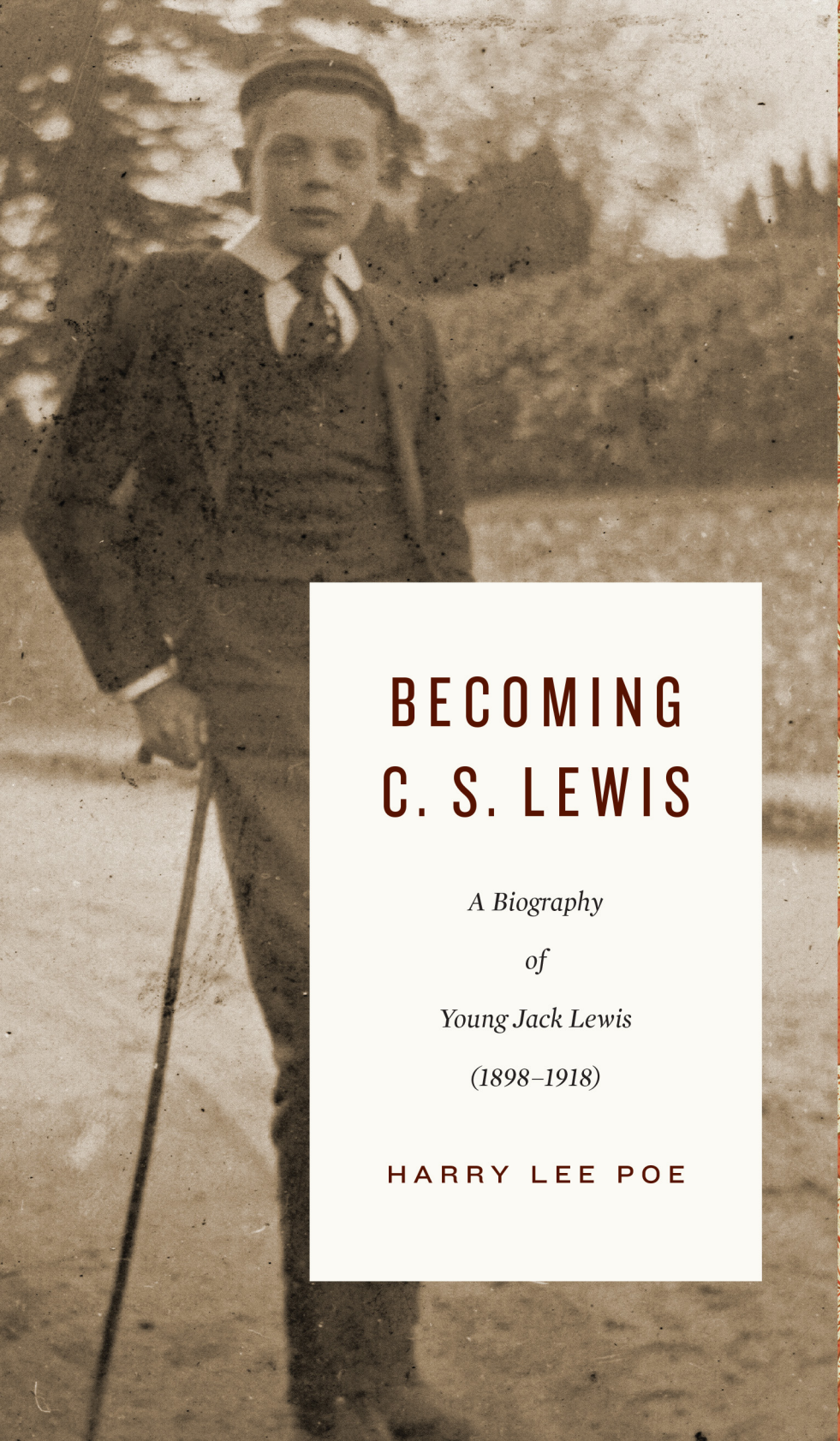

BECOMING C. S. LEWIS

A Biography

of

Young Jack Lewis

(1898–1918)

HARRY LEE POE

"Harry Lee Poe's biography of Lewis's early years is an engaging book filled with glimpses of the celebrated author that cannot be found in any other biography of Lewis."

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"Many fans of C. S. Lewis will savor having so much detail on his early years gathered together in one biography. This portrait of an artist as a young man is based on remarkably rich information that we have concerning Lewis's formative experiences and influences. Harry Lee Poe adds much helpful context and commentary."

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"Wordsworth famously wrote, 'The Child is father of the Man.' To better understand C. S. Lewis's tremendous achievements later in life—as a writer of imaginative fiction and poetry, a literary critic, and a Christian apologist—we should look to his formative years. Harry Lee Poe's *Becoming C. S. Lewis* is a valuable contribution to biographies of Lewis, providing a rich and comprehensive look at Lewis's early years and his important relationships with figures such as his brother, Warren Lewis, his friend Arthur Greeves, and his tutor W. T. Kirkpatrick."

Holly Ordway, Professor of English, Houston Baptist University; author, *Apologetics and the Christian Imagination*

"The young Jack Lewis is the Lewis whom all admirers of the mature C. S. Lewis need to know. We find it highly fitting, then, that Harry Lee Poe, who has long been a devoted guide to Lewis and the Inklings, has chosen to illuminate for us so faithfully the ardent youth who was father to the man."

Carol and Philip Zaleski, coauthors, *The Fellowship: The Literary Lives of the Inklings*

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Becoming C. S. Lewis: A Biography of Young Jack Lewis (1898–1918)

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To
Don King, Nigel Goodwin, and Rebecca Hays,
who have stood alongside me
in the ministry of
the Inklings Fellowship

Contents

Acknowledgments

I had never planned to write this book, but it got ahead of me. On one of those odd days when I decided not to do what I should have been doing, I began to wonder what C. S. Lewis liked to eat. That he liked to eat food, he made abundantly clear. He enjoyed eating and he confessed that he ate more than he should. I decided to look through his letters to see what he said about the meals he enjoyed. As it turns out, he said precious little about the menu. He regularly mentioned eating, but he rarely discussed what he ate. When he first went to live with W. T. Kirkpatrick at Gastons, however, he mentioned that he had good old Irish soda bread.

By the time I had read that far in the letters, however, I realized that the early life of C. S. Lewis had been neglected. He expressed opinions in those letters, before he went off to war, that he might have included in any of his scholarly works. It also became clear that most of the things he liked and disliked had been settled by the time he was seventeen. It became clear to me why Lewis devoted so much of *Surprised by Joy* to his school days and his time with Kirkpatrick. As I read the letters, this book began to take shape in my mind.

I am grateful to my acquisitions editor at Crossway, Samuel James, for his interest in this book—the first of three projected volumes on the life of C. S. Lewis—and the support that he and his colleagues at Crossway have offered. Claire Cook and Josh Dennis in the creative department of Crossway have done a beautiful job

of creating the cover and the cover design of the book, which would have been of paramount importance to seventeen-year-old Jack Lewis. Thom Notaro has done an exceptional job of editing the text.

In his biography of Lewis, Alister McGrath made much of the fact that his was the first biography of Lewis that had taken all of Lewis's letters and diaries into account. The kind of research that he and I have undertaken would be quite impossible had not Walter Hooper done the tedious and meticulous work of editing those letters in three volumes and publishing the diary. Scholars and lovers of Lewis can now examine those letters at their leisure in their own studies without facing the massive expense of traveling to the research libraries and special collections that hold those letters. Hooper has done an enormous service to generations that will come after him.

Even with the vast amount of material that Hooper has edited, much remains unpublished at the Marion E. Wade Center of Wheaton College and in the Bodleian Library of the University of Oxford. I am indebted to the Wade Center and its staff for their great kindness, generosity of spirit, encouragement, and helpfulness during several trips for extended periods of research into the primary documents related to Lewis during his early years. Marjorie Lamp Mead has always been gracious to me and all those who come to use the resources of the Wade. Laura Schmidt and Elaine Hooker went out of their way to find things I did not know existed. David and Crystal Downing arrived at the Wade Center as the new codirectors while I was finishing my research, and they extended me the warmest of possible welcomes. I am delighted that they will be leading this important research library into the future.

I am also grateful to Oliver House, superintendent of the special collections reading rooms in the Weston Library of the Bodleian Library of Oxford, for enabling my research. Judith Priestman, curator of English literary manuscripts, and her staff helped me

make maximum use of my limited time in Oxford so that I could focus on those Lewis papers not duplicated elsewhere. I also appreciate the help and courtesy given me by Rachel Churchill of the C.S. Lewis Company in securing permission to quote Lewis.

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1

Young Jack Lewis at Wynyard School

1908–1910

Between the death of his mother in 1908 and his war service in 1918, young Jack Lewis made the transition from childhood to adolescence to young manhood. He spent this critical period of development, like so many other boys of his social class in England and Ireland, in a variety of institutional settings. During his school days, the boy who would grow to become C. S. Lewis formed his most important tastes in music, art, literature, companionship, religion, sports, and almost every other aspect of life. While his ideas and critical thought about what he liked and disliked would change, his basic preferences came together during this period and formed the foundation out of which his later life grew. The things he liked at fourteen were the things that engaged his intellect and imagination thirty, forty, and fifty years later. The things that sparked his imagination when he was an arrogant, conceited boy were the same things that influenced and motivated his change of character in the context of his conversion to Christianity, when his teenage years were half a lifetime behind him.

The transition from childhood to adolescence to young adulthood also came with critical spiritual issues. All people face the spiritual issues of growing up, but each person must deal with those issues himself or herself. People rarely recognize that they are traveling from one phase of life to another in the midst of the journey, but looking back we can see the landmarks fairly clearly. So it was for Jack Lewis. He lost something from his early childhood when he grew from childhood to boyhood. He suspected that it was the same for all boys for whom those years represent the "dark ages" of life between the two glorious ages of early childhood and adolescence. In boyhood, Lewis thought, everything grows "greedy, cruel, noisy, and prosaic, in which the imagination has slept and the most un-ideal senses and ambitions have been restlessly, even maniacally, awake."[1] Lewis thought of his boyhood as a desert characterized by greed, cruelty, noise, and the mundane—a foreign land that had intruded into the flow of his life as an interruption that did not really belong.[2]

As he moved into his adolescence, however, Lewis recovered some important things from his earlier childhood that his later boyhood had forgotten. He recovered the sense of wonder that comes from an experience of the transcendent. For Lewis, this experience was the most important thing of life itself, and understanding the nature and source of it would eventually lead him to faith in the God of the Bible. His conversion would come long after his adolescent years had ended; but without the path he chose while dealing with the spiritual issues raised in adolescence, Lewis might not have come to faith. At least, he would not have traveled the same path to faith.

The period of adolescence in the United States roughly corresponds to the period from the seventh grade through the twelfth grade or the years of middle school and high school. It begins around the time of the onset of puberty, when the body begins to do such strange things, and it comes to a close as young people mature enough to assume the responsibilities of adulthood. For

some people, the end of adolescence comes when they take their first full-time job. College life can actually prolong adolescence for many people who use college to keep responsibility at bay. Whether college would have prolonged the adolescent period for C. S. Lewis remains a speculative question because he did not have that option. At the age when most young men of his social class would have been settling into their first full year of college, Lewis was settling into the trenches on the Western Front as an eighteen-year-old junior officer in the British Army.

Of Names and Monikers

Christened Clive Staples Lewis, the little boy announced at the age of four that he was Jacksie, soon shortened to Jacks, and finally reduced to Jack.[3] For the rest of his life he was known to his friends as Jack. C. S. Lewis had a variety of nicknames as a teenaged boy. His friend Arthur Greeves called him Chubs because he was a bit chubby.[4] His father, Albert, and his brother, Warren ("Warnie"), began calling him "It" in their correspondence about the time Jack went to Malvern College. By 1910, Albert had added new pet names for his sons as he started calling Jacks "Klicks" and Warnie "Badge."[5] Once Warnie entered the army during the Great War, Jack began calling him "the Colonel." In childhood, Warnie had also been called Bruser (or Bruiser).[6] Nicknames seem to have come with being a member of the Lewis family. In their letters, Flora Lewis called her husband her "dear old Bear" or Lal, while Flora was Doli to Albert Lewis. Albert's father called him Al, while other close friends and relatives called him Ally or Allie.

Clive Staples Lewis's first name was actually a last name, the name of one of the great heroes of Victorian England, for Robert Clive of India had beaten the French and laid the foundations for the absorption of India into the British Empire. The nineteenth century saw many young middle-class boys named Clive in the lesser public schools (what Americans would regard as private schools). When Jack was a child, his extended family on his

mother's side appear always to have called him Clive.[7] Many years later, however, in a letter to Warnie Lewis after Jack died, their cousin Ruth Hamilton Parker referred to him as Jacks.[8] He was also called Clive by his teacher W. T. Kirkpatrick, who prepared him for his entrance examinations to Oxford.[9] George Watson, a former pupil of Lewis and colleague at Cambridge, reminds us that the faculty chairman of the appointments committee at Cambridge, where Lewis had an exalted position as holder of a professorial chair, addressed Lewis as Clive.[10] As an adult, on formal occasions he only used his initials, so he is known to the world as C. S. Lewis. He appears to have first used this formal signature in his first letter to his friend Arthur Greeves from Great Bookham in September 1914.[11] Normally he signed his letters to Greeves from "Jack," but when he was in a particularly pompous mood, he would sign "C. S. Lewis." As an adult, however, he almost always signed his letters "C. S. Lewis" unless writing to close family and intimate friends. A notable exception can be found in his letters to Sister Penelope. He often signed these letters "Clive Lewis" or "Clive S. Lewis," instead of "Jack" or "C. S. Lewis."[12]

The middle name also had an important bearing on the boy who would grow up to be C. S. Lewis. Staples was a family name on his mother's side, a name with a pedigree. Flora Lewis was a Hamilton, and the Hamiltons produced a long line of clergymen in the established church, of which her father was one. Her grandfather, the Right Reverend Hugh Hamilton, had been a bishop. The bishop's wife was a Staples. It was an important marriage in a society where rank mattered, for Elizabeth Staples was the daughter of a member of Parliament. More important for family relations, Elizabeth's sister married the second Marquess of Ormonde! When Flora Lewis named her firstborn child, she had given him names from her family as well. Warren was the maiden name of her mother, Mary Warren Hamilton, whose father was Sir John Borlase Warren. Like his younger brother, Warnie did not have a first name as such; he had three last names.

Thus, we see that Albert Lewis married into a family of the lesser gentry of the Protestant Ascendency of Ireland, and the names of his sons bore witness to those important family relationships, which conveyed a status that his success in the law alone could never provide. These are the kinds of people about which Jane Austen had written almost a century earlier. While English society might have moved on somewhat over the decades, Irish society was still trying to catch up to their English cousins. Knights and baronets have the dignity of a title—and in the case of a baronet, a hereditary title—but they do not have the rank of a peer. They remain commoners, but rather grand commoners. Mary Warren Hamilton had a sister, Charlotte Warren Heard, whose daughter Mary married Sir William Ewart, the second baronet.[13]

Why Wynyard School?

With great expectations for continued prosperity of the family and the greatest possible opportunities for their children, families of the social standing of the Albert Lewis family would be expected to send their sons to England for the kind of education that would aid their advancement in society. Flora appears to have played a major role in the decision to send the boys to England for their education. Albert had suggested a school in Armagh, but Flora countered that Armagh would be no better than Belfast "as regards accent." For those in the Protestant Ascendancy of Ireland, overcoming the Irish accent and learning to affect an English accent was a primary aspect of a middle-class education. After Flora died, the emotional and sentimental Albert would have no choice about sending the boys to England. Their fate was sealed by Flora's death. Albert could disagree with a living Flora, but a deceased Flora carried the argument.[14] She would continue to play the dominant role in any decisions about where the boys would attend school and in Albert's resistance to their pleas for rescue from Wynyard. Albert regularly appealed to his sons for forgiveness when he seemed harsh or difficult, and the tone generally followed

the same pattern as that he expressed to Warnie in January 1910: "But if ever I appear harsh to you dear Badge, remember that I have come through great trouble and affliction, and though I may err in my methods, my one object in living is to start my sons in life as educated Christian gentlemen—worthy sons of their mother." The appeals to Flora's memory were endless.[15]

Boys of good background attended a preparatory school in preparation for admission to a good public school. An English preparatory school corresponded roughly to an American elementary school, and a public school corresponded roughly to American middle school and high school. In both cases, pupils normally boarded at the schools and returned home only during holidays. William T. Kirkpatrick began advising Albert Lewis on preparatory schools in October 1904. Kirkpatrick had been headmaster of Lurgan, the Irish public school that Albert had attended. Kirkpatrick began corresponding with Albert in 1901 after having seen him the previous summer. Kirkpatrick's letters overflow with sage proverbs, such as "A man who forgets his promise betrays a lamentable weakness of character," and "An old horse needs a kick to remind him to go on." Just as his acquaintance with Jack Lewis would coincide with the commencement of the Great War, Kirkpatrick's first letter to Albert coincided with the Boer War. In the Boer War, as in the Great War, Kirkpatrick took the view that the government and those charged with prosecuting the war had no idea what they were doing. He punctuated his first letter with the word "hopeless." He regarded the Boers as fanatical in their political and religious beliefs and thought that the only way they would stop fighting would be if they were all exterminated. Kirkpatrick believed that the war with the Boers would never end as long as the Boers had twenty men left to wreck a railway. The letter suggests the kind of clever remark about the ignorance of government ministers that Jack Lewis would find so entertaining in his mid-adolescence. It also demonstrates that W. T. Kirkpatrick could be wrong.[16]

From Kirkpatrick's perspective, there were no good schools. He was particularly dismissive of Campbell College in Belfast, near the Lewis home. Kirkpatrick claimed to have taught a former Campbell pupil more in three months than the boy had learned at Campbell in a year. Kirkpatrick gave Albert a catalog of his major teaching achievements, bordering on the miraculous, that he had wrought in his young scholars. On the surface, it sounds like bragging, but given the miracles Kirkpatrick would achieve with Warren, it was more a commentary on the status of public schools than on Kirkpatrick as a miracle worker. This view of Campbell College that Kirkpatrick embedded deeply into Albert's mind, however, suggests one reason why Albert did not let Jack stay at Campbell several years later.

As far as what Albert might do about securing the best preparatory school placement for his boys, Kirkpatrick recommended that he write to Gabbitas Thring & Company, educational agents, Piccadilly, London. The agency would find the best school for the boys. Kirkpatrick agreed with Albert that an Irish school would not do if the boys were to have any future at all. He added the telling comment, however, that from his writing, no one could tell that Albert, the product of an Irish school, was not a public school boy.[17] The faint praise would have reminded Albert that he had not arrived, but that his sons might. In later years, the Lewis boys took delight in mocking their father's Irish accent behind his back.

In response to Kirkpatrick's advice, Albert reasoned that if Warren got nothing from his education but "good form" and football, he would at least "learn the language" that marked a man as a gentleman.[18] Gabbitas Thring & Company made Albert aware of Wynyard School in Watford under the headmastership of Robert Capron, who wrote to Albert on December 12, 1904, to sweeten the deal by suggesting that a promising pupil who intended to work toward an entrance scholarship to a first-class public school could expect a reduction in fees. Capron added that his boys had enjoyed great success in winning scholarships.[19]

In choosing a school, Albert had other issues than the quality of education. He hoped to find a school whose fees amounted to no more than seventy pounds a year. Furthermore, he wanted a school noted for its strong discipline, owing to Warnie's "self willed and obstinate" nature.[20] Kirkpatrick considered the four recommendations of Gabbitas Thring & Company that fit the profile Albert had established. He rejected the first school because of misprints in their prospectus. He rejected the second school because it was too cheap. He rejected the third school because it was not so easy to get to from Ireland, while accepting the fourth school, Rhyl, because it was easy to reach from Ireland. In the end, Albert ignored all Kirkpatrick's advice and sent Warnie to Wynyard.[21]

Flora's Influence on Young Jacks

Before Warnie was sent off to his English school, the brothers lived a semi-idyllic existence at their home in the Holywood Hills of the Belfast suburbs with their parents and the servants. The end of Jacks's childhood and entry into adolescence might have been different had his mother lived, but Flora Lewis died when her second son was only nine years old. She was a remarkable woman in many ways. She attended Queen's College in Belfast and took degrees in logic and mathematics during the late Victorian era, when few women held college degrees. She even tried her hand at writing stories and magazine articles. While her husband was of a passionate and vacillating nature, Flora tended to have a steady and practical temper. Both she and Albert loved to read, but neither of them read to their children. This task was left to the nursemaid, Lizzie Endicott.

In the summers, Flora took her two boys to Castlerock, a seaside resort not far from Belfast in County Derry. During their visit to the sea in 1904, Flora wrote to Albert that Jacks was delighted with the water and that he looked so funny skipping around in his "bathing drawers." A little later, however, she wrote that Jacksie

did not care so much for the water. Perhaps his perfidious attitude arose because, as often happens with little boys, something was wrong with him all summer—first his ear, then his skin, then his foot.[22] Illness and health complaints dogged Jacks throughout his childhood. During the holiday to Castlerock in 1906, Jacks suffered from "one of his nasty fever attacks."[23] Warnie caught enough shrimp in a net for them to boil for their tea, and he also began to swim without his water wings. Jacks, on the other hand, did not do well in the water, and Flora concluded that swimming did not suit him.[24]

Though Jacks was normally a well-tempered little boy, his older brother could throw him out of temper with his perpetual teasing. Flora complained in a letter to Albert that Warnie could be tiresome without actually being bad.[25] During the 1906 holiday at Castlerock, Flora took the boys to visit Dunluce Castle for the first time. It was not important to Jacks at the time other than as somewhere to run around as little boys will, but in the years to come it would become a place shrouded in the stuff of faerie.[26] These extended visits to the sea instilled in C. S. Lewis a lifelong love of the sea and swimming, even if it began with a few false starts, but also of trains, the standard means of transportation from Belfast to Castlerock.

Instead of the annual summer holiday at Castlerock, Flora took her boys on a trip to Dieppe, a French seaside resort, in August 1907. No one was seasick from the voyage, and Jacks loved the boat trip across the Irish Sea on their way to London for the first stop of the journey. Jacks fell in love with Trafalgar Square and all the green squares of London, which he thought was "a lovely place." Flora took the boys to the zoo in Regent's Park, where they saw all manner of animals, but Jacks was most delighted by the mice.[27] In keeping with tradition, he was again sick during the vacation. They stayed at an English hotel in France. Flora was concerned about the safety of the beach at high tide, and Warnie wrote to his father that the beach was not very nice when the tide

was in. Despite his prejudice against France and the French, Jacks was delighted with the village, which Warnie described as "the real old sort."[28] On the return trip from France, Flora took the boys back to London. Warnie wanted to see the British Museum, and Jacks wanted to visit the Tower of London.[29] To illustrate how precocious his brother was at this age, Warnie Lewis recalled what Jacks had to say to his father upon their return. He told his father that he was prejudiced against the French. When Albert asked him why, Jacks replied, "If I knew why, it would not be a prejudice."[30]

During this period, Albert's father, Richard Lewis, lived with the family at their recently completed Leeborough house, also known as Little Lea. The declining health of Richard added an extra burden to the operation of the household in 1907.[31] The burden would soon increase. On Friday, February 7, 1908, Flora consulted with a doctor about a complaint that would be diagnosed as cancer. Flora's mother insisted that she surrender herself to the care of a certain general practitioner, but Flora tried to explain to her mother that she would follow the care of the best surgeon in Belfast. A second consultation followed on February 11. On February 12, the first nurse arrived. The operation came immediately afterward on February 15 and lasted for two hours.[32] With Flora's cancer, Albert could not look after his father as well. Richard Lewis left Little Lea on February 19, 1908, after a stay of almost eleven months.[33] He suffered a stroke on March 24, 1908, and died on April 2.[34]

During the spring and early summer, Jacks found himself all alone in the big house with the long corridors filled with books. The mother who had always been there to attend him now needed nursing care around the clock. From the stuff of his childhood, it would not have been difficult for C. S. Lewis to create the figure of Digory in *The Magician's Nephew*, except that Jacks had no playmate like Polly Plummer. Digory and Polly had a box room at the end of the attic where they could play, just like the little end room at Little Lea, where Jacks and Warnie played. Polly wrote stories, just like Jacks and Warnie. Digory had a mother who was

being looked after because she was going to die, just like Jacks. Polly first encountered Digory when he was crying in the garden, but we have no written account of Jacks Lewis crying over the anticipated death of his mother. We can only imagine that C. S. Lewis knew firsthand what he was writing about.

Warnie, Albert, and Jacks Lewis, ca. 1908. Used by permission of the Marion E. Wade Center, Wheaton College, Wheaton, IL.

Warnie and his father exchanged deeply emotional letters almost daily until the end of June, when Albert ended the exchanges by saying he would not write again until he had news. By the end of July, Warnie was back home in Belfast waiting with his family for Flora's death.[35] As the inevitable day approached, Flora wanted to give each of her sons a Bible. Albert dared not leave her side to purchase the Bibles, so his brother Joe accepted the commission and sent the Bibles to Little Lea on August 18.[36] Albert noted in his notebook that Flora died "at 6.30 on the morning of 23rd August, my birthday." Warnie noted that the quotation for the day

from Flora's Shakespearean calendar was a quote from *King Lear*: "Men must endure their going hence, even as their coming hither; Ripeness is all."[37] Fifty-five years later, Warnie would have part of this quotation placed on the gravestone of his little brother when C. S. Lewis died in 1963: "Men must endure their going hence." Ten years after that, the name of Warren Hamilton Lewis would be added to the stone when Warnie died, and the two brothers now share a common grave.

Flora's death did not end Albert's misery in his *annus horribilis*, for less than two weeks later, on September 3, his brother Joe died as well.[38] All in all, Jacks and his brother Warnie might have enjoyed a happy, secure home life during their childhood, but all of that changed when Flora died.

Life after Flora

Lady Mary Ewart took an active interest in the lives of Jack and Warnie after the death of Flora Lewis, who was Lady Ewart's first cousin. As a result, the boys learned how to behave in august company. Through their Ewart cousins, the Lewis boys did not learn how the other half lived; they learned how the other .01 percent lived. Lady Ewart's daughter Hope offered to accompany Jacks on his trip home for the Easter holidays in 1910. In a note to Hope thanking her for the kind offer, Albert mentioned that he had dined with her parents the previous Saturday night at Glenmachan, their substantial house near Little Lea. He also thanked her for taking Jacks to see a production of *Peter Pan*.[39] Hope also wrote to Warnie from Bad Nauheim in Germany, where she and her sister Kelsie had spent a month, with the news that she had seen six flying machines in a fabulous competition. With his love of ships and locomotives, the news of flying machines would have thrilled Warnie and filled him with a degree of jealousy.[40] Over the following years, the kindness was sometimes appreciated and sometimes tolerated by the boys, but their mother was dead and nothing could change the fact or make up for it.

The death of someone who is loved inevitably raises questions of a spiritual nature even if we do not dwell upon them. The death of a mother raises the question known to philosophers and theologians as theodicy, or the problem of suffering. It might be stated simply as "If there is a good, loving, all-powerful God, then why did my mother die?" Lewis would wrestle with this question in one way or another until the time of his own death. It is a good question, versions of which have been asked by almost everyone who has lived. For some people, it has been the guiding question of life, including the Buddha and Charles Darwin. The question raises doubt about the goodness of God, but it is an odd question. It is odd because one cannot question the goodness of God unless the category of goodness is already present, and where does the idea of goodness come from? Though many people wonder these things, not many people try to find the answers. The questions of C. S. Lewis that began to form in his mind during childhood and adolescence would compel him toward answers that resulted in his conversion to faith in Jesus Christ many years later. First, however, he had to make the journey.

School as a Concentration Camp

In September 1908, without benefit of trial by a jury of his peers, contrary to *Magna Carta*, and in the absence of habeas corpus, young Jacks Lewis found himself interred in a concentration camp known as Wynyard School for the crime of surviving the death of his mother.[41] Deprived of his liberty, he also found himself letting go of the *s* at the end of his nickname, which he omitted when he signed his first letter home to his father. The young boy alternated between Jack and Jacks in his correspondence at Wynyard School, but the final *s* would not completely disappear until he later went to Cherbourg School in Malvern in 1911. In a notable exception, Lewis revived Jacks in his last letter home from Malvern College on July 13, 1914.[42]

Jack and Warnie Lewis in the doorway of their home, ca. 1910. Used by permission of the Marion E. Wade Center, Wheaton College, Wheaton, IL.

Wynyard was a very good concentration camp, complete with severe beatings of the pupils and other forms of cruelty, but it was not a very good school. The enrollment had begun to decline in the aftermath of high court proceeding against Robert Capron, the headmaster of the school, following the particularly brutal beating of a child in 1896. Jack and Warnie Lewis failed in their attempts to convince their father that he should pardon them or at least transfer them to a minimum security prison. Warnie's sentence

ended when he left for Malvern College in July 1909. In 1930, as Warnie prepared to return to his military post after leave, he wrote that the end-of-leave feeling may not be pleasant, but it was "but a pale ghost of the Wynyard feeling."[43] Upon leaving the family home at Little Lea for the last time after his father's death, Warnie wrote in his diary that "since the days of going back to Wynyard, I cannot remember feeling so depressed."[44] The brothers carried the misery of Wynyard with them all their lives. When Jack began keeping a diary on April 1, 1922, his first entry involved a local school show he attended that enacted a scene from *Nicholas Nickleby*, which succeeded in calling up the "Wynyard terrors."[45] Though Warnie left Wynyard in 1909, Jack could not leave until the school finally was forced to close in July 1910 because of the continuing decline in enrollment.[46]

The Reverend Robert Capron, whom his students called Oldie behind his back, established Wynyard School in 1881 at the town of Watford in Hertfordshire, about seventeen miles northwest of central London. For Jack's first journey to Wynyard, he and Warnie traveled on their own to and from school. This trip involved taking a ferry across the Irish Sea to Fleetwood in Lancashire, then taking a train from the sea to London, where they transferred at Euston Station to a train that would take them to Watford. Jack Lewis was nine years old when he first made the trip. One of the points of this book is to show that the habits and preferences of a lifetime often form during adolescence or before, and this was certainly the case with C. S. Lewis. Jack and Warnie developed a love of smoking at an early age. By the time they were making their unescorted trips between Belfast and school in England, they indulged themselves in one long wallow in tobacco. Warnie declared that they did not smoke to appear sophisticated and grown-up. He insisted that they smoked only because they liked it, but he failed to explain how and why they took up smoking in the first place. On later trips, the boys traveled by way of Liverpool, instead of Fleetwood, where they enjoyed stopping

over at the Lime Street Hotel in order to eat lunch and smoke their hearts out.[47]

The idea of two children making such a trip is unimaginable in the twenty-first century, but that was a different time, when the vast resources of the British Empire existed seemingly for no other purpose than to ensure a safe passage for Jack and Warnie Lewis. As it turned out, Warnie had a terrible bout of seasickness, the likes of which would not be seen again until Eustace joined *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*. Young Jacks described the journey in a letter to his father about the trip and his arrival in Watford, where he first met Mr. Capron, whom he thought "rather eccentric."[48] Two years earlier, in 1906, a brain specialist had already diagnosed Capron as insane.[49]

Danger Signs at Wynyard

Warnie, as the older brother, had already been at Wynyard for three years when Flora died. She had taken him there when he first enrolled in May 1905. Twenty years after his experience at Wynyard, Warnie wrote that a boy's letters home rarely give a true picture of their school experience: "School boys [*sic*] letters are not to be trusted—fear of their letters being overlooked, fear of them being opened, fear of half measures of redress on their parents part if they do complain, all conspire to make them untruthful, except in extreme unhappiness."[50] The exception to the unreliability of Warnie's letters would be the constant references to the coming holidays and how much he looked forward to going home. He almost always mentioned how many days were left before his vacation would begin and he could come home.

The timing of Flora's cancer coincided with a growing awareness on her part that things might not be well with Mr. Capron at Wynyard. Capron had told Warnie that his mother said he was a failure and that he was lazy. Upon hearing this devastating message, the little boy wrote to his mother. We do not have Warnie's letter, but Warnie preserved his mother's reply, even though she

advised in a postscript to burn her letter because it might cause mischief with Capron.[51]

Though the Irish Ascendency aspired to social acceptance by the English establishment, the Irish tended to be looked down upon as a lower form of life by the English. Warnie's abuse by Capron included his first experience of the English prejudice against the Irish. In a letter to his mother after she had assured him that his father and she did not regard him as a failure in spite of Mr. Capron's assertions, Warnie began to tell her of other things Capron said, especially about his Irishness:

> For instance this is what he said this morning when I missed a question. "please, don't want any of your Irish wit". Now no sensible person objects to having his country laughed at IN FUN out of school. But when he says things like that to me in school when I cannot say anything to him, and puts down all my mistakes to my being "an Irishman" it is rather annoying.[52]

At this point, Flora no longer had the strength to protect her son, and it fell to Albert to sort matters.

During June 1908, Warnie finally summoned the courage to write to his father a long letter enumerating Capron's offenses, but it came at the worst possible time for Albert to deal with it, as Flora lay dying. Albert replied to Warnie's letter immediately, but the substance of his response dealt with the importance of always telling his father everything that troubled him because soon he would have only his father to tell.[53] Albert's unfortunate letter left Warnie without the assurance that his father would protect him while at the same time giving him his first clear understanding that his mother was going to die.

The anti-Irish bias of his schoolmaster continued to plague Warnie, and Jack would witness the abuse when he arrived at Wynyard. They learned well of the English prejudice throughout their dreary days at Wynyard. Warnie reported to Albert that Capron's son Wyn had hit him across the head for not changing

clothes quickly enough after a football game. Capron then assigned Warnie fifty lines of Virgil as punishment for giving cheek to his son and then exclaimed of Warnie's rebelliousness, "Soon we shall have Irish home rule here."[54] Irish home rule had been the great political issue simmering in Parliament for decades, and it had begun to come to a head in the first decade of the twentieth century. In practical terms, it meant a local Irish government dominated by Catholics. This was anathema to the Protestant minority clustered in the north around Belfast. Capron, and many Englishmen like him, could not distinguish between Protestant and Catholic issues, and tended to regard all the Irish as troublemakers who needed to be kept in their place.

Warnie's stream of complaints finally had its impact on Albert, who must have been nearly crippled with grief at this point. He asked Flora's sister-in-law Annie Hamilton to go to Watford and investigate matters at Wynyard. She appears to have been a formidable lady, and Warnie soon wrote to his father, "Since Aunt Annie's arrival the matter has been greatly cleared up." The boys still wanted to leave Wynyard, but Warnie apologized to his father for adding to his burdens after his aunt explained "the reasins [*sic*] why we could not leave."[55] The reasons were left unstated.

Warnie included Capron's letters to Albert in the "Memoirs of the Lewis Family," which he compiled and edited following Albert's death in 1929, and juxtaposed as they are with the letters of Jacks and Warnie, they show how Albert might have doubted his sons' reports of life at Wynyard. Capron had sent Albert Lewis several notes of sympathy and concern during the last stages of Flora's illness and following her death. He was always diligent to remark how he looked forward not only to having young Warren return soon to Wynyard but also to having him joined by his younger brother "Jacko." How the headmaster got Jacks's name wrong is a wonder, since he had gone to so much trouble to ensure that he would get both boys as paying customers. Because he repeated this name in his letter of December 11, 1908, and in

subsequent letters, he may have continued to believe that Jacko was Jacks's name. In Capron's letter of September 9, 1908, following Joe Lewis's death, he urged Albert to "bear up bravely for the sake of the boys" and included a bill for school fees totaling just over forty-seven pounds for the coming term.[56] Capron wrote elegant letters, solicitous for the welfare of Albert and his sons, and showing every concern for Warnie's well-being and how he might be made to improve his many character defects. Jacks's simple response to his father was "it is quite untrue, Warnie is not lazy."[57]

On October 27, Albert wrote a long letter to Capron, much like a legal brief, laying out the facts and the matters in dispute. In his draft of the letter, Albert had informed Capron that he intended to remove his boys from Wynyard at the end of the term, but he struck through this declaration and replaced it with hopes that matters might improve.[58] During the Christmas vacation following Flora's death, Capron wrote a clever letter to Albert recommending that Warnie cut short his vacation and return to school as soon as possible because "prolonged holidays are most baneful" to the boy's progress. Confident that the busy court solicitor could not take the time away from his work, he invited Albert to accompany the boys on their return to Wynyard so that he could see for himself what a fine school he had chosen. Then he added, "I believe that dear Mrs. Lewis had great confidence in my wife and myself, and I would like to prove to you that we merit yours."[59] Jack and Warnie preferred to return to Ireland and enroll in Campbell College even if Albert did not think the boys at Campbell were gentlemen. Warnie observed, "I think English boys are not so honest or gentlemanly as most Irish ones." The boys had had enough of English schools.[60]

Wynyard, however, was not the end of the matter. It was barely the beginning, for Albert's aim was to secure the best public schools for his sons. No sooner had he decided on the preparatory school than he began calculating where to send the boys to public school. By 1906, Albert had sought Kirkpatrick's advice

on how best to assure Warnie a good public school in 1910 or 1911. He had narrowed the field to Rugby, Cheltenham, Repton, Shrewsbury, Rossall, Malvern, and Winchester. The truly great schools of Eton and Harrow were far beyond his means, but he wanted Warnie to have a decent education without turning him into "an ignorant prig." Albert was troubled by the enormity of the responsibility of choosing a good school when all he had to go by were the names and when general knowledge told him how bad some English schools could be.[61]

Kirkpatrick responded to Albert's query with his usual dismissal of schools in general. The whole atmosphere of an English public school mitigates against a pupil ever becoming a scholar, though the tone would help a boy become a snob, which had its advantages in English society. Compared with the "coarseness, vulgarity, and disregard for truth" of an Irish school like Campbell, however, an English school was worth the expense. Kirkpatrick regarded Winchester as more difficult than Eton, Rugby as very good, Shrewsbury as a school where one could do worse, and Malvern as a school that would do. Rossall would not do, and the other schools were unknown to him, which is to say, would not do. Though Kirkpatrick understated the case by saying that one could do worse than Shrewsbury, he spent most of his assessment extolling the virtues of Shrewsbury. In the end, Albert wrote to Rugby, Cheltenham, Malvern, and Shrewsbury to inquire if Warnie might have a place in the summer term of 1909 or early 1910.[62]

Rugby regretted that it could not offer Warnie a place. Malvern, on the other hand, offered him a place in 1909 or 1910.[63] In December 1907, Kirkpatrick wrote to Albert to inquire how Warnie was doing at his preparatory school and to ask if he was going to Shrewsbury, Kirkpatrick's obvious choice.[64] Kirkpatrick may have taken it upon himself to write to the headmaster of Shrewsbury, for the latter wrote to Albert several times in an effort to get a final word on his intentions of enrolling Warnie. Albert

appears not to have replied to these letters.[65] Likewise, the bursar at Cheltenham wrote to know Albert's intentions.[66] Remarkably, Albert appears to have taken the recommendation of Malvern College from Robert Capron over Kirkpatrick's recommendation of Shrewsbury. Capron gave as his reasoning that the head at Malvern had been at Eton and that many of Capron's former pupils had gone to Malvern.[67] By the end of May 1908, the decision was finally made, and Capron began advising Albert on the house at Malvern in which Warnie should be placed.[68] Though Warnie loved his time at Malvern, he was disparaging of Capron's letter of advice in which he mentioned Edward Clifford Bullock as a head of house who would do a fine job. Warnie's memoirs include a note to Capron's letter in which Warnie commented that Bullock had done exceedingly well at Malvern but had only taken a third (what in the South was once known as a gentleman's C) at Oxford, suggesting that the best students at Malvern were ill-equipped for Oxford.[69]

Robert Capron's wife, Ellen, died on March 1, 1909. The Lewis boys liked her and felt sorry for her, as her life was not much different from the bleak life of the boys at Wynyard School. Her death depressed Warnie, for it reminded him of the death of his mother.[70]

As matters deteriorated at Wynyard and more parents withdrew their sons from Capron's care, the headmaster grew to regret his barrage of letters to Albert in which he had criticized Warnie and held him up as a hopeless case. For Capron, Warnie gone meant one less boy paying fees. Capron wrote to Albert during the Easter break of 1909 to say that he took back everything he had said about Warnie's behavior in the past. The boy was now everything that Capron could hope for, and he would be happy for Warnie to stay on at Wynyard rather than go to a public school. With the few boys at the school departing regularly, Capron needed all the boys he could keep to stay in business.[71] Alas, Capron's change of mind came too late. Albert already had Malvern on his mind.

Warnie left Wynyard for the last time on July 28, 1909, but poor Jacks would have to return on his own for the fall term.[72]

Love of Animals

Young Jacks Lewis would carry with him into adolescence a love of animals. At Little Lea, the boys had a canary named Peter and an Irish terrier named Tim.[73] In addition to these animals, in fact, Jacks had populated an entire world of imagination with the inhabitants of Animal Land. Before going off to Wynyard, Jacks had written and illustrated a collection of stories about Animal Land and its major citizens. He had shared with his older brother Warnie the game of making up stories about the imaginary world, and after Warnie went away to Wynyard in 1905, Jacks had written to his brother about developments in their imaginary world.[74]

His love of animals manifested itself as an early ethical dilemma at Wynyard when Jack began the study of entomology. In correspondence with his father, the question arose as to whether Jack would like a microscope for Christmas in order to advance his study of insects. On reflection, Jack thought he would rather have something else. It seemed to him that in order to study an insect under a microscope, it was first necessary to kill the insect. By the age of eleven, Jack thought the extermination of harmless insects purely for the "gratification of one's own whimsical tastes" was not a very nice thing to do.[75] By his criticism of the "whimsical tastes" of others, he indicated the tastes that his own independent mind had begun to mark out for him. In later years, this young judgment would lead Lewis to oppose vivisection, or experimentation on animals. Though his thought would grow in sophistication, Jack Lewis adopted the fundamental value of animals as an aspect of his character, and this valuing would find its way into his fiction.

In *That Hideous Strength*, C. S. Lewis painted a picture of value-free scientific experimentation in which caged animals stand alongside the revitalization of the decapitated human head of a

homicidal maniac. In the end, the animals gain their freedom at the expense of their captors. A few years later, Lewis wrote *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, in which a group of children travel magically to the land of Narnia, Animal Land grown up. Narnia is a world of animals where humans are the intruders and where one of the greatest expressions of cruelty occurs when humans treat animals as mere dumb beasts.

In addition to his fictional treatment of animal experimentation, C. S. Lewis wrote an essay "Vivisection" for the New England Anti-Vivisection Society in 1947.[76] In this essay, he departed both from emotional appeals that pity the suffering of animals and from emotional appeals that stress the suffering of humans. Instead, he explored the nature of suffering and the question of whether pain is an evil.[77] In the brief essay, Lewis moved from the question of right and wrong from a Christian perspective to a perspective free of values in which only a utilitarian naturalistic view prevails, with humans as fair game for experimentation as well as animals. The essay on vivisection repeats much of what Lewis wrote in a chapter titled "Animal Pain" in *The Problem of Pain* in 1940. This chapter explored a Christian view of animal pain in relation to Christian eschatology.[78] The chapter, however, came before he wrote *The Abolition of Man*, in which he warned of the danger of valueless science in a post-Christian world. Remarkably, the boy of eleven followed the same line as the man of forty-nine, for young Jack's reasoning had gone immediately to the insect's experience of pain.

The Literary Life of Boyhood

In the face of all the misery of life at Wynyard, Jacks and Warnie, together with a boy named Field, decided to start a book club.[79] This forerunner of the Inklings might look like a clique or "inner ring," but Lewis would later make an important distinction between a group like his boyhood book club or the Inklings, on the one hand, and a true inner ring, on the other. The self-selecting

group comes together because of something they all like, and the secrecy is accidental, the exclusiveness an innocent by-product of shared interest. Lewis said of this kind of group, of which his then current involvement in the Inklings and his boyhood book club were examples, "This is friendship."[80]

As it turned out, Jacks's book club was more of a cheap magazine club. Warnie's description of it involved each boy subscribing to a different magazine that all the boys could share. Their friend Field would subscribe to *The Captain*. Peckover would get the *Royal*. Gerald Mears would take the *B.O.P.*, Jeyes would get the *London Magazine*, and Randolph Philip Bowser would subscribe to *The Wide World*. That left Warnie to take *Pearson's* and Jacks to take *The Strand*.[81]

A book club seemed a natural basis for association with other boys for Jacks Lewis, even at ten years of age. Books formed the environment in which he had spent his years at home in Belfast. The letters and diaries of Lewis and the diaries of his brother, Warren, flow with continual references to how much emotional and intellectual distance lay between their father and them, but books formed a bond across the generation gap in spite of the conflicts. Jacks regularly wrote to his father about what he was reading and what he thought about what he was reading. In 1910, at the end of the last term he would spend at Wynyard, Jack wrote casually to his father of this bond when he spoke of them as "Shakespearean students like you and I."[82]

In early adolescence, the most important relationship for a young person remains the relationship between parent and child. The greatest task of early adolescence is the development of a sense of self-confidence and self-respect. Children and teenagers have a great capacity for cruelty to one another, and the comfort and security of caring parents plays an important role in helping a child learn how to navigate the treacherous shoals of life. Deprived of his mother by death and his father by distance, young Jacks carried on a regular correspondence with his father throughout his

teens, when he spent most of his year in England at school. There he found himself knocked about and downtrodden on a daily basis by the public school system of his day, in his case a school with a maniac for a head. The system did not encourage the development of a strong sense of confidence and self-respect. Wynyard aimed more at the destruction of its inmates. Jack's struggle with how he felt about himself under the onslaught of ridicule and humiliation would develop into a character of arrogance and pride—a sin that would dog him the rest of his life and about which he would write in *Mere Christianity* and *Surprised by Joy*. Before his conversion, he masked a bruised spirit with an outward veneer of pompous superiority to others.

In this context, the steady correspondence with his father at home created a lifeline, as well as a constant reminder that the term would end and he could go home for the holiday. Regardless of the habits of Albert Lewis that would annoy his young son, home remained the place of security where Jacks found his greatest encouragement and acceptance throughout his youth. Thus, he often wrote about the things he and his father had in common.

Jack's appeal to Shakespeare probably also had something to do with staying in the good graces of his father, who would remain a river of bounty to him until Albert's death. Jack was learning how to manage his father—a skill that would only grow over the next twenty years. His real literary tastes at this time of life went in an entirely different direction from Shakespeare. In *Surprised by Joy*, Lewis recalls of his years at Wynyard with embarrassment, "My reading was now mainly rubbish," like the "twaddling school-stories in *The Captain*."[83] *The Captain* was a boy's magazine published in London between 1899 and 1924. Boys always prevail as the heroes in its stories. P. G. Wodehouse published three serial novels about Ronald Eustace Psmith (with the *P* silent) between 1908 and 1910, when Jack was reading the magazine devotedly. Lewis explained that the attraction of these kinds of stories lies in wish fulfillment for the boy who would never be the hero at

anything or the boy who intended to win at everything. While *Peter Rabbit* appeals to a child's imagination, the stories in *The Captain* appeal to a boy's ambition to be seen as a hero, to be admired, to have a following. Such ambitions are fanned and fulfilled vicariously through the stories of boy-heroes who become captains.

Having grown into a literary sophisticate and snob by the time he was seventeen, Jack looked back on his earlier literary ventures at Wynyard with contempt. He would judge some books as "going back to Henty."[84] George Alfred Henty published 122 historical novels for boys of the adventurous, derring-do variety. Most of his novels involved war and heroism that extolled the British Empire or those values that a good imperialist held dear, as when Henty took the side of the Confederacy over the Union in the American Civil War. After an education at Westminster School and Cambridge, Henty volunteered in the medical corps during the Crimean War. After that, he wrote as a special correspondent covering the Austro-Italian War, the British incursion in Abyssinia, the Franco-Prussian War, the Ashanti War, the rebellion in Spain, and the Turco-Serbian War. From this background, he wrote his tales for boys. His novels had such names as *By Sheer Pluck: A Tale of the Ashanti War*; *A Roving Commission, or, Through the Black Insurrection at Hayti*; *Jack Archer: A Tale of the Crimea*; *With Clive in India: The Beginnings of an Empire*; and *The Young Colonists: A Tale of the Zulu and Boer Wars*. At Wynyard, Jacks devoured these adventure stories.

Jacks also developed a taste for stories about the Roman world, such as *Quo Vadis*, *Darkness and Dawn*, *The Gladiators*, and *Ben Hur*. While all of these stories were efforts at "Christian fiction," the faith element of the stories had little impact on Jacks at the time. He read them for the "sandals, temples, togas, slaves, emperors, galleys, amphitheatres" that fired a boy's morbid, erotic imagination.[85]

Albert Lewis, who enjoyed a prosperous life as police court prosecuting solicitor, in addition to a number of other lucrative

retainers, indulged Jacks in his love of books. During Jack's early days at Wynyard, his father gave him *The First Men in the Moon* (1901) by H. G. Wells. Whether Jacks had read science fiction before this volume, we do not know. What we do know is that after this volume, C. S. Lewis loved science fiction all his life to the point of trying his own hand at writing it, beginning with his first space adventure, *Out of the Silent Planet*.

In 1955, Lewis addressed the Cambridge University English Club in a lecture titled "On Science Fiction."[86] As the newly minted professor of medieval and Renaissance literature at Cambridge, he might have been expected to speak to this group about his area of specialization, with all the prestige attached to it. Instead, he spoke on science fiction, a genre held in contempt difficult to exceed among the literary critics of the time. He singled out *The First Men in the Moon* as the type of fiction he had read with pleasure since his childhood. He had loved this kind of story since before it even had a name, which he amplified by pointing out that only twenty or so years earlier had the name *science fiction* finally settled on this genre, which had earlier been called *scientifiction*, among other things.[87]

This lecture in Cambridge was not the first time he had reminisced in print about his early encounter with a literary form that would captivate him all his life. In 1947 when Lewis and Dorothy L. Sayers took on the project of issuing a book in honor of Charles Williams, with the proceeds to go to his widow, Lewis contributed a chapter "On Stories," in which he retells a portion of *The First Men in the Moon*.[88] Ten years earlier, Lewis had referred to the science fiction of H. G. Wells in his first science-fiction novel, *Out of the Silent Planet*. When Ransom found himself stranded and alone on Mars, his mind immediately went to Wells's descriptions of aliens as monsters, more like insects or worms than like humans, and as creatures bent on mayhem.[89]

The last interview C. S. Lewis gave was for the new science-fiction magazine *SFHorizons* at his rooms in Magdalene College,

Cambridge, shortly before his death.[90] Instead of the usual question-and-answer format of an interview, Lewis carried on a conversation with Kingsley Amis and Brian Aldiss that was recorded and transcribed. What we have is the only example of how Lewis conversed as one topic led to another in a bright exchange of ideas. The transcription provides a window into what an Inklings evening would have been like. What it reveals is a charm and delight with science fiction that years of critical scholarship of medieval and Renaissance literature did not diminish.

Nonetheless, the stories of Wells had not fed the imagination of Jacks Lewis or provided him with a touchstone for that experience he called Joy. He would renew that experience through the literature he discovered a few years later. Instead, the stories of Wells tended to work against the spiritual impulse with their coarse, strong appeal to something more visceral.[91] The comments about H. G. Wells made by C. S. Lewis in later life tended to highlight the defects in the stories of Wells, often contrasting what the two writers did with science fiction. Lewis went so far as to suggest that his space-travel stories worked to exorcise the ravenous taste of Wells.[92]

In the end, the idea of a book club failed. The great hope that the Lewis brothers had of a group of boys coming together was less than a hope. A counterforce was at work at Wynyard that would educate Jacks about human nature in a way that would remain with him all his life.

What a Fellow Hates

If Jacks Lewis had begun to settle upon the things he would love his whole life, he also began to judge things he would hate his entire life. One aspect of his later life first came to light at Wynyard School by virtue of his first experience of the company of many boys. Jacks and Warnie had not grown up having playmates their own age, which is one reason they were best friends to each other. The boys knew Arthur Greeves, who lived across the street, but

Greeves was three years older than little Jacks at a time of life when a single year marks a line of demarcation that few are willing to cross. The friendship with Greeves, therefore, would not blossom until a few years later. At Wynyard, however, the small group of boys in residence at the school were thrown together to create their own society with its own rituals and social structure. As in *The Lord of the Flies*, the boys of Wynyard had their insiders and outsiders. Warnie and Jacks were outsiders. In a letter to his father, Jacks related the elaborate drama of school life with a description of alliances and betrayals. Jacks noted that a tyrant named Squivy (sometimes spelled Squiffy) had started a secret club that included everyone but Warnie and Jacks.[93] Thus, young Lewis came to know at Wynyard School what he would later describe and call "the inner ring."

Lewis developed a lifelong abhorrence of the kind of cliques that develop in all societies for the control of others and the advancement of the inner ring. The menace of the inner ring formed a major theme in *That Hideous Strength*, but it appears in other mature Lewis works. A year before the publication of *That Hideous Strength*, Lewis delivered an oration titled "The Inner Ring" at King's College, the University of London, in which he declared that his audience had met the phenomenon of the inner ring "in your house at school before the end of the first term."[94] Lewis knew of the inner ring at the hands of Squivy at Wynyard, but over the years, he came to recognize it in almost every society of which he was a part. He was still writing about it when he penned *The Four Loves* at the end of his life. He continued to despise the "self-appointed aristocracy" of those who regarded themselves as the "*élite*" for as long as he lived.[95] The desire to be part of the inner ring provides one of Screwtape's most innocent-looking temptations and produces one of the most diabolic results in *The Screwtape Letters*. In his formative years, however, Lewis tasted the antifriendship dimension of the inner ring. It is a tawdry substitute for friendship, and not a very good imitation. The

inner ring exists for exclusion, and Warnie and Jacks certainly felt excluded by the machinations of Squivy.[96] To make the pain of exclusion all the more severe and to elevate it to betrayal, Squivy was the school-chum name given to the Field boy who was to have belonged to the book club that Jack and Warnie tried to start.[97]

We have already noted the strain Warnie experienced in being an Irish boy in an English school. During the Wynyard days, the animosity that Jacks and Warnie felt toward the English became solidified into their own sociodemographic theory of value. Warnie called it the "Northern Theory," and it involved the idea that anyone who lived in the south of England was a bad person, but the farther north one traveled from the south of England, the better the people became. Northern dwellers were superior people to southern dwellers, and this observation explained the island of Britain. On these grounds, Bowser was acceptable because he came from Cumberland in the north.[98] Jacks named Bowser as his "great chum," largely because Capron mistreated him for being from northern England, calling him a "great north country lout."[99] Field, on the other hand, had all of the principal characteristics of the English, in Jacks's opinion: "selfishness, cruelty, pride, and underhand dealing."[100] A day boy named Boivie also merited the approval of Jacks because he was a Swede, therefore a northerner, and Boivie also loathed anything connected with the south of England.[101]

In a brief journal that Jacks attempted while at Wynyard, he elaborated the "Northern Theory" with several observations. People south of Norfolk cannot even appreciate good food. The people get nicer the farther north you travel, but they get nastier the farther south you go. In applying this self-evident truth to the boys in Wynyard, Jacks explained that Bowser was the nicest boy because he came from Cumberland. Jeyes was the second nicest boy because he came from Northampton. Mears was only middling since he came from Chiswick. Squiffy was the nastiest boy at Wynyard because he came from Worthing in Sussex![102]

Jacks's experience of church life during this period also accentuated the divide between the English Protestants and the Irish Protestants. The boys of Wynyard were marched each Sunday to nearby St. John's Church, where Capron's son and assistant often preached. St. John's Church represented the High Church wing of the Church of England. Jacks called it the kind of church "abhorred by respectful Irish Protestants," of which Jacks regarded himself one. Jacks cynically remarked that the church "wanted to be Roman Catholic, but was afraid to say so." His Irish Protestant judgment fell on the church with the declaration "In this abominable place of Romish hypocrites and English liars, the people cross themselves, bow to the Lord's Table (which they have the vanity to call an altar), and pray to the Virgin."[103] Remnants of this anti-Catholic, Ulster background would lead J. R. R. Tolkien in later years to speak of the "Ulsterior motive" of his friend C. S. Lewis.[104]

Jacks's experience at Wynyard also confirmed his conviction that he did not like school games. He made only one reference to school games in his letters home from Wynyard, but the singular reference tells the story: "If I cannot triumph over Squiffy [*sic*] in games and out of school, I will do my level best to triumph over him in work (which I *can* do), and which is perhaps a far better way of getting on."[105] In the struggle for self-confidence, Jacks had decided to work on what he was good at rather than to continue to fail in what he was bad at. He intended to feel good about something, and he realized that academic work was where he could stand above the Squivys of this world. It is most important to note, however, that Jacks judged sports in light of his experience with Squivy. In journal entries from his time at Wynyard, it is obvious that Jacks thought games could be fun. In one exciting game of rounders in which Jacks chose players, his team almost won, except "for a howling catch by Boivie, and another by Mears, and an idiotically risky run by me."[106] As time went by, it was not the games that Jacks hated so much as the treatment

from the English boys when his poor playing elicited their ridicule of the Irish boy. Thus Jacks was taught not to like games, which he associated with misery.

Warnie had written to Jacks about the games at Wynyard long before Jacks arrived there. He said that he was not very good at cricket but hoped to improve. He even asked if Jacksie would like for them to play cricket during his vacation and suggested that they could invite Henry and Jack Stokes to join them.[107] The Lewis boys had never played sports as children at home, so they went to Wynyard without any basic knowledge or skill at organized sports. Wynyard did not help them in this regard. Normally, boys would learn to play the games so important at public schools during their years at preparatory school. In the case of Wynyard, the boys played games only once a week at the Hertfordshire County Cricket ground, some two miles from the school, but as enrollment declined at Wynyard, the weekly games were eliminated. Thus, Jack and Warnie received none of the most important preparation for public school for which preparatory schools existed: skill on the playing fields. At Malvern College, Jack and Warnie would take different paths in dealing with this educational deficiency. By the time Jack left Wynyard, he hated sports.[108]

It is important to note that Jacks had chums and acquaintances at Wynyard, but they did not satisfy the longing for friendship. He knew friendship only in its absence. The common experience he had with the other boys at Wynyard involved the survival impulse and the common enemy they shared in Mr. Capron. John Burnett, a day student, became friendly with Jacks, perhaps over shared misery at Wynyard. Jacks stayed with the Burnett family when he became sick at school and needed to convalesce, and John visited Little Lea during the summer of 1909.[109] Jacks wanted to bring his friend Philip Bowser to Little Lea for the Easter vacation in 1910, but the boy's father did not want his young son to make the trip.[110]

Reflecting on the nature of friendship in *Surprised by Joy*, Lewis remarked that friendship had been the chief source of his

happiness in life, but that mere acquaintance had meant little to him. He even wondered why anyone would want to know more people than could be real friends. Ironically, at that point in his life, C. S. Lewis had collected an enormous number of acquaintances, but apparently not because he had wanted them.[111] Acquaintances drained him without giving back, but friends enriched him.

Lewis in later life professed an inability to do arithmetic or any of its academic cousins. Mr. Capron, who liked geometry and mathematics, ignored other subjects and punished his charges with brutal canings for mistakes made in math. Students tend to like the subjects taught by good teachers and despise the subjects taught by poor teachers. So it seems to have been with Lewis and Mr. Capron.[112] When Lewis began preparing for his entrance examinations to Oxford in 1917, his tutor, W. T. Kirkpatrick, remarked in a letter to Albert Lewis that young Clive not only had no taste for math but had an aversion to it.[113] Interestingly, Kirkpatrick did not say that Jack had no aptitude for math. Kirkpatrick was not one to spare the feelings of people, so he would not hesitate to mention if Jack could not do the work. He had been quite forthright in his letters to Albert Lewis about Jack's older brother, Warnie. Jack could have done the math if he had wanted to do the math, but he hated the math along with the monster who had first inflicted it upon him. It would not be the first time, nor the last, that a teacher had ruined a subject for a student.

This situation suggests the enormous responsibility that teachers have in the manner of their teaching. J. K. Rowling has portrayed this dynamic at work in Hogwarts School of Wizardry and Witchcraft. Some teachers make students love a subject, while other teachers can ruin the most fascinating subject. One of the funniest examples of this problem appears in the case of the Hogwarts history professor who was such a dull teacher that no one noticed he had died.

How the Lewis brothers came to be enrolled at Wynyard suggests another of Jack's dislikes that matured in his life as a scholar.

Albert Lewis prided himself in his ability to see beneath the surface and to read between the lines. In his exhaustive search for an appropriate English school to educate his Irish sons, it seems remarkable that Albert Lewis finally settled on Wynyard. C. S. Lewis reflected on this choice in his spiritual autobiography, *Surprised by Joy*, when he wrote of his father's method of interpretation:

> The obvious meaning of any fact or document was always suspect: the true and inner meaning, invisible to all eyes except his own, was unconsciously created by the restless fertility of his imagination. While he thought he was interpreting Oldie's prospectus, he was really composing a school-story in his own mind.[114]

In his life as a scholar and critic, Lewis had little patience for imaginative schemes of interpreting literature that amounted to little more than a projection of personal fancy upon the text. The tendency to read into a text what a critic was interested in grew to mammoth proportions in the twentieth century as this creative approach became not only acceptable but normative, to the dismay of Lewis, who fought the trend till his death.

In his early academic career in the 1930s, when he began to establish himself as a major figure in the study of English literature, Lewis wrote a series of articles published in *Essays and Studies* that dealt with one aspect of this tendency. The collection of essays, together with responses by E. M. W. Tillyard, was published in 1939 as *The Personal Heresy: A Controversy*. In this series, Lewis attacked the practice of reading an author's fiction as autobiography or of evaluating a work in terms of the author's moral character. He disliked the practice common in the 1950s of finding the hidden meaning to Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* or of his own Narnia tales. This approach to interpretation leads to a kind of mischief he recognized early on in his father's self-congratulatory ability to read between the lines to disastrous results for Jack and Warnie at Wynyard.

Wynyard Revisited

Wynyard's town of Watford made an appearance in *The Great Divorce* over thirty years after Lewis left the market town, and the reference does not come as a compliment. In chapter 10, where Lewis describes the case of the wife who may forgive her husband but never forget his failure to conform to her demands, the wife insists upon improving their circumstances, which includes going house hunting in Watford. Watford is the kind of town where a resident of hell would want to live, but not Lewis.

Another dreadful Watford association entered the Narnia stories at the end of *The Last Battle*. In that story, the earlier visitors to Narnia make one last trip to Narnia from our world by means of a railroad disaster. Eustace and Jill, together with Lucy, Edmund, and Peter, joined by Digory and Polly, all enter the bliss of Aslan's country when a railroad train on which Digory, Polly, Lucy, Eustace, and Jill are traveling crashes into the station platform on which Peter and Edmund stand waiting.[115] In 1910, when Lewis was still at Wynyard School, just such a railroad catastrophe occurred when two Watford trains collided, resulting in death and mayhem. The episode was well reported in the national press, and one cannot help but wonder if young Lewis contemplated that he might have been riding on one of those Watford trains or standing on the platform when the wreck occurred.

The eschatological association of a Watford train wreck and the train disaster in *The Last Battle* might be mere coincidence, but a year before he published *The Last Battle*, Lewis published *Surprised by Joy*, in which he wrote of his Watford experience as preparation for death and paradise. He said, "Life at a vile boarding-school is in this way a good preparation for the Christian life, that it teaches one to live by hope."[116] Lewis found that the expectation of the coming vacation gave him the necessary hope to carry on through the misery of each term at Wynyard under the tyranny of an insane schoolmaster. He even referred to the end of term as the "Last Day." In *The Last Battle*, Lewis reprises this idea

as Aslan explains to all: "'There *was* a real railway accident,' said Aslan softly. 'Your father and mother and all of you are—as you used to call it in the Shadow-Lands—dead. The term is over: the holidays have begun. The dream is ended: this is the morning.'"[117] As bad as Jacks's experience of Wynyard had been, however, his brother Warnie declared that he had escaped the worst of Capron's brutalities because he amused the headmaster, who made Jacks his pet.[118] For Jacks, however, this indignity may have been the worst brutality of all.

The End of Wynyard

Albert confided to Warnie in February 1910 that Jacks continued to be dissatisfied with Wynyard and that, for some reason, the school continued to decline. He even suggested that he might have to remove Jacks and place him somewhere else.[119] Capron saved Albert the trouble of thinking about removing Jacks when he wrote to Albert on April 27 to acknowledge receipt of a check for Jacks's fees. He then informed Albert regretfully that he must give up his "school work." He had hoped to sell Wynyard School as a going concern but feared that he would have to sell the property merely as a private house. He took the opportunity, however, to urge Albert not to allow Jacks to attend a day school in Ireland.[120] The contrary Albert reacted by enrolling Jacks in a day school in Ireland. Jacks would go to Campbell College near Little Lea.

Most biographies of C. S. Lewis go through his school years as quickly as possible in order to get to the important things, but in *Surprised by Joy*, Lewis devoted the greatest part of the book to his childhood. He seems to have understood that his childhood formed him. At one level, his later conversion seems to be the inevitable consequence of a number of decisions he made in late childhood and adolescence about what he liked and what he did not like. The Wynyard experience was brief, but in these few short years Lewis developed tastes that would last his lifetime and would affect his understanding of matters he never even consid-

ered in his youth. The Soviet state did not exist in his youth, but his evaluation of communism derived from his time at school. He once explained to J. B. S. Haldane, the communist scientist known for his Soviet apologetics, that he had a miserable life as a public school student where "mammon was banished," much as, in the Soviet state, the few favors one could hope for came from either servility or force. Such a society had been for him "the most wicked and miserable" he had known, and he thought Soviet communism would be equal.[121] During his time in Malvern and the later three years he spent with W. T. Kirkpatrick, Lewis would complete his basic life preferences. His experience suggests the critical importance of the school years for children and how adults can help them grow through those years, if only they will.

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