighbour of Lewis's who remembers seeing the schoolgirls, but which ones she didn't know as the original children were after some months replaced by others, so that there were perhaps a dozen evacuees emcamped at the Kilns during the first year of the war.

With so little evidence, I have not been able to discover whether Lewis wrote any more of the story at that time. I do not think he did. The next we hear of it is from Chad Walsh who says that, when he visited Lewis in the summer of 1948, he talked "vaguely of completing a children's book which he [had] begun 'in the tradition of E. Nesbit.' "2 Then, on 10 March 1949, Lewis read the first two chapters of The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe to his friend, Roger Lancelyn Green, who was the only person to read all seven stories in manuscript. Spurred on by Lancelyn Green's encouragement, The Lion was completed by the end of the month. More "pictures" or mental images-which Lewis said were his only means of inspiration-began forming in his head and the next two stories, Prince Caspian and The Voyage of the "Dawn Treader," were completed by the end of February 1950. Before the year was out he had written The Silver Chair and The Horse and His Boy and made a start on

^{2.} Chad Walsh, C. S. Lewis: Apostle to the Skeptics (New York, 1949), p. 10.

The Magician's Nephew. The final instalment, The Last Battle, was written two years later.

It would, perhaps, have been an intelligent guess to suppose that Lewis began with things he wanted to say about Christianity and other interests and then fixed on the fairy tale as a way of saying them. But that is not what happened. Lewis said he could not and would not write in that way; that he never exactly "made" a story. It all began with seeing "pictures": a faun carrying an umbrella, a queen on a sledge, a magnificent lion. It was, he remembered, more like "bird-watching" than talking or building. Sometimes a whole set of pictures would join themselves together, but it was necessary to do some "deliberate inventing," contrive reasons as to why characters should be in various places doing various things. Lewis maintained that at first there was nothing specifically Christian about the pictures he was seeing in his head, but that that elementas with Aslan—pushed its way in of its own accord.3

In another essay touching directly on the Narnian stories, "Sometimes Fairy Stories May Say Best What's to be Said," Lewis said that he chose the fairy tale as the form for his stories because of its "brevity, its severe restraints on description, its flexible traditionalism, its inflexible hostility to all analysis, digression, reflections and 'gas.' "4 It is a form he had long been in love with, and when the time came he felt he would burst if he did not write one. Choosing the *form*, he was to say, was allowing the Author in him to have its say. But then the Man in him began to have his turn.

Of very great significance, he thought he saw how

^{3.} Of Other Worlds, pp. 32, 36.

^{4.} Ibid., pp. 36-37.

stories such as he had in mind could steal past certain inhibitions that had paralysed much of the religion he had had in childhood. He believed that the reason we find it so hard to feel as we are told we ought to about God and the sufferings of Christ is because an *obligation* to do so freezes feelings. "The whole subject," he found, "was associated with lowered voices; almost as if it were something medical. But supposing that by casting all these things into an imaginary world, stripping them of their stained-glass and Sunday school associations, one could make them for the first time appear in their real potency? Could one not thus steal past those watchful dragons? I thought one could."

Lewis had not drawn out a scheme for the whole Narnian series before writing The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, although he wrote "An Outline of Narnian history so far as it is known" after all the books had been written. Because there was no definite scheme from the beginning, there are a few inconsistencies in the stories. Like many others, I read the stories in the order in which I could get them from the bookshop. It is, however, best to read them in their proper chronological sequence although experience seems to suggest that, with the exception of The Last Battle, they can be enjoyed in any order. However, the right sequence as Lewis caused me to copy it down is this: The Magician's Nephew (1955), The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe (1950), The Horse and His Boy (1954), Prince Caspian (1951), The Voyage of the "Dawn Treader" (1952), The Silver Chair (1953), and The Last Battle (1956).

For the purpose of following, as it were, the

^{5.} Ibid., p. 37.

mental processes of the author, I have chosen to summarize the books in the order in which they were written.

In The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe the four Pevensie children, Peter, Susan, Edmund, and Lucy, are sent out of London during the war to visit old Professor Kirke who lives in a large country house. While there, Lucy hides in the wardrobe in the spare room and discovers it to be an entrance into the world of Narnia. She meets there a faun, Mr. Tumnus, from whom she learns that Narnia is ruled by the White Witch, who has cast the country into perpetual winter. Later Edmund goes through the wardrobe into Narnia and meets the White Witch who promises that, if he will bring his brother and sisters to her, she will make him a Prince and feed him on Turkish Delight every day. Following this, all four children find their way into Narnia and meet the Beavers, from whom they learn that Aslan, the great Lion and Lord of Narnia, is on the move, and that the White Witch will be overthrown when four "sons of Adam and daughters of Eve" are enthroned at the castle of Cair Paravel. While they are talking, Edmund slips away in order to betray them to the White Witch. When his absence is marked, the others flee to the Stone Table where they are to meet Aslan. Edmund, on reaching the house of the Witch, learns her true nature. The Witch, with Edmund and her followers, hastens toward the Stone Table, hoping to catch the other children. But Spring begins to melt the ice and snow, thus forecasting her doom. The White Witch then prepares to kill Edmund in order that the prophecy of the thrones shall not be fulfilled. Aslan, however, offers his life for Edmund's, thus satisfying the Magic which the Emperor-Over-Sea put into Narnia at the beginning: that every traitor belongs to the White Witch and that for every treachery she has a right to kill. In Edmund's stead, Aslan is slain with the Stone Knife on the Stone Table. Lucy and Susan witness his vicarious death, but while they are sorrowing the Table is cracked and Aslan, resurrected from the dead, returns to them. He explains to them the "Deeper Magic from before the dawn of Time": If a willing victim who had committed no treachery were killed in a traitor's place, the Table would crack and Death itself would start working backwards. Aslan and those loyal to him then defeat the Witch and the four children are crowned Kings and Queens of Narnia. They reign for many years until one day while following the White Stag (who would give you wishes if you caught him) they chase him into the thicket past the Lamp Post, and-come tumbling out of the wardrobe into the spare room.

Prince Caspian: The Return to Narnia opens with the four Pevensie children waiting on a station platform one year after their earlier adventure. They are suddenly drawn back into Narnia and find themselves in the ruins of Cair Paravel. After rescuing Trumpkin, the Dwarf, they are led by Aslan to the mound, Aslan's How, which covers the ancient Stone Table. Centuries have passed and the human descendants of some Earthly pirates (now called Telmarines) rule Narnia. The original Narnians have been driven into hiding by the usurper king, Miraz. The rightful heir, Prince Caspian (who has blown the Magic Horn and thereby drawn the children into Narnia), joins the old Narnians and, with the help of Aslan and the English children, conquers Miraz's army and brings

order and peace to the country. He is then crowned

King Caspian X by Aslan.

In the third book, The Voyage of the "Dawn Treader." Lewis introduces a new character from our world—"a boy called Eustace Clarence Scrubb, and he almost deserved it" (ch. I). Eustace and his cousins, Edmund and Lucy Pevensie, are drawn into Narnia through a picture of an ancient ship and sail with Caspian X in search of the seven Narnian lords whom the wicked Miraz sent to explore the unknown Eastern Seas beyond the Lone Islands. Reepicheep, the valiant Mouse, hopes that by sailing to the eastern end of the world they will find Aslan's own country. On one island the selfish Eustace is turned into a dragon. Only after he has learned humility does Aslan restore him to human form. They go on to discover the island of the invisible Monopods and Lucy helps them regain their visibility by daring the adventure of the Magician's Book. By a hair's-breadth they miss landing on the Dark Island where dreams come true. At last they come to "The Beginning of the End of the World" where they discover the last three Narnian lords for whom they have been searching, in an enchanted sleep at the mystic table on which is lying the Stone Knife with which Aslan was slain by the White Witch. As they approach the End of the World, Reepicheep and the three children go forward, although only Reepicheep is allowed to enter Aslan's Country. The children meet Aslan who tells them, before sending them home, that though Edmund and Lucy will never come back to Narnia they shall thereafter know him better under a different name in their own world.

Seventy Narnian years pass, but only a few

months to Eustace, before he and Jill Pole are called away from their horrible coeducational school into Narnia. In The Silver Chair Aslan sends Eustace and Jill with instructions as to how they are to find Caspian's only son, Prince Rilian. They bungle the first step by Eustace's failure to recognise the now aged Caspian. One of Lewis's most delightful creations, the marsh-wiggle Puddleglum, leads Eustace and Jill into giants' country in search of the Prince. They are waylaid in the giants' city, but eventually discover Underland where a Witch, who has the Prince under her power, is preparing to invade Narnia with her army of Earthmen. Before they can escape, the Witch, by the use of enchantment, brings them to a state in which they are almost ready to disbelieve Aslan's existence. By a great effort of the will, and faith in Aslan, Puddleglum breaks the enchantment. Rilian kills the Witch (now in serpent form) and they escape to Narnia-just in time for the Prince to bid farewell to Caspian before the old king dies. Eustace and Jill are taken to the Mountains of Aslan overlooking Narnia where they witness the resurrection of Caspian by the blood of Aslan. Caspian is allowed to step into this world for a few minutes in order that he and the children may give the bullies at the coeducational school a sound thrashing before he is recalled to Aslan's Country.

The Horse and His Boy is set in the reign of Peter, Edmund, Susan, and Lucy, as described in the end of The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe. It is, then, a story within a story and tells how the boy Shasta of Calormen runs away to avoid being sold as a slave. He takes with him—or, more correctly, is taken by—Bree, a Talking Horse of Narnia. Spurred on by Aslan, who appears in

various guises, he reaches Archenland in time to warn King Lune of the plot by Prince Rabadash of Calormen to kidnap Queen Susan. Rabadash is defeated and Shasta discovers that he is one of the twin sons of King Lune of Archenland.

In the penultimate volume, The Magician's Nephew, Lewis turns back to seek the origin of all the other stories. Digory Kirke (who grows up to become Professor Kirke) and Polly Plummer are carried by magic rings into the dying world of Charn. Digory gives way to temptation there which results in their taking Queen Jadis of Charn (later the White Witch) and Uncle Andrew (the Magician) with them to Narnia. They arrive in time to see Aslan creating it. Digory brings back the Magic Apple from whose seeds grow the tree out of which the Wardrobe is made.

The Last Battle recounts the end of Narnia, many centuries after Aslan was last seen moving visibly through the world. Shift the Ape dresses the simple ass, Puzzle, in the skin of a lion and deceives the Talking Beasts and Dwarfs into thinking that it is Aslan himself. By that deception the Calormenes who worship the devil Tash are enabled to overrun the country. Tirian, the last king of Narnia, prays to Aslan for help and is rescued from the Calormenes by Eustace and Jill, who are mysteriously pulled into Narnia from a moving train. They steal Puzzle from the stable, and the Calormenes discover in that same stable the odious Tash (in whom they have lost faith) who carries off the Calormene leader and Shift, Tirian and the remnant of the faithful Narnians are either slain or make their way into the stable. Those who live to go in find it to be the door into Aslan's Country and meet there all the kings and queens of the

former stories, with the exception of Susan, who is no longer a friend of Narnia. Aslan comes to the door and holds his Last Judgement. Those who are worthy pass in, while those who are not pass into darkness. Narnia is then destroyed by water and fire and the stable door is closed upon it forever. Those within discover themselves in the real Narnia of which the other had only been a copy. Aslan leads them to the Garden of Paradise, where they are united with their friends and see from that great height all that was worth saving from all worlds joined onto Aslan's Country.

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Inspiration and Invention

In the preceding chapter it was mentioned that after Lewis had written all seven Chronicles of Narnia he drew up an "Outline" of the history of that world. He gave the Outline to me, and I shall reproduce it here after pointing out a peculiarity of Narnian time and the interesting use Lewis made of it in his stories. All told, there are 2555 Narnian years between its Creation and its End: only fifty-two Earthly years pass during those 2555 Narnian ones. But there is no exact Narnian equivalent of an Earthly year. As will be seen, between 1940 and 1941 of our time 1303 Narnian years go by: between 1941 and 1942 (our time) only three Narnian years.

Lewis knew very well what he was doing as he had long entertained the thought that other worlds might enjoy qualities such as, say, thicknesses and thinnesses. A fine example of this is found in his Letters to Malcolm where it is suggested that the blessed dead in Purgatory might experience just

such a thing:

The dead might experience a time which was not quite so linear as ours—it might, so to speak, have thickness as well as length. Already in this life we get some thickness whenever we learn to attend to more than one thing at once. One can suppose this increased to any extent, so that though, for them as for us, the present is

always becoming the past, yet each present contains unimaginably more than ours.1

The "thickness" of Narnian time not only provided the children with more interesting and varied adventures than they might otherwise have had, but Lewis found in it, I believe, a means of pointing out a great truth to his characters-and, through them, his readers. When the four Pevensie children left Narnia the first time, the White Witch was dead and everything appeared to be "settled." If Peter, back in this world, had written of the adventures he had there, he might have been tempted to say "And all the Narnians lived happily ever after." But they did not. And a second adventure helped him to see how ignorant he might have been of the health and future of Narnia and (it is hoped) of this world as well. The point Lewis is trying to drive home is that, as we do not know what stage in the history of the world we are in at the moment, we cannot possibly see the meaning of the whole thing. Are we at the beginning? the middle? or the end? We cannot know until it is over; and we have no way of knowing when that will be. To use Lewis's favourite analogy: "We do not know the play. We do not even know whether we are in Act I or Act V. We do not know who are the major and who are the minor characters. The Author knows."2

The reader should remember that, while Lewis had entertained various notions of time before writing any of the Chronicles, he had not worked

^{1.} Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer (London; New York, 1964), ch. XX.

^{2.} C. S. Lewis, "The World's Last Night," The World's Last Night and Other Essays (New York, 1960), p. 105. The essay can also be found in the Fontana paperback Fern-seed and Elephants, ed. Walter Hooper (London, 1975).

out anything like a "scheme" of Narnia-Earth equivalents beforehand. Having written the books, he *then* found out what they were by compiling the table given below:

Outline of Narnian history so far as it is known

NARNIA

ENGLAND

Narnian years

- 1 Creation of Narnia.
 The Beasts made able to talk. Digory plants the Tree of Protection. The White Witch Jadis enters Narnia but flies into the far North. Frank I becomes King of Narnia.
- 180 Prince Col, younger son of K. Frank V of Narnia, leads certain followers into Archenland (not then inhabited) and becomes first King of that country.
- 204 Certain outlaws from Archenland fly across the Southern desert and set up the new kingdom of Calormen.
- 300 The empire of Calormen spreads mightily.
 Calormenes colonise
 the land of Telmar to
 the West of Narnia.

English years 1888 Digory Kirke born. 1889 Polly Plummer born.

1900 Polly and Digory carried into Narnia by magic Rings.

1927 Peter Pevensie born. 1928 Susan Pevensie born.

1930 Edmund Pevensie born.

NARNIA

ENGLAND

Narnian years

Telmar behave very wickedly and Aslan turns them into dumb beasts. The country lies waste. K. Gale of Narnia delivers the Lone Islands from a dragon and is made

407 Olvin of Archenland kills the Giant Pire.

Emperor by their grateful inhabitants.

460 Pirates from our world take possession of Telmar.

570 About this time lived Moonwood the Hare.

898 The White Witch
Jadis returns into
Narnia out of the far
North.

900 The Long Winter begins.

in Narnia. The treachery of Edmund. The sacrifice of Aslan. The White Witch defeated and the Long Winter ended. Peter becomes High King of Narnia.

1014 K. Peter carries out a successful raid on the Northern Giants. Q. Susan and K. Edmund English years

1932 Lucy Pevensie born.

1933 Eustace Scrubb and Jill Pole born.

1940 The Pevensies, staying with Digory (now Professor) Kirke, reach Narnia through the Magic Wardrobe.

NARNIA

ENGLAND

Narnian years English years

visit the Court of Calormen, K. Lune of Archenland discovers his long-lost son Prince Cor and defeats a treacherous attack by Prince Rabadash of Calormen.

- the White Stag and vanish out of Narnia.
- 1050 Ram the Great succeeds Cor as K. of Archenland.
- Q. Swanwhite of Namia.
- 1998 The Telmarines invade and conquer Narnia, Caspian I becomes King of Narnia.
- 2290 Prince Caspian, son of
 Caspian IX, born.
 Caspian IX murdered
 by his brother Miraz
 who usurps the
 throne.
- 2303 Prince Caspian escapes from his uncle Miraz. Civil War in Narnia. By the aid of Aslan and of the Pevensies, whom Caspian summons with Q. Susan's magic Horn, Miraz is de-

1941 The Pevensies again caught into Narnia by the blast of the Magic Horn.

NARNIA

ENGLAND

Narnian years English years

feated and killed. Caspian becomes King Caspian X of Namia.

- 2304 Caspian X defeats the Northern Giants.
- 2306-7 Caspian X's great voyage to the end of the World.
 - 2310 Caspian X marries Ramandu's daughter.
 - 2325 Prince Rilian born.
 - 2345 The Queen killed by a Serpent. Rilian disappears.
 - 2356 Eustace and Jill appear in Narnia and rescue Prince Rilian.

 Death of Caspian X.
 - 2534 Outbreak of outlaws in Lantern Waste. Towers built to guard that region.
 - 2555 Rebellion of Shift the Ape. King Tirian rescued by Eustace and Jill. Narnia in the hands of the Calormenes. The last battle. End of Narnia. End of the World.

1942 Edmund, Lucy, and
Eustace reach Narnia
again and take part in
Caspian's voyage.

1942 Eustace and Jill, from Experiment House, are carried away into Narnia.

1949 Serious accident on British Railways.

There are, doubtless, many like myself who wish Lewis had written stories based on the episodes hinted at in the "Outline." We are, of course, free to state our preferences, but I imagine that, given a choice, it would have satisfied everyone if the

Chronicler of Narnia had given us at least two more stories of the same sort as The Horse and His Boy. That is, adventures of specifically Narnian heroes such as Prince Cor who became the second king of Archenland, or the story of how King Gale delivered the Lone Islands from a dragon and was made Emperor by the islanders. If Lewis ever did see "pictures" in his mind of King Gale's adventures, he apparently did not find them interesting enough to make a story, for it will be recalled that in The Voyage of the "Dawn Treader" Prince Caspian and the others wonder how the Lone Islands ever came to belong to Narnia. Lewis seems to have at least considered a possible answer for he throws out the tantalising comment: "By the way, I have never yet heard how these remote islands became attached to the crown of Narnia; if I ever do, and if the story is at all interesting, I may put it in some other book" (ch. III). When I did, in fact, ask for more stories about Narnia, Lewis's answer was much the same as he gave to others. "There are only two times," he said, "at which you can stop a thing. One is before everyone is tired of it-and the other is after!"

Unfortunately, Lewis almost always destroyed the manuscripts of his published writings. This, as far as I know, is true of all the manuscripts of the Narnian stories, with the exception of a few bits scribbled in his notebooks. Though they don't tell us very much, there is nevertheless sufficient to give us an idea of the "deliberate inventing" that was sometimes necessary when his mental "pictures" did not group themselves into a complete tale. It is also obvious that his first pictures were sometimes supplanted by others, and that pictures that were not used in one story often found a place in some

other. In one of Lewis's notebooks the following piece is written in what looks like a very hurried hand, as if it were dashed off the moment it came into his head:

PLOTS

SHIP. Two children somehow got on board a ship of ancient build. Discover presently that they are sailing in time (backwards): the captain will bring them to islands that have not existed for millennia. Approach islands. Attack by enemies. Children captured. Discover that the first captain was really taking them because his sick king needs blood of a boy in the far future. Nevertheless prefer the Capt. and his side to their soi-disant rescuers. Escape and return to their first hosts. The blood giving, not fatal, and happy ending. Various islands (of Odyssey and St.-Brendan) can be thrown in. Beauty of the ship the initial spell. To be a v. green and pearly story.

the frame into the picture and one of the creatures gets out of the picture into our world.

INVERTED. Ordinary fairy-tale K., Q. and court, into wh erupts a child from our world.

sequel to L.w.w. The present tyrants to be Men. Intervening history of Narnia told nominally by the Dwarf but really an abstract of his story wh. amounts to telling it in my own person.

What we have here is quite obviously a very rough sketch of The Voyage of the "Dawn Treader" which was, when this was written, meant to be the sequel to The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe. The "intervening history of Narnia told nominally by the Dwarf" comes, not in the Dawn Treader, but

in Prince Caspian, which was, as pointed out earlier, the second story to be written. After telling us in Chapter III of Prince Caspian how the Pevensie children rescue Trumpkin the Dwarf, Lewis goes on to say: "So the Dwarf settled down and told his tale. I shall not give it to you in his words... But the gist of the story, as they knew it in the end, was as follows." In Chapters IV-VII Lewis tells us what Trumpkin said.

I have a few scraps of the galley proofs of one fairy tale from which we learn a little. It is of no great importance, but the title of this story was, as printed on the proofs, The Wild Waste Lands. This was amended to read Night Under Narnia, and finally The Silver Chair.³ In Chapter V of The Silver Chair the very sleepy Jill is riding on an owl's back. According to the proofs, Lewis wrote:

Jill was once more pinching herself to keep awake—for she knew that if she dosed on Glimfeather's back she would probably fall off—long before the two owls ended their flight. She tumbled off and found herself on flat ground.

It sounds, of course, as if Jill did in fact fall off the owl's back, and so was amended to read in the printed text:

Jill had to pinch herself to keep awake, for she knew that if she dozed on Glimfeather's back she would

^{3.} While Lewis wrote with great ease, he often had trouble settling on what one feels are the "right" titles for his books. For further details about the difficulties involved in deciding on the titles for the Narnian books, see Chapter X of C. S. Lewis: A Biography (1974) by Roger Lancelyn Green and Walter Hooper.

probably fall off. When at last the two owls ended their flight, she climbed stiffly off Glimfeather and found herself on flat ground.

By a most fortuitous case of survival, there is in one of Lewis's notebooks a long fragment which appears to be an early version of *The Magician's Nephew* even though it does not contain a blend of magician and nephew as we know them in the book by that title. It may seem disproportionately long to quote in a book of this size, but because it is the only substantial Narnian manuscript there is I have decided to give it in full:

Once there was a boy called Digory who lived with his Aunt because his father and mother were both dead. His Aunt, whose name was Gertrude, was not at all a nice person. Years ago she had been a schoolmistress and bullied the girls. Then she became a headmistress and bullied the mistresses. Then she became an inspector and bullied headmistresses. Then she went into Parliament and became a Minister of something and bullied everybody.

It might have been expected that Digory who had to live with this Aunt would have led a very unhappy life. But there were two things that very nearly made up for it. One was that his Aunt was very seldom at home, and even when she was she got up late and went out in the afternoon and usually did not come back till long after Digory's bed-time. People in Parliament are often like this. And when Aunt Gertrude was away Digory did not have a bad time. The only other people in the house were a secretary called Miss Spink whom he had nothing to do with and Cook. Cook was as nice as Aunt was nasty. She was rather old and had been cook in Grandmother's house long ago when Digory's mother and his

Aunt had been girls together. Aunt did not approve of Cook, but she knew that no one else would stay with her, so she had to keep her.

That was one piece of good fortune for Digory. His other piece of good fortune was of a stranger and more exciting kind. By the time you have read a few pages you will see what it was.

This story begins on a day in Autumn when Digory was not at school because he had been having flu' and was supposed not to be quite well yet. Aunt Gertrude had left at two o'clock with strict instructions that Cook was not to give him Bits, that he was not to Hang About the kitchen, and that he must not go beyond the garden. She may have said this because it looked like rain. She may have said it because she had found out that Digory wanted to go out and meet a school friend. Anyway, she said it.

But this bothered Digory very little, and as soon as the front door had shut behind Aunt he went running and skipping down the garden as if he hadn't a care in the world. It was a nice garden with a grove of trees at the bottom which Digory called "the Wood". Aunt G. thought that trees were unhealthy and said, whenever she thought about it, "I must see about having those trees cut down"; but fortunately she was always too busy and forgot to have it done.

Digory went straight up to the big Oak and said, "Hullo, Oak." And immediately the Oak, with a creaking, oaken kind of voice, replied "Hullo, Digory."

If an oak said anything to you or me we should be very surprised; in fact we should either feel rather frightened or think we were dreaming. But Digory was not surprised at all, for it had been happening to him all his life. That was his second piece—or part of his second piece—of good fortune. Ever since he could remember he had had the gift of being able to under-

stand the trees and flowers. When he was very small he had supposed that everybody could do the same; later on, he found out that no-one but himself could do it, and soon he stopped talking about it for fear of being laughed at. Nobody knew about it except his great school-friend—the one he had wanted to go and see that day—and even he didn't always quite believe it. That was why Digory was not at all surprised when the Oak spoke to him.

"We haven't seen you for a long time", said the Oak. "No", said Digory. "I've been ill."

"You humans are always getting something wrong with you", said the Oak. "You're as bad as elms. Are you better now?"

"Yes thanks", said Digory.

"Like to come up?", said the Oak.

"Yes please", said Digory.

The Oak lowered one of its branches and Digory stepped onto it as easily as if it were the first step on a stair. Then the Oak raised that branch and lowered the next so that Digory could step one higher, and so on till Digory got into his old comfortable seat in the main fork of the tree. Almost before he had settled down a shrill little voice from somewhere below him said, "May I come up too?"

"Huh!", said the Oak. "It would be a lot of use warning you off, Mr. Impudence! On you come, though. I can carry plenty of your size"

"Why, its old Pattertwig!", said Digory gazing down through the leaves to where the newcomer was balancing himself on a dangerous-looking branch of the Silver Birch. Pattertwig was a red Squirrel. And the second part of Digory's second piece of good fortune was that he could understand all beasts.

"Hullo, Digory", said Pattertwig. "Where have you been for ever so long?"

"I've been ill", said Digory.

"You humans are always being ill", said the squirrel, "You're as bad as the cattle. Would you like a nut?"

"Are you sure you can spare it, Pattertwig?", said Digory, "Now that the winter's coming on and all?"

"P-r-r-r", chattered the squirrel contemptuously, "What do you take me for? A nice sort of squirrel I should be if I hadn't got a pile big enough to share a nut to a friend without missing it"

"But you were saying last time we met how hard times were getting", protested Digory. Pattertwig, however, made no answer for he had already jumped from the Oak to the Birch and from the Birch to the Fir and was off to fetch the nut. Digory at once looked the other way: it is considered very [bad] manners among squirrels to watch anyone going to his hoard. To ask where it is would be simply outrageous.

"Aren't you going to talk to me", said the Birch in its silvery, showery, rustling voice.

"Of course I am", replied Digory. "In fact I was coming down to have a dance with you in a moment."

"No good to-day", said the Birch. "I can't dance when there's no wind"

"And when there is", said the Fir in its thick, husky voice, "you dance a great deal too much and slap everyone in the face"

Before the Birch could reply Pattertwig came bounding back holding the nut and running on only two feet. Although he could easily have reached Digory by a shorter way he ran right up the Birch and out along a branch at the top which looked much too small to bear his weight: from that he jumped onto the highest and smallest branch he could find on the Oak. He did all this partly because he was in good spirits, but partly because squirrels like showing off.

"There you are!", he said holding up a fine walnut and sitting up on Digory's bare knee

"Thank you very much", said Digory. "It is kind of you."

"Like me to crack it for you?", asked Pattertwig. "You humans aren't much good at that"

"Please", said Digory.

"When I said times were getting very hard", continued Pattertwig while Digory munched the nut, "I wasn't thinking about nuts. I was thinking about these Grey Squirrels. They're real ogres, if you like. One of those chaps would kill you as soon as look at you, and every year there are more and more of them. I don't know where they come from."

"There were none of them when I was an acorn", said the Oak, "Nor yet when I was in my prime. It's your people, your humans, Digory, that brought them in. They don't belong to this country at all"

"If it was no offence to the present company", said Pattertwig, who had been busily washing his beautiful white chest, "I'd like to ask what Humans are there for at all. I never could see what they did except killing animals or putting them in cages or cutting down trees. No offence, Digory: we all know you're different."

"I'm sure I heard something about that question long ago", said the Oak, "So long ago that I can't exactly remember it. They were put there for something, you may depend on it. I used to know what it was; but I'm getting old."

"Whatever it was", said the Fir, "They've forgotten it too. I mean, they can't be doing whatever they were meant to do now."

"And they begin so young", sighed the Birch. "Look at that one on the other side of the wall. It's no older than our own Digory, and there it is doing something horrid with bits of dead trees."

"Is there a—a human, in the next garden", asked Digory.

"Go down this next branch of mine and you'll see it", said the Oak.

Digory set himself astride the next branch, which overhung the next door garden, and worked his way along till he was above the wall. What he saw surprised him very much, for the house next door had been empty ever since he came to live with Aunt G. Apparently it had been taken while he was ill. There were curtains in the windows, the back door was open, and just beneath Digory's dangling feet a girl of about his own age was busily engaged in doing something with planks and sticks and string and nails and a hammer.

You may think that if, like Digory, you could talk to the trees and the animals, you would be far more interested in them than in the boy or girl next door. But then Digory had been talking to trees and animals all his life. He liked it very much, but there was for him nothing new or exciting about it. Indeed he did not realise how much he liked it or how unhappy he would be if the gift were ever taken away from him; just as you and I do not realise till we have toothache how very nice it is not to have toothache. At the moment Digory felt very interested in the girl next door and forgot all about Oak and Birch and Fir and Pattertwig. He looked down between the dry, autumn leaves and said "Hullo!"; and that is what started the whole story you are going to hear.

"Hullo!", said the girl, looking up.

"What's your name?", said Digory.

"Polly", said the girl. "What's yours?"

"Digory", said Digory.

"What a funny name!", said Polly.

"It's no funnier than Polly", said Digory.

"Yes it is", said she.

"'Tisn't", said he.

"'Tis", said she, and went on with her work. But presently she looked up again and said "Who were you talking to just now?"

"You, of course", said Digory

"I mean before that, silly", said Polly.

This question put Digory in a terrible fix. "If I say I was talking to the trees", he thought, "she'll think I'm mad. And if I say I was only pretending she'll think I'm a kid." Then he said out loud,

"I was talking to a squirrel."

At this Polly became interested and stopped her work with the bits of wood. "I say", she said. "Have you got a squirrel—I mean, a tame one?"

"It's almost tame", said Digory.

"P-r-r-r!", chattered Pattertwig in his angriest voice. "Tame, indeed! What do you mean by calling me tame? Eh? And why did you want to go mentioning me to that human at all? P-r-r-r!". That was what Digory heard him saying; but Polly heard only the sound of a chattering squirrel. Next moment she cried, "Oh look! Look! There he goes. A red one too. What a beauty!", for Pattertwig was already making off, bounding from the Oak to the birch and out of sight behind the laurels.

"There's nothing very tame about him that I can see", said Polly in rather a scornful tone.

"He was sitting on my knee a moment ago", said Digory.

"Was he really? Honest Indian?" asked Polly.

"Honestly", said Digory.

"Look here", grumbled the Oak. "Look here, that's not the sort of thing at all, you know, not at all. You've no need to go telling her things like that. That was a secret." But Polly heard only a rustling of leaves.

"I say", she said, "I wonder if we could catch him. I read in a book how to make a trap for squirrels"

"There you are", said the Oak, "That's what comes of

chattering to humans. I knew she'd be wanting to eat him or skin him or shut him up."

"What are you making?", said Digory to Polly, not so much because he wanted to know as because he wanted to change the subject.

"I'm making a raft", replied Polly.

"Where are you going to launch it?", asked Digory.

"Didn't you know there was a stream at the bottom of our garden?", said Polly.

"Of course I did", answered Digory, "I've been over in your garden dozens of times. But I shouldn't think it was much good for sailing on. It just goes under a kind of tunnel in the wall on the other side of your garden, and I know it doesn't come up again in the garden beyond, because—"

"No", interrupted Polly, "That's why I want to explore it. I want to sail into the tunnel and find where it goes to"

"It's awfully low", said Digory, "There'd be nothing like room to stand up or even to sit."

"Of course not. That's why I shall be lying flat, paddling with my feet and holding my torch in one hand and my pistol in the other. It might go anywhere. Perhaps it leads down into the bowels of the earth."

Digory could not deny, even in his own mind, that this was a magnificent plan, and he felt rather ashamed that he had never thought of it himself. He had an uncomfortable idea, too, that Polly might think he had thought of it but been afraid to do it.

"There'd better be two on an expedition like that", he said.

"There'd have to be two rafts, then", said Polly.

"I suppose if we can make one we can make two", said Digory.

"It's going to be hard enough making one", said Polly. "Hadn't you better come over and look"

"Alright", said Digory. He swung himself off the branch onto the top of the wall and jumped down into the next door garden. The raft was made out of boards which had once been the sides of packing cases. At least these were the deck of the raft. They were fastened onto crosspieces which were round, being in fact very small logs. There was one at the end and one in the middle, but none yet at the other end.

"Where's the third crosspiece?", asked Digory.

"That's just the trouble", said Polly. "I was going to use this" (she pointed to two bits on the grass) "but it's rotten and broke as soon as I tried to nail it. And these three are the only long bits in the wood shed."

"Even the two you've got are quite different sizes", said Digory. "And that means the raft will be heavier at one end."

"Yes, and you lie with your head at the other."

"Is one's head heavier than one's feet?", asked Digory.

"If there's anything inside it, it is", said Polly.

"And better still if it's solid all through, I suppose", said Digory. Polly, however, had been thinking of something else and hardly noticed this remark.

"I say", she burst out, "I've an idea. Do you see that branch—the little one—on that big tree in your garden. It's almost straight for a bit, or straight enough. Why couldn't we cut that off? It would do splendidly for the third cross-piece."

The Big Tree that Polly meant was the Oak himself. Digory felt terribly uncomfortable. He got red in the face

and began talking very quickly.

"Aren't we going ahead too fast", he said, "I mean, this raft needs much more thinking out. Those bits of packing cases don't really join, they won't be watertight, it will go under at once, and anyway what about provisions?"

"Who's going too fast now?", said Polly. "Of course we'll cork the seams—with putty, you know—and then we'll paint her. And we can think about provisions any time. But we can't do anything till we've got a third crosspiece"

Digory didn't know what to do. He felt at once that it would be no good saying "The Oak is one of my oldest and best friends and I'd sooner do anything than cut a branch off him." Yet nothing else seemed to be of much use.

"Let's do it now", said Polly. "There's a saw in the shed"

"I—I—I don't think we can do that", stammered Digory.

"Why not?", asked Polly. "Afraid of your grown-ups?"
"It isn't that", said he, "And I haven't got any

"It isn't that", said he, "And I haven't got any grown-ups except Aunt who'd rather see all trees cut down than not"

"Then why on earth not cut a branch when we want one?", said Polly. Then, when Digory made no answer, she added "I'll cut it if you don't know how to use a saw."

"Don't mind betting I can saw better than you", said Digory

"So you say", replied Polly.

"There's no good losing your temper about it," said Digory.

"You're enough to make anyone lose their temper", said Polly. "I never saw such a person! You say you're not afraid, but you won't do it. You say you can saw, but you won't do it. What's the matter with you?"

"I don't know that I'm so keen about that raft of yours", said Digory. "It's all rot about the beastly stream going down to the bowels of the earth. Most likely it's only a drain and there'll be nothing but rats"

Polly, however, hadn't waited to hear him say this and when he had finished he found that she was already coming back from the shed with the saw in her hand.

"Look here", she said, "Even if you daren't do it, or can't do it, yourself, I suppose you're not going to go running to your aunt and telling if I do it"

"I've told you already there's nothing to be afraid of", said Digory. "And any fool can saw. It isn't that at all"

"So you keep on saying", said Polly. "But you don't tell me what it is"

"I hate messing trees—living trees—about", said Digory at last.

"Oh, really!", said Polly. "This is too silly. If you don't want to go on with the raft, why can't you say so and have done with it, instead of making such crazy excuses. I believe you are afraid after all. Why, you look as if you were going to blub this minute"

"I tell you I'm no more afraid than you are", shouted Digory, now very angry.

"Then I dare you to do it", said Polly.

"Give me your beastly saw, then", said Digory furiously, snatching it out of her hand. A moment later he was up on the top of the wall. He leaned towards the Oak and said in a low voice, "I say, Oak, do you mind very much? It's such a little branch." But Oak said nothing, and as Digory laid hold of the branch he meant to cut, another branch somehow slapped him in the face so hard that it drew blood on his forehead and brought the tears into his eyes in good earnest. He began sawing.

Squeak—squeak went the saw (which was a wretched, blunt thing) and suddenly from overhead there came a great clap of thunder.

"Come down", shouted Polly. "There's going to be a storm."

Digory glanced down and saw that her face had turned quite white. He couldn't help feeling pleased at this and

called down to her, without turning round, and sawing on all the time.

"Who's afraid of a bit of thunder."

"I hate it", said Polly. "And it's dangerous to be under trees—and you're using steel—and look! There's a flash of lightning. Do come down. Please. It's not safe." Her voice rose almost to a scream.

It wasn't particularly safe and if Digory had been alone he would have thrown away the saw and taken to his heels. But he was on his metal now and took no notice of Polly's entreaties until at last he had got through the branch.

"There you are", he said in a superior voice as he threw it down to her. "And now perhaps we had better go. Here comes the rain"

It did, in torrents. Digory was wet through before he got to the back door, but Cook saw to all that and had his clothes dry and him in bed and asleep hours before Aunt G. came home.

"It's extremely inconvenient for me", said Aunt Gertrude at breakfast next day. "But Mrs. Lefay says she is coming to see me—and you, of course—this afternoon"

"Who is Mrs. Lefay, Aunt," asked Digory.

"There is no need to speak with your mouth full, Digory", replied Aunt G. "Mrs. Lefay is your Godmother."

"What's she like?", asked Digory.

"My whole aim in your education", said Aunt G. "is not to put opinions into your head but to encourage you to form opinions of your own. That is why—but I see you are not attending"

"Sorry, Aunt", said Digory who had in fact stopped listening as soon as his Aunt began talking about aims and education, because he had heard it all very often before. "Do go on about my Godmother"

"As I was going to say when you interrupted me", continued his Aunt, "The last thing I would wish to do is to influence your opinions about Mrs. Lefay or about anyone else. I, personally, may not think her either a very useful citizen or a very enlightened woman. I may even consider her manners impertinent and her habits unhygienic. I may wonder what induced your father and mother to select such a person. I may be unable to see that the whole institution of God-parents fulfills any useful function. But I don't want you to take any of these opinions ready-made. You must meet her with an open mind."

Digory began to think that his Godmother might be rather nice

"Fortunately, or unfortunately for me", said Aunt Gertrude "I shall not have to go to the House this afternoon, so I shall have to see the woman. You will please to be ready at four o'clock precisely, properly dressed and with your hair brushed and your face washed. Do not forget your nails. The visit will probably not be repeated. Meanwhile, as it is fine this morning, you must go out. I have some messages for you to do. But you will have to wear your raincoat"

"But, Aunt", said Digory, "I'm simply Boiling already" "That will do, Digory", said Aunt G.

Digory would not so much have minded having his whole morning filled up with messages if they had been messages that really wanted doing; but he knew very well that she had thought them all up for the purpose, as she would say, "Of giving him something to do." She often said boys were happier if they had Something to Do. She loved telling other people what made them happy.

As a result of his wasted morning it was not till after lunch that Digory had a chance to go down to the Wood at the end of the garden. As he got near it he felt rather nervous.

"Oak", he said, laying his hand on the trunk of his old friend, "I'm most awfully sorry about yesterday. You did understand, didn't you? You know I wouldn't for myself steal even one leaf of yours, but how could I go on being dared and told I was a coward and told I couldn't saw—and by a girl too? You did understand, didn't you?"

But the Oak answered not a word. Nor did the other trees when Digory appealed to them. It was the first time in his life that such a thing had ever happened to him. He went on trying to make the trees see reason, but there was no answer. He begged and implored and apologised and then grew angry and said "Alright! Sulky things. Losing that branch was no more to Oak than having my nails cut would be to me. I don't know what you're all making such a fuss about. Oak cut my face yesterday and made it bleed and I'm not sulking about that. Have it your own way."

He turned miserably to go back to the house. At that moment two grubby and quarrelsome London sparrows alighted on the roller. Digory, who had been understanding birds' voices all his life, at once listened to hear what they were arguing about. He had often been able to settle bird-quarrels and send both parties away content. This time, he found to his horror that he could not make out what they were saying. It was just meaningless chatter to him as it would be to you or me. Then a terrible thought struck him. Up till now he had taken it for granted that he was the same as he had always been but that the Trees had changed and become angry. But supposing it wasn't that? Supposing the Trees and beasts and birds were still the same and that the change was in him, that he had lost his gift and become like

everyone else? This thought was almost more than Digory could bear. The only life he had ever known was a life in which you could talk to animals and trees. If that was to come to an end the world would be so different for him that he would be a complete stranger in it. He felt as you or I would feel if one day all the grass disappeared and the whole country turned into grey dust: almost as we should feel if all the people in the world went suddenly dumb. Nothing that had ever happened to him was quite so bad as this. Then Aunt G. rapped on a window and told him to come in and get himself dressed and washed.

He could hear the visitor arriving downstairs long before he was ready. This was not surprising, for he had not begun dressing at once when he went to his room. He had sat on the edge of the bed for a long time staring at the carpet and doing nothing. He could not fully take in what had happened to him. Sometimes he tried to believe it hadn't happened: but deep down inside him he felt that he had really lost his wonderful gift and that nothing in the world—no books, or games, or friends, or holidays abroad, or motor-bikes, or cars, or a yacht—could ever make up for it. "What a fool I've been—oh what a fool!" said Digory.

At last he got dressed and came slowly downstairs, very slowly, not because he was shy—he no longer cared twopence about his Godmother one way or the other—but because he was so wretched. He went into the drawing room. And the first thing he heard was his Aunt's voice saying "always felt the boy needs taking out of himself."

Another voice, a deep, dry voice that sounded more like a man's than a woman's, replied

"Taking out of himself, eh? How do you do that? by skinning 'em?"

And of course Digory knew they were talking about him. Then he came out into the middle of the room.

The visitor was the shortest and fattest woman he had ever seen. When you saw her face from in front it looked almost square, and very big. When you saw it from the side the long nose and the long chin stuck out so that they almost met. She was dressed in black and her chest seemed to be all covered with some kind of yellow dust.

"Don't be afraid you're going to have to kiss me", said the old woman staring at Digory with very keen eyes under very fierce grey eyebrows. "I'm too ugly for that and ten to one you don't like snuff. I do, though"—and she took out a little gold box and took a big pinch of snuff up one of her wide nostrils and then another big pinch up the other.

"How do you do, Godmother?", said Digory politely.

"I won't ask how you do", said Mrs. Lefay "Because I see you do very badly."

"He is just getting over influenza", said Aunt G. "We are quite satisfied—"

"I dare say you are", said Mrs. Lefay "And I wasn't talking about that"

"I thought", said Aunt G., with her lips getting thinner and whiter as they always did when she was angry, "That if you were interested in the boy you might like to hear—"

"Well, I wouldn't", said Digory's Godmother. "Of course he'll get over influenza. They all do except the ones that die, and I can see he didn't."

"I will leave you together for a little while", said Aunt G. with her iciest voice, getting up, and leaving the room.

Digory was standing all this time in front of his Godmother and staring at the large black bag which hung over her arm. Two long biscuit-coloured objects projected from it. He thought he had seen something very like them before but he could not imagine where. One of them seemed to twitch as if it were alive, but that might only be because the bag shook when the old lady moved her arm.

"Well!", said Mrs. Lefay, "She's gone. Now for you. I'm not going to ask what's wrong with you—"

"But there's nothing wrong, Godmother", said Digory.
"That's a good lie", said Mrs. Lefay (not in a scolding voice but rather as you might say, "That's a heavy shower") "And you needn't tell any more because, as I said, I'm asking no questions. But I'll tell you how you look. You look exactly like what Adam must have looked five minutes after he'd been turned out of the Garden of Eden. And you needn't pretend you don't understand. And—drat the boy, what do you keep staring at?"

"Its-its your bag, Godmother"

"Oh him", said Mrs. Lefay. "Well you can see him, but Hands Off." She loosened the mouth of the bag and out popped the head of a live rabbit: it was his ears, projecting from the bag, that had so puzzled Digory.

"That's Coiny, that is", said Mrs. Lefay, "Out for his afternoon ride. And he's not a present for you, whatever

you may think."

"I never thought anything of the sort", said Digory indignantly.

"I see you're telling the truth this time", said Mrs. Lefay "And I know you didn't expect to be given Coiny. A nice house this would be for a sensible, experienced rabbit and he a founder of a family! I only wanted to make you angry."

"Why, Godmother?", asked Digory.

"To see what you'd look like, of course. To see if you'd the right flash in the eye. And you haven't lost that, anyway, though I think you've lost something else

in the last day or so. And now, I don't want to waste any more time. Here's my card with my address on it, and if ever you want to see me, take in all these directions because I don't mean to say everything twice over. You can catch a tram outside this house that will take you to Ravelstone Circus. Then look all round the Circus till you see Little Antrim Street. Then go along that on the left side till you come to Cuckoo Court. Then go down the Court on the right side till you come to a furniture shop that sells birds and pictures. Then you must go into the shop and you'll see

See what? No one knows because the manuscript, unfortunately, breaks off at this point. A pity, for the matter-of-fact Mrs. Lefay was beginning to be a very interesting old woman. But what kind of woman? She appears indirectly in *The Magician's Nephew* as Uncle Andrew's bad fairy godmother from whom he "inherits" the Atlantean dust out of which the Magic Rings were made. My guess is that she would have been Digory's good fairy godmother.

I have said that this fragment "appears to be an early version of The Magician's Nephew," but I have it on the testimony of my friend Roger Lancelyn Green that Lewis read the fragment to him in June 1949—which means that it was almost certainly written immediately after The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe. When compared with the four Narnian stories which were completed in between The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe and The Magician's Nephew, we see what Lewis called the "Author's impulse" in him "pawing to get out" vividly illustrated in this "Lefay Fragment"

^{4. &}quot;Sometimes Fairy Stories May Say Best What's to be Said," op. cit., p. 35.

which runs to a little over twenty-six pages in one of his notebooks. Also of interest is the manner in which we see the ingredients of this single surviving manuscript finding their way into other stories:

1. After the Lefay fragment ends abruptly at the top of page 27 of the notebook, Lewis skipped a few lines and wrote an early version of Eustace's diary, which is found in *The Voyage of the "Dawn Treader."* So, even if we didn't have Roger Lancelyn Green's account, it would be clear that the Lefay

fragment preceded the diary in time.

2. The picture of Aunt Gertrude with which the Lefay fragment opens is remarkably like the Head of Experiment House who, after the excitement at the end of The Silver Chair, was seen to be "no use as a Head, so they got her made an Inspector to interfere with other Heads. And when they found she wasn't much good even at that, they got her into Parliament where she lived happily ever after" (ch. XVI). The Head of Experiment House was, then, almost certainly modelled on Aunt Gertrude.

3. In the second chronicle of Narnia, Prince Caspian, we meet a talkative red squirrel named Pattertwig who offers Caspian a nut from his winter store. As he bounds off to fetch it, Trumpkin whispers in Caspian's ear, "Don't look. Look the other way. It's very bad manners among squirrels to watch anyone going to his store or to look as if you wanted to know where it was" (ch. VI). In the Lefay fragment Digory is offered a nut from a red squirrel, Pattertwig, and when the squirrel goes off to get it "Digory at once looked the other way; it is considered very [bad] manners among squirrels to watch anyone going to his hoard. To ask where it is would be simply outrageous." Pattertwig is yet

another winsome ingredient salvaged from the un-

published manuscript.

4. While the name "Digory" does not appear in the first story of Narnia, it was Roger Lancelyn Green's belief before it was mine, that Lewis was, in the Lefay fragment, searching for the origins of Narnia. If the author had gone on from this Lefay beginning, I think Digory would still have been discovered (as he is in The Magician's Nephew) to have been the boy who later in the series becomes Digory Kirke and, by a tying up of loose ends, the old Professor of The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe. But Lewis went on to write Prince Caspian and so this was delayed. It is also worth noting that, in the end, Lewis decided against having talking animals and trees in England-thus causing, as I think he intended, a sharper contrast between our world and that of Narnia.

The Lefay fragment, then, was written soon after The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe and before the final draft of Prince Caspian, which contains one of its characters (Pattertwig). Lewis possibly wrote other such fragments-now lost. This one survived because the notebook in which it was written contains notes on English literature that Lewis made a point of preserving. I have thought it worth quoting in full because it reveals so much worth knowing about the workings of Lewis's imagination. The fragment is rather like a fuzzy ball of dandelion seeds which, when struck by the wind, were scattered in many directions. Some of the seeds, or "pictures," found root in other books, and some remained on the parent stem and became the basis for The Magician's Nephew as we now have it.

The five manuscript pages of Eustace's diary that

follow the Lefay fragment are essentially the same as the diary found in Chapters II and V of The Voyage of the "Dawn Treader." Still, as the differences between them are nevertheless very interesting, and to realise my intention of publishing all the Narnian manuscripts there are, it seems wise to transcribe the whole of the manuscript diary here:

Tue. Aug 20-This is positively the first day since we left L.I. on which it has been possible to write anything. We have been driven before the storm for 26 days and nights, as I know because I have kept a careful count: though the others all say it is 28. (Pleasant to be embarked on a dangerous voyage with people who can't even get a simple little thing like that right!). I have had an appalling time, up and down enormous waves hour after hour and week after week, usually wet to the skin, and of course without any chance of a proper meal even when I was well enough to eat. It all proves what I told them at the very beginning, the madness of setting out in a rotten little tub like this. It would be bad enough even if I was with decent people, instead of fiends in human form. Caspian and Edmund are probably the most selfish boys that ever lived. The night we lost the mast-there's only a stump left now-though I was seriously ill they forced me to come on deck and work like a slave. Lucy said that if she and Reepicheep could she supposed I could too. I wonder she doesn't see through Reepicheep: everything he does is for the sake of showing off. But of course a kid like her can't understand that

To-day this beastly boat is level at last and the sun is shining and we have all been jawing about what to do. We have biscuit enough (beastly stuff, by the way) to last about 15 days. We shall have to kill all the fowl as quickly as we can eat them, because the muck they eat is

nearly finished. That means about 10 days' food: say 25 altogether. The real trouble is water. On short rations, quarter of a pint a day each, we've got enough for 20 days. (There's still lots of rum and wine but that would only make us thirstier). If only we could, of course the sensible thing wd. be to turn W. again and make for L.I. But it took us 26 days (they say 28) coming with a gale behind us. Even if we got an E. wind it might take far longer to get back. And at present there's no sign of a E. wind, in fact there's no wind at all. As for rowing back, it would take months; and anyway, no one could row on 1/4 pint of water a day.

The others all decided to go on, further E, in the hope of finding land. I felt it my duty to tell them that we didn't know there was any land to the E and tried to get them to see the dangers of wishful thinking and the importance of facing the facts. Instead of producing any better plan they had the cheek to ask me what I proposed. That was a bit too much, so I just pointed out, coolly and quietly, that I had been kidnapped and brought on this idiotic voyage without my own consent; and it was hardly my business to get them out of their scrape. Even the clever Caspian couldn't think of any answer to that, so they all just went on talking to one another as if I wasn't there. So it's settled we're to go on E. if we can.

Wed. Aug 21. Still becalmed. Roast fowl for dinner. All the good bits kept for the others as usual. Lucy for some reason tried to make up to me by giving me a bit of hers but that interfering swine Edmund wouldn't let her. Pretty hot sun.

Thur Aug 22. Still becalmed and very hot. Feeling very ill all day and sure I've got a temperature. Of course these idiots have come to sea without a thermometer.

Fri Aug 23. A horrible day. Woke up in the night knowing I was feverish and must have a drink of water.

Any doctor would have said so. Goodness knows, I'm the last chap to try to get any unfair advantage, but I never dreamed that this water rationing wd. be meant to apply to a sick man. I would have woken the others up and asked if I hadn't been too unselfish (much thanks I get for it! There are some people it is no good being decent to). So I just got up and took my cup and crept along to the beaker, very quietly of course because I didn't want to disturb the others. Some chaps, if they'd been feeling as bad as I was, wouldn't have bothered about that but I always try to behave properly to people even if they don't do it to me.

Well, I got to the beaker alright, but I'd hardly had more than a cupful when that little spy Reepicheep came along and caught me. I tried to explain but he had everyone up in a moment and there was the deuce of a row. I of course asked, as anyone would, what Reepicheep was doing sneaking about the beaker in the middle of the night. But he's such a dear little pet with them all that no one wd. believe he was trying to steal an extra drink: and when he understood what I meant he whipped out his silly little sword and wanted to fight me. By Gum, if only I hadn't felt so ill! As it was I had to apologise for peace sake. Then Caspian, who is a brutal tyrant, said that in future anyone found tampering with the beakers wd. get 2 dozen: and as if that wasn't enough went on in the most patronising way pretending to be sorry for me and saying that everyone felt just as feverish as I did and we must all make the best of it etc, etc. Beastly prig! Stayed in bed all to-day.

Sat. Aug 24th. A little wind to-day but still from the W. Made a few miles E.wards with the sail set on what Caspian (trying to be v. nautical) calls a jury-mast, made out of the bowsprit set upright and tied onto the old stump. Still terribly thirsty. I shall go quietly overboard

some night soon and then perhaps they'll be sorry for the way they have treated me

Aug 25—Still going E. I stay in my bunk all day now and see no one but Lucy who tries to be decent in her kid's way.

Aug 26. Land in sight: a v. high mountain a long way to the S.E.

Aug 27 The mountain is bigger and clearer but still a long way off. Gulls again to-day for the first time since I don't know how long.

Aug 28—Caught some fish and had them for dinner. Dropped anchor at 7 p.m. in 3 fathoms in bay of this mountainous island. That *idiot* Caspian wouldn't let us put off in the boat to get water because it was getting dark & he was afraid of savages and wild beasts (he was supposed to be afraid of *nothing*). Extra water ration to-night

Aug 29. The most terrible and queerest day of my life but all's well that ends well (Here follows Bill Birdbittle's dragon story & the writer's change of heart)

This clearly is a rough draft of Eustace's diary which underwent various transformations as Lewis discovered not one Lone Island, but three. It would also appear that the author had originally planned for the "Dawn Treader" to dock at Narrowhaven for a shorter time than it actually does, and to have the ship brave a storm for twenty-eight days, rather than a hurricane for twelve. Perhaps the most significant change of all is that while Eustace's adventure as a dragon lasts, according to the manuscript, only a day, it is in the book lengthened to about six days.

Such then are the extant manuscripts from which we can learn something about the earliest "mental

pictures" and "deliberate inventing" behind the Narnian stories. They are to be accepted for what they are—and no more. Lewis believed that most that survives from the past survives or perishes by chance. "Is there," he asked, "a discovered law by which important manuscripts survive and unimportant perish? Do you ever turn out an old drawer (say, at the breakup of your father's house) without wondering at the survival of trivial documents and the disappearance of those which everyone would have thought worth preservation?"5 Anyway, it is enough to say that I wasn't looking over the author's shoulder as he wrote the Narnian stories, nor have I seen any of the manuscripts which were thrown away. But something warns me that if I begin to conjecture about my conjectures someone other than Prince Rabadash will turn into an Ass. So I sternly draw rein and return to the more profitable realm of fact: the seven Chronicles of Narnia which Lewis meant for us to read.

^{5.} C. S. Lewis, "Historicism," Christian Reflections, ed. Walter Hooper (London; Grand Rapids, 1967), p. 109.

Narnia Within

From the mental picture of a Faun carrying an umbrella and parcels in a snowy wood, Lewis went on to imagine a country which has become as real and familiar to many people as the world we live in-and for some more dearly loved. After Miss Pauline Baynes had been commissioned to illustrate The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, Lewis sent her his own drawing of Narnia. On it are marked the sites we come to know in all the stories set in Narnia proper (Lantern Waste, the Castle of Miraz, Beruna, Cair Paravel, etc.) as well as the fringes of the Wild Lands of the North and Archenland, which lies south of Narnia. Lewis had, apparently, foreseen the story of The Silver Chair, for marshwiggle country is clearly indicated on his original map with a note to Miss Baynes pointing out that "a future story will require marshes here. We needn't mark them now, but must not put in anything inconsistent with them."1

Lewis's close observations of nature and his ability to describe what he saw, heard, and smelled, are

^{1.} For reasons which I am unable to explain, Miss Baynes's re-drawing of Lewis's original map appears only in the (British) Geoffrey Bles hardback and Puffin paperback editions of Prince Caspian. The pictures of the Monopods in chapter XI of The Voyage of the "Dawn Treader" are based on drawings by Lewis of a Monopod asleep and a Monopod standing. Lewis's map, his drawings of the Monopods, and his letters to Miss Baynes are in the Bodleian Library, Oxford.

nowhere so evident as in the Narnian stories. His description of Narnian countryside, weather, and food are, I expect, more effective than we first realise in contributing to the astonishing sense of reality achieved in these books. Not surprisingly, they are based on the countries Lewis knew and liked best: the British Isles and the Republic of Ireland, which are the only countries he knew well.

In July 1964 Lewis's brother, Warren, or Warnie as he was affectionately known, and I went on a motor tour of Co. Louth in the Republic of Ireland. We stopped at what seemed the highest point in the Carlingford Mountains, a spot which, according to Warnie, his brother Jack Lewis "pronounced to be the loveliest place he had ever seen." I felt, as we walked through the heather with the sun on our faces, that I had been plunged into the quiddity of Narnia. There the grass is almost emerald green and the heather a delicate purple. Looking north you can see, down below, a narrow bay of water stretching inland to Warren Point. And visible beyond that is Rostrevor—a favourite resort of the Lewis brothers—and higher up are the Mountains of Mourne which really do appear to be "sweeping down" to the Irish Sea. It was Warnie's belief that his brother had to a great extent modelled Narnia on this beautiful aggregate of gentle mountains and windswept coastline. And certainly it comes close to fulfilling Jack Lewis's notion of ideal weather: cool, dewy, fresh. It is, however, worth noting that, while Lewis claimed to be impartial to weather in general, he once described himself to me as having the "constitution of a polar bear," and I have heard him complain of summer weather with temperatures in the high seventies as "suffocating," "blistering," "scorching."

No accident, then, that he placed Calormen in the southernmost region of his imaginary world?

Although I am about as indifferent to food as a man can be, I nevertheless feel that modern works of fiction have for a long time become less "homely" and "cosy" in neglecting to say much about what its characters eat and drink, Indeed, so-called realistic literature seems to have almost forgotten that food is one of the most steadfast pleasures in nearly everyone's life. While Lewis is not glaringly obvious in correcting this deficiency—if it be such—some of the finest "imbedded" pleasures of the Narnian stories are his descriptions of Narnian foods. Descriptions which somehow familiarise, without making dull, the strangeness of another world, and which quietly convince us that we are in a real world that we should enjoy living in if we could get there. Sumptuous feasts very properly follow coronations and victories, but I suspect most of us are more vulnerable to the descriptions of the more ordinary Narnian fare. There are many examples to choose from, but there are two which are especially nice: the jug of beer and the freshwater trout which was "alive half an hour ago and has come out of the pan half a minute ago" in the Beavers' cave,2 and the meaty, spicy sausages "fat and piping hot and burst and just the tiniest bit burnt" in the cave of the Dwarfs.3

As I pointed out earlier, it would be difficult to know what kind of "dressed animals" Lewis was writing about in his boyhood stories without the benefit of his illustrations. In the Narnian books his animals appear in their natural beauty and interesting differences. They are the real thing. While

^{2.} The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, ch. VII.

^{3.} The Silver Chair, ch. XVI.

few people have seen Lewis's juvenilia, the chances are that almost every reader has seen a Walt Disney film. I find much of Walt Disney's work very pleasant, but his dressed animals do not seem to me much like the animals they are intended to represent. Perhaps they are not supposed to be. For whatever reason. I don't think it could be claimed that Mickey Mouse is very mousy, or Pluto very doggy. On the other hand, the Narnian animals, whether they can talk or are dumb, retain the qualities that endear them to us. Anyone who has owned a dog will recognise the realistic touch when he reads about the adventures at the Giants' Castle. where there are "wagging tails, and barking, and loose, slobbery mouths and noses of dogs thrust into your hand."4 The Giants' dogs were dumb, but even the Talking Dogs in The Last Battle "joined in the conversation but not very much because they were too busy racing on ahead and racing back and rushing off to sniff at smells in the grass till they made themselves sneeze" (ch. XIV). In the same chapter everyone is waiting to hear what Aslan said to Emeth the Calormene; and when "the Dogs had all had a very noisy drink out of the stream they all sat down, bolt upright, panting, with their tongues hanging out of their heads a little on one side to hear the story."

Excellent as Lewis's descriptions are, the books are so enhanced by the illustrations of Pauline Baynes that it would be an inconsiderate omission not to refer here to her part in the success of the Chronicles of Narnia. The combination of story and illustrations is one of the happiest I know of, and Miss Baynes, when I asked her in July 1978

who chose her to illustrate the books, told me that the idea seems to have originated with the author himself. Recalling her meetings with Lewis, she said "C. S. Lewis told me that he had actually gone into a bookshop and asked the assistant there if she could recommend someone who could draw children and animals. I don't know whether he was just being kind to me and making me feel that I was more important than I was or whether he'd simply heard about me from his friend Tolkien." 5

Lewis had indeed admired Pauline Baynes's illustrations to Professor Tolkien's Farmer Giles of Ham (1949) and he told me that he had "endless admiration" for her illustrations to his Narnian books, particularly her drawings of his animal characters. It would seem, however, that Lewis was unaware of how formidable he appeared in the eyes of someone as modest and self-effacing as Miss Baynes, for he told me he found her "too shy" to talk with as frankly as he should sometimes have liked. But it is best to hear the story from Pauline Baynes who has kindly allowed me to reproduce a letter she wrote to me on 15 August 1967:

... Dr. Lewis & I hardly corresponded at all over the illustrations to his books; he was, to me, the most kindly and tolerant of authors—who seemed happy to leave everything in my completely inexperienced hands! Once or twice I queried the sort of character he had in mind—as with Puddleglum & then he replied, but otherwise he made no remarks or criticisms, despite the fact that the drawings were very far from perfect or even, possibly,

^{5.} This came out in an interview with Miss Baynes in the documentary film Through Joy and Beyond: The Life of C. S. Lewis made by Lord and King Associates of West Chicago and released in 1979.

from what he had in mind. I had rather the feeling that, having got the story written down & out of his mind, that the rest was someone else's job, & that he wouldn't interfere. As I remember, he only once asked for an alteration—& then with many apologies—when I (with my little knowledge) had drawn one of the characters rowing a boat facing the wrong direction!

When he did criticise, it was put over so charmingly, that it wasn't a criticism, i.e. I did the drawings as best I could—(I can't have been much more than 21 & quite untrained) and didn't realise how hideous I had made the children—they were as nice as I could get them—and Dr. Lewis said, when we were starting on the second book, "I know you made the children rather plain—in the interests of realism—but do you think you could possibly pretty them up a little now?"—was not that charmingly put?

We had very few meetings-one, I think, in Geoffrey Bles' office, once over lunch at the Charing Cross Hotel [1 January 1951]—(rather a hectic affair with him watching the clock for his train)-and once when he invited me to lunch at Magdalen [31 December 1949] with an imposing collection of fellow guests, including Ruth Pitter. On all these occasions, being a self-conscious & stupidly introverted young girl, all I could think of was whether I was saying & doing the right thing, so that I didn't really register the important things like what Dr. Lewis said and did! He was invariably friendly & kind to me, but I suppose inevitably, I always felt overawed. I distinctly remember him picking the chestnuts out of the brussels sprouts with his fingers & saying it was a pity to waste them at the end of the Magdalen lunch! . . .

One remark he made somehow made a big impression on me—but I don't really see why it should have done

so. At the time of the Charing Cross Hotel lunch, he looked through some of the drawings I had done—& it was of bears—& he said "This one is particularly nice—you have got the right feeling"—& I said "how funny, I find bears no trouble at all, very easy to draw"—whereupon he answered—"Things one finds easy are invariably the best." This took a lot of thinking about, for though it is of course logical, up till then I had thought that nothing could be worthwhile that had not been a battle, a difficulty overcome, & that good things could only come after a lot of hard work & rubbing out. Of course he was right: if one knows about something so that you can draw it effortlessly it will be fluent & direct.⁶

By the time Miss Baynes had completed the illustrations to the fifth book, Lewis was more satisfied than ever with the quality of her work. His enthusiasm is particularly evident in the letter he wrote to her on 21 January 1954:

Dear Miss Baynes

I lunched with Bles yesterday to see the drawings for The Horse and feel I must write to tell you how very much we both enjoyed them. It is delightful to find (and not only for selfish reasons) that you do each book a little bit better than the last—it is nice to see an artist growing. (If only you cd. take 6 months off and devote them to anatomy, there's no limit to your possibilities).

Both the drawings of Lasaraleen in her litter were a rich feast of line & of fantastic-satiric imagination: my only regret was that we couldn't have both. Shasta among the tombs (in the new technique, wh. is lovely) was exactly what I wanted. The pictures of Rabadash hang-

^{6.} Bodleian Library, MS. Eng. Lett. C. 220, fols. 162-64.

ing on the hook and just turning into an ass were the best comedy you've done yet. The Tisroc was superb: far beyond anything you were doing 5 years ago. I thought that your human faces—the boys, K. Lune etc.—were, this time, really good. The crowds are beautiful, realistic yet also lovely wavy compositions: but your crowds always were. How did you do Tashbaan? We only got its full wealth by using a magnifying glass! The result is exactly right. Thanks enormously for all the intense work you have put into them all. And more power to your elbow: congratulations.⁷

Miss Baynes has undoubtedly shown that, of the many illustrators who over the centuries have drawn anthropomorphic beasts and fanciful creatures, she

is very near the top of the list.

But we may well ask why Lewis chose to make so many of his characters Talking Animals and mythological creatures or Longaevi (longlivers)—a name borrowed from the classical writer Martianus Capella.8 Would not people have done as well? Talking Animals and Longaevi such as giants, dwarfs, fauns, centaurs, dryads, naiads, and other creatures which are not human, but which behave in varying degrees humanly, are, Lewis believed, the "expression of certain basic elements in man's spiritual experience . . . the words of a language which speaks the else unspeakable." He is, then, speaking the proper language of the fairy tale, the

9. C. S. Lewis, A Preface to "Paradise Lost" (Oxford, 1942),

ch. VIII.

^{7.} Bodleian Library, MS. Eng. Lett. C. 220, fol. 155.

^{8.} See the chapter on "The Longaevi" in Lewis's The Discarded Image: An Introduction to Medieval and Renaissance Literature (Cambridge, 1964), pp. 122-38.

only language there is for the type of stories he was writing. To have used people instead, or to have given these creatures anything other than their traditional characteristics, would have been, he thought, ungrammatical. Besides this, Talking Animals and Longaevi are, he believed, "an admirable hieroglyphic which conveys psychology, types of character, more briefly than novelistic presenta-tion." For instance, Eustace, Jill, and Puddleglum have among the Northern Giants a quality of experience that would have been impossible among any other sort of creature. All those twenty-ton, earthshaking, unpredictable morons, just as likely to laugh as cry, are the only creatures who could have frightened and exasperated them in just that way. Could the greedy and vulgar Shift have been anything but an ape? Could any person have made us understand bravery so well as the gay and martial Reepicheep? Lewis was not fond of talking about his own books, but when he did, it was usually with as much detachment as when speaking of other writers' works. It was, however, his opinion that Puddleglum and Reepicheep were the best of the Narnian creations. Puddleglum, the marshwiggle, is modelled, Lewis told me, after his gardener, Fred Paxford—an inwardly optimistic, outwardly pessimistic, dear, frustrating, shrewd countryman of immense integrity. But unlike Paxford, Puddleglum is so much more the type of man of which Paxford is typical.

But here an example might be illuminating, though I must first point out that, while true, it is meant to show what was undoubtedly a loving side

^{10. &}quot;On Three Ways of Writing for Children," Of Other Worlds, p. 27.

of Paxford's character: if anyone thinks otherwise I can only suppose him to be of a congenitally acid disposition. Though very generous with what he had, Paxford was an adept at what is called "holding things together with a nail and a piece of string." During my stay at the Kilns I noticed in Major Warren Lewis's study an example of this. Once when a window in the major's study was broken, Paxford could not bring himself to buy a new, clear pane of glass to replace the broken one. He used instead an opaque piece, such as is normally used in lavatories, which was the only kind he happened to have handy. It is there to this day, and the effect is that, when glancing out the window, one invariably feels that something has gone wrong with one's eyes.

Occasionally Paxford did the cooking, and very good he was at it. We always ate simply, but well. The problem was that, as Paxford did the shopping, we could never be sure of having enough of some rather basic things. As Lewis's secretary, it was part of my job to arrange teas, and I was often worried as to whether there would be enough sugar in the house. This indispensable item, of which Lewis was so fond, comes in both two- and one-pound bags. It was typical of Paxford to buy only half a pound at a time if he could find someone to take the other half. As Lewis entertained a number of distinguished visitors, and as most used sugar in their tea, I was in constant fear of there not being enough. I talked this over with Paxford, who invariably said "Well, you never know when the end of the world will come and we don't want to be left with sugar on our hands. What'll we do with it then, eh?" In vain did I argue that it wouldn't make any difference what was in the larder when the End came. The point I particularly stressed is that we wanted "Mr. Jack's" guests to enjoy their tea—especially the one coming that very afternoon.

As Lewis pointed out in his essay "On Stories," there is a convenience in making your characters animals and Longaevi. As they are not human, so many economic difficulties are avoided. They do not have to be either children or adults. There is no struggle for existence, no domestic worries. They come and go as they please. There is plenty of good eating in Narnia, but where does it all come from? The Dwarfs are very clever, but no one ever heard of their keeping pigs. Who, then, made the sausages? or the wine, beer, and cheese?

Lewis's ideas on animal immortality were mentioned earlier in the book, and it is now time that we noticed the application of those ideas in the Narnian stories. We must remember, however, that we are talking about imaginative fiction, and I think it would be unwise to push the analogies too far. It would appear that part of Lewis's purpose was to create a world in which the relation between men and beasts is as nearly as possible like that which might have existed before both were corrupted at the beginning of this world. He even gives us an idea of what the Narnian animal king-

[&]quot;He may not take sugar," said Paxford.

[&]quot;But he may," said I.

[&]quot;But he may not," replied Paxford, "and then where are we?"

^{11.} Of Other Worlds, p. 14.

dom was like before men or evil came into their lives (the people are there only as witnesses at first). Instead of animals being subordinate to men, the dumb beasts are subordinate to the Talking Animals (see chapters IX and X of The Magician's Nephew). The biblical parallels are fairly obvious. After the Creation. Aslan chooses from the beasts (all of which are dumb) two of every kind and gives them speech and reason: Noah is commanded to take into the Ark "every living thing of all flesh, two of every sort" (Genesis vi: 19). Aslan then gives the Talking Beasts dominion over the dumb beasts: as God gave Man "over every living thing that moveth upon the earth" (Genesis i: 28). Aslan commands the Talking Beasts to treat the dumb ones gently lest they become like them and lose their reason, "for out of them you were taken and into them you can return" (ch. X). The nearest parallel to this-although, like the first, the context is not the same—is the curse that falls on Man after the Fall: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Genesis iii: 19).

However, after the Coronation of King Frank I, all Narnian beasts become subordinate to Man. Though Man is responsible for the corruption of Narnia—through Digory's having brought the evil Jadis there on the day of Creation—the Kings and Queens of Narnia must always be human. This is not their privilege, but their responsibility: "As Adam's race has done the harm, Adam's race shall help to heal it." It is, then, part of Man's

^{12.} The Magician's Nephew, ch. XI. Cf. Rom. v: 19 and I Cor. xv: 22.

redemptive function to help raise the beasts to their derivative immortality in the eternal Narnia. And—who can deny it?—the beasts play a not insignificant part in the redemption of Man ("Either other

sweetly gracing").

Most of Lewis's children are quite unattractive before they visit Narnia, and they come back much improved. That is one of the reasons they are taken there. Some of their faults can be traced to their schools. "I wonder what they do teach them at these schools," Professor Kirke asks in The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe (ch. V). Eustace Clarence Scrubb, we learn in The Voyage of the "Dawn Treader," "liked books if they were books of information and had pictures of grain elevators or of fat, foreign children doing exercises in model schools," and he also liked bossing and bullying other people (ch. I). When he takes shelter in the dragon's uncomfortable cave, the author says: "Most of us know what we should expect to find in a dragon's lair, but, as I said before, Eustace had read only the wrong books. They had a lot to say about exports and imports and governments and drains, but they were weak on dragons" (ch. VI). At the beginning of The Silver Chair, Eustace and Jill Pole are pupils at the same school: "It was 'Coeducational,' a school for both boys and girls, what used to be called a 'mixed' school: some said it was not nearly so mixed as the minds of the people who ran it. These people had the idea that boys and girls should be allowed to do what they liked" (ch. I).

Lewis's overt attack on the modern theory of "democratic" or "progressive" education in Great Britain and the United States is contained in two

articles13 criticising the Norwood Report.14 It was continued in a later article15 and reached its fullest expression in his Screwtape Proposes a Toast. In the last two instances Lewis reminded us of Aristotle's belief that democratic education ought to mean. not the education that most "democrats" like, but the education that will preserve democracy. Lewis believed that educators and parents had confused the two. They want an education that is "democratic" only in the sense of being egalitarian—one that smudges over the inequality of the intelligent and diligent boy and the stupid and idle one. There are, Lewis thought, two ways of doing this: one is to abolish those one-time compulsory subjects that show up the real differences between the boys; the other is to make the curriculum so broad that every boy is bound to find something he can do well. In either case the object is the same, which is that no boy, and no boy's parents, will feel inferior. This demand for equality, which is by no means confined to schools, and which grows more ravenous every day, results (he felt) in the inferior person's resentment of anything that is stronger, subtler, or better than himself. And, as Envy is insatiable, the more you concede to it the more it will demand.

^{13. &}quot;Is English Doomed?", The Spectator, CLXXII (11 February 1944), p. 121; and ["The Parthenon and the Optative"] "Notes on the Way," Time and Tide, XXV (11 March 1944), p. 213. (Lewis wrote titles on his private copies of "Notes on the Way," and I have reproduced them here within square brackets so that we can distinguish one essay from another.)

^{14.} Curriculum and Examinations in Secondary Schools: Report of the Committee of the Secondary School Examinations Council Appointed by the President of the Board of Education in 1941 (London: H. M. Stationery Office, 1943).

^{15. [&}quot;Democratic Education"] "Notes on the Way," Time and Tide, XXV (29 April 1944), pp. 369-70.

As Lewis has Screwtape say in his "Toast," it induces a man "to enthrone at the centre of his life a good, solid resounding lie"—a lie that is often expressed in the familiar and incantatory phrase I'm as good as you.¹⁶

Eustace Clarence Scrubb is the product of a social education and home that have made him the truculent, selfish coxcomb we meet at the beginning of The Voyage of the "Dawn Treader." Desperate diseases require desperate remedies. It is in the form of a dragon, the outward semblance of his inner spiritual condition, that he learns humility and the beginnings of self-knowledge. Afterwards, Aslan helps him strip off the "old Adam" and he emerges a much better person. This is one example of what is repeated throughout the books. None of the children simply "develops" into a better person. They are strongest when they are most dependent on Aslan, and it is all those Lion's kisses (imparting divine grace) that make the otherwise impossible possible.

It is Peter who, in my opinion, best fulfills the chivalric ideal. Lewis devoted an essay to this special contribution of the Middle Ages to our culture¹⁷—an ideal he found perfectly expressed in Sir Ector's lament over his dead brother Sir Launcelot: "Thou wert the meekest man that ever ate in hall among ladies; and thou wert the sternest knight to thy mortal foe that ever put spear in the rest." The important thing about this ideal is the double demand it makes on human nature, "The

^{16.} The Screwtape Letters and Screwtape Proposes a Toast: with a new Preface (London, 1961; New York, 1962).

^{17. [&}quot;The Necessity of Chivalry"] "Notes on the Way," Time and Tide, XXI (17 August 1940), p. 841.

^{18.} Sir Thomas Malory, Le Morte Darthur, XXI, xiii.

Knight," said Lewis in his essay, "is a man of blood and iron, a man familiar with the sight of smashed faces and the ragged stumps of lopped-off limbs; he is also a demure, almost a maidenlike, guest in hall, a gentle, modest, unobtrusive man. He is not a compromise or happy mean between ferocity and meekness; he is fierce to the nth and meek to the nth." Unfortunately, it is not natural for a man to be both heroic and meek. Heroism is most often found in the noisy, arrogant bully: and meekness usually found in the weak, defenceless man. Though the two tendencies are difficult to bring together, it is, nevertheless, important that a man embody both. Further, it is this ideal, as embodied in Sir Launcelot, which Lewis believed "offers the only possible escape from a world divided between wolves who do not understand, and sheep who cannot defend, the things which make life desirable."

At our first meeting with the four Pevensie children in The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, it is Peter whom we would choose as the meekest, the most courteous and fair-minded. But would he be any good at defending Narnia, to say nothing of himself? But then, what about the impetuous and cowardly St. Peter of the Gospels? If we had read nothing beyond the story of his denial, nothing of his part in the Acts of the Apostles, would we have believed that after the Resurrection he would become one of the most courageous defenders of the Faith the world has ever known? When Susan winds her horn, the slightest prompting from Aslan is sufficient to send Peter to her rescue. He feels sick at the thought of fighting the Wolf, but he rushes into battle. For a while it is all "blood and heat and hair" (ch. XII), but he slays the Wolf and is afterwards knighted Sir Peter Wolf's-Bane. Then the seed of courage is planted in all of them. Even the one-time traitor, Edmund, after some words from Aslan (which he never forgets), fights the White Witch until he falls wounded.

In this and all the other Narnian books, the greatest feats of arms are inseparable from the most perfect courtesy. Some of the most thrilling are recounted in The Voyage of the "Dawn Treader." The young king, Caspian, overthrows the slave trade in the Lone Islands by sheer pluck and courage. How it must cheer the heart of anyone who has not given himself body and soul to politics to see the hideously complicated, lazy bureaucracy overturned by Caspian who, an instant later, his naked sword across his knees, is facing the bilious Governor. "'My lord,' said he, fixing his eyes on Gumpas, 'you have not given us quite the welcome we expected. We are the King of Narnia'" (ch. IV). Then follows the all too familiar bilge from Gumpas about economics, interviews, appointments, graphs, trade, statistics, ending in the question, "Have you no idea of progress, of development?" "I have seen them both in an egg," Caspian replies. "We call it Going Bad in Narnia."

It is on this same voyage that the adventurers sight what appears to be a cloud of infinite blackness resting on the sea. It is decided that they will not venture into the ominous Darkness, and all speak with hushed voices as they prepare to avoid this frightening enterprise. "And why not?" comes the clear voice of Reepicheep. "Will someone explain to me why not." No one is anxious to explain and so Reepicheep continues: "If I were addressing peasants or slaves, I might suppose that this sugges-

tion proceeded from cowardice. But I hope it will never be told in Narnia that a company of noble and royal persons in the flower of their age turned tail because they were afraid of the dark" (ch. XII).

These and all other heroic achievements are centred around the castle of Cair Paravel, the hereditary seat of Narnian kings. It is modelled on a medieval court such as that of King Arthur at the beginning of that exquisite fourteenthcentury poem Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. More than that, Lewis restored all the fragments of an old unity: coronations, feasts, rich clothes, courtly language, merriment, friendship of a high order, hawking. There is one detail of the medieval (indeed, even earlier than the medieval) court which Lewis, an enthusiastic reader of epic poetry, was certain to include.19 Before Eustace and Jill set off in search of Prince Rilian, they are entertained in the great hall of Cair Paravel where after "all the serious eating and drinking was over, a blind poet came forward and struck up the grand old tale of Prince Cor and Aravis and the horse Bree, which is called The Horse and His Boy."20 They are listening to a Narnian epic which is well over a thousand years old. Though the setting of all the Narnian stories is essentially medieval, it is Narnian medieval. Lewis has so perfectly blended the high court of Cair Paravel with the ancient Longaevi of Greek and Roman myths that we are hardly aware that it has a dimension no real medieval court ever had. It seems the most natural thing in the world to see a centaur come galloping up to court, and some of

^{19.} See his chapter on "Primary Epic" in A Preface to "Paradise Lost."

^{20.} The Silver Chair, ch. III.

Lewis's own marsh-wiggles doing most of the "watery and fishy kinds of work" nearby.²¹

Narnia is a monarchical society, one in which there is loyal and joyful obedience to those above one in the hierarchic scale of being. From top to bottom, the order of precedence would run something like this: The Emperor-Over-Sea and Aslanthe High King Peter-the Kings and Queens of Narnia-the lesser nobility-Talking Beasts and Longaevi—the dumb beasts. One would be very far out to suppose that because Narnia is monarchical it is a society of slaves. Before his coronation Frank, the first king of Narnia, promises Aslan that he will "rule and name all . . . creatures, and do justice among them, and protect them from their enemies," rule the creatures "kindly and fairly, remembering that they are not slaves . . . but Talking Beasts and free subjects," that he will not "have favourites either among his own children or among the other creatures or let any hold another under or use it hardly," and if enemies come against the land, to "be the first in the charge and the last in the retreat."22 These solemn promises are binding on every king of Narnia and Archenland: Tirian, the last king, quite rightly offers his life in the service of his subjects.

Those who live under very different systems of government might, understandably, sense some seeming contradiction in the fact that Lewis made his Narnians free subjects, yet at the same time answerable to the Monarch. Aslan knows that evil is already at work on the day of Creation, and he is insuring Narnia against an absolute, tyrannical rule

^{21.} Ibid., ch. XVI.

^{22.} The Magician's Nephew, ch. XI.

such as the Calormenes chafe at under their Tisroc. The "seeming contradiction" will, I hope, be cleared up by what I think is a fair summary of Lewis's political "position." (1) He believed that most people are democrats because they think themselves so wise and good as to deserve a share in the government. He was, he claimed, a democrat for the opposite reason: he believed that mankind is so fallen that no man can be trusted with unchecked power over his fellows. It follows from this that they ought to have equal rights (equal rights being a very different thing from the "good, solid resounding lie" that all men are equal beings). But having equal rights is not something we should be proud of having to have. It is, more properly, something we ought to feel a certain shame about, something to be regarded as a medicine for our fallen condition, rather than as a food. (2) Quite apart from the high, personal respect Lewis had for Queen Elizabeth II and her father, King George VI, he defended the ceremonial monarch on the grounds that it is, among many other advantages, a visual reminder that we are not equal beings:

There, right in the midst of our lives, is that which satisfies the craving for inequality, and acts as a permanent reminder that medicine is not food. Hence a man's reaction to Monarchy is a kind of test. Monarchy can easily be "debunked"; but watch the faces, mark well the accents, of the debunkers. These are the men whose tap-root in Eden has been cut: whom no rumour of the polyphony, the dance, can reach—men to whom pebbles laid in a row are more beautiful than an arch. Yet even if they desire mere equality they cannot reach it. Where men are forbidden to honour a king they honour mil-

lionaires, athletes, or film-stars instead: even famous prostitutes or gangsters. For spiritual nature, like bodily nature, will be served; deny it food and it will gobble poison.²³

23. "Equality," The Spectator, CLXXI (27 August 1943), p. 192.

MES VII CEN

Theological Parallels

C. S. Lewis believed that there are three elements in all developed religions, and in Christianity one more. The first is the experience of the Numinous. If you were made aware that there is a mighty spirit in the room with you, you would feel wonder and a sense of inadequacy to cope with such a visitant. This shrinking feeling which the numinous object excites in you is awe. A good example is Jacob's vision of a ladder reaching from earth to Heaven upon which ascend and descend the angels of God. When Jacob woke from sleep he exclaimed, "Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place!" (Genesis xxviii: 16-17). The second element in religion is the consciousness of a moral law, and the third element appears when we realise that the numinous power is the guardian of the morality to which we feel an obligation. The fourth is an historical event, such as the recognition that the incarnate Son of God is the "awful haunter of nature and the giver of the moral law."1

All these elements are vested in the person of the great, golden Lion of Narnia, but it is the Numinous, the dreadful, that at first strikes us the most directly. When, in *The Lion, the Witch* and the Wardrobe, the Pevensie children first hear

^{1.} The Problem of Pain, ch. I.

the name of Aslan, something jumps in their insides (ch. VII). When they see him they know that they are face to face with one who is both good and terrible. The sight of his great, royal, solemn, overwhelming eyes causes them to go "all trembly" (ch. XII). He is a figure of immense power and beauty. When, after his resurrection, "he opened his mouth to roar his face became so terrible that they did not dare to look at it. And they saw all the trees in front of him bend before the blast of his roaring as grass bends in a meadow before the wind" (ch. XV). In The Voyage of the "Dawn Treader" the greed of Caspian and Edmund over the magical properties of Deathwater pool, which turns all that touches it to gold, gives way to fear and wonder when, across the grey hillside "without noise, and without looking at them, and shining as if he were in bright sunlight though the sun had in fact gone in, passed with slow pace the hugest lion that human eyes have ever seen" (ch. VIII). Two qualities Lewis told me he borrowed from various descriptions of the Holy Grail, that of brightness and a sweet odour, contribute to Aslan's numinous effect. Both are present in the manifestation of Aslan's glory to Shasta in The Horse and His Boy. When the boy fell at the Lion's feet, the "High King above all kings stooped towards him. Its mane, and some strange and solemn perfume that hung about the mane, was all round him. It touched his forehead with its tongue. He lifted his face and their eyes met. Then instantly the pale brightness of the mist and the fiery brightness of the Lion rolled themselves together into a swirling glory and gathered themselves up and disappeared" (ch. XI).

There is never any doubt in anyone's mind that

Aslan is the Lord of that world. Even his enemies

believe this ("the devils also believe, and tremble," James ii: 19). If I had not read the Narnian Chronicles, I could not have believed an author could concentrate so much goodness into one being. None of the soulful, overnice qualities we sometimes find in people we feel we ought to like, but cannot. Here, in this magnificent Lion, is absolute, thrilling goodness beyond anything we could imagine. Qualities we sometimes think of as opposites meet in him and blend.

He can be very stern. When the White Witch questions whether he will keep his promise (to die in Edmund's stead), his great roar sends her running for her life. A particularly fine example is found in The Silver Chair. After the rude and saucy Jill has pushed Eustace off the cliff, she turns toward the stream to get a drink. Her way is unexpectedly blocked by the Lion, who she knows has seen her "for its eyes looked straight into hers for a moment and then turned away—as if it knew her quite well and didn't think much of her." When she asks him to move out of her way, she is answered by a look and a growl. She knows she might as well have asked a mountain to move aside for her convenience. Nor will he bargain with her. Desperate for a drink of water, she asks, "Do you eat girls?" "I have swallowed up girls and boys, women and men, kings and emperors, cities and realms," says Aslan. "I daren't come and drink," replies Jill. "Then you will die of thirst," the Lion tells her. When she proposes to look for another stream, he tells her, "There is no other stream" (ch. II).

It does not occur to Jill to disbelieve the Lion. And Aslan's sternness, as she and all the other children come to see in time, is the only thing that could have helped them past their pride and

ignorance to some good which he planned for them. It is the proof, not the weakness, of his love. He always wants for them something so much better than they could have wanted, or thought they wanted, for themselves. As the master of an unwilling donkey knows when to apply the whip, and when the carrot, so Aslan in his omniscience knows when tenderness is best. At the end of the quest for Prince Rilian, recorded in The Silver Chair, the sight of Aslan causes Jill to remember all her snappings and quarrellings and how she muffed nearly all the signs he had given her. She tries, but is unable to say "I'm sorry." The Lion, understanding this, draws Jill and Eustace to himself, and touching their pale faces with his tongue, says, "Think of that no more. I will not always be scolding" (ch. XVI). In The Horse and His Boy Shasta did not know that Aslan had been caring for him since his birth. Nor does he realise that he would never have reached King Lune in time to warn him of Rabadash's treachery had not the Lion spurred him on. When the tired and dispirited lad complains that he is the unluckiest person in the world, he feels the warm breath of Aslan on his hands and face and the great Lion says "Tell me your sorrows" (ch. XI).

Nowhere in the Narnian books is the large, embracing love of Aslan for every creature in all worlds so poignantly felt as when Digory, anxious to draw the Lion's attention to the fact that his mother lies dying, blurts out:

"But please, please—won't you—can't you give me something that will cure Mother?" Up till then he had been looking at the Lion's great front feet and the huge claws on them; now, in his despair, he looked up at its

face. What he saw surprised him as much as anything in his whole life. For the tawny face was bent down near his own and (wonder of wonders) great shining tears stood in the Lion's eyes. They were such big, bright tears compared with Digory's own that for a moment he felt as if the Lion must really be sorrier about his Mother than he was himself.

"My son, my son," said Aslan. "I know. Grief is great. Only you and I in this land know that yet. Let us be good to one another."

There are others whom Aslan is unable to help. Like many of us in this world, the Dwarfs in The Last Battle are so determined not to be taken in that they stop their ears and close their eyes against anything that can do them good. When, for instance, a glorious feast is spread before them, they see and taste only such fare as they would expect to find in a stable. "The Dwarfs are for the Dwarfs," they constantly reiterate to their spurious comfort and to their eternal undoing. "They have chosen," says Aslan, "cunning instead of belief. Their prison is only in their own minds, yet they are in that prison; and so afraid of being taken in that they cannot be taken out" (ch. XIII). When, in The Magician's Nephew, the self-imposed blindness of Uncle Andrew erects a barrier between himself and the comfort Aslan longs to give him, the Lion says, "Oh Adam's sons, how cleverly you defend yourselves against all that might do you good!" (ch. XIV). Similar words were spoken by this same Lion over Adam's sons in the land of Judah centuries ago: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are

^{2.} The Magician's Nephew, ch. XII.

sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" (Matthew xxiii: 37).

Yes, the same Lion, for Aslan is Christ. It is, however, with reluctance that I mention this fact regardless of how well-known it already seems to be. I am reluctant because I do not want in any way to damage Lewis's success in getting "past those watchful dragons" which freeze many people's feelings about Christ and orthodox Christianity. I am sympathetic with those well-intentioned Christians who in Sunday schools, and writing for periodicals, draw attention to the fact that Aslan is meant to be the Son of God; and I know only too well the temptation, when all our evangelistic efforts seem to fail, to hand out to non-Christians the fairy tales with the comment, "Just you read these, and you'll know what I mean." Let us, by all means, give away as many copies of the fairy tales as we can afford: but not, please, with any explanation about who Aslan is. An "explanation" on our part is, I am convinced, very unwise, as it would very likely frustrate Lewis's purpose and blunt the effectiveness of the books. It is often precisely because many readers do not know who Aslan is that the Narnian stories have been so successful in getting into the bloodstream of the secular world. Hints about who is what and so forth have already caused many readers to regard the fairy tales as codes that need deciphering. They were written to give pleasure and (I think) as an unconscious preparation of the imagination. And this-it cannot be denied-they do most effectively without our extra efforts. If the fairy tales succeed in breaking down the partition of prejudices that prevent nonbelievers from even

thinking about the Christian tenets (and they appear to be doing this), then our efforts will be very much needed.

"But why," you might well ask, "are you at this very moment talking about the forbidden subject?" The kind of book I am writing is not meant for children or those who enjoy only a nodding acquaintance with the stories, but for specialistspeople deeply interested in C. S. Lewis himself. When I heard that the Narnian tales were, in some places, being taught as a kind of systematic theology, I felt that someone ought to attempt an explanation of why this is impossible: or for those who do think it possible, why they should proceed with the greatest caution. It is my belief that we will not find an exact, geometrically perfect equivalent of Christ's Incarnation, Passion, Crucifixion, and Ascension in the Narnian stories. We are not meant to. This is why we should not press the analogies too closely, or expect to find in the tales the same logic we find in the Christian story. If we do press the analogies too closely, we will, I think, go a long way towards spoiling our receptivity for what the stories have to give us. Here are some examples of what I mean.

1. First, in what way is Aslan the Son of God? I once thought we could say that he is the Son of God *incarnate* as Lion. This may have been because Lewis himself says that Aslan "is an invention giving an imaginary answer to the question, 'What might Christ become like, if there really were a world like Narnia and He chose to be incarnate and die and rise again in *that* world as He actually has done in ours?" "3 Lewis is, however, using the

^{3.} Letter of 29 December 1958 in Letters of C. S. Lewis, ed. W. H. Lewis (London; New York, 1966), p. 283.

term "incarnate" rather loosely here, for Aslan is never incarnate as Lion in the same way that Christ was Man. Let us consider what the Incarnation means.

According to the Athanasian Creed, Christ is: "God and Man; God, of the Substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds: and Man, of the Substance of his Mother, born in the world; Perfect God, and Perfect Man . . . Who although he be God and Man: yet he is not two, but one Christ; One; not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh: but by taking of the Manhood into God." This means that in some mysterious way the eternal Son of God is united with a natural, human organism so as to become one person; the union, as the Creed says, of Perfect God and Perfect Man. The Christian story goes on to say that, by His incarnation, Christ is able to taste death on behalf of all others, and by His rising to life again restores us to everlasting life. He then ascends into Heaven in His glorified Manhood-which Manhood He keeps for all time.

When Christ became Man, His divine nature was united with that of a natural, human mortal. But Christ as Aslan is never incarnate as a natural, dumb lion; never a cub suckled by a lioness. Indeed, He is not always found in the fashion of a Talking Lion, although if Chapter XIV of The Horse and His Boy were the only part of the fairy tales we possessed we might be led to think so. In that chapter Bree the Horse maintains that Aslan (whom he has never seen) is not a real lion, but resembles a lion only in his strength and fierceness. While Bree is expounding the nature of Aslan, the Lion walks up from behind and nearly startles the Horse out of his wits. "Now, Bree," says Aslan, "you poor,

proud, frightened Horse, draw near. Nearer still, my son. Do not dare not to dare. Touch me. Smell me. Here are my paws, here is my tail, these are my whiskers. I am a true Beast" (ch. XIV). This episode is quite obviously modelled on St. John's account of the risen Lord's appearance to the doubting Thomas, and Aslan's answer to Bree is doubtless meant to stand as a parallel to Our Lord's answer to Thomas: "Then said he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing" (John xx: 27).

The passage from St. John and the passage from The Horse and His Boy are remarkably similar, but they nevertheless mean something quite different. Thomas had been with Jesus for several years and he is saying (John xx: 25) that only by handling His physical body will he believe (a) that Jesus is risen, and (b) that the risen Lord is the same person as the incarnate and crucified Jesus. Bree, on the other hand, is more like the Bishop in The Great Divorce who thought of Jesus as "something purely spiritual."4 The Horse even denies that Aslan has the body of an animal, for as he says "If he was a lion he'd have to be a Beast just like the rest of us" (ch. XIV). Aslan makes it quite clear that he is not a man, not a phantom, but-like Horses, Squirrels, Rabbits, Dogs, and so on-he is a true Beast. And that—and no more than that—is what Lewis meant when he wrote about Christ being "incarnate" in Narnia.

By taking upon Himself the form of a Man, Christ was (I presume) never free to change His nature into something other than a Man. Aslan is

^{4.} C. S. Lewis, The Great Divorce (London, 1945; New York, 1946), ch. V.

not thus restricted. Quite obviously, it is as a Lion that Lewis thought of Aslan. John the Baptist, after all, thought of Christ as a Lamb ("Behold the Lamb of God"),⁵ and in the same Gospel Our Lord speaks of Himself as bread, water, light, a vine—even a door.⁶ But of course it is as a Lion that Christ is most often pictured, especially by the Old Testament writers—a choice of images on which I was favoured by the following note by my friend, the late Austin Farrer, sometime Warden of Keble College, using his own translations of biblical texts:

The Seer of Revelation is shown Christ as a Lamb, not a Lion. But it is to be observed that as his first appearance the Lamb-Christ is introduced as a paradoxical substitute for a Lion-Christ. "One . . . saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion from the Tribe of Judah, the Scion of David, has conquered; he can open the Book . . . And I saw in the midst of the Throne . . . a Lamb standing as though slaughtered" (Rev. v: 5-6). A Jewish seer of much the same date presents the straight picture of the royal Aslan: "And I beheld, and lo, as it were a lion roused out of the wood roaring; and I heard him send forth a human voice . . . This is the Messiah whom the Most High has kept unto the end of the days, who shall spring up out of the seed of David" (II Esdras xi: 37; xii: 32). The Lion-Messiah of Jewish tradition derives from the Oracles of Jacob on his twelve, sons. He praises Judah as the royal stem, a lion none does rouse, a hand from which the sceptre will never depart (Genesis xlix: 9).

Quite apart from the biblical parallels, Narnia is after all predominantly a world of animals, and

^{5.} John i: 29.

^{6.} John vi: 35; vii: 37; xii: 46; xv: 1; x: 7.

the Lion, the traditional King of Beasts, seems the most natural and appropriate choice for Lewis to have made. Still, the incarnation of Christ differs in yet another way from Aslan's "incarnation" in Narnia: Aslan does not always appear as a Lion. In The Voyage of the "Dawn Treader" Aslan takes the form of an albatross (ch. XII) and a lamb (ch. XVI). In The Horse and His Boy he assumes the form of a cat (ch. VI) and on several occasions that of an ordinary dumb lion. And, finally, in the "new Narnia" as envisaged in the last chapter of The Last Battle, "He no longer looked to them like a lion." What then? What else but in His resurrected Manhood. It is fortunate, I think, that Lewis does not actually say this, for that fact belongs to all the "chapters" that followed, of which the Narnian Chronicles had been "only the cover and the title page." There would have been no Narnian stories had there not been the great Original, but the stories being what they are, and the readers being what they are, there are undoubtedly others than myself who want to preserve in our memories as long as we can that magnificent leonine form.

2. In order to satisfy God's demand for perfect justice, Christ, the Perfect Man, died upon the Cross for the sins of the whole world. Aslan died on the Stone Table for Edmund Pevensie. We might deduce from this that Aslan would have died for the whole of Narnia, but we are not in fact told that he would or did do so. Try as we might, I simply do not see how we could work out a doctrine of the Atonement from Aslan's vicarious sacrifice for one boy—a boy, not from Narnia, but from this world. I should be very sorry to hear that anyone was attempting to do so, for I think he would have to read into the Narnian stories all sorts of things

that are not there, were not meant to be there. What Lewis tells us is that Aslan is obedient to the will of the Emperor-Over-Sea, and that he loves Edmund so much that he is willing to pay his penalty for him. It is moving and beautifully clear, easier for most untrained minds to grasp than the fact that Christ died for all mankind. And it gets "past those watchful dragons."

3. The Gospels represent Christ as passing after death into a life that has its own new Nature: He is still corporeal, can eat broiled fish, but finds locked doors no obstacle for Him (John xx: 19) and can ascend bodily into Heaven. He is related to Nature in such a way that Spirit and Nature are fully harmonized. Or, to use Lewis's analogy from his book on Miracles: "Spirit rides Nature so perfectly that the two together make rather a Centaur than a mounted knight" (ch. XVI). I tremble at the thought of what I should say if I were forced to explain how (if at all) Aslan's pre-resurrection body differed from that which he had after his death. In The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe we see the Lion undergoing something very like the Passion of Christ: "But how slowly he walked! And his great, royal head drooped so that his nose nearly touched the grass. Presently he stumbled and gave a low moan" (ch. XIV). What does it mean? It means exactly what it says. Nevertheless, I cannot see that any physical change is caused by his resurrection: he was omniscient and omnipotent both before and after the event. It is perhaps pointless to make such heavy weather of a theological problem not even posed, but my worry is-what happens if it is posed? In any case, the most reliable hints about the new, resurrected Nature are found, not in The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, but in the final

chapter of *The Last Battle*, which will be discussed later.

However, accepting—as I do—that it would be unwise to try and maintain an artificial silence about biblical as well as non-biblical parallels which even Lewis has been accused of having made quite "obvious," I offer the following advice regarding what many others would now wish to open up to closer inspection.

Lewis himself gave us a very useful piece of advice on the dangers of imagining "parallels" which are not there. It is found in a passage from his essay on "The Genesis of a Medieval Book," the last two

sentences of which I have italicized:

The text before us, however it came into existence, must be allowed to work on us in its own way and must be judged on its own merits . . . And while we are reading or criticizing we must be on our guard against a certain elliptical mode of expression which may be legitimate for some purpose but is deadly for us. We must not say that the Grail "is" a Celtic cauldron of plenty, or that Malory's Gawain "is" a solar deity, or that the land of Gome in Chrestien's Lancelot "is" the world of the dead. Within a given story any object, person, or place is neither more nor less nor other than what that story effectively shows it to be. The ingredients of one story cannot "be" anything in another story, for they are not in it at all.⁷

Thus, while it is true that "disguise" of a sort was part of Lewis's intention, it is nevertheless essential to see—as he points out above—that what is in one book or world cannot be the same in another book

^{7.} C. S. Lewis, Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Literature, ed. Walter Hooper (Cambridge, 1966), pp. 39-40.

or world. Put another way, what "Miss T" eats does not remain as it was but turns into "Miss T." The instructions Aslan gives Eustace and Jill on how to discover Prince Rilian are meant, I think, to reinforce the importance of following Christ's commandments. On the other hand, if, while reading The Silver Chair, we are thinking only of Christ's instructions to the rich young man recounted in St. Mark x: 17-21, we'll have missed what we are meant to be attending to in Narnia. It's afterwards, minutes or hours or perhaps even years afterwards, that the two worlds are to be joined in our minds. (Pauline Baynes told me that while she was deeply moved by the sacrifice of Aslan, it was not until after she had illustrated The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe that it broke upon her Who he was meant to be.) But even if that juncture never takes place, we will have benefitted enormously from The Silver Chair, for it is part of the success of a great author that the sense of his book does not depend on the reader's knowing the original source of its ingredients.

Is there any good to be had from source-hunting? Whatever benefits the discoveries confer upon the hunters, there are some misuses I see resulting from too great emphasis upon this suspect "use" of literature.

Let us, for instance, and for the sake of argument, suppose that Lewis borrowed the black cloud resting over the Dark Island in The Voyage of the "Dawn Treader" from the similar black cloud resting on the sea in Rider Haggard and Andrew Lang's The World's Desire (1891). Lewis had read The World's Desire and for all I know he could have "got" his idea of the black cloud from that book. As, however, Lewis had just as fertile an imagination as did

either Haggard or Lang, should we not assume that they "got" the idea from some other author who may have "got" it from some earlier writer? If all the literature ever written were available, and we had time enough to read it all, would we find that the idea goes all the way back to Adam? Or is it not possible that Lewis and the authors of The World's Desire (and no telling how many others) came at the idea completely independent of one another? In a letter to Arthur Greeves of 31 August 1930 Lewis admitted that one ingredient in his poem Dymer (1926) was in fact borrowed from George MacDonald's Phantastes but that another ingredient was already in Dymer before he read and found pretty much the same thing in MacDonald's Wilfred Cumbermede. "Don't you get the feeling," he asked in the letter, "of something waiting there and slowly being recovered in fragments by different human minds according to their abilities, and partially spoiled in each writer by the admixture of his own mere individual intentions?"8

Certainly there is something to be said for looking for and finding interesting "parallels," but my belief is that when a teacher comes across a pupil who rejoices in having solved a mere "puzzle" by discovering that Narnia is the name of an ancient Italian city, that Arslan (which Lewis altered to Aslan) is the Turkish word for lion, that the name Puddleglum is John Studley's sixteenth-century translation of two Latin words from the Hippolytus, the teacher should lead him away from the suspect realm of anthropology to true literary pleasures by showing him how one thing becomes

8. They Stand Together, op. cit.

^{9.} See C. S. Lewis's mention of this in his English Literature in the Sixteenth Century (Oxford, 1954), Bk. II, ch. ii, p. 256.

a different thing in another book. It is, for instance, not enough to say that the immediate source of Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet is Arthur Brooke's extremely ugly Tragical History of Romeus and Juliet: we need to show him what a completely different use Shakespeare made of the story if we are to help him appreciate the latter's genius.

Even those likenesses which seem to bear the closest resemblance to historical events in this world can be so similar without being the same. Yet these similarities required nothing of mature analysis for their perception; indeed, children, whom Lewis regarded as the most aware of his readers, were the first to respond to the ultimate likeness. And then, invariably, Lewis would be courteous in his reply. Like the one he offered to a little girl, Patricia Mary Mackey, who was living in Bedford. She had written to Lewis and told him exactly what he meant in the Narnian stories. So, typically, Lewis replied:

Magdalene College, Cambridge. 8 June 1960

Dear Miss Mackey

All your points are in a sense right. But I'm not exactly "representing" the real (Christian) story in symbols. I'm more saying "Suppose there were a world like Narnia and it needed rescuing and the Son of God (or the Great Emperor Oversea) went to redeem it, as He came to redeem ours, what might it, in that world, all have been like?" Perhaps it comes to much the same thing as you thought but not quite.

- 1. The creation of Narnia is the Son of God creating a world (not specially our world).
 - 2. Jadis plucking the apple is, like Adam's sin, an act

of disobedience, but it doesn't fill the same place in her life as his plucking did in his. She was already fallen (very much so) before she ate it

- 3. The stone table is meant to remind one of Moses' table
- 4. The Passion and Resurrection of Aslan are the Passion and Resurrection Christ might be supposed to have had in *that* world—like those in our world but not exactly like
- 5. Edmund is like Judas a sneak and traitor. But unlike Judas he repents and is forgiven (as Judas no doubt wd. have been if he'd repented).
- 6. Yes. At the v. edge of the Narnian world Aslan begins to appear more like Christ as He is known in this world. Hence, the Lamb. Hence, the breakfast—like at the end of St. John's Gospel. Does not He say "You have been allowed to know me in this world (Narnia) so that you may know me better when you get back to your own"?
- 7. And of course the Ape & Puzzle, just before the Last Judgement (in the Last Battle) are like the coming of Antichrist before the end of our world.

All clear?

I'm so glad you like the books.

Yours sincerely C. S. Lewis

I think we can better appreciate the use Lewis made of biblical parallels when we consider the two opposite dangers into which he could have fallen. Had the parallels been very obvious, he would not, I think, have nearly so many readers. Nonbelievers would have felt they were being "got at" and rejected them at once. On the other hand, our imaginations would not have been attuned to the Everlasting Gospel had he been too subtle—

especially as so many people today have never read the Bible. Some middle way was needed. This via media came easily to Lewis because he did not begin with morals or the Gospels at all, but wrote stories in which those ingredients pushed themselves in of their own accord. This is understandable to those who spent some time in Lewis's company. He could talk about the saints as naturally and unembarrassedly as you or I could talk about next-door neighbours. "Poor Lazarus," I recall him saying, "he had to die all over again!" And because Lewis's primary intention was to tell a story, rather than get a "message" across, the biblical elements blend into the stories. They are more like leaven in dough than raisins in a cake: it is difficult to say where they begin and where they end. Indeed, sometimes the "parallels" elude our discovery by the sheer multiplicity of them, blended into what is a quite simple episode. A good example is found in chapter XIII of *The Voyage of the "Dawn Treader"* where the children find three Lords of Narnia asleep under an enchantment, round a table spread with exotic foods supplied by a beautiful Princess. On the table is the cruel-looking knife with which the White Witch killed Aslan. The Princess's father, Ramandu, appears but is unable to speak until a bird lays a live coal on his lips. Among the many possible "sources" for these elements, other than Lewis's own imagination, are those we all know about. There is Rip Van Winkle; there is the passage in I Kings xvii: 6 which tells how ravens fed Elijah with "bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening." The Knife recalls King Pelles's sword which struck the Dolorous Blow. The bird takes us back to Isaiah vi:6-"Then flew one of the seraphims unto me,

having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: and he laid it upon my mouth." It is inevitable that a man so widely read as Lewis should have known all these things—but they, as I have pointed out above, neither collectively nor individually, are what his story is about.

My next example illustrates, not so much a multiplicity of elements which are fairly easy to identify if one has read what Lewis would have called the "Right Books," as what might be called a theological overtone. The Narnian stories might perhaps have succeeded just as well without any mention of the Emperor-Over-Sea, but Lewis, it seems, wanted to hint at the Trinity of Persons in the Godhead. The Emperor-Over-Sea is meant, I think, to suggest the Father. The Holy Ghost is hinted at more subtly. In the Nicene and Athanasian creeds we confess that the Holy Ghost proceeds eternally from the Father and the Son. After His resurrection, Christ "breathed" on the Apostles saying, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost" (John xx: 22). I believe Lewis meant to suggest something like this when Aslan breathes on the children, imparting strength for the tasks they are to undertake. A broader hint is found in The Horse and His Boy: "Who are you?" Shasta asks the Lion who has been walking beside him. "'Myself,' said the Voice, very deep and low so that the earth shook: and again 'Myself,' loud and clear and gay: and then the third time 'Myself,' whispered so softly you could hardly hear it, and yet it seemed to come from all round you as if the leaves rustled with it" (ch. XI). The reader who knows some theology, and whose mind is turned, as it were, in a certain direction when he reads these words, may catch an echo of eternal

truth reverberating from Aslan's words: Myself (the Father)... Myself (the Son)... Myself (the Holy Ghost). If, on the other hand, the reader does not "know the doctrine," the passage will by no means be spoiled for him. He will take the Lion to mean what he says, even if he (the reader) does not know the depths of meaning behind the Lion's words.

Turning to the Old Testament, it will be remembered that while on Mount Sinai Moses asked to see God's glory, the full manifestation of Himself. Because no man can see the Lord's face and live, the Lord said, "There is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock: And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a clift of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by: And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen" (Exodus xxxiii: 21-23). At the end of The Silver Chair Aslan comes with Caspian, Eustace, and Jill into this world to visit Experiment House. "They shall see only my back," says the Lion. After he caused the wall of the school to fall down, "he lay down amid the gap he had made in the wall and turned his golden back to England, and his lordly face towards his own lands" (ch. XVI). The bullies from Experiment House rush toward them, but when they see the back of the Lion and the figures in glittering clothes they are filled with terror. After they are given a sound thrashing they run and get the Head who, when she sees the Lion and the others, becomes hysterical. All this eventually results in Experiment House becoming a better school. God's manifestation causes Moses to worship and pray for the Israelite nation. The golden back of Aslan strikes terror into the hearts of the children and the Head, who had previously been not

unlike those "stiff-necked people" for whom Moses

prayed.

But such parallels, variously transfigured as they are in Narnia, are not what the books are about. Indeed, I do not think it is specially the identifiable biblical elements which cause us to regard the Narnian stories as Christian books. Almost every page of every book is suffused throughout with moral substance of a quality which I don't believe anyone, whatever his beliefs, could fairly object to. As pointed out earlier, the tales are not built around moral themes which were in the author's mind from the beginning: these themes grew out of the telling and are as much a part of the narrative as scent is to a flower.

I heard a specialist on children's literature say recently that writers are "going back" to moral themes—and he cited "pollution" as the supreme example. None of us objects to a clean world, but the morality of Lewis's books goes far deeper and touches on levels of human understanding rarely attempted even by those who write for adults. An especially good example occurs in The Voyage of the "Dawn Treader" (ch. X). As Lucy searches the Magician's Book for the spell which will make the Dufflepuds visible, she comes across a spell which will let you know what your friends say about you. Not even wishing to avoid this dangerous thing, Lucy says the magical words and hears her good friend, Marjorie, say very unkind things about her to another girl. Later, when Aslan discovers what poor, heartbroken Lucy has done, he says, "Spying on people by magic is the same as spying on them in any other way. And you have misjudged your friend. She is weak, but she loves you. She was afraid of the older girl and said what she does not

mean." "I don't think I'd ever be able to forget what I heard her say," answers Lucy. "No, you won't," replies Aslan.

Are there many of us who have not found, like Lucy, that such a dangerous course, once taken, forbids return? I've never seen the enormous difference between what our friends say, and what they really think, about us so unforgettably portrayed.

Finally, before we move onto The Last Battle, which deserves separate and special consideration, it is right that we see how the Narnian stories answer so many of the questions raised by Lewis as he progressed from atheism to Christianity. Paganism, as Lewis came to see, had been only a "prophetic dream" of that which became Fact in the Incarnation. But just as God, by becoming Man, underwent a certain humiliation, so the old, richly imagined myths, Lewis believed, must succumb to rational analysis: they must undergo a kind of death before they can be reborn in glory. But "those who attain the glorious resurrection," Lewis wrote in Miracles, "will see the dry bones clothed again with flesh, the fact and the myth re-married, the literal and the metaphorical rushing together" (ch. XVI). In his interplanetary novels Lewis attempted to bridge the gap that, in this world, exists between fact and myth. On Malacandra (Mars), Lewis's hero, Ransom, meets creatures who use the same method of shepherding as did the Cyclops in Homer.¹⁰ He sees on Perelandra (Venus) the Garden of the Hesperides, mermaids, mermen, Mars and Aphrodite, and realises that the "triple distinction of truth from myth and of both from fact was purely terrestrial—was part and parcel of

^{10.} Out of the Silent Planet (London, 1938; New York, 1943), ch. XV.

that unhappy division between soul and body which resulted from the Fall. Even on earth the sacraments existed as a permanent reminder that the division was neither wholesome nor final. The Incarnation had been the beginning of its disappearance." At the end of the third novel, That Hideous Strength, the Planetary Intelligences come down from their spheres to destroy a modern Tower of Babel in England. And in his short story, "Forms of Things Unknown," the astronauts discover something on the Moon that, on Earth, they had dismissed as "mere mythology."

But nowhere in all of Lewis's fiction are we so likely to forget that there ever has been an estrangement between fact and myth as in the Chronicles of Narnia. This is, I should think, especially true of those young readers who are brought up on the Narnian stories before they know there are such things as "ancient myths"; they will consider the Longaevi just as much a part of Aslan's original creation as are the animals. But Lewis had been closing the gap between fact and myth in ways other than his interplanetary novels. A good example is found in his chapter on "Miracles of the Old Creation" in which he pointed out that when Our Lord made water into wine at the wedding feast in Cana He was doing "close and small and, as it were, in focus what God at other times does so large that men do not attend to it." This miracle, he said, "proclaims that the God of all wine is present. The vine is one of the blessings sent by Jahweh: He is the reality behind the false God Bacchus. Every year, as part of the Natural order, God makes wine. He does so by creating a vegetable organism that

^{11.} Perelandra (London, 1943; New York, 1944), ch. XI.

can turn water, soil, and sunlight into a juice which will, under proper conditions, become wine."12

But if Christ (Aslan in Narnia) is the reality behind the false god, why does Lewis bring into Prince Caspian Bacchus, Silenus, and the Maenads? Because now that we know who the God of wine really is, there is no danger of confusion: Bacchus "can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do" (John v: 19). Now that we no longer need Bacchus, it is safe to have him. Besides this, how else could we have a proper romp before the Battle of Beruna Bridge if we forego such a wealth of imaginative experience as we get from Bacchus and his madcap followers? Although Lewis divested him of his power to cause madness and murder, the god retains his essential wildness. In his retinue is his old tutor, Silenus, who "began calling out at once, 'Refreshments! Time for refreshments,' and falling off his donkey and being bundled on to it again by the others, while the donkey was under the impression that the whole thing was a circus, and tried to give a display of walking on its hind legs. And all the time there were more and more vine leaves everywhere." After the festivities Susan says to Lucy, "I wouldn't have felt very safe with Bacchus and all his wild girls if we'd met them without Aslan." "I should think not," replies the sensible Lucy (ch. XI).

Thus, without enfeebling his own power, Aslan does through Bacchus that which he did "close and small" centuries ago in Cana of Galilee. "Here you are, mother," said Bacchus, dipping a pitcher into the cottage well and handing it to the little old woman. "But what was in it now was not water but

^{12.} Miracles, ch. XV (italics mine) .

the richest wine, red as red-currant jelly, smooth as oil, strong as beef, warming as tea, cool as dew." The same is true of the other mythological creatures in Narnia: all are extensions and expressions of the power and fecundity of their Creator. "Hail, Lord," says the River-god to Aslan (ch. XIV). That gets it just right: there never has been a permanent divorce between fact and myth.

ASS VIII EE

A Rebirth of Images

"You all know," said the Guide in the first work Lewis wrote as a Christian, "that security is mortals' greatest enemy." But unlike some of the ancient Stoics, as well as a great many of the modern ones, Lewis was not putting on a "brave face" because he thought death either terrible or final. Indeed, it was for him the reverse. Even in his wild, atheistical youth he seemed undaunted at the prospect of death: and by the time he became a Christian he had already come a long way towards seeing that "Joy," the deepest longings of all men is, at bottom, a desire for Heaven. While he disliked the "Liturgical Fidget" which has overtaken the Anglican Communion, I think the one expression Lewis would have heartily approved of in the new Roman Rite is the prayer for the "Pilgrim Church on earth." But to put into perspective his thoughts on "mortals' greatest enemy" and the inevitable destination of either Hell or Heaven for everyone, I quote a passage from the last book Lewis was to write, the final sentence of which has possibly become the most famous he was ever to pen:

I do not think that the life of Heaven bears any analogy to play or dance in respect of frivolity. I do think that while we are in this "valley of tears", cursed with labour,

^{1.} The Pilgrim's Regress, op. cit., Bk. X, ch. i.

hemmed round with necessities, tripped up with frustrations, doomed to perpetual plannings, puzzlings, and anxieties, certain qualities that must belong to the celestial condition have no chance to get through, can project no image of themselves, except in activities which, for us here and now, are frivolous. For surely we must suppose the life of the blessed to be an end in itself, indeed The End: to be utterly spontaneous; to be the complete reconciliation of boundless freedom with order -with the most delicately adjusted, supple, intricate, and beautiful order? How can you find any image of this in the "serious" activities either of our natural or of our (present) spiritual life?—either in our precarious and heart-broken affections or in the Way which is always, in some degree, a via crucis . . . It is only in our "hours-off", only in our moments of permitted festivity, that we find an analogy. Dance and game are frivolous, unimportant down here; for "down here" is not their natural place. Here, they are a moment's rest from the life we were placed here to live. But in this world everything is upside down. That which, if it could be prolonged here, would be a truancy, is likest that which in a better country is the End of ends. Joy is the serious business of Heaven.2

While we know that Lewis wavered occasionally in ordering some of the events in the first six Chronicles, and that he had to do a little "deliberate inventing" here and there, no one can say that he gave no inklings of the "twist" he was to put into *The Last Battle*. Hint after hint is thrown out in all the other stories that no one may camp forever in Narnia, just as no one may camp forever in this world. If we feel too great a shock at having

^{2.} Letters to Malcolm, op. cit., ch. XVII.

the old, familiar Narnia crumble beneath our feet, how are we to endure the shock when the real thing happens here? But it would not be fair to suggest that anything remotely like despair is what Lewis was after. Every hint of impending separation from the old Narnia is underpinned by persistent intimations of how great a loss it would be to lose the royal and all-loving Aslan, how complete would be our happiness to enjoy him forever.

It is difficult to select from the many passages in which Lewis attempts to woo our hearts from all but Aslan the ones that do this best, those which might be called the most typical. I am, thus, obliged to become autobiographical. After numerous readings of the Chronicles the passage which stabs me with the sweetest and sharpest desire comes from the last chapter of The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe. After the White Witch is dead, Aslan leads the children to Cair Paravel. The castle towered above them and "before them were the sands, with rocks and little pools of salt water, and seaweed, and the smell of the sea and long miles of bluish-green waves breaking for ever and ever on the beach. And oh, the cry of the sea-gulls! Have you heard it? Can you remember?"

Taken in their context, these words—especially the questions—set me yearning for that "unnameable something" more powerfully than any bluishgreen waves and the cry of seagulls in this world have ever done. In this particular instance I do not feel sorry for the children in Narnia (they remain there for five years) but for myself. I can tell from the feel of the book in my hands that for me the adventure is almost at an end. And, forgetting the other stories momentarily, how can I live never to meet Aslan again? I am suggesting that for both the

reader and those who make it into Narnia, the joys of that world (the place, the inhabitants, the castles, the landscapes) are inseparable from the greater joy of knowing the Lion. We want to be there because he is there. We desire the Lion because—well, not only because Aslan is in himself desirable, but because the desire is one of the things he has implanted in us, one of the things of which we are made.

From what we are told about Experiment House in The Silver Chair, it seems unlikely that any of the pupils there would have read the kinds of books that evoke a desire for anything outside this world. In any event, Jill is certainly puzzled when Aslan speaks of "the task for which I have called you and Eustace here out of your world" (ch. II). She explains to the Lion that nobody called them into Narnia, but that it was their own wish to go there, hoping that "Somebody" would let them in: to which Aslan replies, "You would not have called to me unless I had been calling to you." At the end of their quest for Prince Rilian, Jill and Eustace are taken to Aslan's Country where they see Caspian X resurrected from the dead. Longing to be, like Caspian, forever united to Aslan, "A great hope rose in the children's hearts." "No, my dears," said Aslan, reading their thoughts. "When you meet me here again, you will have come to stay. But not now" (ch. XVI).

There is a particularly moving example of the children's love for Aslan in *The Voyage of the* "Dawn Treader" (ch. XVI). When they learn that they must return to their own world, the truth dawns upon them that it is not so much the change in worlds they dread, but separation from the lion:

"It isn't Narnia, you know," sobbed Lucy. "It's you. We shan't meet you there. And how can we live, never meeting you?"

"But you shall meet me, dear one," said Aslan.

"Are—are you there too, Sir?" said Edmund.

"I am," said Aslan. "But there I have another name. You must learn to know me by that name. This was the very reason why you were brought to Narnia, that by knowing me here for a little, you may know me better there."

That, I think, is as frank a statement as Lewis makes anywhere about his evangelistic purpose in writing the Narnian stories.

The English children are, I suppose, from a Narnian point of view, "Gentiles" from an unknown world who become Narnians by adoption. There are, however, native Narnians who, when they see the Lion for the first time, feel a natural and spontaneous devotion to the person of the divine Aslan—as, for instance, Caspian's old nurse in Prince Caspian, who when she sees Aslan bending over her sickbed says, "Oh, Aslan! I knew it was true. I've been waiting for this all my life" (ch. XIV). Hwin, the mare in The Horse and His Boy, on seeing the Lion, trots up to him and says, "Please, you're so beautiful. You may eat me if you like. I'd sooner be eaten by you than fed by anyone else" (ch. XIV). But from here we move on to the culmination of the triumphant theme of Joy as the "serious business of Heaven."

The Last Battle, which won the Carnegie Medal for the best children's book of 1956 is, in my opinion, the best written and the most sublime of all the Narnian stories, the crowning achievement

of the whole Narnian creation. Everything else in all the other six stories finds its ultimate meaning in relation to this book. One can read the other stories in any order, but *The Last Battle* must be read last because, as Lewis would say, you cannot possibly understand the "play" until you've seen it through to the end. Lewis insisted on taking us to the end—and beyond.

If The Last Battle is re-read less often than the other fairy tales—and I don't know that it is—this is probably because the first eleven chapters, which take place in the old, familiar Narnia, are so extremely painful to read. Almost everything we have come to love is, bit by bit, taken from us. Our sense of loss is made more excruciating because we are allowed-even encouraged-to believe that things will eventually get back to "normal." We feel certain that the King, at least, will not be deceived by Shift's trickery: but he is. When Eustace and Jill arrive we know it will only be a matter of time until all is put right. Yet, despite their willingness to help, there is so little they can do without the help of Aslan. And where, by the way, is He? Our hearts warm within us as Jewel the Unicorn recounts the centuries of past happiness in which every day and week in Narnia had seemed to be better than the last:

And as he went on, the picture of all those happy years, all the thousands of them, piled up in Jill's mind till it was rather like looking down from a high hill onto a rich, lovely plain full of woods and waters and cornfields, which spread away and away till it got thin and misty from distance. And she said:

"Oh, I do hope we can soon settle the Ape and get back to those good, ordinary times. And then I hope they'll go on for ever and ever and ever. Our world is going to have an end some day. Perhaps this one won't. Oh Jewel—wouldn't it be lovely if Narnia just went on and on—like what you said it has been?"

"Nay, sister," answered Jewel, "all worlds draw to an end; except Aslan's own country."

"Well, at least," said Jill, "I hope the end of this one is millions of millions of millions of years away." (ch. VIII)

So do we all. Yet a few minutes later Farsight the Eagle brings word that Cair Paravel, the high seat of all the Kings of Narnia, has been taken by the Calormenes. And, as he lay dying, Roonwit the Centaur asked the King to remember that "all worlds draw to an end and that noble death is a treasure which no one is too poor to buy" (ch. VIII).

Lewis's didactic purpose ought to be clear to those who are conversant with orthodox Christianity. He uses his own invented world to illustrate what the Church has been teaching since the beginning, but which is becoming more and more neglected or forgotten. Namely, that this world will come to an end; it was never meant to be our real home—that lies elsewhere; we do not know, we cannot possibly know, when the end will come; and the end will come, not from within, but from without.

Most of the events in *The Last Battle* are based on Our Lord's apocalyptic prophecies recorded in St. Matthew xxiv, St. Mark xiii, and St. Luke xxi. The treachery of Shift the Ape was suggested by the Dominical words found in St. Matthew xxiv: 23-24:

If any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs,

and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.

The Ape almost—so very, very nearly—succeeds in deceiving even the most faithful followers of Aslan, first through trickery and, later, when he becomes the tool of Rishda Tarkaan and Ginger the Cat, in propounding his "new theology": the confusion of Aslan and the devil Tash as "Tashlan." As the monkey Shift is a parody of a man, so his "theology" is a parody of the truth. We are prepared for ordinary wickedness in an adventure story, but with the advent of the "new theology" we move into a new and dreadful dimension where ordinary courage seems helpless.

When it seems quite certain that Eustace and Jill will soon die fighting for Narnia, they speculate as to whether, at the moment of their death in Narnia, they will be found dead in England. Frightened by the idea, Jill begins a confession which she breaks off mid-sentence. "What were you going to say?"

asks Eustace. She answers:

I was going to say I wished we'd never come. But I don't. I don't. Even if we are killed. I'd rather be killed fighting for Narnia than grow old and stupid at home and perhaps go about in a bathchair and then die in the end just the same. (ch. IX)

From that point onward Lewis lets go the full power of his imagination, and we are carried relentlessly forward into what is truly the *last* battle of Narnia, in front of the Stable. There King Tirian, the children, and the remnant of faithful Narnians are either slain or make their way inside. The Stable

has become none other than the way into Aslan's Country and, drawing out this brilliant piece of symbolism, Lewis has Jill say in a moment of selfless appreciation: "In our world too, a Stable once had something inside it that was bigger than our whole world" (ch. XIII).

What is a little confusing, but which is partly explained in chapters IV and V, and fully cleared up in the last chapter, is that all (except one) of the "friends of Narnia"-Digory Kirke, Polly Plummer, Peter, Edmund and Lucy Pevensie, Eustace Scrubb, and Jill Pole-died together in a railway crash in England. They are reborn in glory and, inside the Stable, Eustace and Jill meet all the others. The exception is Susan Pevensie who, "no longer a friend of Narnia" (ch. XII), has drifted of her own free will into apostasy. Liberal clergymen and other "kind" but mistaken people, preferring the temporary passion of Pity to the eternal action of Pity, have found the absence of Susan a reason for calling Lewis "cruel." But they are well answered in The Great Divorce where, explaining why those who have chosen Hell shall not be allowed to veto the joys of Heaven, he says: "Every disease that submits to a cure shall be cured: but we will not call blue yellow to please those who insist on still having jaundice, nor make a midden of the world's garden for the sake of some who cannot abide the smell of roses" (ch. XIII).

Numbered, however, among the blessed in the eternal Narnia is Emeth the Calormene. I have never heard any denunciation of Lewis for allowing him this beatitude, but it might be worthwhile seeking some justification. "Is it not frightfully unfair," Lewis asked, "that this new life should be confined to people who have heard of Christ and

been able to believe in Him? But the truth is God has not told us what His arrangements about the other people are. We do know that no man can be saved except through Christ; we do not know that only those who know Him can be saved through Him." Like the Pagans in The Pilgrim's Regress, the "pictures" the Calormenes received probably contained the divine call, but through a passage of time they were all but overgrown with Calormene inventions. The fact remains that Emeth, stung with desire, acted on as much truth as he could perceive through the "dirty lens" of the Calormene religion.4 He sought Aslan with all his heart even when circumstances made it all but impossible to find him. And though he did not know Aslan until he went through the Stable door, it is Aslan, nevertheless, who became his Saviour there. The beautiful retelling of Emeth's meeting with Aslan echoes many Dominical utterances, but one passage I believe Lewis almost certainly had in mind is: "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd" (John x: 16).

With a terrible beauty that makes the heart ache, and which is perhaps only matched by Dante's Paradiso, Aslan goes to the Stable door and holds His Last Judgement. Those who are worthy pass in, the others turn away into darkness. Inside, the children watch as Aslan, fulfilling the apocalyptic prophecies of the New Testament, destroys Narnia

3. C. S. Lewis, Mere Christianity (London; New York, 1952), Bk. II, ch. v.

^{4. &}quot;Horrible nations have horrible religions: they have been looking at God through a dirty lens." Mere Christianity, Bk. IV, ch. ii.

by water and fire and closes the Stable door upon it forever.

After this dazzling feat of the imagination, one might reasonably expect that Lewis could not help but let us down in "unwinding" his story. He knew that the merest slip of the pen could have cast a shadow of incredulity over all that went before, and he proceeded very cautiously in opening the children's eyes to where they are. The question was how do you portray Heaven? How make it heavenly? How "unwind" upwards?

The answer lay in finding—and then trying to describe—the difference between the earthly and the eternal world. In order to stride the pitfalls into which so many critics of the Narnian stories stumble, it is necessary to do a little demolition work here. First, it's about as natural as sneezing for moderns to call something an "allegory" when it has a meaning slightly different from, or other than, the one the author gives it. In this sense you can "allegorize" practically anything. The reason why Lewis claimed that neither his Narnian stories nor his interplanetary trilogy are allegories is that he was using the traditional definition of the term: by allegory he meant the use of something real and tangible to stand for that which is real but intangible. Love can be allegorized, patience can be allegorized, anything immaterial can be allegorized or represented by feigned physical objects. But Aslan, for example, is already a physical object. To try and represent what Christ would be like in Narnia is to turn one physical being into another physical being—and that, of course, does not fall within Lewis's definition of what constitutes an "allegory." On the other hand, there is much in the Narnias, and specially in The Last Battle, which

would fit Lewis's own description of symbolism:

The allegorist leaves the given—his own passions—to talk of that which is confessedly less real, which is a fiction. The symbolist leaves the given to find that which is more real. To put the difference in another way, for the symbolist it is we who are the allegory. We are the "frigid personifications"; the heavens above us are the "shadowy abstractions"; the world which we mistake for reality is the flat outline of that which elsewhere veritably is in all the round of its unimaginable dimensions.⁵

Symbolism, as described here, was not for Lewis a fanciful bit of intellectualism. He believed that Heaven is the real thing of which earth is an imperfect copy. His problem was not only of finding some way to illustrate this, but to describe the heavenly life in such a way that it would not seem a place of perpetual negations. In his essay "Transposition," he suggests that we think of a mother and son imprisoned in a dungeon. As the child has never seen the outer world, his mother draws pencil sketches to illustrate what fields, rivers, mountains, cities, and waves on a beach are like:

On the whole he gets on tolerably well until, one day, he says something that gives his mother pause. For a minute or two they are at cross-purposes. Finally it dawns on her that he has, all these years, lived under a misconception. "But," she gasps, "you didn't think that the real world was full of lines drawn in lead pencil?" "What?" says the boy. "No pencil-marks there?" And instantly his whole notion of the outer world becomes a blank... So with us. "We know not what we shall be";

^{5.} C. S. Lewis, The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition (Oxford, 1936; New York, 1958), ch. II.

but we may be sure we shall be more, not less, than we were on earth.6

Lewis had a knack of making even the most difficult metaphysical concepts understandable and picturing the otherwise unpicturable. In order that his readers will feel as comfortable in the world beyond the Stable door as the children in the book, he brings in homely details such as the fact that Narnian clothes feel as well as look beautiful and even the very comforting news that "there was no such thing as starch or flannel or elastic to be found from one end of the country to the other" (ch. XII). Then, as the children and many of the animals they have come to love follow Aslan further into the country, their sense of strangeness wears off until it eventually dawns upon them that the reason why everything looks so familiar is because they are seeing for the first time the "real Narnia" of which the old one had been a "copy." As they rejoice in this discovery, Lord Digory, whom we first met as old Professor Kirke in The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, explains the difference between the two, adding, "It's all in Plato, all in Plato: bless me, what do they teach them at these schools!" (ch. XV). He is referring in the main, perhaps, to Plato's Republic and the Phaedo in which Plato writes about immortality and the unchanging reality behind the changing forms.

One very important detail, overlooked perhaps by the majority of readers as it is blended so perfectly into the narrative, concerns the manner in which resurrected bodies differ from earthly ones. The children discover that they can scale waterfalls

^{6.} In They Asked for a Paper (London, 1962), p. 178.

and run faster than an arrow flies. This is meant to be a parallel to the Gospel accounts of Christ's risen body: though still corporeal, He can move through a locked door (John xx: 19) and ascend bodily into Heaven (Mark xvi: 19). But whereas Christ had been the "first fruits" of the Resurrection, all now share in this mighty and glorious immortality as prefigured by St. Paul when he wrote, "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible and we shall be

changed" (I Corinthians xv: 51-52).

When the children reach the Mountain of Aslan they are joined by all the heroes of the other six books, Reepicheep the Mouse, Puddleglum the Marsh-wiggle, and a host of other old friends. There another surprise awaits them. Lewis had earlier, in his novel That Hideous Strength, defined Arthurian "Logres" as the permanent and enduring heart of Britain. So now, without bending any Apostolic teaching so far as I can see, he extends this analogy further by showing the children that "no good thing is destroyed" and that all the countries that were worth saving have become parts of the whole-"spurs jutting out from the great mountains of Aslan" (ch. XVI). Uneasy, nevertheless, that their joy may yet be snatched from them, and that they may be sent back to earth, they turn to Aslan who answers the question in their minds: "Have you not guessed?" he says, "The term is over: the holidays have begun. The dream is ended: this is the morning."

And as He spoke He no longer looked to them like a lion; but the things that began to happen after that were

so great and beautiful that I cannot write them. And for us this is the end of all the stories, and we can most truly say that they all lived happily ever after. But for them it was only the beginning of the real story. All their life in this world and all their adventures in Narnia had only been the cover and the title page: now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story which no one on earth has read: which goes on for ever: in which every chapter is better than the one before.

There has never been a book written, I fancy, in which the assumptions of the author were not present, implicitly or explicitly. Even the most blameless stories of child-life have at their base beliefs about something or the other. There is no such thing as not believing anything. One who does not agree with the central premises of the Narnian Chronicles must agree with some others. Will they lead to better ends than those of Lewis's books? I have read many modern works of literature about which I am forced to say "I admire the workmanship, but deplore the sentiments"; but only of the Narnian Chronicles can I unhesitatingly say, "This is beautiful, and this is right."

MIS IX CEN

Our True Home

In what is perhaps an unnecessary, but I hope not an unworthy Epilogue, I have chosen to end on a personal note. There has not been, there should not be, any attempt to read the Chronicles of Narnia as Lewis's "autobiography." It nevertheless seems to me perfectly natural and legitimate for the reader of the Narnian stories and Chapter VIII of this little study to wonder if the author of the Narnian stories took the most serious parts of it much to heart. He did.

Writing about the desire for Heaven as part and parcel of the desire for God, Lewis once said, "The proper rewards are not simply tacked on to the activity for which they are given, but are the activity itself in consummation." The old Narnia, as we have observed, flowed into the "real Narnia." In the penultimate chapter of The Last Battle, Jewel the Unicorn, arriving on the other side of the Stable door, expressed the feelings of all the others. He stamped his hoof, neighed, and cried, "I have come home at last! This is my real country! I belong here. This is the land I have been looking for all my life, though I never knew it till now."

The Unicorn's words recall for me Lewis's own reaction to death at a crucial time in his life. After years of illness, Lewis was taken on 15 July 1963 to

^{1. &}quot;The Weight of Glory" in Transposition and other Addresses.

the Acland Nursing Home in Oxford. Immediately upon arrival, he went into a coma and the doctors expected, and in fact said, that he would die at any moment. After a priest had given him Extreme Unction, I, along with other friends, waited close by for the sad news. To our astonishment and delight, Lewis awoke and asked for his tea, completely ignorant that he had been so close to death. During the weeks that followed, I sat by his bed talking with him about many things. His conversation was as lively and interesting as I ever remember it. I can still hear his great, booming voice quoting the English poets, joking with his friends, and taking me to task for deficiencies in my logic.

Despite Lewis's high spirits, I began to feel that I was wrong in not telling him how close he had come to dying after entering the nursing home, especially as the doctors felt he might not live much longer. I was tortured as well when I remembered Screwtape's belief that it is better for us to die unprepared in costly nursing homes amid friends who lie about our condition, than for a soldier to go, prepared for death, into battle.2 In the end I gave in and told him about the coma from which it was not expected that he would recover, his anointing-everything I knew. And all the while I attempted to comfort him as best I could. He listened spellbound, his eyes glowing with excitement. "Dear Walter," he said when I finished, "I am glad you have not left me a stranger to that which concerns me most deeply." And then, seeing how afraid I was that he might die soon, he set about comforting me.

Although Lewis's illness caused him little pain

^{2.} The Screwtape Letters and Screwtape Proposes a Toast, op. cit., Letter V.

at this time, he knew he would never be completely well. And knowing that this is a world in which none of us tarry long, he yearned for those "lenten lands" beyond which something better and permanent awaited him. Observing his peaceful acceptance of death-there was nothing regretful about it—I said, "You know, you really do believe all the things you've written." His eyes opened wide with surprise. "Of course!" he said. "That's why I wrote them." I know he was tantalised by the fact that he had almost passed the last frontier separating him from our true country, and after he came home he dictated many letters describing his feelings about the experience in the nursing home. He began one: "The door was open, but as I started through it was closed in my face." Then, turning to me, he added, "I would rather have died, but apparently it is my duty to live. I am happy to do either, but-oh, I would like to have gone through that door." A few months later—the same day, and I think the same hour, that John F. Kennedy was killed in Dallasthe door opened again. This time he went through.

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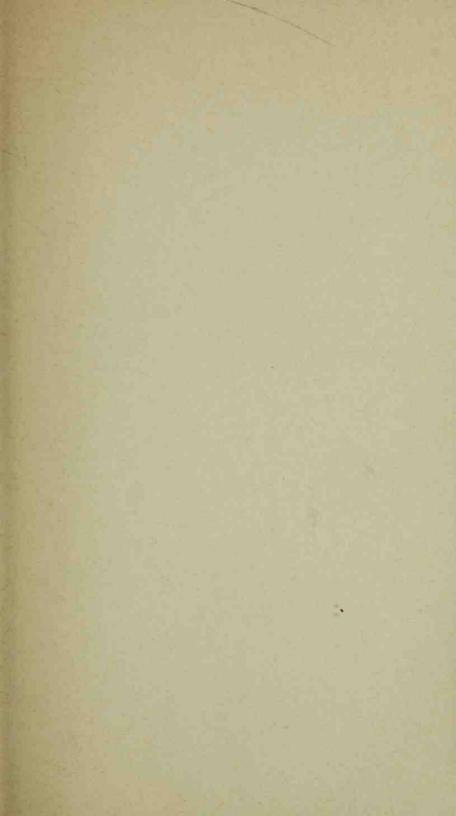
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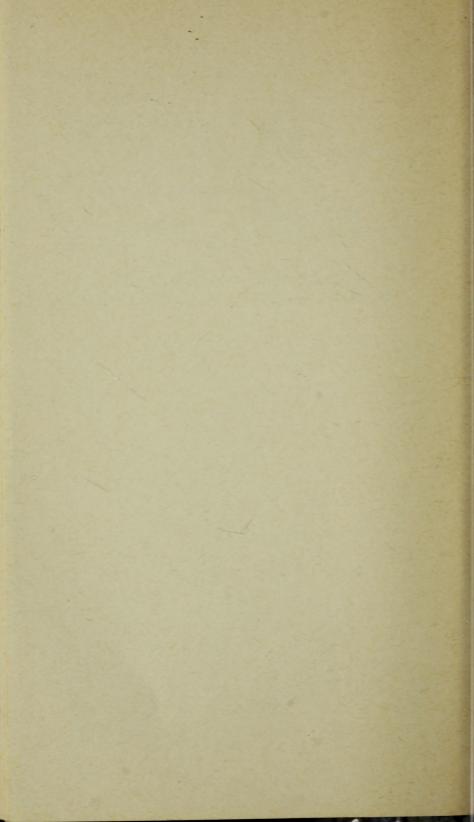
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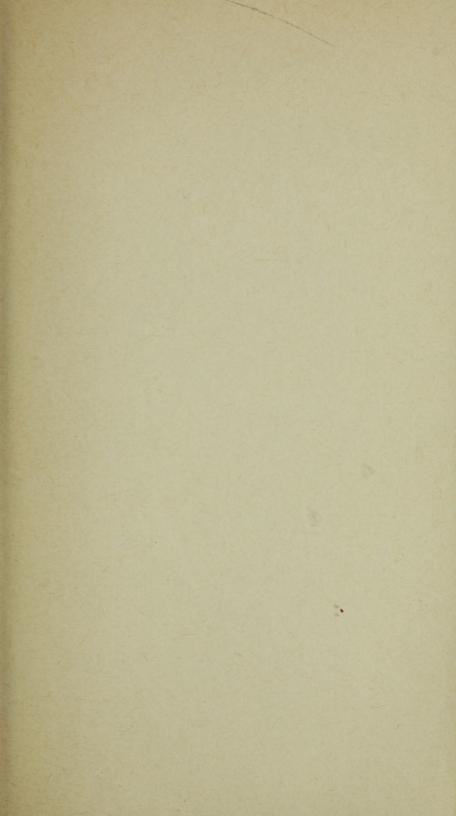
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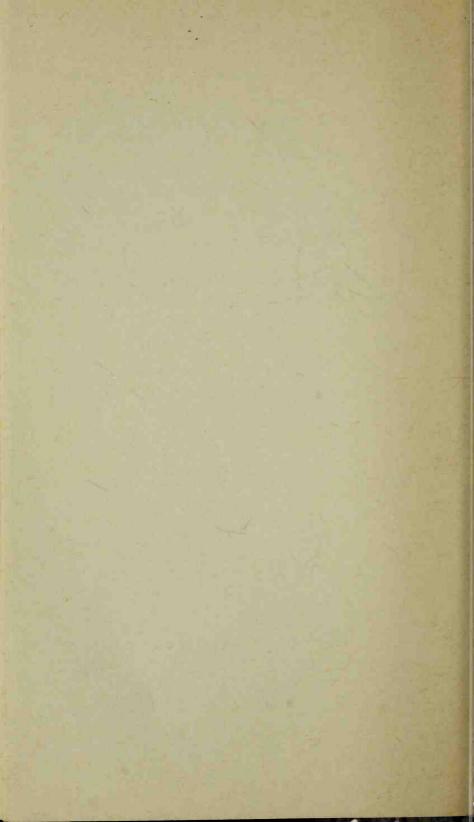
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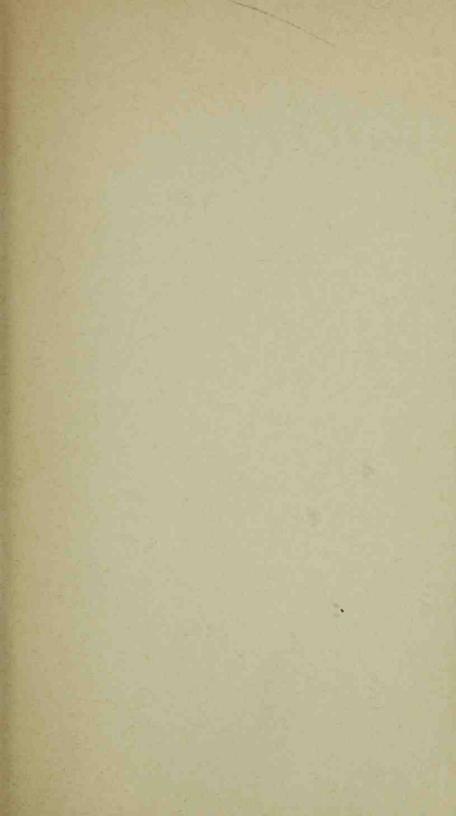
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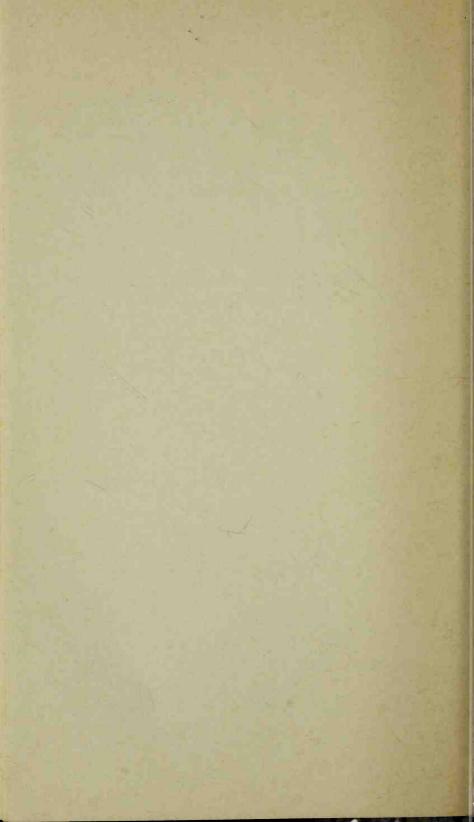


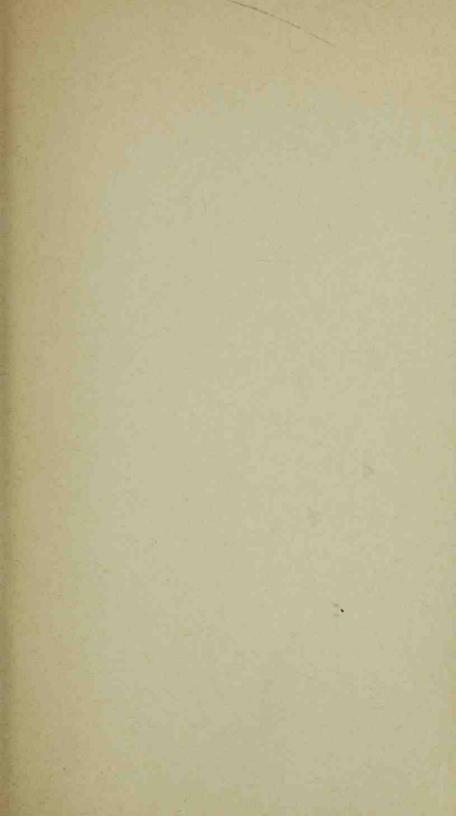


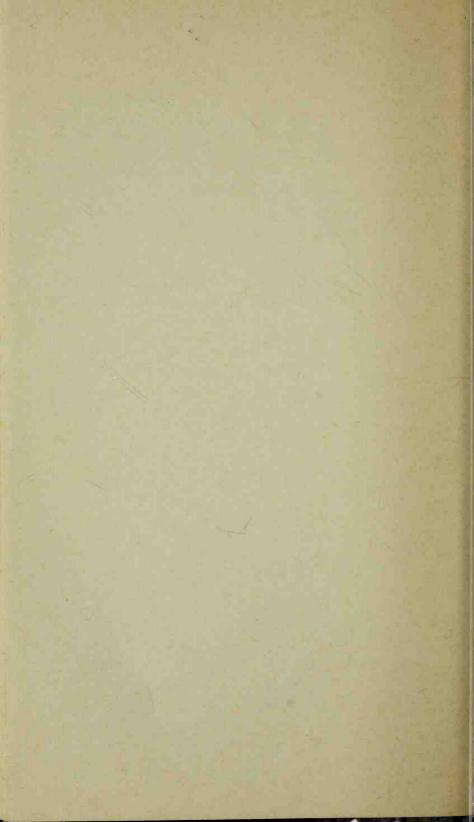


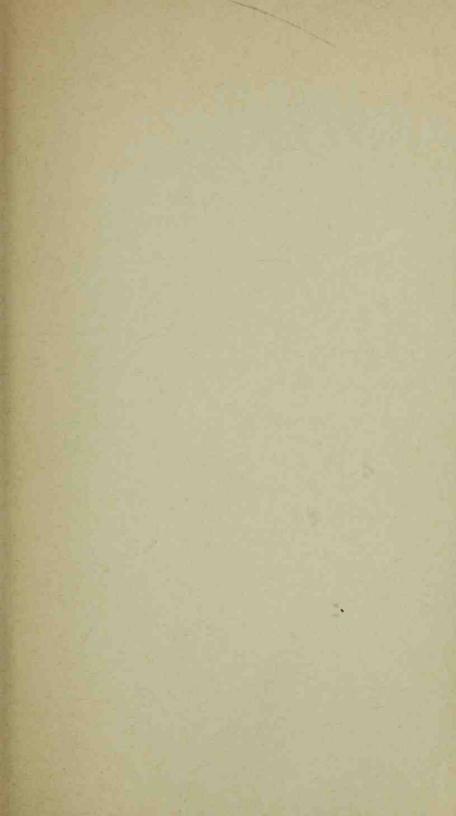


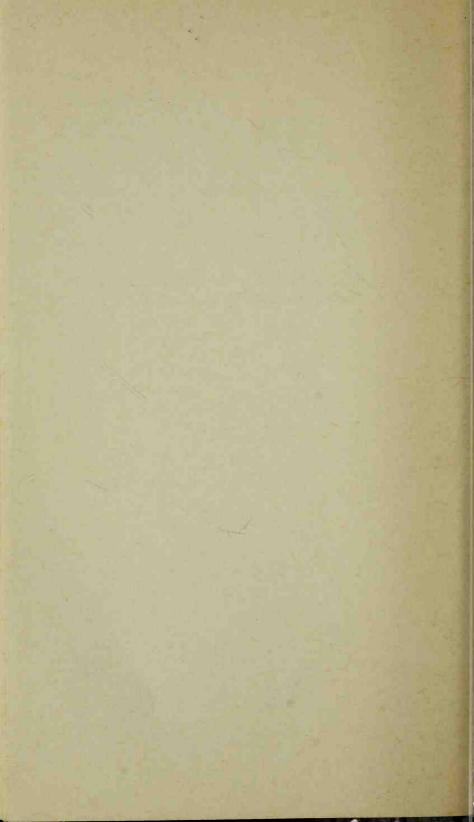


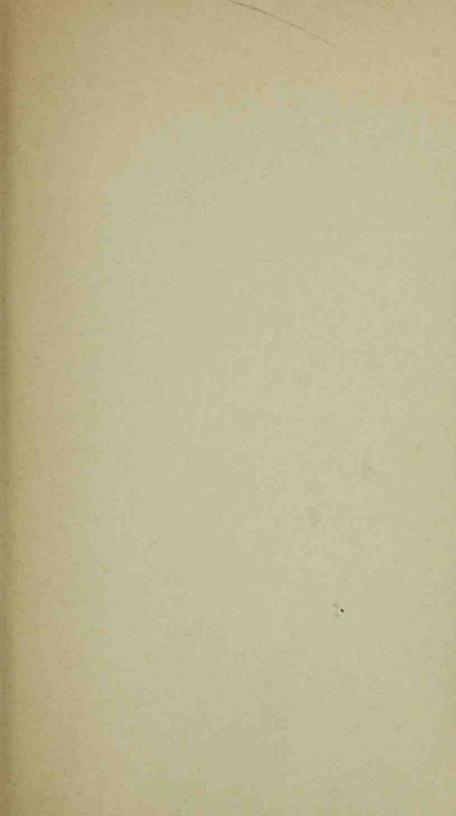


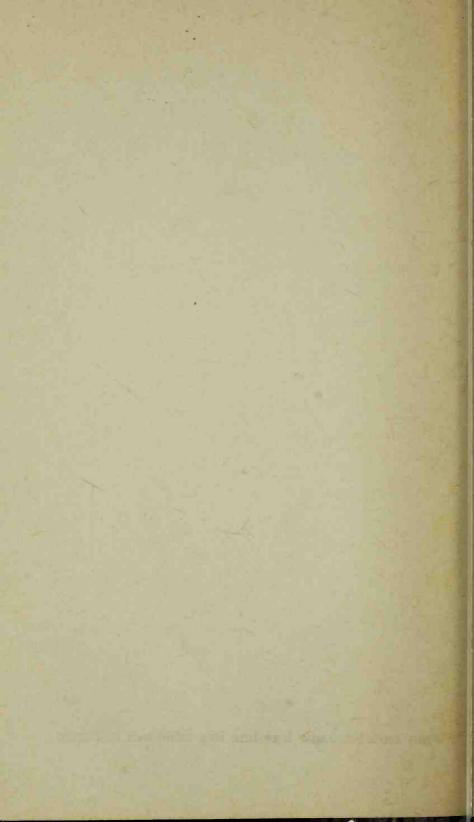


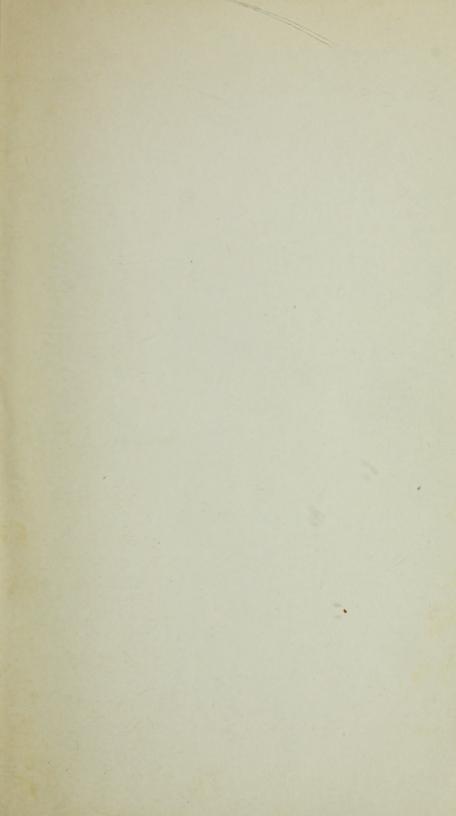












C.S. LEWIS ON THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA

I thought I saw how stories of this kind could steal past a certain inhibition which had paralysed much of my own religion in childhood. Why did one find it so hard to feel as one was told one ought to feel about God or about the sufferings of Christ? I thought the chief reason was that one was told one ought to. An obligation to feel can freeze feelings. And reverence itself did harm. The whole subject was associated with lowered voices; almost as if it were something medical. But supposing that by casting all these things into an imaginary world, stripping them of their stained-glass and Sunday school associations, one could make them for the first time appear in their real potency? Could one not thus steal past those watchful dragons? I thought one could.

Walter Hooper is C.S. Lewis' biographer and the world's foremost scholar of and authority on Lewis and his work.



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