

A Comparison of Two Editions of Lewis Carroll's Diaries 1855

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This is a comparative reading of the *Diaries of Lewis Carroll*, edited by Roger Lancelyn Green, 1953, and *Lewis Carroll's Diaries vol.1* by Edward Wakeling, 1993. There is a forty years' lapse between the two editions.

The year 1855 was the fifth year of Charles Lutwidge Dodgson's life and study at Christ Church, Oxford, and in that year he was twenty-three. The diaries reveal a wide range of his interests. As Dodgson was a mathematics student, many mathematical formulae and notes on mathematics are found in the Wakeling edition, but these do not appear in Green.

Dodgson bought *Euclid* published by Chambers for his sister Louisa on Ap. 16. On this date he writes, "I had to scratch out a good deal he had interpolated, (e.g.....) and put some [sic]¹ he had left out. An author has no right to mangle the original writer whom he employs: all additional matter should be carefully distinguished from the genuine text." It is amusing that this same person had in mind rewriting Shakespeare for girls. Shakespeare should be appreciated by girls without any harmful, blasphemous words, he thought. For him a literary work and a mathematics text were two separate

things.

“Pott’s *Euclid* is the only edition worth getting—both Capell and Chamber’s are mangled editions.” This comment does not appear in Green. What is interesting here is that Dodgson had a very clear view of which edition was good and which one was not.

Dodgson’s diaries are also noteworthy for his comments on the books he read, the music he listened to, the sculptures and paintings he saw, and theatres and plays he went to. The comments themselves may not be unique or outstanding, expressing more or less a common-sense point of view. However, who had ever attempted, for example, to describe the feeling of listening to the first-rate music as, “there is a sense of anxiety and labour, labour to enjoy it to the utmost, anxiety not to waste our opportunity: there is, I verily believe, a sensation of pain in the *realisation* of our highest pleasures, knowing that now they must soon be over...” (Sep.1).

In the Wakeling edition, this quotation appears in square brackets, which means that it was an additional or subsequent note written on the opposite side of the page, added later by Dodgson himself². Green treated the same passage as the main entry of Sep.3 (not of Sep.1). As the editor of the complete diaries, Edward Wakeling checked this and other incongruities between the two editions. He consulted the photocopies of the original diaries on which his entire edition is based, and checked and cleared some incongruous points between the two editions. These are listed below.

There are other comments on music in the diaries and what is

amusing is that Dodgson could not forbear, nor ignore, very bad singing. Thus he noted, "I could not have believed such bad singing was to be heard anywhere,... by two very old men, one of whom had symptoms of a tune in his singing, the other nothing the least like one" (Sep.16). On another occasion Dodgson complains about the audience, saying "...we went over a large party to Harrogate to a morning concert. {Singers' names continue}—a less enthusiastic audience I never saw: the best piece of all 'Sulla Poppa,' by F.Bodda, failed of an encore." Here, Green had deleted the singers' names and Dodgson's comment on the audience.

As to the omissions, Green explains in his Preface that, "My principle has been to keep every entry of literary interest, every reference to even the least important of his works, every personal touch, every mention of the books that he read, the plays that he witnessed, and the pictures that he saw. I have also included every meeting with a man or woman, in whatever branch of life, who was of the smallest importance in their own day, or has the tiniest claim to remembrance now. I have sometimes omitted passing acquaintances which are no more than lists of names..." Green goes on to say that he had sought to avoid repetition in the diary wherever possible, and that "Otherwise my cuts have chiefly been of mathematical and logical formulae and minor problems, of many unimportant references to his work as Mathematical Lecturer at Ch.Ch., and of the movements and doings of friends and relations in which he was not personally concerned..."⁴.

Edward Wakeling suggests that the omissions, the misspellings;

and muddling the order of the original sentences found in Green might possibly have been caused by the type-written scripts Dodgson's nieces had provided. Maybe this was the case. Green himself writes in his preface, "Only one other book {i.e. other than Stuart Dodgson Collingwood's *Life and Letters of Lewis Carroll*} contains extensive extracts from the original Diaries: Mr. Helmut Gernsheim's *Lewis Carroll, Photographer*, (1949)—and in this case the extracts were made by Dodgson's nieces." Green himself had been "permitted to read every word of the diaries, no embargo has been laid on any sentence in them, and this book contains all that the diaries have to tell," except, of course, private family matters. If so, then some of the omissions might possibly have been at Green's discretion.

Dodgson was unsympathetic to people being coarse and unpleasant. He went to Covent Garden on June 21 and saw Grisi sing in *Norma*. He writes, "she was magnificent in voice and acting but in appearance is red-faced and coarse....wonderfully young looking for 50." Green gives fourteen lines of notes for Grisi, while Wakeling's note states "Guilietta Grisi, prima donna opera singer" and ignores the rest, quite understandably, as Dodgson was not interested in her. These and other comments by Dodgson, if collected and published, would make interesting reading.

Dodgson was interested in Marionettes and plays for children. He writes on Ap.11 "All existing plays for such objects {i.e. plays for representation by Marionettes, or plays by children}⁵ seem to me to

have one of two faults—either (1) they are meant for the real theatre, and are therefore not fitted for children, or (2) they are overpoweringly dull—no idea of fun in them.” This quotation appears in square brackets in the Wakeling edition, while Green treats it as part of the entry for the day. But Green omitted the reference which Dodgson had marked at the end and we read in Wakeling: “See also Aug.25, 27”⁶.

So we can proceed to Aug.25 and 27, and discover a reference to charades by children. He writes, Aug.25: “a plan I formed some time ago, suited for inferior actors....” What is interesting about this is that the ‘plan’ he had formed was for unskilled, ordinary children who like to join in. This is important because any interested child could take part and enjoy acting. To learn about the plan you need to read the full diary entry for the day. The Aug.27 record says, “In the evening we performed two charades on the new plan...” and continues stating who took part and how the plan was improved upon by his uncle William’s suggestions.

This was also the day he met little Frederica Liddell (niece of the Dean of Ch.Ch.) and writes, “Each time I see her confirms me in the impression that she is one of the most lovely children I ever saw, gentle and innocent looking, not an inanimate doll-beauty.” He was interested in children and especially little girls. He was, however, not a man who was interested in girls for their “inanimate doll-beauty”.

March 16, when he had finished reading the first volume of *Friends in council* by Sir Arthur Helps Dodgson writes, “beautifully written, and I think well worth a second perusal”. He continues “If

the conversation has a fault, it is the too great similarity of style in the different speakers. This is always a danger in fictitious conversation; it is hardly possible to give each speaker real individuality without caricature (as in Dickens). If two or three authors would join in writing such conversations, each taking one of the characters..."

Dodgson was, of course, careful in inventing the Wonderland characters' conversation. If we take, for example, the Hatter, we may recall that Dodgson's favourite Uncle Skeffington Lutwidge was a barrister and a Commissioner in Lunacy living in London. According to a footnote in *Letters* by Morton Cohen, "Dodgson's Diaries chronicle an accident-ridden life for Lutwidge and death from a wound inflicted by a lunatic while he was visiting an asylum" (p.10).

Quoting from Green's version for 1873 (Wakeling's edition for this year has yet to be published), Dodgson records⁷,

"May 21. Telegram from Mr. Wilkes at Salisbury that my Uncle Skeffington has been injured. Left Oxford 8.15 and slept at Basingstoke."

"May 22. Reached 'White Hart', at 10, and learned that Uncle Skeffington had been struck by a lunatic. Saw Mr. Coates (surgeon) and Sir James Paget."

"May 23. Uncle Skeffington better: left for Christ Church."

"May 28. Telegram. Went to Salisbury, joining Sir James Paget on the way: we arrived a few minutes after my dear Uncle's death. Aunt Lucy and Fanny were there."

Dodgson may have learned about insane people from his uncle.

The Hatter's abruptness of conversation and the irrelevancy of his remarks to the context, all reveal his lunacy.

'It wasn't very civil of you to sit down without being invited,' said the March Hare. 'I didn't know it was your table,' said Alice; 'it's laid for a great many more than three.' 'Your hair wants cutting,' said the Hatter. He had been looking at Alice for some time with great curiosity, and this was his first speech. 'You should learn not to make personal remarks,' Alice said with some severity; 'it's very rude.' The Hatter opened his eyes very wide on hearing this; but all he said was, 'Why is a raven like a writing-desk?'

(from *AAIW* p.83)

Carroll's diaries are quite different from his letters. Charles Lutwidge Dodgson was a serious man. We know him as a student of mathematics and logic, and he was preparing for the ordination. His reading plan (March 13) included, "Divinity: keep up Gospels and Acts in Greek, and go on to Epistles"; "divinity reading for ordination"; "scripture history"; and "church architecture", among others. But that is not all. In his scheme of reading are found novels and poetry; and of the latter he writes: "read whole poets, or at least whole poems," and he mentions poets such as Shakespeare, Milton, Byron, Coleridge, and Wordsworth. Tennyson was not included here, but it was perhaps because Dodgson was actually reading the poet a lot at this time and there was no need of mentioning him by name.

Tennyson's "*Maud*" appears four times in volume 1 and Dodgson comments on the wording: "If genuine, they are very unworthy of him" (Mar.8). But of a later version of the poem he writes on Aug.14, he writes "Tennyson's '*Maud*' arrived,...he has improved very much." Further, on Sep.25 he writes, "Read *Maud* again ... I enjoy it much more on a second reading: the canto beginning 'I have led her home' is true, passionate poetry; one can scarcely believe but that it must have been written under the inspiration of a first love."

The first three stanzas of the canto XVIII begin with "I have led her home, my love, my only friend," "None like her, none," and "There is none like her none."

Dodgson befriended the Aireys, "staying at present in Croft," (Aug.17), and he writes on Sep.25 (the day of the above comment on *Maud*) "Decidedly a very pleasant family." For the entry of Sep:1 Green has only three lines of the record for that day, which begins, "Off to Whitburn." But these were the last three words of a full eight-line long sentence: "Went down to the station....: the Aireys were also waiting to go to Richmond: the family waited till half-past one to see me off to Whitburn." These two 'off's are not so dramatically far away from each other as the one in "Off with his head." However, the presence of the subject and verb before 'off' makes a difference. The Wakeling edition says that "the family waited to see me off to Whitburn", while Green's version reads, {I went} "off to Whitburn". The deletion of the preceding subject and verb does not help the reader to guess what was originally said in the text. Although such deletion often matters little, having the complete text is necessary in order for the reader to learn the situation clearly and

precisely.

To give another example, the entry under Mar.2 from Wakeling's edition begins, "Frank and I set out for Nuneham to call on Mr. Cook of Whitburn, the new rector, but were driven back by the rain: on our way back we went to see the picture exhibiting at Ryman's, ..." Green's entry begins, "Went to see the picture exhibiting at Ryman's, ...". Here Green also cut off the introductory part of the day's adventures.

We must therefore be aware that the deleted part in Green's version may contain some more interesting material about Dodgson. This is how useful and important it is to read the Diaries in their complete form.

Dodgson was as critical and conscientious about his own study as any mathematics student. He writes under April 18, "For some days back I have been writing 'Notes on Salmon'"; following this entry Dodgson writes, "but have been stopped today by an inconsistency, or rather want of symmetry, in my system of notation, ..." This last, self-reflecting remark on his notes, was omitted by Green version.

The incongruous points between the two editions of the *Diaries* have been carefully checked by Mr. Wakeling, who consulted the photocopies of the original diaries:

1. Sep.3.(M). Green's entry is followed by further fourteen lines which in Wakeling's version are in square-brackets and are under the entry of Sep.1. Wakeling is correct. "Dodgson wrote them on the other side of the page" states Edward Wakeling, "and are

really an addendum, hence in the square brackets.”

2. On Sep.17 Dodgson writes “... I found it hard to reconcile this with what I heard from Mr. Tristram, Aug.18.” There is no entry for this date in the diaries. “I guess,” says Edward Wakeling, “Dodgson is referring to his letter register which is, sadly, lost.”

3. As for the section in June 7, the order of the sentences are:

(a)-(b)-(c) in Wakeling (p.101)

(c)-(b)-(a) in Green (p.52)

(G stands for Green and W for Wakeling.)

W: (a) The Library visitation took place on the 18th, and I left for London next day

(b) Work of the term –

(c) Long Vacation

G: (c) LONG VACATION

(b) Work of the term:....

(a) The Library Visitation took place on the 18th, and I left for London the next day.

Wakeling's edition is correct. He says, “The section which begins, “Nothing remarkable occurred...” is an un-dated entry. The heading, ‘Long Vacation’ occurs just before the entry for June 19.”

4. The entry for Aug. 5 is in square brackets. This follows the entry in Green for Aug.4, “Began sketches of an evening party ...” in

Green. In Wakeling's edition the entry which says, "Began sketches ..." follows after the Aug.5 entry. Wakeling is correct, again. The beginning section of the entry for Aug.4 is deleted in Green.

5. Wakeling edition is correct in the following cases:

- (a) Dodgson wrote 'Oblique Coord.' Edward Wakeling expanded this abbreviation to 'Coordinates' in the correct mathematical term (Jan. 23):

G: Oblique Coordination

W: Oblique Coordinates

- (b) For June 23, 'after' in the Wakeling edition is correct. "Dodgson means the following Wednesday. He often wrote up the diary after the event," says Mr. Wakeling.

G: 'afternoon' as in "Part of the family arrived on the Wednesday *afternoon* from East Bergholt."

W: 'after' as in "part of the family arrived on the Wednesday *after* from East Bergholt."

- (c) It was Green who had deleted sections from the Diaries text in almost all cases. However, in the following instance he included some extra material, which did not exist in the original diaries (Aug.30):

G: (—No, The pictures were pronounced 'not up to the mark': I shall send no more—)

W: (no)

- (d) There are a few mis-transcriptions in Green edition. They have been checked by Mr. Wakeling and are listed in note 8.

It is clear at a glance how much Edward Wakeling has improved the structure of the diaries. He has made it easier for the reader to follow the main text by placing all the supplemental material in footnotes. Thus he set the body of the text free from the incessant interruptions which occur in Green's edition. Sometimes Green will mention, for example, not only a brother's rank (of someone who appears in the context) but also his occupation and published works, running a full nine lines in the body of the text while the main text itself consists of only four (May 17, in Green). For those who have experienced numerous distractions while reading, and have waded through all those interruptions, Wakeling's edition is a pure blessing.

At the end of the *Diaries, vol.1*, the editor states that Dodgson gave a list of contents at the end of the (original) volume 2. It was a categorical list of contents prepared by Dodgson himself. This is omitted because a comprehensive index is provided. The list included categories like "Events, Suggestions etc., Memoranda, Mathematics, Music, Painting and Art, Books, Writings etc. and Theatricals," with corresponding page numbers.

Mr. Wakeling says that this list will be reproduced in a revised edition. It would be useful for understanding more closely the interests and personality of Charles Lutwidge Dodgson.

Notes:

- 1 Wakeling noticed that Dodgson had made a mistake in his handwriting and written, "..... put some some (sic) he had left out ...". This kind of word repetition easily occurs in rapid handwriting, and was "corrected" in different ways: Wakeling deleted the repeated word, and Green replaced the repetition with the word 'in'.
- 2 "Most journal entries appear on the right-hand page of the notebooks; Dodgson uses the left side for additional or subsequent information, indicated in square brackets in the *Diaries*" (from the Preface of the *Diaries* edited by Edward Wakeling, p. 5.)
- 4 Preface to the *Diaries*, ed. by R.L.Green, p.xviii
- 5 The words in braces { } are supplemented by the present writer.
- 6 This is how Dodgson made reference to related topics in his diaries.
- 7 Morton Cohen mentions one other date about Skeffington in the *Diaries*, May 27, 1857, but this is unfortunately deleted in Green.
- 8 Some mis-transcriptions found in Green edition:

G: Illustrated London News (July 27)

W: Illustrated News

G: author (Sep. 15)

W: authoress

G: For some days I have been writing... (Ap.18)

W: For some days back I have been writing

G: the advantage of being tested (Ap.11)

W: the advantage of having being tested

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