

Christ Church Library, Carroll Collection

Digitised image notes and captions by Edward Wakeling

Carroll-184 - History of Mr. C and Mr. T.

Introductory notes:

Dodgson had a repertoire of stories that he told to groups of children, "History of Mr. C and Mr. T." being one of them. This particular story was usually told to one child at a time since it required Dodgson to draw a picture as the narrative unfolded, although larger audiences are recorded. In the latter cases, Dodgson tended to use a blackboard, and the picture did not survive after the story was told. However, copies of the final picture survive such as this one to Gladys Baly. But for many years the actual story as told by Dodgson was not known. F. Menella Dodgson, niece and executor of the C. L. Dodgson Estate, was keen to track down someone who could relate the story.

In June 1952, Menella received this letter from Hedley Burrows, Dean of Hereford (MS: Dodgson Family Collection, Woking):

Dear Miss Dodgson,

I was with my dear sister, Mrs. Knyvett at Bolton Percy Rectory June 13-14. She is terribly crippled as the result of her long and painful illness, but I found her very much better in herself, and actually out of pain.

She is "the Molly" of the Diary, and she has the signed copy of *Alice* which Lewis Carroll gave her. She remembered Mr. C and Mr. T perfectly and drew it for me, and told the story as she remembered him telling it. She told me she amused hundreds of children with it ever since.

I feel sure she would write it out for you. I can't reproduce it myself sufficiently well. There was another story about a duck which she can't sufficiently recollect. But Mr. C and Mr. T are delightful. I have drawn the CAT as best I can. The story is about a walk that Mr. C went to see Mr. T - the trouble he had getting there, and the easier way back which Mr. T showed Mr. C.

Do write to her. It would amuse and interest her to retell this to you.

Yours sincerely,

Hedley Burrows.

This copy of the final drawing was made by Dodgson for Gladys Mary Baly (b. 1884) on 5 October 1891. Dodgson's diary for this date, written during his stay at Eastbourne, indicated:

Our fellow-lodgers are a Mrs. Baly, with her mother Mrs. Richards, her sister, and her little girl Gladys. The last-named came up this morning, and spent an hour with us, by my invitation. I found she already had a copy of *Alice*, so gave her one, to match, of the *Looking-Glass*.

Clearly, as part of his first meeting with Gladys, he told her the "History of Mr. C and Mr. T."

The story itself was written down by Mary Geraldine Burrows (b. 1892), later Mrs. Knyvett:

Mr. C had a great friend called Mr. T and one day Mr. C determined to go and see Mr. T's new house, but he was not very sure of the way, so he took a path which he knew was in the right direction but which was very hilly and frightfully muddy. He started off straight down the hill but at the bottom he slipped badly and fell in the mud. However, nothing daunted, he picked

himself up and scrambled back to the path, but alas he had only gone a few yards when he fell again. Up he scrambled again, muddier than ever, but luckily he came to a nice straight bit but, alas, he was striding along a little too quickly and he came across another muddy bit and down the hill he fell again. Very annoyed with himself, he scrambled up yet again but had hardly got on the path when he slipped again. Then he came to a steep hill up. However, he managed that alright, and then, to his delight, he saw Mr. T's house in front of him with the door facing him. Mr. T came out to greet him and said "Do you like the lovely flowers in my garden. You see how beautiful my house is built. My fires never smoke because I have such good chimneys." Then Mr. T took him upstairs and showed him the lovely view from his windows. They had a lovely tea together and much chat and Mr. T asked Mr. C which way he had come. When Mr. C told him, Mr. T said "Oh, that is entirely the wrong way. I will show you the proper way home," and when he did so Mr. C found there was a perfectly good road, absolutely straight, and not muddy at all, back to his own home.

Mary "Molly" G. Knyvett

There is now an alternative re-telling of the story. The text is transcribed below.

Once upon a time there was a man called Mr. C, and another man called Mr. T. One day, Mr. C thought he would like to ask Mr. T to dinner, so he went across to his house but when he got there, there were so many bushes (whiskers) round the door. He had to climb up to the window. He knocked and called out: "Are you there, Mr. T?" but no answer. So he climbed up a chimney and called down: "ARE you there Mr. T?" No answer, and he climbed up the other chimney. "ARE YOU THERE?" he shouted. No answer. So he banged on the other window: "ARE-YOU-THERE Mr. T?" This time a little voice said "Go downstairs and wait for me."

When he came, he said he'd like to come for dinner and said "Let's go home the other way." So they set off, and soon, DOWN fell Mr. T and Mr. C pulled him up, but then DOWN fell Mr. C and Mr. T had to pull *him* up! They went a bit further and DOWN fell Mr. T again! Mr. C pulled him up and down fell Mr. C and he had to be pulled up again.

After that, they walked very carefully till they got right home and what do you think they had for dinner?

The source of this re-telling is unknown, but it tells us that Dodgson often varied the story, but the outcome was the same. As far as is known, Dodgson himself did not write down the story - no manuscript version in his hand has come to light. But examples of the final picture are known. In the diary entry given above, the story is not mentioned by name - but the date on the drawing tells us that it was told on this day. The first mention comes in an entry for 15 February 1894:

About 6 I went to the School of St. Paul's {Oxford}, where Beatrice Hatch assembles some 50 or 60 girls of the middle class once a week, for an hour of entertainment. I told them "Mr. C and Mr. T," "Mr. M etc," "the old goose," and "Bruno's Picnic," which filled about 40 minutes. The children (ages about 12 to 4) seemed to enjoy it.

This performance was repeated two years later on 27 February 1896:

Went at 6 to St. Paul's School, to talk to the girls whom Beatrice Hatch gets together once a week.... This time I told them "Little Christel," "Mr. C and Mr. T," and "The Three Little Pixies." For the last two I drew pictures, with charcoal, on sheets of white paper, pinned to a board. It is a much more effective plan than a black board. Miss Kate Field played the violin between whiles.

Dodgson had a repertoire of stories he could tell. At least twenty different stories are mentioned in his diaries. During the last few years of his life he gave lessons in Logic to girls at the Oxford High School, but he also told this story to some of the younger pupils from time to time before letting them depart so that he could concentrate on Logic with the older girls and teachers (26 January 1897). Other mentions of "Mr. C and Mr. T" occur on 29 May, 8 June, 24 September, 1 October, 6 October, and 18 October in 1897. It was clearly a popular tale that Dodgson enjoyed telling.