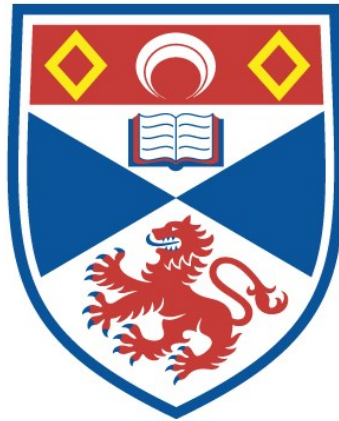


**WOMEN IN THE LIFE AND WORKS OF J.M.  
BARRIE**

Helena Winnicka

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of MPhil  
at the  
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(a) I, HELENA WINNICKA, hereby certify that this thesis which is approximately 60,000 words in length has been written by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis is a study of J M Barrie's relationships with women in his life and his portrayal of them in his works. For this purpose the women concerned are divided into the following categories: Mothers; Romantic Heroines and Actresses; Wives; Spinsters and Independent Women; Servants; and Ladies of Title. Barrie's life spans the years 1860-1937, covering forty years of Queen Victoria's reign; the reigns of Edward VII and George V; the First World War and the abdication of Edward VIII. The changing position of women in society and the shifts in Barrie's own attitudes towards them throughout this period, as reflected in his experiences and in his writings, are described. Particular attention has been given to the following women who played major rôles in Barrie's life: Margaret Ogilvy, Barrie's mother, who was the predominant influence until her death in 1895; Mary Ansell, who was Barrie's wife from 1894 until their divorce in 1909; Sylvia Llewelyn Davies, wife of Arthur Llewelyn Davies, whom Barrie worshipped as the epitome of motherhood from 1898 until her death in 1910; and Lady Cynthia Asquith, who was Barrie's secretary from 1918 until 1937.

Barrie's emotional history and attitudes to women are traced concurrently with a study of the development of his career from journalist through novelist to dramatist and public speaker, and of his social progress from the simple life of his childhood in Kirriemuir to his eminence in artistic, political and aristocratic circles at the time of his death in London in 1937. This study is also intended to establish that, although, by modern standards, Barrie is not a major figure in the world of letters, he made an idiosyncratic contribution to it.

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INTRODUCTION

The difficulties which have to be faced in any attempt to analyse J M Barrie as a man and as an artist are indicated in a speech which he made to the Critics' Circle on May 26, 1922, where, with tongue firmly in cheek, he anticipates criticism:

Your word for me would probably be fantastic. I was quite prepared to hear it from your chairman, because I felt he could not be so shabby as to say whimsical, and that he might forget to say elusive. If you knew how dejected those terms have often made me. I am quite serious. I never believed I was any of those things until you dinned them into me. Few have tried harder to be simple and direct. I have always thought that I was rather realistic.<sup>1</sup>

The more Barrie professes to reveal, the more he conceals, so that the accuracy of any information he gives about himself in his speeches<sup>2</sup> and memoirs<sup>3</sup> is always suspect. Barrie's is the truth of the artist rather than the historian, and the public man tends to talk about himself as if he were a character of fiction; selecting, rejecting and changing facts to suit his purpose. On the other hand, in his private life Barrie appears never to have discussed his most intimate problems with anyone, but in his notebooks and his works of fiction he conveys a great deal of his personal emotional history. The nearest Barrie comes to being "simple and direct" in publicly summing up his art is in the speech which he made on being given the Freedom of Edinburgh on July 29, 1929:

I know very well, with the poets, that all my life I have only been trying to catch the wind with a net.<sup>4</sup>

The main object of this study is to describe Barrie's relationships with women throughout his life and his portrayal of them in his works. Barrie was born in Victorian Scotland in 1860 and died in 1937, six months after the accession of George VI. He lived through a period of momentous change which affected the position of women in society and his attitudes towards them. The most important influence in Barrie's life and on his work was his mother, Margaret Ogilvy. In his formative years he developed an intense emotional relationship with his mother which he never outgrew. Throughout his life the relationship with a woman in which Barrie appears happiest is that of the devoted admirer of marriage and motherhood without the responsibilities of being husband and father. In the year before his mother's death in 1895, Barrie married the actress, Mary Ansell, but their childless marriage failed and they were divorced in 1909. The woman who really replaced his mother in Barrie's affections was Sylvia Llewelyn Davies, wife of Arthur Llewelyn Davies and ultimately the mother of five sons. This relationship, which lasted from 1898 until

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1 J M BARRIE : McCONNACHIE AND J M B (LONDON : 1938) p 54

2 J M BARRIE : McCONNACHIE AND J M B (LONDON : 1938)

3 J M BARRIE : THE GREENWOOD HAT (LONDON : 1937)

14 J M BARRIE : McCONNACHIE AND J M B (LONDON : 1938) p 178



the widowed Sylvia's death in 1910, set the pattern which fulfilled Barrie's emotional needs. He was devoted to the idea of Sylvia's devotion to her husband and family and the last thing he wanted was to jeopardise it, while at the same time he knew he was in no way threatened by the danger of his manhood ever being put to the test.

Those three women provided Barrie with models of mothers and wives but he never experienced a mature adult relationship as husband and father nor was he able to write about it. His experience of spinsters centred largely on his elder sister, Jane Ann, who never left home but remained her mother's companion and servant throughout her life. His pretentious younger sister, Maggie, afforded Barrie the opportunity to exercise his fatal capacity to make romantic heroines of women, while his niece, Lillian, who became headmistress of Wallasey High School, was an independent woman for whom he showed affection and admiration. All those relationships were grist to Barrie's literary mill.

Throughout his life Barrie admired pretty actresses and, from the time when he became established as a dramatist after the turn of the century, they were the women with whom he was most closely involved in his professional capacity, and some were also a source of personal friendship and inspiration. Barrie's significant experience of servants dates from 1909, when he resumed a bachelor life in a flat in the Adelphi, employing his own staff. In the following year he became responsible for the running of Sylvia Llewelyn Davies's household at Campden Hill Square after her death. Barrie was fortunate that, on the whole, the people in his own service resembled those servants whom he had earlier portrayed in his works.

The fourth woman to play a principal part in Barrie's life was Lady Cynthia Asquith, who became Barrie's secretary in 1918 and filled that post until his death. Barrie despised soulless efficiency and Cynthia's lack of professional qualifications and experience were an asset rather than a liability. However, in Cynthia Asquith the distinguishing features of most of the various categories of women in this study were combined. As a potential romantic heroine the first requisite was her beauty, which she had hoped would gain her entry into the world of films, but she had been unsuccessful in that direction and lacked the experience to be a stage actress. Although very happily married and the mother of two sons (a third was born later), her independence was reflected in her desire to take advantage of the new era of emancipation and to help to support her family. Finally, her aristocratic background gave Barrie great satisfaction and the opportunity to indulge his master/servant fantasy, which will be dealt with later.

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Barrie's treatment of the various categories of women in his works is a combination of his highly individual experience and his occasionally wayward imagination. His tendency to romanticise women sometimes gets the upper hand, when we have evidence that his actual knowledge of the type of women concerned must have told him that he was giving a false portrayal. This wilful disregard for truth is most obvious in the one actress whom Barrie portrays in his works; she makes the discovery that she only exists on the stage and has no reality apart from that, although Barrie had many happy friendships with actresses in their private capacities. His inability to transcend what can only be described as blind prejudice in his creation of ladies of title is a great weakness. The romantic heroines in his works are completely unreal, but the tone of mockery which Barrie uses in portraying some of them is a sign of his awareness that the picture he is giving of the women concerned is unrealistic.

His most realistic creations are the mothers and wives, based on his own mother, who are overpossessive of their children and mother their husbands. In describing those women Barrie's writing comes nearest to the truth of his own intense and sometimes claustrophobic experience. But in addition he portrays other mothers and wives with varying characteristics, and his attitudes to mothers and wives in the mould of Margaret Ogilvy show some interesting developments in the course of his works. Servants in Barrie's works are, for the most part, realistically portrayed and some of his liveliest characters, who combine integrity and humour, are to be found in this category. His treatment of spinsters and independent women shows variety within the group and in relation to some of them Barrie is at his most understanding and enlightened.

In the course of this discussion of Barrie's relationship with the women of his acquaintance, and his handling of those of his creation, his social progress from his childhood in Kirriemuir to the position of fame and wealth which he had attained at the time of his death, in London in 1937, will be traced. This study also follows the development of Barrie's career and deals not only with his contemporary popularity as a dramatist and his success as a journalist and public speaker but with what, in my opinion, was his failure as a novelist, and estimates the overall value of his contribution to literature.

CHAPTER 1 : MOTHERS

James Matthew Barrie was born in Kirriemuir on May 9, 1860, the third son and ninth child of David Barrie and Margaret Ogilvy. David Barrie was an employe<sup>e</sup> of other weavers, in a small way, as well as a weaver himself. Although their four-roomed cottage was rather cramped, the Barries had enough money for the necessities of life and typified the virtues of Victorian Scotland in their faith, courage and respect for education. In 1862, their eldest son, Alexander Barrie, graduated with first class Honours in Classics at Aberdeen and subsequently became a schoolmaster at Bothwell, where his eldest sister, Mary, accompanied him as his housekeeper. Maggie, the last child, was born in 1863 and at this time Jane Ann<sup>d</sup>, who was to become her mother's companion and prop, was sixteen. Barrie enjoyed the usual childhood games such as "Spye, smuggle bools, kickbonnety, peeries, the preens, suckers, pilly, buttony, palauleys and fivey," which he later described in Sentimental Tommy. Fishing and cricket were favourite pastimes and puppet-shows and travelling fairs provided great excitement.

But in 1867, when Barrie was six, an event occurred which was to have a profound effect on him. His elder brother David, who was then fourteen and in Alexander's care at Bothwell, was knocked on to the ice by a friend who was skating, and died of a fractured skull. David was Margaret Ogilvy's favourite son and destined to be a minister. Margaret Ogilvy, then in her late forties, was overwhelmed by her sorrow and never fully recovered her strength. She seems to have made little effort to control her feelings for the sake of her other children and Barrie's description of his apparent rejection at the age of six is heartrending. Fortunately his sister Jane Ann, with her shrewd common sense, did her best to remedy the situation. In Margaret Ogilvy (1896), a portrait of his mother, Barrie recounts how Jane Ann told him to go to his mother, who had taken to her bed with grief:

This sister, who was then passing out of her <sup>'</sup>teens, came to me with a very anxious face and wringing her hands, and she told me to go <sup>ben</sup> to my mother and say to her that she still had another boy. I went ben excitedly, but the room was dark, and when I heard the door shut and no sound came from the bed I was afraid, and I stood still. I suppose I was breathing hard, or perhaps I was crying, for after a time I heard a listless voice that had never been listless before say, 'Is that you?' I think the tone hurt me, for I made no answer, and then the voice said more anxiously, 'Is that you?' again. I thought it was the dead boy she was speaking to, and I said in a little lonely voice, 'No, it's no him, it's just me!' Then I heard a cry, <sup>and</sup> my mother turned in bed, and though it was dark I knew that she was holding out her arms.<sup>1</sup>

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1 J M BARRIE : MARGARET OGILVY (LONDON : 1897) p 12

Barrie goes on to describe how he tried to be like David:

One day after I had learned his whistle ... from boys who had been his comrades, I secretly put on a suit of his clothes, ... and thus disguised I slipped, unknown to the others, into my mother's room. Quaking, I doubt not, yet so pleased, I stood still until she saw me, and then - how it must have hurt her! 'Listen!' I cried in a glow of triumph, and I stretched my legs wide apart and plunged my hands into the pockets of my knickerbockers, and began to whistle ... It was doubtless that same sister (Jane Ann) who told me not to sulk when my mother lay thinking of him, but to try instead to get her to talk about him.<sup>1</sup>

Thus began the intimacy with his mother which was to have a profound effect on Barrie's relationship with women in his life and his portrayal of them in his works. This early experience of his brother's death and its effect on his mother explains a great deal about Barrie. His efforts to distract and comfort his mother after the loss of David continued as long as she lived but at the same time he knew that he could never take his dead brother's place. In A Window in Thrums (1889) Jamie, the surviving son of the family, says to his mother, Jess:

"I never took Joey's place wi' ye, mother."

Jess pressed his hand tightly in her two worn palms, but she did not speak.<sup>2</sup>

When he was a child Barrie promised his mother that she would lie on feathers and after her death he was able to say:

Everything I could do for her in this life I have done since I was a boy; I look back through the years and I cannot see the smallest thing left undone.<sup>3</sup>

In Margaret Ogilvy Barrie describes the influence which his mother had on his writing:

What she had been, what I should be, these were the two great subjects between us in my boyhood, and while we discussed the one we were deciding the other, though ~~none~~<sup>neither</sup> of us knew it ... The reason my books deal with the past instead of with the life I myself have known is simply this, that I soon grow tired of writing tales unless I can see a little girl, of whom my mother has told me, wandering confidently through the pages. Such a grip has her memory of her girlhood had upon me since I was a boy of six.<sup>4</sup>

Margaret Ogilvy's father was a stonemason and a member of the Auld Licht Kirk, a puritanical brand of Protestantism. The Presbyterian Church of Scotland was divided into sects and the Auld Lights were the most uncompromising of them all, and

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1 J M BARRIE : MARGARET OGILVY (LONDON : 1897) pp<sup>15,</sup> 16 & 17  
 2 J M BARRIE : A WINDOW IN THRUMS (LONDON : 1893) p 191  
 3 J M BARRIE : MARGARET OGILVY (LONDON : 1897) p 200  
 4 J M BARRIE : MARGARET OGILVY (LONDON : 1897) pp 20 & 24



characterised by a narrow self-righteousness. On her marriage to David Barrie she joined the Free Church, to which he belonged, but Barrie's works with a Thrums setting are based in the Kirriemuir of his mother's girlhood, which was dominated by the Auld Licht Kirk.

At the age of eight, on her mother's death, Margaret Ogilvy became mistress of the house and mother to her younger brother. This image of the child as substitute mother occurs frequently in Barrie's works; the best-known example is Wendy in Peter Pan (1904). Peter Pan has been listening at the nursery window to Mrs Darling telling stories to her children and when Wendy says she knows lots of stories Peter asks her to return with him to the Never Land. The stage directions tell us that, like the journalist Barrie, Peter "would like to rip <sup>those</sup> the stories out of her."<sup>1</sup> It is the Lost Boys who ask her to be their mother:

WENDY: (not to make herself too cheap). Ought I? Of course it is frightfully fascinating; but you see I am only a little girl; I have no real experience.

OMNES: That doesn't matter. What we need is just a nice motherly person.<sup>2</sup>

Notice that there is no question of Peter being father and Wendy "is too loving to be ignorant that he is not loving enough."<sup>3</sup> Peter tells Wendy that his feelings for her are those of a devoted son and confides:

Tiger Lily is just the same; there is something or other she wants to be to me, but she says it is not my mother.<sup>4</sup>

Captain Hook in the same play wants Wendy as a mother for the pirates, not as a wife for himself. It is this relationship between mother and son which Barrie understands and describes best; his worship of women as mothers with the complete absence of sexuality is a completely unrealistic combination. In fact it is a child's picture of his mother and Barrie rarely progresses beyond this.

The Little White Bird (1902), that strange book which contains the germs of all Barrie's major works, anticipates Wendy in the character of Mamie Mannering, the little girl who stays behind in Kensington Gardens after the gates have been locked and meets the early Peter who at this point lives with the birds on an island in the Serpentine. He asks Mamie to return to the island with him and tells her the birds will be pleased. The modern psychiatrist could have a field day with the following passage but Nico Davies, one of the Llewelyn Davies brothers whose unofficial guardian Barrie became in later life, assures us that Barrie was "an innocent"<sup>5</sup> and that is why he could write Peter Pan:

1 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 34

2 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 49

3 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 64

4 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 64

5 ANDREW BIRKIN : J M BARRIE AND THE LOST BOYS (LONDON : 1980) p 130

'They (the birds) are always thinking of their nests!', he said apologetically, 'and there are some bits ~~of~~ you' - he stroked the fur on her pelisse - 'that would excite them very much.'

'They shan't have my fur', she said sharply.

'No', he said, still fondling it, however, 'no. O Mamie', he said rapturously, 'do you know why I love you? It is because you are like a beautiful nest' ... '... Fancy a nest in my neck with little spotty eggs in it! O Peter, how perfectly lovely!' ...<sup>1</sup>

Then Peter admits it would not be fair to take her with him if she still thinks she can go back home. Finally Mamie returns home and knits a kettle-holder for Peter and as an Easter present her mother suggests the imaginary goat with which Mamie frightens her brother Tony at night. Now Peter rides around the gardens every night, playing on his pipe. We have here the same obsession with motherhood but at the same time the Peter figure eludes emotional commitment and domestic ties.

We have two examples in Barrie's works of children becoming substitute mothers because of the inadequacy, as a result of illness, of their own mothers, and the absence of their fathers. The first is Tommy Sandys, hero of Sentimental Tommy (1896). After the birth of his sister Elspeth, Tommy's mother, Jean Sandys, is too tired and ill after her day's work to have much energy to take an interest in her baby and it is Tommy who teaches Elspeth to walk and speak. Barrie colourfully describes Elspeth's early education; Tommy puzzles how to keep her upright:

Elspeth lay on her stomach on the floor, gazing earnestly at him, as if she knew she was in his thoughts for some stupendous purpose. Thus the apple may have looked at Newton before it fell.<sup>2</sup>

There is great joy when Elspeth is finally able to say "Auld Licht". Tommy's mother had taught him letters but he had learned words by studying posters. He wanders the streets of London with his little sister and ~~one of the attractions for them are~~ <sup>they are attracted by</sup> the chemists' shops with their coloured bottles:

In the glamour, then, of the romantic bottles walked Tommy and Elspeth; meeting so many novelties that they might have spared a tear for the unfortunate children who sit in nurseries surrounded by all they ask for, and if the adventures of these two frequently ended in the middle, they had probably begun another while the sailor-suited boy was still holding up his leg to let the nurse put on his little sock.<sup>3</sup>

Thus began Tommy's sense of responsibility towards Elspeth and her dependence on him, a relationship which was to cause complications in their adult lives.<sup>4</sup>

1 J M BARRIE : THE LITTLE WHITE BIRD (LONDON : 1938) pp 190 & 191

2 J M BARRIE : SENTIMENTAL TOMMY (LONDON : 1896) pp52+53

3 J M BARRIE : SENTIMENTAL TOMMY (LONDON : 1896) p 57

4 Tommy is discussed in the chapter dealing with Wives, and Elspeth in the chapter dealing with Romantic Heroines and Actresses.

The other child who plays substitute mother is Grizel in Sentimental Tommy. She is the daughter of the Painted Lady, who is mentally disturbed and the object of her daughter's care.<sup>1</sup> If we compare the following passages from Margaret Ogilvy and Sentimental Tommy we can see how closely Barrie has transcribed his mother's childhood experience:

'And now you've gone back to my father's time. It's more than sixty years since I carried his dinner in a flagon through the long parks of Kinnordy!'

'I often go into the long parks, mother, and sit on the stile at the edge of the wood till I fancy I see a little girl coming towards me with a flagon in her hand.'

'Jumping the burn (I was once so proud of my jumps!) and swinging the flagon round so quick that what was inside hadna time to fall out. I used to wear a magenta frock and a white pinafore. Did I ever tell you that?'

'Mother, the little girl in my story wears a magenta frock and a white pinafore'<sup>2</sup>

The little girl Barrie refers to here is Grizel:

She wore a white pinafore over a magenta frock, and no one could tell her whether she was seven or eight, for she was only the Painted Lady's child.<sup>3</sup>

It is Grizel who most enjoys the childhood games in the Den, for they are her escape from her domestic cares:

There were nights when the lair saw Grizel go riotous with glee, laughing, dancing, and shouting overmuch, like one trying to make up for a lost childhood.<sup>4</sup>

Notice the resemblance here between Grizel and Margaret Ogilvy:

leaping joyful~~y~~ from bed in the morning because there was so much to do, doing it as thoroughly and sedately as if the brides were already due for a lesson, and then rushing out in a fit of childishness to play dumps or palaulays with others of her age.<sup>5</sup>

Barrie is very much aware of the sentimental appeal of mothers, absent or present, and there are several minor occasions I have noticed where he drags them in quite blatantly on that basis. The first is in the introduction to his one-act play Pantaloon (1905), where, in describing the home of Pantaloon and Columbine, he adds:

The mother is dead, to give the little home a touch of pathos.<sup>6</sup>

On returning to Thrums with his bride, Rob Angus, hero of When a Man's Single (1888), remarks:

- 1 The Painted Lady is discussed in the chapter dealing with Spinsters and Independent Women.
- 2 J M BARRIE : MARGARET OGILVY (LONDON : 1897) p 178 pp 177+178
- 3 J M BARRIE : SENTIMENTAL TOMMY (LONDON : 1896) p 125
- 4 J M BARRIE : SENTIMENTAL TOMMY (LONDON : 1896) p 270
- 5 J M BARRIE : MARGARET OGILVY (LONDON : 1897) p 28
- 6 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 597



Many a day my mother has walked from the saw-mill into this glen with my dinner in a basket.<sup>1</sup>

In the play A Kiss for Cinderella (1916) Mr Bodie the artist fancifully calls his statue of the Venus de Milo, Mrs Bodie, because she is his ideal. Here he tries to explain her smile to the little drudge, Cinderella, but she is sceptical:

BODIE : : That is perhaps the smile of motherhood. Some people think there was once a baby in her arms ...

CINDERELLA : If I had lost my baby I wouldn't have been found with that pleased look on my face, not in a thousand years.

BODIE : Her arms were broken, you see, so she had to drop the baby -

CINDERELLA : She could have up with her knee and caught it.<sup>2</sup>

By way of contrast Barrie's last play, The Boy David (1936), features the mother of David, whose most outstanding characteristic is the absence of sentimentality in her nature; Barrie stresses this by repeating it at least four times in the stage directions describing her. She is "a determined housewife, harsh, and without sentimentality", and to prove it here is her initial opinion of David:

I know to my shame that the child is timid and backward. The best that can be said of him is that the sheep like him.<sup>3</sup>

But when Samuel warns her that David is to be great and terrible she has a new respect and a feeling of awe regarding David. There is a nice touch of bathos in the following lines:

DAVID : Mother, I think I am now to be exalted.

MOTHER : (wringing her hands) Not before your father.<sup>4</sup>

In Act II, Scene I, Saul and David compare mothers, which I think is a piece of over-indulgence on Barrie's part. David claims proudly that no woman in Bethlehem can "lay on" as his mother does. In this respect she resembles the mother of Tommy's friend Shovel in Sentimental Tommy:

Shovel ... called her his old girl or his old lady, and it was a sight to see her chasing him across the street when she was in liquor, and boastful was Shovel of the way she could lay on, and he was partial to her too.<sup>5</sup>

A final revealing description of David's mother shows some points of comparison with Margaret Ogilvy:

Having last seen him (David) holding his own in royal company, we now see him

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1 J M BARRIE : WHEN A MAN'S SINGLE (LONDON : 1938) pp.265+266

2 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 404 pp.403+404

3 J M BARRIE : THE BOY DAVID (LONDON : 1938) p 13

4 J M BARRIE : THE BOY DAVID (LONDON : 1938) p 41

5 J M BARRIE : SENTIMENTAL TOMMY (LONDON : 1896) p 25

helpless in the hands of this whirlwind of a woman ... This woman is secretly proud of him now, but there is no soft sentiment in her. She is still hopelessly perplexed about what it all means.<sup>1</sup>

Margaret Ogilvy was certainly not a "whirlwind of a woman"; her tactics seem to have been rather those of gentleness and guile. Nor is she lacking in sentiment - being more inclined to emotional blackmail on occasions. There is no doubt of her pride in her son's achievements but she was very far from understanding him. I have been unable to find much evidence based on impressions of people who actually met Margaret Ogilvy and such as there is is trivial or smacks too much of vague eulogy to be of much value. Darlington tells us:

Conan Doyle, meeting her in 1893, when she was near the end of her life, was instantly impressed. And indeed, the mixture of courage, humour, tenderness and intelligence that was hers, together with her powers of concentration, would have made her a person of mark in any walk of life.<sup>2</sup>

Robertson Nicoll, founder of the "British Weekly", on looking at a photograph of Margaret Ogilvy, was moved to say:

I recall the slow, wise, tender smile. I hear again the gentle voice recalling the past. I understand better than ever the strong, brave faith that coloured every thought and word. Mrs Barrie was the daughter of Saunders Ogilvy, and to the last in every distress her thoughts went back to him. She was full of memories of him and <sup>of</sup> others like him - "the strong nails that keep the world together".<sup>3</sup>

Dr Alexander Whyte, the famous Edinburgh preacher, remembers:

a dear little, sweet, gracious, humorous, tender-hearted soul. I loved her, and I hoped sometimes she loved me ... I can see my old mother and her drinking their kindly cup of tea together.<sup>4</sup>

Hammerton tells of two girls who spent a summer at Kirriemuir with another old lady who did not give them enough to eat. Mrs Barrie gave them a good breakfast every day of their holiday. He also recounts how Mr David Anderson, who had been at Dumfries Academy with J M Barrie, continued to visit Mr and Mrs Barrie:

for several years after young Barrie had gone out of his life he continued on terms of intimacy with them, frequently going over to enjoy their company when they had left Forfar and were finally settled at Kirriemuir. No better evidence of geniality and friendliness could be wished. The nature that can win the

1 J M BARRIE : THE BOY DAVID (LONDON : 1938) p 127

2 W A DARLINGTON : J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1938) p 74

3 J A HAMMERTON : BARRIE, THE STORY OF A GENIUS (LONDON : 1929) p 211

4 J A HAMMERTON : BARRIE, THE STORY OF A GENIUS (LONDON : 1929) p 214

affection of other peoples' children is in tune with universal parenthood.<sup>1</sup>

In my opinion there was nothing particularly remarkable about Margaret Ogilvy but there was something remarkable about the love her son had for her and the influence she had on his writing. What I find most striking about Margaret Ogilvy is that she was very much a mother first and a wife second, but in Victorian Scotland she was by no means unique, as fathers of large families found that bread-winning took up most of their time and energy. But what is significant is that most of the wives in Barrie's works devote themselves principally to their children at the expense of their husbands or they tend to treat their husbands as if they were children.<sup>2</sup> In Margaret Ogilvy here is all that Barrie has to say about his father:

(he) proved a most loving as he was always a well-loved husband, a man I am very proud to be able to call my father.<sup>3</sup>

The mother was very much the focal point of the Barrie household; as a result, in Barrie's works fathers are nonentities or conspicuous by their absence. In his war-plays, after the death of his adopted son George Llewelyn Davies, Barrie treats the relationship between fathers and sons. Then he must have had second thoughts about David Barrie, with his patience and industry, living very much in his wife's shadow. (This shift of emphasis is discussed later.)/ Jane Ann had taken over most of the work of the house so Margaret Ogilvy had time to spend with her children. She also appears to have been more demonstrative than many Scottish mothers. In Margaret Ogilvy Barrie describes her humble domestic triumphs in finding bargains and altering clothes; but his love for his mother was not a blind love and he records her deviousness as well as her virtues. Here she uses emotional blackmail to make her son take a rest from his writing:

'You'll put by your work now, man, and have your supper, and then you'll come up and sit beside your mother for a whiley, for soon you'll be putting her away in the kirk-yard.'<sup>4</sup>

On this occasion we see her possessiveness:

*Vailina*  
Vailinia (home of R.L Stevenson) was the one spot on earth I had any great craving to visit, but I think she always knew I would never leave her. Some-time, <sup>she said,</sup> she should like me to go, but not until she was laid away.<sup>5</sup>

When a famous man, <sup>such as</sup> eg Carlyle, was mentioned, Margaret Ogilvy always said that she would rather have been his mother than his wife which shows where her own priorities lay. This is Margaret Ogilvy telling her son how she would use her womanly wiles to get the better of an editor:

1 J A HAMMERTON : BARRIE, THE STORY OF A GENIUS (LONDON : 1929) p 37

2 Those points are discussed in the chapter dealing with Wives

3 J M BARRIE : MARGARET OGILVY (LONDON : 1897) p 31

4 J M BARRIE : MARGARET OGILVY (LONDON : 1897) p 105

5 J M BARRIE : MARGARET OGILVY (LONDON : 1897) p 146.

'I'm thinking I could manage him,' says my mother, with a chuckle.

'How would you set about it?'

Then my mother would begin to laugh.

'I would find out first if he had a family, and then I would say they ~~are~~<sup>were</sup> the finest family in London.'

'Yes, that is just what you would do, you cunning woman! But if he has no family?'

'I would say what great men editors are!'

'He would see through you.'

'Not he!'

'You don't understand that what imposes on common folk would never hoodwink an editor.'

'That's where you are wrong. Gentle or simple, stupid or clever, the men are all alike in the hands of a woman that flatters them.'

'Ah, I'm sure there are better ways of getting round an editor than that.'

'I daresay there are,' my mother would say with conviction, 'but if you try that plan you will never need to try another.'<sup>1</sup>

It says a great deal in Margaret Ogilvy's favour that she was not over-protective of her youngest son during his childhood. Barrie began his education in Kirriemuir at Bank Street School, which was kept by the Misses Adam<sup>2</sup> and where fees, lessons, rewards and punishments were all on the simplest possible scale, but at seven he moved to the Free Church School at Southmuir and spent the best part of a year there before moving in 1868 to Glasgow Academy, where his brother Alexander was Classics master. Any fears or misgivings his mother may have had as a result of David's death must have been eclipsed by her faith in Alexander and the knowledge that this arrangement was in Barrie's best educational interests. This move marked the end of the longest continuous period that Barrie was ever to spend in Kirriemuir. From this point<sup>onward</sup> he was to see it from the outside and no doubt this separation from his mother heightened his feelings for her too. He spent three years in Glasgow but this period seems to have made no other impression on him.

In May 1870 the Barrie family left Kirriemuir for Forfar. With the coming of the power-looms, David Barrie saw that his best chance lay in securing a post in the counting-house at Laird's Linen Works in Forfar. In 1871 Barrie returned to live with his family and attended Forfar Academy; Alexander had resigned his post and entered a period of training for the inspectorate. The Barrie family moved back to Kirriemuir in 1872 and took up residence at Strath View, a bigger house which

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1 J M BARRIE : MARGARET OGILVY (LONDON : 1897) pp 66, 67 & 68

2 The Misses Adam are discussed in the chapter dealing with Spinsters and Independent Women



David Barrie could afford now that he had become chief clerk in the new factory at Kirriemuir. Barrie - after a spell at Webster's Seminary - returned to the Free Church School he had left four years previously, a stepping-stone this time to Dumfries Academy, which he was due to join in 1873, Alexander having been appointed H M Inspector of Schools for the district of Dumfries.

Let us look at Barrie, aged twelve, in 1872. He was very fortunate in his brother Alexander, who, although solid and studious himself, instinctively understood his imaginative younger brother's temperament: Margaret Ogilvy encouraged him in his reading and writing; biography and exploration were her own favourite reading, "for choice the biography of men who had been good to their mothers,"<sup>1</sup> and "Explorer's mothers also interested her very much."<sup>2</sup> In Margaret Ogilvy Barrie tells us that he and his mother read many books together when he was a boy; they included Robinson Crusoe and The Pilgrim's Progress. He also took a magazine called "Sunshine", which contained a serial about a little water-cress seller, who became his earliest romantic heroine. One day Barrie decided to write tales himself, but he is not sure if the idea was not put into his head by his mother, who wanted to make progress with her clouty hearthrug:

They were all tales of adventure (happiest is he who writes of adventure), no characters were allowed within if I knew their like in the flesh, the scene lay in unknown parts, desert islands, enchanted gardens, with knights ... on black chargers, and round the first corner a lady selling water-cress ... From the day on which I first tasted blood in the garret my mind was made up; there could be no hum-dreadful-drum profession for me; literature was my game.<sup>3</sup>

The years Barrie spent at Dumfries Academy (1873-1878) were happy ones and gave him plenty of opportunities for fun and self-expression. He enjoyed the debating society and the Dumfries dramatic club, for which he wrote a melodrama, Bandalero the Bandit, and he also wrote articles for "The Clown", the schoolboy magazine. His outdoor pursuits were walking and fishing and cricket, but what he seems to have enjoyed most was playing at the adventures he read about in books, a passion he never outgrew and was to enjoy reliving with the Davies boys at Black Lake Cottage and writing about in Sentimental Tommy:

The horror of my <sup>boy</sup> childhood was that I knew a time would come when I also must give up the games, and how it was to be done I saw not ... I felt that I must continue playing in secret.<sup>4</sup>

The only clouds on the schoolboy Barrie's horizon were his sensitivity about his

- 1 J M BARRIE : MARGARET OGILVY (LONDON : 1897) p 44  
 2 J M BARRIE : MARGARET OGILVY (LONDON : 1897) p 45  
 3 J M BARRIE : MARGARET OGILVY (LONDON : 1897) pp 49 & 50  
 4 J M BARRIE : MARGARET OGILVY (LONDON : 1897) p 29

youthful appearance and lack of height, and the problem of his future career. It was expected at home that he would go to University as Alexander had done and as David would have done had he lived. Barrie had no hope of a bursary but Alexander, as always, was understanding and helpful; he suggested Edinburgh, where he had connections, but the main consideration was that the distinguished David Masson was Professor of Rhetoric and English Literature there. Barrie knew he had it in him to be a writer and regarded further formal education as a stumbling-block, but he knew also the hopes his family had for him, and we can imagine his mother trying to wheedle him into an academic career. As he tells us in Margaret Ogilvy:

To be a minister - that she thought was among the fairest prospects, but she was a very ambitious woman, and sometimes she would add, half scared at her appetite, that there were ministers who had <sup>become</sup> ~~been~~ professors, but it was not canny to think of such things.<sup>1</sup>

Barrie matriculated at Edinburgh in 1878 and graduated in 1882. In the speech which he made on the occasion of his installation as Chancellor of Edinburgh University in 1930, Barrie laments the absence of Unions and Hostels in his own student days, as they do so much for the social atmosphere he had missed.<sup>2</sup> As a student, Barrie did not suffer economic deprivation but the word "Grind" appears frequently in his diaries for the period and on the whole it seems to have been a time of hard work, self-discipline and some loneliness. But Alexander's home at Dumfries, where Barrie enjoyed playing with his nephews and nieces, provided a happy escape, and he made a beginning in journalism, reviewing books and doing some dramatic criticism for the "Edinburgh Courant". During this time he also wrote a play called Bohemia but no trace of it remains.

When he graduated in 1882 Barrie was still set on literature as a career, to the alarm of his mother. With his strange enthusiasms, his fits of depression, his love of the theatre and his reckless <sup>dis</sup> regard <sup>of</sup> for security, her youngest son was unlike the model, Alexander, and David if he had lived would have been even more successful. Barrie's faith in his own gift, and his determination, were fortunately stronger than his mother's caution and love of orthodoxy. In a speech to the Authors' Club in 1932 Barrie sums up his formal education and his own determination:

I was an idler at school, and read all the wrong books at college. But I fell in love with hard work one fine May morning, and I continued to woo her through a big chunk of half a century.<sup>3</sup>

His mother's failure to understand him is not surprising, as Barrie appears to have found difficulty in understanding himself. In one of his notebooks, round about

1 J M BARRIE : MARGARET OGILVY (LONDON : 1897) p 51

2 J M BARRIE : THE ENTRANCING LIFE (LONDON : 1930) p 10

3 J M BARRIE : McCONNACHIE AND J M B (LONDON : 1938) p 248

1926, he makes the following remarks about his own gift for writing:

My case as I vaguely see it is that nothing influenced me - showed no aptitude - had a little box inside me that nothing opened until in later years it did of its own accord. Just a few trifles in it, but I made a game with them for many years, till tired of it before public did so - or about ~~the~~ the same time.<sup>1</sup>

But in the autumn of 1882, for want of a better alternative, Barrie returned to Edinburgh ostensibly to write a work, which was to be called "The Early Satirical Poetry of Great Britain (with some account of the manner in which it illustrates history)." He also envisaged a series to be entitled "The Scot Abroad", and another work "A Dowager in Love". We have no evidence that even one of those works was begun, as he was also contributing observations on current affairs to newspapers and had ideas for historical romances and farces. (In 1881, the year before he went to University, Barrie had written a three-volume novel. The publisher offered to print it for payment and said he considered Barrie "a clever lady" (sic).)

Barrie returned home to Kirriemuir in 1883 and spent most of his time writing but he really needed the test of seeing his own paragraphs in type. He felt that if he turned to teaching or anything else he would betray himself for good. His mother was bewildered and sceptical and it was the practical Jane Ann who came to his aid. In a newspaper she saw an advertisement which stated that the "Nottingham Journal" required a leader-writer. In spite of his lack of experience and the fact that he sent an old Edinburgh <sup>e</sup> Essay on "King Lear" as an example of his work, Barrie was given the post. (Testimonials from Masson and Alexander Whyte must have carried some weight.)

Barrie's stay in Nottingham, from January 1883 to the autumn of 1884, is discussed more fully in the chapter dealing with Romantic Heroines and Actresses, and his beginnings in journalism are reflected in When A Man's Single (1888), where Noble Simms sums up the journalistic instinct:

If you have the journalistic instinct, which includes a determination not to be beaten, as well as an aptitude for selecting the proper subjects, you will by and by find an editor who believes in you. Many men of genuine literary ability have failed on the Press because they did not have that instinct.<sup>2</sup>

On his arrival in Nottingham he was given no instructions or advice and there was no time for a trial run; but this desperate situation seemed to bring out the best in Barrie. He began by writing two columns a day, which meant an average of twelve hundred words every day. To this he shortly added book reviews and two weekly

1 DENIS MACKAIL : THE STORY OF J M B (LONDON : 1941) p 77

2 J M BARRIE : WHEN A MAN'S SINGLE (LONDON : 1938) p 145

special articles. His ability to assume a character was soon in evidence; his leading articles sounded mature and wise and, as Hippomenes on Mondays and A Modern Peripatetic on Thursdays, he wrote essays on anything that came into his head. The summer of 1883 also saw the publication of a serial entitled "Vagabond Students - Original Sketches of Life at a Northern University". But by the following summer Barrie felt that he was in a rut. His real ambition was to go to London but he was not yet financially ready for that step. Soon after his application for the post of assistant editor on the "Liverpool Post" had been turned down, the proprietors of the "Nottingham Journal" dispensed with Barrie's services as an economy measure, preferring to buy syndicated articles, and in the autumn of 1884 he returned home.

Barrie was now an experienced but unemployed journalist and he tried to earn a living as a free-lance in Fleet Street from Kirriemuir. He longed to go to London but money was the obstacle. There was the railway fare to be considered and the cost of keeping himself while waiting for articles to be accepted and paid for. Then, in November, 1884, while talking to his mother, Barrie was reminded of her stories of the Kirriemuir she had known as a child. The article which resulted was "An Auld Licht Community", which appeared in the "St James's Gazette" on November 17, 1884. Its editor, the eminent and influential Frederick Greenwood, returned a later article with the comment: "I liked that Scotch thing, any more of those?" This was just the encouragement Barrie needed to produce, with his mother's cooperation, further articles on the same theme, all of which were accepted, along with articles on other topics. By March 1885 Barrie was determined to go to London. Jane Ann encouraged the move but his mother was afraid for him and did not have the same faith in his capabilities. To settle the matter Barrie wrote to Greenwood, who advised him to stay at home, but Barrie disregarded Greenwood's advice and left for London.

The next ten years, until his mother's death in 1895, covered Barrie's transition from journalist to novelist to dramatist. Much of his success was due to the fact that he was the right man in the right place at the right time. London in the 1880s was a symbol of security and prosperity and from a literary viewpoint provided greater opportunity than has been offered since; and the great popularity of the theatre in the 1890s extended into the Edwardian era. But this is not to belittle Barrie's talents and hard work, which enabled him to survive as a free-lance journalist, contributing regularly to such newspapers as "The St James's Gazette", "The Edinburgh Evening Dispatch" and "The British Weekly", which was edited by William Robertson Nicoll. In 1887 Barrie published Better Dead, his first novel, at his own expense. It treated the idea of murder as a joke, with victims selected on the



grounds that their names were appearing too often in the Press. It lacked originality and, like several of Barrie's prose works, utilised material which had previously appeared in newspaper articles. Greenwood retired from the "St James's Gazette" in 1888, and this event ended Barrie's association with that newspaper, but another door opened for him when Henley became the editor of the "Scots Observer" in Edinburgh (and later of the "National Observer" in London, which published the work of the famous writers of the day, including Hardy and W B Yeats). In the same year Barrie gained recognition with the publication of Auld Licht Idylls and When A Man's Single.

In my opinion, the only works of Barrie's which are worth serious consideration as novels are Sentimental Tommy (1896) and Tommy and Grizel (1900). The prose works published before his mother's death are collections of previously published newspaper articles strung together, or novels which were previously serialised in newspapers and as a result are badly constructed and have wildly improbable plots. The exception is A Window in Thrums (1889), which was based on articles, but the realism of the principal characters took over and made it a novel. The collections of articles are Auld Licht Idylls (1888), An Edinburgh Eleven (1889) and My Lady Nicotine (1890), which are of biographical interest, as is the novel When A Man's Single (1888). The novels are enlivened by the natural dialogue, which indicates the dramatist Barrie was to become, but the only women in them who are realistically portrayed, with the exception of Leebie in A Window in Thrums,<sup>1</sup> are mothers based on Margaret Ogilvy.

~~I shall deal with the relationship between mothers and sons in the prose works which Barrie wrote before his mother's death, in chronological order.~~ In the last seven years of her life Margaret Ogilvy became increasingly frail and her physical and mental health both gave cause for constant anxiety. The tale of "Cree Queery and Mysy Drolly" in Auld Licht Idylls (1888) begins:

The children used to fling stones at Grinder Queery because he loved his mother.<sup>2</sup>

It describes filial devotion and the struggle Grinder Queery had to keep himself and his mother from the poorhouse. The only mention of the father is that Cree had learned his trade of knife and scissor-grinder from him. At first sight it may appear that Barrie piles on the agony purely for sentimental effect, as in the following passage. (When Cree has to leave his mother with Dan'l Wilkie's wife and finds employment in Tilliedrum, Mysy asks the narrator to help her to write to her son and gives him a piece of paper which Cree had drawn up years before):

1 Leebie is discussed in the chapter dealing with Spinsters and Independent Women

2 J M BARRIE : AULD LICHT IDYLLS (LONDON : 1889) / p 145

The paper consisted of phrases such as "Dear son Cree", "Loving mother", "I am taking my food weel", "Yesterday", "Blankets", "The peats is near done", "Mr Dishart" (the minister), "Come home Cree". The Grinder had left this paper with his mother, and she had written letters to him from it.<sup>1</sup>

There is no similarity between the physical hardships of Mysy Drolly's life and Margaret Ogilvy's circumstances, but in Margaret Ogilvy we find a passage in which Jane Ann prompts her mother to communicate with Barrie shortly before her death. It seems to me that, deep as his own love was for his mother, Barrie knew that in practical terms it was Jane Ann who sacrificed herself to her mother, and it is this sacrifice that Barrie portrays in Cree Queery's devotion:

On a day but three weeks before she died my father and I were called softly upstairs. My mother was sitting bolt upright, as she loved to sit, in her old chair by the window, with a manuscript <sup>[of one of Barrie's books]</sup> in her hands. ~~(the M-S of one of Barrie's books)~~. But she was looking about her without much understanding. 'Just to please him', my sister whispered, and then in a low, trembling voice my mother began to read. I looked at my sister. Tears of woe were stealing down her face. Soon the reading became very slow and stopped. After a pause, 'There was something you were to say to him', my sister reminded her. 'Luck', muttered a voice as from the dead, 'luck'. And then the old smile came running to her face like a lamplighter, and she said to me, 'I am ower far gone to read, but I'm thinking <sup>I am</sup> in it again.'<sup>2</sup>

The reader's response to this passage depends on his emotional makeup. I can vouch for the truth of it because it reflects my own emotional experience. Even then I was forced to question the apparent commercial exploitation of such depth of feeling, but after deliberation it seems to me that Barrie was only doing what came naturally to him, like Noble Simms, the journalist in When a Man's Single who said that he could have written an article on his mother's coffin. If Barrie had painted his mother's portrait we would not question his sincerity or his motives. Finally, compare these passages; the first describing Cree's love for his mother:

Every one said that Mysy's death would be a merciful release - every one but Cree.<sup>3</sup>

The second passage appears in Margaret Ogilvy, <sup>where Barrie says:</sup> ~~Barrie began the last chapter of Margaret Ogilvy by saying:~~

For years I had been trying to prepare myself for my mother's death, trying to foresee how she would die, seeing myself when she was dead. Even then I knew it was a vain thing I did, but I am sure there was no morbidness in it.<sup>4</sup>

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- 1 J M BARRIE : AULD LIGHT IDYLLS (LONDON : 1889) p 148
  - 2 J M BARRIE : MARGARET OGILVY (LONDON : 1897) p 182 pp 181+182
  - 3 J M BARRIE : AULD LIGHT IDYLLS (LONDON : 1889) p 147
  - 4 J M BARRIE : MARGARET OGILVY (LONDON : 1897) p 183

Here, whatever our emotional experience, we must respect the intensity of Barrie's love for his mother to appreciate the profound effect it had on him.

A Window in Thrums (1889) closely portrays Barrie's own family and is also discussed in relation to Barrie's sister, Jane Ann, in the <sup>chapter</sup> ~~section~~ dealing with Spinners. In this novel Barrie is Jamie, the son who is a barber in London, and as ~~As~~ Jess (his mother) says:

an' aye when he gangs back to London after his holidays he has a fear, he'll never see me again, but he's terrified to mention it, an' I juist ken by the wy he taks haud o' me, an' comes runnin' back to take haud o' me again. I ken fine what he's thinkin', but I daurna speak.<sup>1</sup>

In a household dominated by his wife and daughter, Hendry represents Barrie's father and, like David Barrie in Margaret Ogilvy, he is damned with faint praise:

there's no a better man than Hendry. There's them 'at's cleverer in the wys o' the world, but my man, Hendry McCumpha, never did naething in all his life 'at wasna <sup>weel</sup> ~~well~~ intended, an' though his words is common, it's to the Lord he looks. I canna think but what Hendry's pleasin' to God.<sup>2</sup>

Let us consider now the matter of Jess's possessiveness and jealousy with regard to her son. This is illustrated in the following passage, where she confides her fears to her daughter, Leebie:

But let Kitty, or any other maid, cast a glinting eye on Jamie, then Jess no longer smiled. If he returned the glance she sat silent in her chair till Leebie laughed away her fears. ...

"I canna help it, Leebie", said Jess. "Na, an' I canna bear to think o' Jamie bein' mairit. It would lay me low to lose my laddie. No yet, no yet."<sup>3</sup>

Matters come to a head when Jess finds a glove which belongs to a woman in London who makes him forget his family, and he only returns home after their deaths. Leebie recounts the incident to the narrator:

"Wha is she, Jamie?" my mother said.  
 "He turned awa his heid - so she telt me. 'It's a lassie in London', he said,  
 'I dinna ken her muckle.'  
 "Ye maun ken her weel", my mother persisted, 'to be carryin' about her glove; I'm dootin' yer gey fond o' her, Jamie?'  
 "Na", said Jamie, 'a'm no. There's <sup>na</sup> naebody I care for like yersel, mother.'  
 "Ye wouldna carry about onything o' mine, Jamie", my mother said; but he says,

1 J M BARRIE : A WINDOW IN THRUMS (LONDON : 1893) pp 49 & 50

2 J M BARRIE : A WINDOW IN THRUMS (LONDON : 1893) p 49

3 J M BARRIE : A WINDOW IN THRUMS (LONDON : 1893) pp 179-178+179

'Oh, mother, I carry about yer face wi' me aye; an' sometimes at nicht I kind o' greet to think o' ye'.<sup>1</sup>

How far are we justified in thinking that Barrie's mother too was jealous and possessive? We have no evidence that Barrie ever gave her cause for jealousy until his prospective bride visited Kirriemuir in 1894. Having overcome her initial prejudice against actresses, she seems to have been happy about her son's marriage in 1894 and it was fortunate for Barrie that he had his wife to turn to after the deaths of his mother and sister, Jane Ann, in the following year. An intense love for a parent does not necessarily preclude a fulfilling marital relationship and we cannot blame Margaret Ogilvy for actively standing in the way of her son's happiness. She was certainly possessive, in the sense that she needed flattery and took pride in the fact that he could not keep her out of his books. It was the shrewd Jane Ann who commented that it was about time that he did. I shall attempt to analyse the failure of Barrie's marriage, as far as is possible, in the chapter dealing with Wives. At this point I would say that in later life the relationship with a woman in which Barrie appears to have been most comfortable is that of the worshipper of marriage and motherhood, without the involvement of being husband and father. In that respect he remained the boy he tells us of in Margaret Ogilvy:

We had read somewhere that a novelist is better equipped than most of his trade if he knows himself and one woman, and my mother said, 'You know yourself, for everybody must know himself', (there never was a woman who knew less about herself than she), and she would add dolefully, 'But I doubt I'm the only woman you know well'.

'Then I must make you my heroine', I said lightly.

'A gey auld-farrant-like heroine!' she said, and we both laughed at the notion - so little did we read the future.<sup>2</sup>

The last novel Barrie published in his mother's lifetime was The Little Minister in 1891, the year in which he began his career as a dramatist. His first play, written in collaboration with Marriott Watson, was Richard Savage. Just as Barrie had financed the publication of his first novel, he and Marriott Watson paid for a special afternoon performance of their play on April 16, 1891. In spite of its failure, Barrie was theatre-struck and the same year saw the success of his parody, Ibsen's Ghost. In 1892 he began making notes for his novel Sentimental Tommy and his play, the popular Walker, London, was produced, followed by The Professor's Love Story in 1894, and the stage version of The Little Minister in 1897. The only convincing element in the novel, The Little Minister, is the relationship between the

1 J M BARRIE : A WINDOW IN THRUMS (LONDON : 1893) p 186

2 J M BARRIE : MARGARET OGILVY (LONDON : 1897) p 60 pp 59+60



Auld Licht minister, Gavin Dishart, and his mother, Margaret. The little minister's highly improbable adventures with the 'gypsy', Babbie, are discussed in the chapter dealing with Romantic Heroines and Actresses.

The minister's mother has had two husbands, neither of whom is realistic, as each represents an extreme, but their types are found elsewhere in Barrie's work. The first, Adam Dishart, was a sailor turned fisherman, the masterful type whom Barrie thinks women admire, before he betrays them. The second, Gavin's father, is the "ingle-nook" kind of man, more like Barrie himself, who in lonely middle age still has his romantic illusions about women and dreams of a lost love. Gavin's father sums up both types here:

There was something about him (Adam Dishart) that all women seemed to find lovable, a dash that made them send him away and then well-nigh run after him. At any rate, I could have got her (Margaret) after her mother's death if I had been half a man. But I went back to Aberdeen to write a poem about her, and while I was at it Adam married her.<sup>1</sup>

After three months of marriage Adam Dishart left his wife and disappeared for six years. In his absence she married Gavin Ogilvy (becoming Margaret Ogilvy) and had his son. When Adam returned he claimed his wife and the child, and Gavin Ogilvy went away to become eventually a lonely school-master in Glen Quharity near Thrums, the place to which the minister brought his mother.

In a letter to Arthur Quiller-Couch written on November 6, 1899, Barrie congratulates him on his portrayal of the boy and his parents in his book The Ship of Stars, and makes this point:

I could have had a shot at the mother, but the father is altogether beyond me, men have seldom done the father well.<sup>2</sup>

I think this is an excuse for Barrie's inability to portray fathers convincingly. It seems to me that his own father was so overshadowed by his wife, and Barrie so enamoured of his mother, that he took his father for granted and never really got to know him. When Gavin Ogilvy tells the little minister that he is his father, Barrie adds that they had no real feeling for each other as father and son, only an exchange of words that they had found too late. It is only in his later war plays that Barrie tackles the problem of communication between father and son.<sup>3</sup>

Margaret Ogilvy put her children before her husband, and the most important man in Margaret Dishart's life was her son:

These two were as one far more than most married people, and, just as Gavin in

1 J M BARRIE : THE LITTLE MINISTER (LONDON : 1905) p 300

2 J M BARRIE : LETTERS OF J M BARRIE (ed VIOLA MEYNELL) (LONDON : 1942) p 16

3 This matter is discussed in the chapter dealing with Wives.

his childhood reflected his mother, she now reflected him.<sup>1</sup>

The rapport between Barrie and his mother is echoed here, and in the following conversation:

"Ah, Gavin, I'm thinking, I'm the reason you pay so little regard to women's faces. It's no natural".

"You've spoilt me, you see, mother, for ever caring for another woman. I would compare her to you, and then where would she be?"

"Sometime", Margaret said, "you'll think differently".

"Never", answered Gavin, with a violence that ended the conversation.<sup>2</sup>

In the novel Margaret is proved right and Gavin's love for <sup>Babbie</sup>~~Bessie~~ is stronger than his devotion to his mother - and at one point even threatens his calling as the Auld Licht minister. Nor are we left to assume that Gavin and <sup>Babbie</sup>~~Bessie~~ live happily ever after, as we hear of them again in Sentimental Tommy, where their schoolboy son, Gavin, is a friend of Tommy. But Barrie's own life did not follow the same course. He married Mary Ansell in 1894, his mother died in 1895, and in 1898 he transferred his worship of motherhood to Sylvia Llewelyn Davies. Sylvia was later to describe her marriage as a true love match, and when Barrie first met her, on New Year's Eve, 1897, she was the mother of three sons. For the next thirteen years, until her death in 1910, she was to be the most important woman in Barrie's life. But before discussing these events in detail, I shall deal with the remaining principal mothers in Barrie's works. It is interesting to observe how closely they reflect the period of transition in Barrie's emotional life.

Jean Sandys, mother of Tommy, in Sentimental Tommy (1896), which Barrie had been planning since 1892, owes something to Margaret Ogilvy. Like Margaret Dishart and the Painted Lady, she is the victim of a masterful man, for whom she left her first love Aaron Latta, in her native Thrums. The novel opens in London shortly before the birth of Tommy's sister, Elspeth, six months after her father's death. Just before her own death Jean sends for Aaron Latta and he takes her children back to Thrums, where he brings them up. Jean resembles Barrie himself in that her life was in London but her roots were in Thrums. He describes her as:

an unhappy woman, foolish, not very lovable, flung like a stone out of the red quarry upon a land where it cannot grip, and tearing her heart for <sup>the</sup> sight of ~~a land~~ <sup>the home</sup> she shall see no more.<sup>3</sup>

This allusion to the red quarry is reminiscent of Barrie's description in Margaret Ogilvy of his grandfather, the stonemason, his mother's father, whom he had never met:

1 J M BARRIE : THE LITTLE MINISTER (LONDON : 1905) p 11

2 J M BARRIE : THE LITTLE MINISTER (LONDON : 1905) pp 82 & 83

3 J M BARRIE : SENTIMENTAL TOMMY (LONDON : 1896) p 10

On the surface he is as hard as the stone on which he chiselled, and his face is dyed red by its dust, he is rounded in the shoulders and a 'hoast' hunts him ever; sooner or later that cough must carry him off, but until then it shall not keep him from the quarry, nor shall his chapped hands, as long as they can grasp the mell.<sup>1</sup>

Jean Sandys resembles Margaret Ogilvy in her pride and concern with appearances. Though living in poverty, she writes letters to Thrums in which she boasts of her prosperity, and she never regretted that when she and her husband left Thrums she gave the driver their last two pounds to make an impression. Like Barrie's mother she entertains her children with stories of her youth, so that they are as familiar with landmarks like the Den and the Cuttle Well as if they had lived in Thrums themselves. I think too that she shows the same emotional self-indulgence in confiding her tragic history to a sensitive child as Margaret Ogilvy did at the time of David's death. But Jean's confidences are meant as a warning to Tommy not to be a masterful man like his father.

Fine I kent he was a brute, and yet I couldna help admiring him for looking so magerful (masterful) ... You've heard me crying to Aaron in my sleep, but it wasna for him I cried, it was for his fireside.<sup>2</sup>

However, Jean's essence is summed up thus:

Mind that whatever I have been, I was aye fond o' my bairns, and slaved for them till I dropped.<sup>3</sup>

The Little White Bird (1902) has as its underlying theme the glorification of motherhood and I shall look at it more closely in examining the failure of Barrie's marriage. At this point I just want to indicate how it shows the conflict of Barrie's allegiances. Its heroine, the little nursery-governess who becomes the mother of David, is Mary A---, like Barrie's wife, the childless Mary Ansell, but David is based on Sylvia Llewelyn Davies's son George, and she is the mother who is glorified. There is no trace of Margaret Ogilvy here; Barrie's mother and his wife have both been superseded. It constantly amazes me how Barrie reveals so much of his personal life in this way; the shift of allegiance was first marked in Tommy and Grizel (1900), where he actually began by using his wife as a model for Grizel and then switched to Sylvia. <sup>The</sup> This passage which describes the adult Grizel's beauty shows a remarkable likeness to <sup>descriptions of</sup> Sylvia Llewelyn Davies:

the sun made her merry, but she looked more noble when it had set, then her pallor shone with a soft radiant light, as though the mystery and sadness and

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1 J M BARRIE : MARGARET OGILVY (LONDON : 1897) p-25, pp 25+26  
 2 J M BARRIE : SENTIMENTAL TOMMY (LONDON : 1896) p-113, pp 111+113  
 3 J M BARRIE : SENTIMENTAL TOMMY (LONDON : 1896) p 118

serenity of the moon were in it. ... to kiss Grizel on her crooked smile would have been to kiss the whole of her at once.<sup>1</sup>

By 1904 Mrs Darling in Peter Pan, with her "sweet mocking mouth" and her dress-making talents - her evening dress "made out of nothing and other people's mistakes" - is unalloyed ~~Syliva~~<sup>Sylvia</sup> Llewelyn Davies. To be fair to Sylvia Llewelyn Davies, she is unrealistically portrayed here by Barrie at his sentimental worst:

She does not often go out to dinner, preferring when the children are in bed to sit beside them tidying up their minds, just as if they were drawers.<sup>2</sup>

She verges on sainthood with regard to her children:

Dear night-lights that protect my sleeping babes, burn clear and steadfast tonight,<sup>3</sup>

and like most of the wives discussed in the next section she humours her husband as if he were a child. In The Little White Bird Barrie dismisses Mary A--'s husband, who is anxiously awaiting the birth of his child, thus:

Poor boy, his wife has quite forgotten him and his trumpery love.<sup>4</sup>

Mr Darling is made to look a fool, ending up in the dog's kennel. There is no doubt that children might find the situation amusing, and Peter Pan was written for their entertainment, but I still think that the following passage in the stage directions describing Mr Darling has a bitter note which stems from Barrie's frustrated paternity:

He is really a good man as breadwinners go, ... In the city where he sits on a stool all day, as fixed as a postage stamp, he is so like all the others on stools that you can recognise him not by his face but by his stool, but at home the way to gratify him is to say that he has a distinct personality.<sup>5</sup>

In concluding this section on mothers and my discussion of what Barrie regarded as the supremely important relationship, that of mother and child, it makes a refreshing change to turn to his play The Old Lady Shows Her Medals (1917). The heroine, Mrs Dowey, is not based on Margaret Ogilvy or Sylvia Llewelyn Davies; she is not married - 'Mrs' being a title she has assumed to give herself status; and she is only a mother by adoption. She was inspired by Barrie's landlady in Edinburgh during his student days, Mrs Edwards, to whom he refers in the speech he made to mark being given the Freedom of Edinburgh in 1929:

I would rather have had her here today than almost anyone I can think of, ... She kept lodgings - fortunately for me. ... In after years, when I used to go

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- 1 J M BARRIE : TOMMY AND GRIZEL (LONDON : 1938) pp 43 & 44
  - 2 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 19
  - 3 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 28
  - 4 J M BARRIE : THE LITTLE WHITE BIRD (LONDON : 1938) p 35
  - 5 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 21



and see her, she would shake a playful fist at me and say:- "<sup>yer</sup> ~~yer~~ play wis here, being acted by the play-actors, and I was fain to go, but oh Mr Barrie, I couldna daur!"<sup>1</sup>

Mrs Dowey is a hard-working old charlady who has invented a son, Kenneth, for herself to compete with the other charladies who despise women who "have no man-party at the wars."<sup>2</sup> Mrs Dowey outdoes the others in her praise of Kenneth, who begins his letters "Dearest mother", has hairy legs and is in the Black Watch. Mr Willings, the minister, comes to tell Mrs Dowey that he has met her son at the Church Army quarters. Kenneth, "a great rough chunk of Scotland", had just arrived in London and was bewildered by it. He thought the minister was mad but agreed to meet his "mother". At first he jeers at her and the blank sheets of paper which she calls his letters but he gradually unbends and admits that he has no family of his own, and takes her on probation. Originally he had regarded her as a joke to be shared with his mates but eventually he knows that he will never do that. Before he leaves for action Kenneth adopts Mrs Dowey as his mother and tells her:

Old lady, you are what Blighty means to me now.<sup>3</sup>

We have a last glimpse of Mrs Dowey a month or two after Kenneth's death in action:

It is early morning, and she is having a last look at her medals before setting off on the daily round. They are in a drawer, with the scarf covering them, and on the scarf a piece of lavender.<sup>4</sup>

She cradles her black frock as Margaret Ogilvy cradled her children's christening robe on her death-bed, but though she kisses Kenneth's letters she does not cry over them. This play is in my opinion the happiest celebration in Barrie's works of that relationship in which he felt most comfortable, that of mother and son.

Mrs Dowey, in spite of having no children of her own, has all the feelings of a natural mother and expresses them in relation to Kenneth. But being a mother only by adoption she does not presume on her position nor does she take anything for granted. We see how she boasts of Kenneth to her friends but in his presence she is careful not to do or say anything which might embarrass him. Unlike Margaret Ogilvy, she is not possessive, nor does she resort to emotional blackmail. What is most admirable about her is that after Kenneth's death she does not succumb to self-pity as Margaret Ogilvy did after David's death. She is self-reliant and treasures the memory of the happiness she had with Kenneth while carrying on bravely with her own life. Kenneth's behaviour is manlier and more natural than that of Gavin

- 1 J M BARRIE : McCONNACHIE AND J M B (LONDON : 1938) ~~p-181~~ pp. 180 + 181  
 2 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 804  
 3 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 825  
 4 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) ~~p-826~~ pp. 825 + 826

Dishart and Jamie McQumpha, who have been dominated by their mothers for too long and as a result find it difficult to escape from their clutches.

The point at which Kenneth asks Mrs Dowey to be his mother is sentimental, and the girlish pleasure she shows when he flatters her is reminiscent of Margaret Ogilvy:

DOWEY : You must have been a bonny thing when you were young.

MRS DOWEY : Away with you!

DOWEY : That scarf sets you fine.

MRS DOWEY : Blue was always my colour.<sup>1</sup>

But on the whole the character of Kenneth as a dour, undemonstrative Scot is well handled:

Don't <sup>you</sup> be thinking, missis, for one minute that you have got me.<sup>2</sup>

His caution is matched by Mrs Dowey's: she is careful not to frighten him off by revealing the depth of her feelings, so that he is touched by her concern for him and reaches the point where, with typical canniness, he is ready to take her first on probation, before finally admitting:

Old lady you are what Blighty means to me now.<sup>3</sup>

Barrie's description of Mrs Dowey's relationship with Kenneth illustrates mutual affection and each respects the other as an individual. This play is largely free of the sentimental glorification of mothers exemplified ~~in~~ <sup>by</sup> Mrs Darling in Peter Pan and Mary A-- in The Little White Bird, and has none of the claustrophobic atmosphere of those relationships where mothers are based on Margaret Ogilvy. But, in conclusion, let us remember that Barrie's temperament played a large part in the intense relationship he had with his mother and she is not entirely to blame for the effect he had on her. In this play we see how Barrie has come to terms with his feelings for his mother and his description of the relationship between Mrs Dowey and Kenneth shows a greater maturity.

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1 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 825  
 2 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 814  
 3 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 825

CHAPTER 2 : ROMANTIC HEROINES AND ACTRESSES

The first romantic heroine whom Barrie encountered was the little water-cress seller who featured in the monthly magazine, "Sunshine", which he read as a child. Barrie says of her:

This romantic little creature took such hold of my imagination that I cannot eat water-cress even now without emotion.<sup>1</sup>

By the time he ~~has written~~ <sup>wrote</sup> The Little White Bird (1902) she had become "the unattainable she", the ideal woman to whom the narrator, a sentimental, whimsical bachelor - in my opinion the real Barrie - must remain true:

she was the child of all the brave and wistful imaginings of men.... I had won her love but I could not keep it. ... It was as if, unknowing, I had strayed outside the magic circle ... The current was broken, ... The failure was mine alone, but I think I should not have been so altered by it ~~if I had~~ <sup>I</sup> known what was the defect in me through which I ~~never~~ let her love escape. ... I saw her again, years afterwards, when she was a married woman playing with her children. ... She picked herself up in the old ~~leisurely~~ <sup>ei</sup> manner, lazily active, and looked around her benignantly, like a cow: our dear wild one safely tethered at last with a rope of children.<sup>2</sup>

I think this strange passage gives a good indication of Barrie's worship of pretty young women and mothers but "the defect" in him made it impossible for him to make the necessary connection between the two. Most people pass through<sup>f</sup> the adolescent phase of being 'in love' with someone they do not really know; then they marry someone whom they love and spend their lives getting to know them and having children. But after the failure of his marriage Barrie reverted to admiration of pretty young women and/or mothers without having any threatening intimate contact with them. Barrie's tendency is to make romantic heroines of women. We have seen this in his idealisation of his mother<sup>3</sup> and we shall see it in his relationship with two other women, Sylvia Llewelyn Davies<sup>4</sup> and Lady Cynthia Asquith<sup>5</sup>, who were to become central figures in his life.

Another member of his own family of whom Barrie made a romantic heroine was his sister Maggie, three years his junior. According to other accounts, Maggie was a very ordinary ~~f~~ and-to some - a rather irritating woman, but Barrie treated her with reverence throughout her adult life. Barrie had always been fond and protective of his little sister and playmate. In 1885 she stayed with him, on one of several visits to London; she told Barrie that if she had had the time and the talent she would have liked to be a writer herself and he was touched by her hero worship of him. The tragedy which occurred later strengthened the bond between them. In 1891

1 J M BARRIE : MARGARET OGILVY (LONDON : 1897) p 48

2 J M BARRIE : THE LITTLE WHITE BIRD (LONDON : 1938) p-85 pp. 80-85

3 In the chapter dealing with Mothers

4 In the chapter dealing with Wives

5 In the chapter dealing with Ladies of Title

Maggie became engaged to the Rev James Winter and as a wedding present Barrie gave him a horse so that he could more easily visit his outlying parishioners in Bower, in Caithness. On May 9 Barrie received a telegram stating that James Winter had been thrown from his horse and killed only weeks before his wedding. Barrie was stunned by the news and blamed himself for the tragedy. He resolved to devote his life to Maggie and she became the model for Elspeth in the 'Tommy' novels, but in 1893 Maggie married William Winter, her dead fiancé's brother, another fine man, <sup>although</sup> but he was never allowed to forget he was a substitute.

The Winters and their son were annual guests at Stanway<sup>1</sup> when Barrie acted as host there. Cynthia Asquith describes them thus:

(Maggie) had to some extent, I believe, been the original of Elspeth in Sentimental Tommy, and had a distinct look, especially in her very fine eyes, of her brother, whom she loved to idolatry. ... (William Winter) a transparently good, touchingly selfless man of a charming simplicity.<sup>2</sup>

Shortly before she married Barrie, Mary Ansell met Maggie but did not like her, regarding her as rather possessive of her brother, but she was careful not to antagonise her. Barrie was notoriously unmusical and it is strong proof of his love for Maggie that he hired a piano when she stayed with him in London, tolerated her musical circles at Stanway and even provided a bed-piano for her deathbed. In a letter to Lady Irvine written on 4 February 1936, shortly before Maggie's death, Barrie speaks of his affection for his sister:

My sister, who is the last of us except myself, was so much to me that you can't know me well without having known her.<sup>3</sup>

In The Greenwood Hat (1930) Barrie remembers the agonies he suffered as a young man who knew he was not attractive to young ladies:

I was in the Scotch express on my way to London, and I think it was at Carlisle that five of them boarded my compartment, all husband-high. When their packages had been disposed of and they were comfortably settled in their seats they turned their eyes on me and gave their verdict in the deaf-and-dumb alphabet, ... 'Quite harmless'.

It became his habit to get into corners:

In time the jades put this down to a shrinking modesty, but that was a mistake; it was all owing to a profound dejection about his want of allure. ... What is such a man to do with himself except plod on writing weary novels and plays?<sup>4</sup>

1 Stanway is discussed in the chapter dealing with Ladies of Title

2 CYNTHIA ASQUITH : PORTRAIT OF BARRIE (LONDON : 1954) p 151

3 J M BARRIE : LETTERS OF J M BARRIE (ed VIOLA MEYNELL) (LONDON : 1942) p 270

4 J M BARRIE : THE GREENWOOD HAT (LONDON : 1937) pp 125-137



In 1930, Barrie, a venerable figure in his old age, can afford to mock his younger self, but the complex still persists.

The earliest attempts Barrie made to get in touch with eligible young women occurred between 1883 and 1884, when he was a journalist in Nottingham. His friend Hibbert, sub-editor on the "Nottingham Journal," described Barrie at the age of twenty-three as:

the most shy, the most painfully sensitive creature, with an exquisite delicacy in regard to women.<sup>1</sup>

This description tallies with Barrie's picture of Tommy in Tommy and Grizel, who represents himself. The writer Pym and his friends made coarse jokes about a barmaid called Dolly and recommended her as "a fit instructress" for Tommy:

for a time he writhed in silence, then burst upon them indignantly for this unmanly smirching of a woman's character.<sup>2</sup>

However, he visits Dolly in the bar because the others had hinted "dark things" of her and he weaves romances about her:

some of them of too lively a character, and others so noble and sad and beautiful that the tears came to his eyes.<sup>3</sup>

Those impressions of Barrie are reinforced by jottings in his own notebooks in relation to characters in projected works:

- Bashful with women ... He always wanted to kiss pretty girls tho' manner made him stiff with them - ... missed flirting days of boyhood ~~and~~ <sup>&</sup> they came later when he knew the world ... - Had he even a genuine deep feeling that wasn't merely sentiment? ... - Perhaps the curse of his life that he never had a woman.<sup>4</sup>

The object of Barrie's affections in 1883 was the actress Minnie Palmer, who was appearing at the local theatre. He <sup>wrote</sup> made a one-act farce, Caught Napping, and took it round to her dressing-room, but when he met her he could hardly speak and she rejected Barrie and his play. Mackail is the only one of my sources who refers to the next incident and the actress involved is unnamed. This actress also played in Nottingham and generously accepted Caught Napping but did not attempt to force it on her management. However, she did accompany Barrie on a drive in a hired victoria, and although nothing else happened, except in Barrie's mind, he continued to write sentimental letters to her for a number of years.

The pattern is set for Barrie's later relationships. Here we have the ingredients of his capacity to make romantic heroines of women: his reserve, his delicacy,

1 JANET DUNBAR : J M BARRIE, THE MAN BEHIND THE IMAGE (LONDON : 1970) p 52

2 J M BARRIE : TOMMY AND GRIZEL (LONDON : 1938) p 23

3 J M BARRIE : TOMMY AND GRIZEL (LONDON : 1938) p 24

4 ANDREW BIRKIN : J M BARRIE AND THE LOST BOYS (LONDON : 1980) pp 33 & 34



his sexual fears and his inability to express genuine deep feeling with regard to women, which resulted in his writing plays for attractive actresses and his sentimental correspondence with happily married women.

The first group of romantic heroines in Barrie's works are distinguished by what he calls their "purity," which I have interpreted as their lack of worldly experience; love is their main concern and their illusions about it are out of touch with reality. The ethereal Columbine in Pantaloon (1905) is a symbolic example. She does not speak but expresses herself in her dancing, which Barrie describes as "the loveliest of all languages, and as soft as the fall of snow".<sup>1</sup> She is saved from marriage to the ~~Clam~~<sup>Crown</sup> by Harlequin, who carries her out by the window, and several years later she returns with a little grandson to gladden the heart of her father, Pantaloon, who used to call her his "little Fairy". Elspeth Sandys, Tommy's sister, in Sentimental Tommy (1896) and Tommy and Grizel (1900), has been mentioned earlier in this chapter and will be discussed elsewhere.<sup>2</sup> She tells Tommy (alias Barrie) who has known "noble thoughts" come to him when he was listening to a brass band:

"When I see you so fond of me, and taking such care of me, I am ashamed. You think me so much better than I am. You consider me so pure and good, while I know that I am often mean and even <sup>a</sup> have wicked thoughts."<sup>3</sup>

It is important to bear this passage in mind when considering Barrie's ambivalent attitude to the remaining romantic heroines in this group. It is a mixture of idealisation and mockery. Those heroines, in chronological order, are Mary Abinger and her friend Nell Meredith in When a Man's Single (1888), Amy Grey and her friend Ginevra in Alice-Sit-by-the-Fire (1905) and Joanna Trout in Dear Brutus (1917).

Barrie mocked the ladies of title described in popular fiction and then proceeded to create Lady Pippinworth in their likeness.<sup>4</sup> In When a Man's Single he mocks the romantic novel, The Scorn of Scorns, written by Mary Abinger, but the character of Mary Abinger is equally unrealistic. When Rob Angus, a hitherto sensible man, reads Mary's novel,

It seemed to him that the soul of a pure-minded girl had been laid bare to him,<sup>5</sup>

and his reason deserts him. But before Rob and Mary finally get together Mary has a splendid moment with Sir Clement Downton, the villain of the piece:

The baronet pushed the door close and turned to her passionately, a film over his eyes and his hands outstretched.

'Mary', he cried 'is there no hope for me?'

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- 1 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 600
  - 2 Elspeth is discussed in relation to Grizel in the chapter dealing with Spinsters and Independent Women.
  - 3 J M BARRIE : TOMMY AND GRIZEL (LONDON : 1938) p 173
  - 4 Lady Pippinworth is discussed in the chapter dealing with Ladies of Title.
  - 5 J M BARRIE : WHEN A MAN'S SINGLE (LONDON : 1938) p 90

'No', said Mary, opening the door for herself, and passing out.<sup>1</sup>

Barrie apparently would have us believe in the real and lasting nature of the love which Rob and Mary have for each other, but at the same time Dick Abinger expresses his doubts about his forthcoming marriage to Nell Meredith, who is cast in the same mould as her friend, Mary Abinger:

Whatever I say to Nell is taken to mean the exact reverse of what I do mean; she reads my writings upside down, as one might say; she cries if I speak to her of anything more serious than flowers and waltzes, but she thinks me divine when I treat her like an infant.<sup>2</sup>

At this point I can only echo Blake's comment:

You never know where you are with Barrie.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>Barrie</sup> Barrie introduces Amy in Alice-Sit-by-the-Fire by mentioning her diary:

we cannot be sure that our hands are clean enough to turn the pages of a young girl's thoughts.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>This</sup> immediately establishing her as a romantic heroine, but a note of <sup>mockery</sup> ~~mocking~~ is introduced in the description of her room:

a gifted woman's touch is everywhere; if you are not hand-sewn you are almost certainly hand-painted, but incompletely, for Amy in her pursuit of the arts has often to drop one in order to keep pace with another.<sup>5</sup>

Amy and her friend Ginevra have just left school and have sworn eternal mutual devotion, but their ideas of life are shaped by the fact that they have been to the theatre "eight times in seventeen years". As Amy says to Ginevra:

Until Monday, dear, when we went to our first real play we didn't know what life is.<sup>6</sup>

Barrie uses Amy (and Ginevra) to indulge in a little gentle satire at the expense of contemporary theatrical devices and Amy's precocity in attempting to educate her mother, <sup>however</sup> but the plot is very feeble and the original production of the play was only redeemed by Ellen Terry in the part of Amy's mother, Alice. Barrie does not attempt to make Amy and Ginevra anything but token romantic heroines whose illusions about life are seen as a basis for comedy.

In Dear Brutus, Barrie describes Joanna Trout thus:

Joanna Trout, who, when her affections are not engaged, has a merry face and figure, but can dismiss them both at the important moment, which is at the word

- 1 J M BARRIE : WHEN A MAN'S SINGLE (LONDON : 1938) pp 117 & 118
- 2 J M BARRIE : WHEN A MAN'S SINGLE (LONDON : 1938) pp 256 & 257
- 3 GEORGE BLAKE : BARRIE AND THE KILLYARD SCHOOL (LONDON : 1951) p 73
- 4 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 241
- 5 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 242
- 6 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 244

'love'. Then Joanna quivers, her sense of humour ceases to beat and the dullest man may go ahead.<sup>1</sup>

As a character she is never fully developed but acts as a foil <sup>to</sup> Purdie, whose wife does not understand him, and together they are "the great strong-hearted man and his natural mate in the grip of the master passions." However, after their return from the wood Purdie has realised that he is just a philanderer but for some people there may be a second chance. Joanna appears to have learned her lesson:

I feel that there is hope in that as well as a warning. Perhaps the wood may prove to have been useful after all.<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps the most romantic of all Barrie's heroines, in the sense that she is mysterious and difficult to pin down, is Leonora in the one-act play, Seven Women (1917). Mr and Mrs Tovey invite the bachelor Captain Rattray, an old school-friend of Mr Tovey, to dinner. They tell him that they have also invited seven women. The joke is that the characteristics of the seven women who have been described to Captain Rattray are combined in one woman, Leonora. She is the woman who sometimes has no sense of humour and sometimes almost too much. When occasion demands she is a politician, or a 'Very woman', the essence of helpless femininity. She is also a mother, a coquette and a murderess. <sup>†</sup> This last is not to be taken literally; she felt like murdering a man who would not close a train window when her little girl had a cold. This simple plot is dramatically effective and the play ends neatly with Captain Rattray being glad to hear that "the unspeakable darling",<sup>3</sup> Leonora, is a widow.

The heroine of A Kiss for Cinderella (1916) is a mixture of various romantic heroines of fiction and the result is unsuccessful. When the play opens she is "a poor little neglected waif," but her voice and manner have a certain refinement "caused by the reading of fairy tales and the thinking of noble thoughts." As "the Penny Friend", she dispenses help and advice, and mothers war orphans.<sup>4</sup> This combination of common sense and imagination can be traced back through Barrie's own heroines like Wendy in Peter Pan (1904), Irene in The Little White Bird (1902) and Grizel in Sentimental Tommy (1896) and Tommy and Grizel (1900), to Margaret Ogilvy. The second act of the play consists of the heroine's romantic fantasy and she stars in her own version of Cinderella, with original touches like the godmother who appears in Red Cross Nurse's uniform. She does not accept Prince-Hard-to-Please's proposal until she learns that he has taken the goodness test and the thermometer has registered 99. However, in Act III there is a return to reality and we find Cinderella, now called Jane, dying in hospital after being found starved of food and

1 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 465

2 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 514

3 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 636

4 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 402 pp. 398, 402 + 413

affection and suffering from exposure. Geduld points out Barrie's debt here to Hans Andersen's The Little Match Girl, who sees fantasies in the flames when she strikes her matches. Barrie has got his wires crossed here and is influenced by conflicting heroines of romantic fiction, or as Geduld puts it:

Act III ... erred in destroying the illusion of pantomime for children who delight in the spectacle of a scullery maid transformed into a princess, but are unlikely to be impressed with the spectacle of <sup>a</sup>Cinderella turning into a Little Nell.<sup>1</sup>

Wives who mother their husbands have been discussed elsewhere<sup>2</sup> and now we come to the two romantic heroines whose husbands treat them as if they were children. They are Alice Grey in Alice-Sit-by-the-Fire (1905) and Mary Rose, heroine of Mary Rose (1920). Like Mrs Page in Rosalind and Phoebe Throssel in Quality Street, Alice experiences nostalgia for her lost youth and by the end of the play she has come to realise that she has outgrown her girlhood. Alice is forty and her husband is much older. She has been in India, separated from her children for five years. Her seventeen-year-old daughter, Amy, is under the mistaken impression that:

if we know ourselves well, we know our parents also.<sup>3</sup>

Alice is very immature in expecting her children to love her at once. She loses her temper with her son, is afraid of being too demonstrative with her daughter, and even the baby does not take to her immediately. However, she gains her daughter's friendship by humouring her fantasies:

she thinks that she has saved me, and it makes her so happy,<sup>4</sup>

and wins over her son by letting him think he has protected her from her bullying husband. Colonel Grey is moved almost to tears at the thought of Alice growing up and not being his little girl any more, when Alice, with emotional blackmail worthy of Margaret Ogilvy at her most devious, says of her daughter:

My girl and I are like the little figures in the weather-house; when Amy comes out, Alice goes in.<sup>5</sup>

Alice Grey as a romantic heroine is the sort of woman no woman can stand but whom a sentimental, whimsical, older husband might just conceivably indulge.

Mary Rose also behaves like a little girl, and her husband treats her as one, but in terms of theme, plot and characterisation Mary Rose is vastly superior to Alice-Sit-by-the-Fire. Barrie introduces Mary Rose thus:

There is nothing splendid about Mary Rose, never can she become one of those

1 HARRY M GEDULD : JAMES BARRIE (NEW YORK : 1971) p 142

2 In the chapter dealing with Wives

3 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 249

4 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 304

5 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 307



secret women so much less innocent than she, yet perhaps so much sweeter in the kernel, who are the bane or glory, or the bane and glory, of greater lovers than she could ever understand. She is just a rare and lovely flower, far less fitted than those others for the tragic rôle.<sup>1</sup>

A further note of unease is introduced when Mr and Mrs Morland hint at something odd in connection with their daughter and Barrie describes Mary Rose's elusive quality:

the happiness and glee of which she is almost overfull know of another attribute <sup>of her</sup> that never plays with them.<sup>2</sup>

Those lines are reminiscent of the supernatural element in Dear Brutus when Margaret, his dream daughter, tells the artist, Dearth:

Things that are too beautiful can't last. ...To be very gay, ... is so near to being very sad.<sup>3</sup>

Her parents warn Simon, when he wants to marry Mary Rose, that she is "young for her age" but he tells them that he regards her innocence as "a holy thing". Simon, although little more than a boy himself, promises Mary Rose that he will let her play after their marriage, and four years later he tolerates her putting rowan berries in her hair, and talking to the trees on her island in an embarrassingly sentimental way. But when Mary Rose begins to speak of kissing Simon for the last time the atmosphere changes, and when the "call" comes to Mary Rose she becomes a romantic heroine, in the sense that what she experiences is of a strange and moving nature, and Barrie has captured the spirit of James Hogg's Kilmeny and the vision of two worlds. Like Peter Pan, Mary Rose represents youth and timelessness.

When she returns after twenty-five years her reunion with her family is a poignant one. They have changed while she has not. But the fact that she is reunited with her lost son, now grown to manhood, and has a cosy chat while seated on his knee, tends to mar the effect which Barrie created in describing her mysterious disappearance.

On June 21, 1900, Barrie <sup>wrote</sup> ~~is writing~~ to Sylvia Llewelyn Davies to congratulate her on the birth of her fourth son, Michael, <sup>16</sup> on June 21:

I don't see how we could have expected him to be a girl, you are so good at boys, and this you know is the age of specialists. And you were very very nearly being a boy yourself.<sup>4</sup>

Sylvia's 'boyish' qualities were her spirited, fun-loving nature, and her love of adventure which was curbed by the more decorous Arthur and her domestic responsibilities.

- 1 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 544
- 2 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 544
- 3 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 498
- 4 ANDREW BIRKIN : J M BARRIE AND THE LOST BOYS (LONDON : 1980) p 77



responsibilities. Two romantic heroines in Barrie's works who display those qualities are <sup>Babbie</sup> ~~Robbie~~ in The Little Minister (1891) and Lady Mary in The Admirable Crichton (1902). Those two characters also represent a life of freedom outside established society. When the little minister first sees <sup>Babbie</sup> ~~Robbie~~ singing and dancing in the wood, with a twig of rowan berries in her hair, he thinks she is an instrument of the devil. Similarly, Crichton describes Lady Mary as "a child of Nature". The settings of their respective courtships, Caddam Wood and a desert island in the Pacific, have the same "romantic and barbaric atmosphere", and their partners, the little minister and Crichton, the former butler, share similar auras of enchantment.

However, in my opinion, neither <sup>Babbie's</sup> ~~Robbie's~~ relationship with the little minister, nor Lady Mary's with Crichton, is convincingly resolved. Babbie's motto is "let us be happy for the moment", but Barrie points out, "it was ill suited <sup>for</sup> to an Auld Licht minister".<sup>1</sup> She asks the little minister, Gavin:

Do you never feel, when you have been living a humdrum life for months, that you must break out of it, or go crazy?<sup>2</sup>

In reply Gavin defends his way of life and boasts of his salary. Then <sup>Babbie</sup> ~~Robbie~~ makes it clear that her ideal man must be brave, make his influence felt, champion the weak, have a mind of his own, must understand her and be her master. This is a tall order but, inspired by love, Gavin claims he is that man and in return <sup>Babbie</sup> ~~Robbie~~ loves him for his aspirations. This does not seem a very sound basis for a lasting relationship, particularly as Gavin has just told his possessive, wheedling mother,<sup>3</sup> who insists she is "a stupid ignorant woman," that if this is the case "that seems to be the kind I like." Finally, Gavin's mother accepts her highly unsuitable daughter-in-law without<sup>a</sup> murmur. The social problems which beset Lady Mary's relationship with Crichton will be discussed elsewhere,<sup>4</sup> but the unnerving element here is that Lady Mary lacks the courage of her convictions and dismisses her love for Crichton as a romantic infatuation which will not stand the test of life in England. This is clearly a symptom of Barrie's prejudice against ladies of title, whom he accuses of lacking strength of character. His attitude had changed by the time Lady Cynthia Asquith became his secretary and on 19 November 1919 he is writing to her to say that the part of Lady Mary in The Admirable Crichton would have been "the very thing"<sup>5</sup> for her.

Writing to Cynthia Asquith on 3 January 1920, Barrie tells her:

I got a lot of New York press-cuttings about Mary Rose today, contradictions of each other, etc. The only good thing I found was that what my work failed in

1 J M BARRIE: THE LITTLE MINISTER (LONDON : 1905) p 173

2 J M BARRIE : THE LITTLE MINISTER (LONDON : 1905) p 165

3 Gavin's mother, Margaret Dishart, is discussed more fully in the chapter dealing with

4 In the chapter dealing with Ladies of title mothers

5 J M BARRIE : LETTERS OF J M BARRIE (ed VIOLA MEYNELL) (LONDON : 1942) p 172  
VIOLA MEYNELL

was robustness. I haven't seen it put exactly thus before, but I fancy it is exactly right. ... Why can't I be more robust? You see how it rankles.<sup>1</sup>

In this letter we have Barrie's awareness of his own shortcomings as a writer. I would define <sup>lack of</sup>robustness, the absence of strength and vigour, ~~in this context~~ as Barrie's inability, despite his great imaginative sympathy, to describe a realistic full-blooded relationship between a man and a woman, with all their deficiencies; this tendency to romanticise people and their relationships is present throughout Barrie's life and works but nowhere is it more in evidence than in the romantic heroines whom he created. Barrie's apologia for this lack of robustness is to be found, written thirty years earlier, in The Little Minister (1891), where, in the person of Gavin Ogilvy, the sentimental, whimsical schoolmaster, still mourning his lost love, he confesses:

(I) curse myself as an inge-<sup>neer</sup>-~~er~~ man, for I see that one can only paint what he himself has felt, and in my passions I wish to have all the vices, even to being an impious man, that I may describe them better. For this may I be pardoned.<sup>2</sup>

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1 J M BARRIE : LETTERS OF J M BARRIE (ed VIOLA MEYNELL) (LONDON : 1942) p-174pp.173+174

2 J M BARRIE : THE LITTLE MINISTER (LONDON : 1905) p 210

The only character in Barrie's works who is an actress is Mrs Page in Rosalind (1912). Mrs Page resembles Phoebe in Quality Street<sup>1</sup> (1902) in that she tricks a man who is in love with her into believing that she has recaptured her youth, but ~~whereas~~ ~~whereon~~ Phoebe sighs for the loss of her looks, Mrs Page, at the beginning of the play, is enjoying 'letting herself go'. Phoebe, being a respectable, sensible woman at heart, is happy to learn that Valentine Brown prefers her older, sadder, wiser self - however unlikely this may be. Conversely, Mrs Page, who has sacrificed everything to her art, returns to the world of illusion where she really belongs.

Barrie was always drawn to very pretty women, so it is not surprising to find him introducing Mrs Page thus:

Is she good-looking? is the universal shriek; the one question on the one subject that really thrills humanity.<sup>2</sup>

But:

the question seems beside the point about this particular lady, who has so obviously ceased to have any interest in the answer. ... Yet we notice, as contrary to her type, that she is not only dowdy but self-consciously enamoured of her dowdiness.<sup>3</sup>

Mrs Page, a professional actress on the London stage, aged "forty and a bittock", has taken refuge in a country cottage to indulge in middle age, which she regards as a "comfy, sloppy, pull-the-curtains, carpet-slipper sort of word". However, one of her admirers, Charles, an ex-public schoolboy of twenty-three, seeking shelter from the rain, asks Mrs Page's landlady if he can warm himself at the fire in her lodger's room. He does not recognise Mrs Page but sees the photograph of Miss Beatrice Page, the actress, whom he has just seen off to Monte Carlo. Mrs Page pretends this is a photograph of her daughter and Charles congratulates her. There is an echo of Margaret Ogilvy here:

CHARLES : I think it even cleverer to have had her than to be her.<sup>4</sup>

Later, Mrs Page reveals her true identity, showing Charles a scar on her wrist which he is bound to recognise. Then she gives an interesting account of her life as an actress; she explains that there are no parts for middle-aged ladies:

When you come to write my epitaph, Charles, let it be in these delicious words, 'She had a long twenty-nine!' ... It is not confined to the stage. The stalls are full of twenty-nines.<sup>5</sup>

She explains that the life of an actress is essentially superficial and that she is

1 Phoebe is discussed in the chapter dealing with Spinsters and Independent Women

2 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 666

3 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 666

4 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 674

5 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) pp 680 & 681

always playing a part:

I am always ready with whatever feeling is called for. ... I am crying, but all the time I am looking at you through the corner of my eye.<sup>1</sup>

This sounds very like Barrie as he describes himself, as Sentimental Tommy, in Tommy and Grizel (1900). Her art is the most important thing in her life, as his writing was for Barrie:

if I had a husband and children I would cram them on top of the cart if they sought to come between me and Arden.<sup>2</sup>

When the telegram arrives from her manager asking her to play Rosalind, Mrs Page retires to her room and emerges as Beatrice Page, the only real thing in her life being the world of illusion. We can see in this description of an actress's life just why the ~~stage~~<sup>stage</sup> was Barrie's true métier as a writer. It gave him an outlet for some of the most outstanding features of his own temperament; his tendency to romanticise people and events; his power to elicit and sway emotions; and his imaginative ability to create a world into which people could escape temporarily from the pressures of their daily lives. At the same time Beatrice Page, as an actress who sacrificed her personal life for her art, is an extreme case, as we shall see that the actresses whom Barrie knew managed to combine their art with other interests and kept the world of illusion where it belongs, on the stage.

Barrie's marriage to the actress Mary Ansell will be analysed shortly,<sup>3</sup> and he was involved with countless actresses in the course of his professional life. The actresses I have selected for discussion here can be divided into three categories. Irene Vanbrugh, Maude Adams and Hilda Trevelyan were all actresses whose highly successful careers were bound up with their appearances in works by Barrie. Ellen Terry and Mrs Patrick Campbell were already famous actresses before Barrie cultivated their friendship. Finally, Gaby Deslys and Elisabeth Bergner were both foreigners for whom Barrie wrote works, and both productions were failures attended by ill luck.

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1 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p-683 pp. 683 + 684

2 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 689

3 In the chapter dealing with Wives.



Irene Vanbrugh had been playing ingénue leads in Toole's company for two years before she appeared in Barrie's play Ibsen's Ghost (1891) and had a great success with her parody of Marion Lea, who was playing Thea Tesman in Ibsen's play at the Vaudeville. During the run of Ibsen's Ghost Barrie had a mild flirtation with Irene Vanbrugh and also became friends with her three sisters, one of whom, Violet, was also a successful actress. When Walker, London was to be staged in 1892 it was assumed that Irene Vanbrugh would play the leading female rôle but Barrie ~~insisted~~<sup>insisted</sup> on this being assigned to Mary Ansell.<sup>1</sup> Irene Vanbrugh later wrote in her autobiography:

Mary Ansell ... was delightful and extremely pretty. I acknowledge this <sup>now</sup> more freely than I did at the time because I was jealous of her success; especially as the author was in love with her.<sup>2</sup>

However, in 1900 Irene Vanbrugh married Dion Boucicaült and under her husband's direction and Frohman's management starred at the Duke of York's, Barrie's favourite theatre, for the next fourteen years, playing Lady Mary in The Admirable Crichton (1902) and Amy in Alice-Sit-by-the-Fire (1905). In 1911 Irene Vanbrugh persuaded Barrie to overcome his prejudice against music-halls and she appeared as Kate in The Twelve-Pound Look at the Hippodrome. Barrie found that the play went better here than in the regular theatre, and as a result Irene Vanburgh appeared at the Coliseum in 1912 in the title role of Rosalind, which merited a command performance at Sandringham at the end of that year, and as Lady Lilian in Half an Hour at the Hippodrome in 1913.

In 1914 Irene Vanbrugh played the Spirit of Culture in Barrie's play Der Tag, inviting the Kaiser to commit suicide, but the piece fell flat. Another venture was the Cinema Supper which Barrie organised in 1914. One hundred and fifty guests, almost all on the stage or in society, were invited to enjoy a banquet followed by entertainment; Frank <sup>Tinney's</sup> Tinney's revue, starring Frank himself, was followed by a series of all-star sketches written by Barrie. Irene Vanbrugh appeared with Godfrey Tearle in a sketch called Taming a Tiger. But guests objected to being filmed as they arrived and ate and drank and Mr Asquith, <sup>who</sup> ~~was~~ had attended, sent Barrie a letter from 10 Downing Street stating that he regarded the event as an invasion of privacy. Undaunted, in 1917 Barrie devised Reconstructing the Crime which consisted of six scenes and a ballet with an all-star cast, again including Irene Vanbrugh. The event also included a charity auction and the entire proceeds went to the Cavendish Square Hospital Depôt. Irene Vanbrugh also appeared, as Miss Isit, in Shall We Join The Ladies? (1921), which was part of a triple bill to mark the opening

1 This matter is discussed in the chapter dealing with Wives

2 ANDREW BIRKIN : J M BARRIE AND THE LOST BOYS (LONDON : 1980) p 34



of RADA's new theatre in Gower Street; RADA had developed out of Tree's old school of acting and had been directed for twelve years by Kenneth Barnes, Irene Vanbrugh's brother. The actress and her husband were Barrie's guests at Stanway in 1925 and during her visit she played Ophelia to young Simon Asquith's Hamlet. In the following year Barrie attended Dion Boucicault's funeral, a gesture which marked his long friendship and professional association with Irene Vanbrugh and her husband.

Barrie first saw the American actress Maude Adams when he visited America in October 1896. This American trip<sup>1</sup> was also the occasion of Barrie's first meeting with the theatrical manager, Charles Frohman, which was to prove a turning-point in the playwright's career. Accompanied by Frohman, Barrie saw Maude Adams in Rosemary at the Empire Theatre in New York. He was very much impressed by her star quality but reluctant to adapt his script of the dramatised version of The Little Minister, strengthening the part of ~~Bobbie~~<sup>Babbie</sup> to make it a vehicle for Maude Adams. However, he was finally persuaded to do so and in September 1897 Maude Adams appeared as ~~Bobbie~~<sup>Babbie</sup> in Washington for a try-out, and, following a run of six months in New York, The Little Minister toured the States. With no competition from cinema and radio the vast territory of theatrical America proved a goldmine for Barrie. In 1905 Maude Adams played the title role in Peter Pan and the dramatic critic of the American magazine, "Outlook", was moved to comment:

it is a bit of pure phantasy by the writer who, since the death of Robert Louis Stevenson, has most truly kept the heart and mind of a child.<sup>2</sup>

In 1901 Maude Adams appeared as Phoebe in Quality Street, prior to its London production, and in 1908 she starred as Maggie Wylie in What Every Woman Knows. She was also surprisingly successful in The Legend of Leonora (1914), which was the only occasion on which Barrie saw her in one of his plays. This particular play had a very chequered career. It began life as a one-act play called Seven Women and was extended to three acts and called The Adored One as a vehicle for Mrs Patrick Campbell. It proved a failure, but, after Maude Adams's success with it under its new title, Irene Vanbrugh made a successful appearance in the original version, Seven Women, in 1918. In 1917 Maude Adams starred in A Kiss for Cinderella, and in The Ladies' Shakespeare, which was never performed in Britain. However, after a difference of opinion with the Frohman Company, she did not appear in Mary Rose (1920), much to Barrie's disappointment.

Barrie's relationship with Maude Adams was rather strange. Of course he recognised her value in financial terms, writing to Elizabeth Lucas on 13 February 1919:

Miss Adams not well, hasn't been playing for months and won't ~~be~~ before autumn.

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1 Barrie's visit to America in 1896 is discussed in the chapter dealing with Wives  
2 JANET DUNBAR : J M BARRIE, THE MAN BEHIND THE IMAGE (LONDON : 1970) p 146

It makes a mighty difference ~~to~~<sup>in</sup> my income!<sup>1</sup>

In the course of their long association he only saw her twice on stage, but whenever she was on holiday in England he was ready to squire her; in 1910 he took her to visit the dying Sylvia Llewelyn Davies in Devon. He always spoke of her as Miss Adams, flattered her, and was mysterious and possessive about her. For Barrie, Maude Adams was another romantic heroine.

When Peter Pan was being produced for the first time in 1904 Barrie wanted Seymour Hicks for Captain Hook and his wife Ellaline Terriss for Wendy, but Ellaline Terriss was pregnant and her husband did not want to appear without her. As a result, Gerald du Maurier played Hook and Wendy was played by Hilda Trevelyan. Barrie had been impressed by Hilda Trevelyan's performance as Moira in a touring production of Little Mary in the autumn of 1903. At the first rehearsal of Peter Pan she was sworn to secrecy as to the contents of the play and told that she would have to have her life insured and be given flying lessons. Having survived this initial experience, Hilda Trevelyan went on to become a friend of the playwright and to be associated with Barrie's works throughout her career.

In 1905 Hilda Trevelyan appeared as the servant, Richardson, in Alice-Sit-by-the-Fire, and in 1908 she played the leading rôle of Maggie Wylie in What Every Woman Knows. Hilda Trevelyan later recalled how, as Barrie's guest at Black Lake Cottage in 1909, she looked out of her window one morning and saw her host with his Newfoundland dog, Luath, walking behind him with his front paws through Barrie's arms. This incident is not inappropriate to that master of fantasy, and reminiscent of the chapter in The Little White Bird (1902) where the St Bernard, ~~Porthos~~, (Barrie's first dog), becomes the man, William Paterson. On 12 February 1911 Barrie ~~is writing~~<sup>wrote</sup> to console Hilda Trevelyan on the death of her mother:

In a sense it is now all over, but only in a sense, for just as some of you dies with her, some of her will live on with you.<sup>2</sup>

When A Kiss for Cinderella was first produced in 1916, Hilda Trevelyan starred as Cinderella, another character, like Wendy and Maggie Wylie, who combines good sense and imagination.

Barrie never forgot his first Wendy, as this letter, written to Hilda Trevelyan on 27 December 1920, shows:

You are Wendy, and there will never be another to touch you.<sup>3</sup>

Seventeen years after her first performance as Wendy, Hilda Trevelyan appeared as Lucy, a maid, in Shall We Join the Ladies? ~~in~~ (1921). In 1925 she starred again in

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1 J M BARRIE : LETTERS OF J M BARRIE (ed VIOLA MEYNELL) (PETER DAVIES : 1942) p 94  
 2 J M BARRIE : LETTERS OF J M BARRIE (ed VIOLA MEYNELL) (LONDON : 1942) p 57  
 3 J M BARRIE : LETTERS OF J M BARRIE (ed VIOLA MEYNELL) (LONDON : 1942) p 58

the revival of A Kiss for Cinderella and played Patty, the maid, in a revival of Quality Street in 1929. In the casting of Barrie's final play, The Boy David, in 1936, Hilda Trevelyan was not forgotten. She was considered for the part of David's mother along with Nina Boucicault, the first actress to play Peter Pan in (1904), but the part finally went to Jean Caddell, who had been the first Mrs Dowey in The Old Lady Shows Her Médals (1917) and the first Mrs <sup>O'Leary</sup> ~~Clery~~ in Mary Rose (1920). We can see from Hilda Trevelyan's experience how Barrie had the power to advance the career of an actress who impressed him and also what friendship and loyalty he showed towards her.

Ellen Terry had been one of the stars of the London Theatre, appearing with Irving at the Lyceum, when Barrie wrote his first play in 1891. He wrote the part of Alice<sup>1</sup> in Alice-Sit-by-the-Fire (1905) with Ellen Terry in mind but she said later that although the part was made to measure she had never felt comfortable in it and, despite her fine performance, the play barely survived its run. She and Barrie acted as sponsors when the actress Pauline Chase was baptised in 1906, and in February 1922, as Rector of St Andrews University, Barrie ~~is writing~~ <sup>wrote</sup> to Principal Irvine nominating Ellen Terry for an honorary LL.D.:

I don't know whether you ever give the LL.D. to ladies. This would be rather fine, I think.<sup>2</sup>

Cynthia Asquith describes the actress among the other LL.D.'s as "a solitary flower in a vegetable garden".<sup>3</sup> After the Rectorial proceedings, Ellen Terry ~~writes~~ <sup>wrote</sup> to G B S:

If only you had seen J.M.B. yesterday! He was almost as beautiful and adorable as my 5 months' old kitten. If only you had been there to watch him! He seems to me to be so ill, the poor mite. ... Haig is a pet, and the two together are ... two such boys!<sup>4</sup>

She and Barrie remained friends until she died, almost blind, aged eighty-one, in July 1928.

Barrie had long admired Mrs Patrick Campbell as an actress and as a beautiful and brilliant woman. Of her romance with Shaw he said:

at last Shaw can blush. But which of them it is that listens I can't make out.<sup>5</sup>

After an accident in a taxi, Mrs Patrick Campbell was ill for a long time and Shaw and Barrie were concerned about her future. Shaw wrote Pygmalion for her and Barrie added two acts to Seven Women, which became The Adored One, and persuaded

1 Alice is discussed in this chapter as a romantic heroine.

2 J M BARRIE : LETTERS OF J M BARRIE (ed VIOLA MEYNELL) (LONDON : 1942) p 236 p. 263

\*OF 3 CYNTHIA ASQUITH : PORTRAIT OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1954) p 68

4 DENIS MACKAIL : THE STORY OF J M B (LONDON : 1941) p 575

5 DENIS MACKAIL : THE STORY OF J M B (LONDON : 1941) p 448

Frohman to star Mrs Patrick Campbell in it. It opened at the Duke of York's on September 4, 1913 and was another failure for Barrie, despite hectic rewriting and further rehearsals. But his friendship with the actress continued and on 7 January, 1918 Barrie ~~is writing~~ <sup>wrote</sup> to console her on the death of her son, Acting Lieutenant Commander Alan Campbell, who was killed in action in France on 30 December, 1917:

How much rather would you have had this sorrow than never had a son who would go to the war and die fighting gallantly for his country. ... Surely you are a proud woman as well as a sad one.<sup>1</sup>

Cynthia Asquith gives a lively picture of the actress inviting herself to dinner in Barrie's flat, reading her Memoirs aloud and complaining that Shaw would not let her publish all the letters he had written to her. Mrs Patrick Campbell's spell is summed up by Cynthia:

'My face is like a burst paper-bag!' keened ~~the~~ <sup>this</sup> mistress of <sup>the</sup> ~~a~~ <sup>comi-tragic</sup>, ... And, as she spoke, the beauty that she mourned would revisit her face. ... I ~~remember~~ <sup>remembered</sup> her when, ... she had melted me as Melisande, frozen me as Electra.<sup>2</sup>

In November 1913 Barrie took the Davies boys to a revue, A La Carte, at the Palace Theatre. <sup>As Birkin observes,</sup> ~~All~~ of them, including Barrie, were bowled over by the star, Gaby Deslys, one of the earliest sex symbols, whose lack of acting talent was amply compensated by her appearance on stage in a state of semi-nudity, her fantastic head-dresses, her provocative dancing and her scandalous reputation. After the performance Barrie offered her a chinchilla coat as a token of esteem, but when she came to lunch at the Adelphi flat he told her he had changed his mind and gave her a sketch which was immediately incorporated in her current show. Barrie then decided he would write a full-length revue for her. Some people were shocked that someone of Barrie's eminence in the theatre should go to such lengths for a glorified chorus-girl <sup>however,</sup> ~~but~~ this was an attempt to keep pace with the younger generation, and it also satisfied his masterful side to have an international star at his command. In addition to her obvious charms, Gaby Deslys was very hard-working and popular with everyone in the theatre.

Barrie arranged a meeting between Gaby Deslys and George Davies on what was to be his last leave from the trenches. There is no evidence of anything more than a mild flirtation, but Peter Davies later commented:

It is my belief that J.M.B., though so isolated himself ... from the flesh and the Devil, had the perception and ~~the~~ imagination and tolerance and sense of the fitness of things to smile on such a little piece of naughtiness, ... and even pave the way for it.<sup>3</sup>

1 J M BARRIE : LETTERS OF J M BARRIE (ed VIOLA MEYNELL) (LONDON : 1942) p 37

2 CYNTHIA ASQUITH : PORTRAIT OF BARRIE (LONDON : 1954) pp 61 & 62

3 ANDREW BIRKIN : J M BARRIE AND THE LOST BOYS (LONDON : 1980) p 228



George Davies was killed seven days before Barrie's revue, Rosy Rapture or the Pride of the Beauty Chorus, backed by Frohman<sup>1</sup> and starring Gaby Deslys, opened at the Duke of York's on March 22, 1915. It was preceded on the bill by The New Word.<sup>2</sup> Its theme was the eternal triangle and it included filmed sequences and music by John Crook and Herman Darewski. Barrie's friend E V Lucas wrote the lyrics, and there were two numbers by Jerome Kern from one of Frohman's American musical comedies. But the producer, Dion Boucicault, lacked the necessary lightness of touch and much of what Gaby Deslys said was not understood by the audience, <sup>which</sup> who did not share Nico Davies's delight in the evening's entertainment:

Of course I was only eleven, but to me it was just about the most wonderful thing Uncle Jim had ever done. Unfortunately no one else agreed with me, and it was a more or less total disaster.<sup>3</sup>

Barrie was distressed by the failure of his revue, which meant disappointment for its star, and he asked Frohman to come over from America earlier than planned. As a result he was drowned when the "Lusitania" was attacked by U-boats. The show closed on May 29, less than nine weeks after its opening. A final sad note was the death of Gaby Deslys, after a long and painful illness, less than five years later.

Barrie met the Austrian actress Elisabeth Bergner in January 1934; she had bought Peter Scott's portrait of Barrie and the artist introduced her to the playwright after Barrie had been captivated by her performance in Escape Me Never. At their first meeting Barrie experienced the magic chemistry inspired by Gaby Deslys. Elisabeth Bergner had been a leading actress in Germany and had then made films in Paris under the direction of her husband, Paul Czinner. Cynthia Asquith, who also saw her in Escape Me Never, described her as:

Vibrantly alive, humorous, harrowing, with some quite undefinable enchantment of her own,<sup>4</sup>

Now that Germany, under the Nazi régime, was closed to her, C B Cochran had engaged her and she achieved instant stardom in Britain. Barrie invited her to his flat and offered to write a play for her, his first play since Shall We Join The Ladies? in (1921.) Elisabeth Bergner suggested the subject, saying she would like to play the Biblical shepherd boy, David.

This was the stimulus for which Barrie had been waiting; the name David brought back memories of his dead brother and he was inspired by the theme of youth and courage. At seventy-three Barrie felt rejuvenated but there was a superstitious secrecy about his project. His caution was prophetic and the entire venture was beset by accidents and delays. His historical researches provided the background

1 See the chapter dealing with Wives

2 See the chapter dealing with Wives

3 ANDREW BIRKIN : J M BARRIE AND THE LOST BOYS (LONDON : 1980) p 246

4 CYNTHIA ASQUITH : PORTRAIT OF BARRIE (LONDON : 1954) p 201



for The Boy David but David, like Peter Pan, was the spirit of youth: in him Barrie combined memories of his own childhood with his knowledge of all the little boys with whom he had been acquainted. After the first impetus he could visualise Saul and Jonathan, but Goliath presented problems and by the end of March Barrie was in despair. In April Gerald du Maurier, whom Barrie wanted to play Saul, died of cancer and he found fresh inspiration in the relationship of David and Jonathan which he based on his own childhood friendship with James Robb in Kirriemuir.

When he had finished writing the play Barrie had to wait two and a half years before it was produced. Elisabeth Bergner was to appear in Escape Me Never in America after its London run and then there were her film commitments. In her absence Barrie kept up a correspondence with her, making her a romantic heroine to whom he paid extravagant compliments, and when she returned to England he took an interest in the filming of As You Like It, in which she appeared, although he had paid little attention to the filming of his own plays.

It was not until February 1936 that The Boy David went into rehearsal, and then Barrie heard the news of his sister Maggie's death and was ill with grief for a week. He felt the strain of the early rehearsals; there was mutual antipathy between Barrie and Augustus John, the ~~scene-~~designer, C B Cochran was a strong character, and Elisabeth Bergner was temperamental. Things improved, but Elisabeth Bergner told Cynthia Asquith that she felt the adult David should have been played by a man. Barrie fell ill and when Elisabeth Bergner was operated on for appendicitis the play was postponed indefinitely.

It was seven months before The Boy David was in rehearsal again for three weeks before its opening in Edinburgh. There were problems with the new stage, the set and the complicated lighting plot. Barrie, who had seldom been well enough to attend rehearsals, was still trying to make cuts and alterations. He became ill again, missing the first performance, and spent most of the two weeks of the Edinburgh run in bed. On the whole the play was well received in Edinburgh. It needed pulling together and speeding up, but these changes had to wait until the company was back in the London theatre. Elisabeth Bergner was perfect as the boy David but the Edinburgh audiences shared her opinion that the adult David should have been played by a man. Barrie was visited in Edinburgh by Granville-Barker, who loved the play and wrote a preface to it when it was published after Barrie's death. Granville-Barker was full of praise for the dramatic dialogue of the play and the conflicts it depicts:

the conflicts/ between youth and age; good luck and ill, between the strength of innocence and the weakening doubt which knowledge brings, and, worst of all,

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the conflict not between those who hate, but those who love each other.<sup>1</sup>

He also made the very important point:

in taking a known story to dramatise, he (Barrie) had lost a large part of his liberty - more valuable to him than <sup>to</sup> most - to adapt character to event and event to character, and both to an imaginative scheme which may grow and change.<sup>2</sup>

The Boy David opened in London on December 13, 1936, almost immediately after the announcement of the abdication. Cynthia Asquith was torn between concern for Barrie's play and the chance to exploit her knowledge of the Royal family. She noted in her diary:

The "Daily Mail" would commission article on Yorks whatever the circs. £100 if abdication £70 if not, so I cleared my afternoon.<sup>3</sup>

Barrie was not well enough to attend the opening performance of The Boy David, which was adversely received by the ~~Press~~ <sup>critics</sup> who preferred characters created by Barrie and objected to David being played by a foreign woman. The play was branded a failure, despite public protests by Granville-Barker and Shaw and the fact that it was seen by sixty thousand people. The immense cost of the production exceeded the takings and Barrie gave Cochran permission to withdraw it. Barrie was not resentful but he regretted the disappointment which the withdrawal of his play meant to Elisabeth Bergner and as a result he left £2,000 in his will to 'my ~~love~~ <sup>loved</sup> Elisabeth Czinner professionally known as Elisabeth Bergner for the best performance ever given in a play of mine.'<sup>4</sup>

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- 1 CYNTHIA ASQUITH : PORTRAIT OF BARRIE (LONDON : 1954) p 211  
 2 CYNTHIA ASQUITH : PORTRAIT OF BARRIE (LONDON : 1954) pp 202 & 203  
 3 JANET DUNBAR : J M BARRIE, THE MAN BEHIND THE IMAGE (LONDON : 1970) p 296  
 4 JANET DUNBAR : J M BARRIE, THE MAN BEHIND THE IMAGE (LONDON : 1970) p 302

Barrie's relationships with the actresses whom he knew in his life serve to emphasise just how unrealistic is his description of Mrs Page in Rosalind, who sacrifices her personal life to her art, is essentially superficial in her display of emotion, and intends to remain an eternal twenty-nine. The actresses described were called upon to feign emotion, and their beauty and charm were necessary professional attributes, but they did not live permanently in the world of illusion and Barrie knew this very well.

His relationships with Ellen Terry and Mrs Patrick Campbell illustrate his respect for established talent, but his nomination of Ellen Terry for an honorary LL.D, and his solicitude for Mrs Patrick Campbell after her accident show Barrie prepared to demonstrate affection in a practical way. His long associations, both professional and personal, with Irene Vanbrugh and Hilda Trevelyan also demonstrate his capacity for loyalty and friendship.

The relationship between Barrie and Maude Adams lasted for more than twenty years, but distance, and the fact that he only saw her perform twice, added glamour to their association, so that for Barrie she never lost the magic which had captivated him in 1896. Gaby Deslys and Elisabeth Bergner also had this effect of enchantment on Barrie and it is unfortunate that, for those reasons already discussed, the works he wrote for them were unsuccessful, but it is noteworthy that his first reaction to the failure of those works was his concern for the actresses whom he felt he had disappointed.

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"They're kittle cattle, the women", said the farmer of Craigiebuckle ...  
 "I've often thocht ~~that~~ maiterimony is no onlike the lucky bags the'auld wifies has at the nuckly (the fair). There's prizes and blanks baith inside, but, losh, ye're far <sup>frae</sup> ~~from~~ sure what ye'll draw oot when ye put in yer han'." <sup>1</sup>

We have no evidence that before his marriage to Mary Ansell in 1894 Barrie had had any serious intimate relationship with a woman - apart from his mother. We know too that he had been 'in love' on several occasions with very pretty actresses, whom he had safely worshipped from afar. We have suffered with him when he described how women regarded him as "harmless" and we have observed his self-consciousness about his lack of height and his immature appearance, but by 1891, when he first saw Mary Ansell, he had become the amusing and charming Mr Barrie, much in demand socially now that he was a successful novelist and promising playwright. His novel The Little Minister was published in 1891 and in the same year the influential actor manager, J L Toole, encouraged by Henry Irving, whom Barrie had met at the Garrick Club, bought the rights to Barrie's play, Walker, London.

Mary Ansell, about a year younger than Barrie, was small and very pretty. Before his death her father had been a licensed victualler in Bayswater and she did not have much in common with her mother, who objected to her daughter going on the stage, but Mary was very determined and ambitious and wanted to make a career for herself. Showing the same initiative as Barrie had done in financing the publication of his first novel, Mary used a legacy to take out a training company of her own. This gave her experience as an actress and managers were no longer able to treat her as an amateur. After appearances in the provinces, her greatest step forward was her rôle in Brighton, a farce by the American playwright Bronson Howard, staged at the Criterion by Charles Wyndham in December 1891. Toole decided, in January 1892, to produce Walker, London and when Barrie saw Mary Ansell, for the first time, in Brighton, he immediately wanted her for the lead in his own play. Irene Vanbrugh, who had played in Ibsen's Ghost (1891), was the obvious choice for the part, but to everyone's astonishment Barrie remained adamant until Toole reluctantly gave way and engaged Mary Ansell.

Barrie had been attracted first by Mary's looks but he came to appreciate her independence and intelligence. She showed that she liked him and he was flattered by her appreciation and encouragement. They were constantly together and in the world of the theatre it was considered that they were as good as engaged. We can only speculate about Barrie's feelings at this point, as he never discussed them with anyone, but there are plenty of clues in his notebooks and his works. It seems

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1 J M BARRIE : AULD LIGHT IDYLLS (LONDON : 1889) p 221



that he wanted to love her and did not want other men to love her but he also wanted to keep the whole thing exactly as it was. Barrie must have known that he was temperamentally unsuited to married life. His fears of marriage are first revealed in an article, "My Ghastly Dream", in the "Edinburgh Evening Dispatch" in 1887:

Always I see myself being married, and then I wake up with the scream of a lost soul, clammy and shivering. ... My <sup>ghastly</sup> nightmare always begins in the same way. I seem to know that I have gone to bed, and then I see myself slowly waking up in a misty world. As I realise where I am the mist dissolves; and the heavy shapeless mass that weighed upon me in the night time when I was a boy, assumes the form of a woman, beautiful and cruel, with a bridal veil over her face. When I see her she is still a long way off, but she approaches rapidly. I cower in a corner till she glides into the room and beckons me to follow her ... Her power is mesmeric, for when she beckons I rise and follow her, shivering, but obedient.<sup>1</sup>

The same feelings of horror at the prospect of marriage are expressed in relation to Dick Abinger in When A Man's Single (1888):

"I am going to be married <sup>though</sup> ~~when~~ I would much rather remain single. My wife will be the only girl I ever loved, and I like her still more than any other girl I know. Though I shuddered just now when I thought of matrimony, there can be little doubt that we shall get on very well together." ...

Dick rose and paced the room, ... His lips quivered and his whole body shook. He stood in an agony against the mantelpiece with his head in his hands, and emotions had possession of him compared with which the emotions of any other person <sup>described</sup> in this book were but children's fancies.<sup>2</sup>

The highly successful production of Walker, London opened on February 25, 1892, and Barrie began making notes for his next play, The Professor's Love Story, commissioned by Irving. The death of William Winter<sup>3</sup> on May 9 was a tragedy for which Barrie blamed himself and he vowed to take care of his sister Maggie for the rest of her life. Neither of them would ever marry; here is a possible solution to his own problem with regard to Mary Ansell. His devotion to Maggie at this time sowed the seeds for the relationship between Tommy and Elspeth in the "Tommy" novels. He accepted the offer of Robertson Nicoll's cottage in Shere and he and Maggie travelled south and stayed there throughout August. Barrie began a correspondence with Robert Louis Stevenson and finished The Professor's Love Story, but Irving did not

1 ANDREW BIRKIN : J M BARRIE AND THE LOST BOYS (LONDON : 1980) pp ~~36 & 37~~ p.37

2 J M BARRIE : WHEN A MAN'S SINGLE (LONDON : 1938) pp 256 & 258

3 This is discussed in the chapter dealing with Romantic Heroines and Actresses



like the play and it was turned down by Toole and others until the American rights were bought by E S Willard, an actor home on holiday from America, where he had been heading his own company. In early autumn 1892 Barrie was back in London and seeing Mary Ansell again, but he was mainly devoted to Maggie, with whom he shared lodgings, and to work on Sentimental Tommy. After the failure of the comic opera Jane Annie or The Good Conduct Prize, in which he had collaborated with Conan Doyle, and his short play Becky Sharp, which had formed part of a quintuple bill, he returned to Scotland with Maggie at the end of June 1893.

On June 30, 1893, Barrie made his first appearance as a public speaker when he presented the prizes at Dumfries Academy and later that summer he opened a bazaar to raise funds for a new kirk for the Auld Lights in Kirriemuir. Maggië's engagement to her late fiance's brother, William Winter, gave Barrie his freedom but he spent much of that autumn with Maggie and her husband in Hampshire. Barrie had now reached the point where he must decide what to do about Mary Ansell. His brother Alexander had met Mary and liked her and she had confided her feelings for Barrie to him but he could only tell her that she must be patient. On November 30 a telegram informed Barrie that his mother was dangerously ill and he went to her at once. Her life hung in the balance for a week and Barrie remained in Kirriemuir for several more weeks until she had made a reasonable <sup>recovery.</sup> ~~recover.~~ When he finally returned to London he became secretly engaged to Mary Ansell but no one must be told until he had informed his mother. Did he perhaps hope that if she withheld her approval he might still be saved? That is something we shall never know. At any rate Barrie caught a chill in Kirriemuir; the symptoms turned to pleurisy and pneumonia and for weeks he was near death. Jane Ann was unable to look after Barrie and her mother. It was Maggie who sent for Mary Ansell, who acted as nurse while Barrie's brother-in-law, Dr Murray from Bristol, battled to save him. Not until June did he recover, in time to hear of the first British performance of The Professor's Love Story. It had a reasonably successful run while its author remained convalescent in Scotland and on July 9, at his parents' home, Barrie married Mary Ansell.

Now let us look at the three and a half years of marriage which the Barries shared before Sylvia Llewelyn Davies and her family entered their lives in 1898. The death of Barrie's mother and his sister Jane Ann in September 1895 broke the strongest links which bound him to his family and his native place and although the chain was never severed, in the deepest emotional sense, this was the end of a phase in Barrie's life. There was a change too in terms of his work; with the exception of Tommy and Grizel (1900), the dramatised version of The Little Minister

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(1897) and Sentimental Tommy (1896) were the last works written by Barrie in which the Kirriemuir of his mother's childhood formed the background. But it seems to me highly significant that in Margaret Ogilvy (1896) there is no mention of his marriage. The chief place in Barrie's affections, left empty by the death of his mother, was not to be filled by his wife nor was she to be the dominant figure in the next chapter of his life.

After a honeymoon in Switzerland, where Mary bought Porthos, the St Bernard which was to be the third member of their household, the Barries returned to lodgings in London. During the first year of his marriage Barrie's health was still delicate and he was working less hard than usual, although his mind was teeming with ideas. This seems to have been the time when he and Mary enjoyed their happiest period of companionship and no doubt for a while he enjoyed being mothered. After about a year of marriage they moved into 133 Gloucester Road, South Kensington, which was to be their home for the next six years. Barrie liked people to admire his pretty wife and he enjoyed having a proper home but he now began to spend much of his time shut up in his study. There was no financial necessity for Barrie to work as hard as he did and Mary found this difficult to accept but Barrie had always had a compulsion to work. A great deal of heart-searching went into the creation of Tommy Sandys, who appears first in Sentimental Tommy (1896) and later in Tommy and Grizel (1900). The value of Tommy and Grizel as an analysis of Barrie's temperament is immense and it will be discussed in due course. Barrie also became very involved in rehearsals for The Little Minister before it began its highly successful run on November 6, 1897, after its triumph in America. Mary felt excluded from all this activity and began her search for a country cottage.

But there was time too for travel and friends. In March 1896 the Barries paid a brief visit to Paris, a city which Barrie always enjoyed. In August or early September they went to see Barrie's father in Edinburgh, where he now lived with his daughter Sara and her uncle Dr Ogilvy, Margaret Ogilvy's brother, who had retired from his ministry in Motherwell. In October of the same year Barrie and his wife accepted Robertson Nicoll's invitation to accompany him to America, where he had publishing business. One of the main attractions for Barrie was the opportunity to meet George Washington Cable, the novelist and story-writer of Louisiana, with whom he had been corresponding. Cable had done for the Creoles what Barrie had done for the Auld Lights. There was a meeting too with Charles Frohman, the Jewish American theatrical manager with whom Barrie was soon to have a business and personal relationship lasting until Frohman's death on the "Lusitania" in 1915. Barrie always claimed that it was Frohman who encouraged him to become a dramatist when he would

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have preferred to remain a novelist. Barrie was equally fortunate in his American publisher, Charles Scribner. In 1896 it was he who suggested the publication of a uniform edition of Barrie's works with introductions by the author as a means of combating the publishing pirates, although no material published before the 1891 Copyright Bill could be protected.

In June 1897 the Barries were at Broadway, the beautiful village in Worcester-shire which had become a colony of English and American artists, including Sargent and Henry James, and was presided over by the ~~Millers~~<sup>Millefs</sup> and the de Navarros; before her marriage Madame de Navarro had been the actress Mary Anderson. It was in Shere, a vil-lage near Guildford, that Barrie had first captained his cricket team, the Allahak-barries, in 1887. In 1897 he organised the Broadway artists in a match against Shere, and they celebrated their victory on the eve of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee.

On the face of it then, an interesting and prosperous life. The Barries enter-tained in their comfortable home, which exhibited Mary's flair for interior decora-tion. They travelled frequently and mixed with cultivated and talented people. But when they were alone the silences between them grew. Mary managed to fill her own days while her husband was engaged in pursuits she could not share, but what she had wanted most from marriage was loving companionship and a happy family life and, after three and a half years of marriage, there were no children. Ultimately we can only speculate, but it seems to me that this was the root cause of their estrangement and the failure of their marriage, and a tragedy for both of them.

We have observed Barrie's fears in relation to marriage but they appeared to have been overcome. However, there were sexual difficulties. Mackail is coy on the matter of children:

At first there is hope, and then again there is hope, and presently doctors are consulted, and then for a while there is still the shadow of hope. But it fades.<sup>1</sup>

Dunbar throws most light on the matter: after her divorce Mary Barrie told friends that their marriage had never been consummated, as Barrie was impotent. He refused to discuss the problem with her or to seek medical advice:

Her correspondence with H.G. Wells makes this abundantly clear; and many years later, "she confided a great deal of information about her life to Compton Mackenzie, one of the most sympathetic of men. ... Mary would have gone on trying to maintain some semblance of a normal marital relationship if ~~he~~ (Barrie) had not indulged <sup>his</sup> in extraordinary fantasies for the worship of beautiful women and their children.<sup>2</sup>

1 DENIS MACKAIL : THE STORY OF J M B (LONDON : 1941) p 236

2 JANET DUNBAR : THE MAN BEHIND THE IMAGE (LONDON : 1970) pp 184 & 185

An entry in the notebook Barrie kept on his honeymoon reads:

- Scene in Play. Wife - have you given me up? Have nothing to do with me?  
Husband calmly kind, no passion &c. (à la self).<sup>1</sup>

Mary's longing for a more passionate relationship and children was to be revealed in her book Dogs and Men (1923):

Perhaps my love for dogs, in the beginning, was a sort of mother-love. Porthos was a baby when I first saw him: a fat little round young thing. The dearest of all in a lovely litter of St Bernards, away there in Switzerland. My heart burnt hot for love of him ...<sup>2</sup>

The loneliness she suffered within her marriage to Barrie (and later in her marriage to Gilbert Cannan) is described here:

I only loved clever men. And clever men, it seems to me, are made up of reserves. It is out of their reserves they bring their clever things. ... You think they will one day open their reserves, and that you will be the favoured one who is admitted to the cupboards where they keep their cleverness. But that is an illusion. The reserves of men are <sup>as</sup> helpless as a dog's lack of reserve is helpless. A man had to be clever, really clever, to please me. And I loved my dogs so passionately because they could never, never be clever in that way. They could never be complicated as the men were complicated.<sup>3</sup>

The Barries celebrated ten years of marriage on July 9, 1904, and on the following day Barrie made this entry in his notebook:

- Tin wedding in 10th year.

July 10, 1904.

Idea - Husband & wife story, scene caused by husband - evidently they don't get on well together - his fault - she violent - interrupted by visitors with Tin Wedding presents. (He hasn't remembered it is their wedding day.)/ She immediately in woman's way sort of manner talks as if ~~her~~ husband best in world - how he spoils her, &c, pretends <sup>grand</sup> good present from him, &c. When they're gone, he remorseful & swears to make it happy day yet for her (thinks he's doing finely) then she shows true self - says can quarrel over little things ... but not over the big things. Too late to talk of love & his giving it to her, <sup>she</sup> she no longer wants it. Her own love for him has gone from her, spilt, ended, &c ... She says he can have affairs with other women as he wills. They don't disturb her. Do as he likes about that. Wd like to go on pretending to people happy &c, less for his sake (he had thought it all so touching and

1 ANDREW BIRKIN : J M BARRIE AND THE LOST BOYS (LONDON : 1980) p 39

2 ANDREW BIRKIN : J M BARRIE AND THE LOST BOYS (LONDON : 1980) p 39

3 ANDREW BIRKIN : J M BARRIE AND THE LOST BOYS (LONDON : 1980) pp 39 & 40



all for him) as '∴ [~~because~~] it's a woman's way, &c.

~~[because] it's a woman's way, &c.~~

He wishes cd do anything for her wedding day & she admits there's one thing he cd do. Sometimes for dif [ferent] reasons - as good <sup>mood</sup> ~~move~~ or '∴' he's going off to dinner &c, leaving her, ~~as~~ he paws her & he keeps up old custom of kissing her goodnight. She asks him not to do these things as her Tin Wedding gift. He consents, she goes off about business of house leaving him crushed. (Curtain.....)

- Audience probably thinks she is to be sweet long-suffering creature. Her parents, &c, all deceived by her now as always about their married life. She tells him she has borne for long & forgiven & forgiven, but love gone for a year & he hasn't even seen it is gone. - She has <sup>[revulsion]</sup> ~~scunner~~ of him over good-night kiss & tells how feels at night coming on ~~and~~ <sup>\*</sup> has resorted to various artifices to escape kiss ... He points out she embraced him before friends - She how <sup>he</sup> little knows how horrible it was to her - Done to deceive ... He thinks she was generous to him in deceiving guests, but she tells him it wasn't generosity at all, but a woman's vanity. - She says ... I'm no grand figure of tragedy - not tall enough - too plain - hands too red - I'm just a woman who made a mistake (12 years ago), Mary abt. us.

- She on the agonies of years of forgiveness, self-deceptions, clinging to straws, &c, & how all ~~these~~ <sup>these</sup> have gone. Like stick in fire, flaming, red, with sparks, now black <sup>&</sup> ~~and~~ cold.

- He says can't we pick up the pieces (of our love) & she says no - love not a broken jar but fine wine - contents spilt - can't pick that up. (The underlinings are Barrie's.)<sup>1</sup>

Here we are again faced with that problem which is always present in the study of Barrie: where does fact end and fiction begin? Once again, too, we are reminded of how even in his most intimate moments he was always watching himself, and analysing his own reactions. The gist of this passage is the wife's insistence on keeping up the appearance of a happy married life in front of other people, which is certainly what Mary Barrie tried to do. What her own motives were in so doing and whether she informed her husband of them we cannot be sure but we can only guess that some incident or conversation triggered off these notes. Certainly the wife in the projected work whose husband had affairs had a more clear-cut problem than Mary Barrie did. But these jottings certainly confirm the impression that Barrie's marriage had been a façade for several years and that Barrie regarded it as a mistake.

1 ANDREW BIRKIN : J M BARRIE AND THE LOST BOYS (LONDON : 1980) p 110, pp 109 + 110



Now let us return to New Year's Eve 1897. When she met Barrie at the home of Lady Lewis in Portland Place, Sylvia Llewelyn Davies was thirty-one and had been married for over five years to the barrister, Arthur Llewelyn Davies. She had three sons; George, aged four and a half, Jack, fourteen months younger, and Peter, who was nearly one. (The family was to be completed by the birth of Michael in 1900 and Nico in 1904.) Before her marriage Sylvia had been a du Maurier, sister of the actor Gerald du Maurier, who was to play Captain Hook in Peter Pan, and daughter of George du Maurier, author of Peter Ibbetson and Trilby. The du Mauriers were frivolous and gay and Sylvia's family background was completely different to that of Arthur. His family lived in Westmorland, where his father, the Reverend John Llewelyn Davies, had been transferred after attacking Imperialism from the pulpit at Windsor. He was a lifelong supporter of workers' rights, trade unionism and women's suffrage and his daughter and six sons grew up in an earnest and intellectual atmosphere.

Arthur first met Sylvia at a dinner party in 1889 and they became engaged after a few weeks but they could not afford to marry until 1892. Arthur had been called to the bar in the previous year and in addition to his own income he received a legacy from an uncle. Sylvia worked with the theatrical dressmaker, Mrs Nettleship, and received some money from her father. They were a striking couple, and Barrie was first attracted to Sylvia as he had been to his wife, by her looks. Her friend, Dolly Ponsonby, described Sylvia thus:

Without being strictly speaking pretty, she has got one of the most delightful, brilliantly sparkling faces I have ever seen. Her nose turns round the corner - also turns right up. Her mouth is quite crooked ... Her eyes are very pretty - hazel and very mischievous. She has pretty black fluffy hair: but her expression is what gives her that wonderful charm, and her low voice.<sup>1</sup>

Sylvia's poignant expression was the only indication of the sadness which was in store but at this point in her life it had not touched her.

Sylvia was not just attractive to Barrie, but with her high spirits, her cleverness and her amusing ways, she also got on well with his wife. By the spring of 1898 Barrie and the Llewelyn Davies family had become friends. Barrie did most to keep the friendship going and won the children over with his games and stories. Mary was aware of Barrie's romantic infatuation for Sylvia but she hid her resentment. She had been through it before with actresses. Had she not stood by while he flirted with Winifred Emery, his leading lady in The Little Minister, and paid her extravagant compliments? She thought at first that this was just another

passing fancy and while she waited for it to be over she occupied herself in beautifying her home, buying clothes, visiting her mother and looking for a cottage.

Sylvia, secure in Arthur's love and her own love for him, accepted Barrie's attentions with amusement. Arthur was the one who was most affected. He knew he was in no danger of losing Sylvia to Barrie but he was disturbed by Barrie's interest in Sylvia, seeing it as a kind of adolescent passion, unnatural in someone of Barrie's age and position. Arthur was also very conscious that Barrie's income was much greater than his own; he resented his possessiveness towards Sylvia and the boys and regarded him as an intruder. He could not understand why Barrie was so interested in other people's children. This was the thing that hurt Mary Barrie most. She longed for a child of her own and was forced to stand by and watch Barrie spending so much time and thought on Sylvia's boys, apparently oblivious of - or deliberately blinding himself to - his wife's feelings.

Let us take time now to look at Barrie's legendary rapport with children; we have already noted how he enjoyed playing with his brother Alexander's children in Dumfries. Another favoured child was Quiller-Couch's son, Bevil. In November 1894 the Quiller-Couches had found lodgings in Fowey for the Barries and Porthos. Some photographs Barrie had taken of Bevil and Porthos were bound into a little book by Mary and her husband added a commentary. The writer Maurice Hewlett's children, Cecco and Pia, were also befriended by Barrie, but he was very discriminating and always chose the children whose friendship he wanted to cultivate.

Another child friend of Barrie's in the 1890s was Pamela Maude, daughter of the actor Cyril Maude who played the title role in The Little Minister. She later recalled the effect Barrie had on her as a child, and it is interesting to note too her impressions of Mary Barrie:

Our parents called him 'Jimmy'. He was unlike anyone we had ever met, or would meet in the future. He looked fragile, but he was strong when he wrestled with Porthos, his St Bernard dog...

Mr Barrie talked a great deal about cricket and wanted Margery (her sister) to like it and to be boyish, but the next moment he was telling us about fairies as though he knew all about them. He was made of silences, but we did not find these strange; they were so much part of him that they expressed him more than anything he could say.

'Jimmy didn't say one word the whole of lunch', we heard Mam say to our father ... but it seemed to us that his silences spoke loudly ... We came to look on Mr Barrie as our friend; he did not seem to belong to the theatre like other playwrights; when he and our parents talked together he told jokes that had

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nothing to do with the play, and he looked shy with the actors and actresses. He and Papa liked to talk about fishing. We never saw him without his pipe. ... Mrs Barrie was lovely ... but we could not feel at ease with her. She did not talk to us and she never smiled when we were with her. Mr Barrie did not talk and she did not smile, and yet he was our companion. When we were away from him he seemed to be with us; he was more present than our parents or Mrs Barrie who were beside us.

In the evening, when the strange morning light had begun to change, Mr Barrie held out a hand to each of us in silence, and we slipped our own into his and walked, still silently, into the beech-wood. We shuffled our feet through leaves and listened, with Mr Barrie, for sudden sound, made by birds and rabbits. One evening we saw a pea-pod lying in the hollow of a great tree-trunk, and we brought it to Mr Barrie. There, inside, was a tiny letter, folded inside the pod, that a fairy had written. Mr Barrie said he could read fairy writing and read it to us. We received several more, in pea-pods, before the end of our visit.<sup>1</sup>

"Mr Barrie did not talk and she did not smile" is a very telling description of the Barries. His silences, which the children accepted without question, were most disconcerting to adults and ultimately unnerved his wife but, like a child, Barrie did not make conversation when he did not feel like it. Mary's sadness and the fact that she made the children feel uncomfortable suggest her great unhappiness in having none of her own. The final paragraph of Pamela Maude's comments has a poetic quality which reminds me of Barrie's description of Shelley in The Little White Bird:

Shelley was a young gentleman and as grown-up as he need ever expect to be. He was a poet, and they are never exactly grown-up.<sup>2</sup>

This vision which Barrie shares with the child and the poet is referred to in the introduction to Peter Pan:

All the characters, whether grown-up or babes, must wear a child's outlook on life as their only important adornment.<sup>3</sup>

One of the happiest summers of Barrie's life was that of 1901, which he spent with the Davies boys and their parents at Black Lake Cottage, near Farnham in Surrey, which Mary had finally found and had renovated. Barrie created for the Davies boys a world of pirates, Indians and what he always called "wrecked islands", and he himself was Captain Swarthy, forerunner of Captain Hook. The photographs

1 ANDREW BIRKIN : J M BARRIE AND THE LOST BOYS (LONDON : 1980) p 50

2 J M BARRIE : THE LITTLE WHITE BIRD (LONDON : 1938) p 135

3 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 19

which Barrie took of the boys' adventures were turned into a book called The Boy Castaways of Black Lake Island. The text was printed and the photographs bound by Constable's. There were only two copies; one for Barrie, and one for Arthur Llewelyn Davies which "lost itself" in a railway carriage, as Barrie tells us when he describes it as "the best and rarest" of his works in the Preface to Peter Pan.

It must have been very difficult for someone like Arthur to understand Barrie. He knew that Barrie was no real threat to him and he had learned to live with Barrie's love for Sylvia and the boys and appeared to accept it as Sylvia did. Barrie's behaviour in joining in games which he invented for the children may have seemed childish to Arthur. It may seem childish to us, too, an adult's occasional normal enjoyment of a child's game taken to extremes, but I think it is too easy just to dismiss such behaviour by saying that Barrie never grew up. His behaviour was childlike in the sense that he still possessed a child's sense of wonder and vision as the poet does and to me it is to be regarded as a rare gift not as a case of retarded development. Barrie was also a curious mixture of the sentimental and the practical. In the preface to Peter Pan he cites the summer at Black Lake as being responsible for the beginnings of that play:

I clutch my brows in vain to remember whether it was a last desperate throw to retain the five of you for a little longer, or merely a cold decision to turn you into bread and butter.<sup>1</sup>

Another point that must be made in discussing Barrie's relationships with children is that he always knew when it was time for them to grow up and move on. He says of the Davies boys:

One by one as you swung monkey-wise from branch to branch in the <sup>wood</sup> world of make-believe you reached the tree of knowledge.<sup>2</sup>

Arthur may also have overlooked the fact that a childless person has to work very hard to earn the love of a child and to form some kind of bond with it which a parent can take for granted.

Underneath all the fun he had with the Davies boys lay Barrie's own yearnings for paternity. Those are revealed in The Little White Bird (1902) where the narrator, Barrie disguised as "a gentle, whimsical, lonely old bachelor," invents a son, Timothy, for himself so that he can compete with the father of the real child, David, for whom George Llewelyn Davies was the model. When David outgrows the games and the stories, as he must, Barrie makes the poignant comment:

"David is not my boy, and he will forget. But Timothy would have remembered."

1 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 4

2 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 4



The passage in which he decides it is time to 'kill off' his imaginary son is very moving:

of Timothy

I wished (so had the phantasy, taken possession of me) that before he went he could have played once in the Kensington Gardens, and have ridden on the fallen trees, calling gloriously to me to look; that he could have sailed one ~~proper~~<sup>paper</sup> galleon on the Round Pond; fain would I have had him chase one hoop a little way down the laughing avenues of childhood, where memory tells us we ~~men do~~<sup>fun</sup> but once, on a long summer day, emerging at the other end as men and women with all the fun to pay for; and I think (thus fancy wantons with me in these desolate chambers) he knew my longings, and said with a boy-like flush that the reason he never did these things was not that he was afraid, for he would have loved to do them all, but because he was not quite like other boys; and, so saying, he let go my finger and faded from before my eyes into another and golden ether; but I shall ever hold that had he been quite like other boys there would have been none braver than my Timothy.<sup>1</sup>

The pathos of this description is only matched in the statement which Mary Barrie makes in one of her books:

What wonderful children visit the dreams of a childless woman, and how little wonderful they are compared with a living child.<sup>2</sup>

It seems to me tragic that Barrie and his wife, with this deepest longing in common, lived together for fifteen years without discussing their problem or attempting to find a solution to it, perhaps in the adoption of a child. As it was, Barrie turned to Sylvia and the boys while Mary was forced to stand by and watch, even finding herself grateful that in their company Barrie came to life while alone with her at home he was depressed. It surprises me that she managed to bear the situation for as long as she did. She found outlets for her creativity in her houses and gardens and in 1905 found a studio in Kensington and took up enamel-work, while in The Little White Bird (1902) Barrie actually announces his intention of writing a book to get his "revenge" on the woman who is about to have a baby:

I decided, unknown even to David, to write the book, 'The Little White Bird; of which she had proved herself incapable, and then when, in the fulness of time, she held her baby on high, implying that she had done a big thing, I was to hold up the book.<sup>3</sup>

The narrator even refers to the child as the "shadow" and the book as the "substance" and the mother has to put him right on this. It constantly amazes me how Barrie

1 J M BARRIE : THE LITTLE WHITE BIRD (LONDON : 1938) p 59

2 JANET DUNBAR : J M BARRIE, THE MAN BEHIND THE IMAGE (LONDON : 1970) p 187

3 J M BARRIE : THE LITTLE WHITE BIRD (LONDON : 1938) p 257



could reveal so much of himself in his writings and yet refuse to discuss his problems with anyone.

By the time that Tommy and Grizel was published in 1900 Mary Barrie had come to accept that her husband's feelings for Sylvia Llewelyn Davies were not of a temporary nature. Although this novel is dedicated to his wife and Barrie began by using her as the model for Grizel, in the course of writing it he switched to Sylvia as model and the description of Grizel's physical beauty reflects Sylvia. We have an important indication of Barrie's feelings for Sylvia in one of his notebooks where he put down revisions. He makes Grizel's nose tip-tilted (like Sylvia's) and adds:

[A]  
~~A~~ woman who will always look glorious as a mother, ... ~~A~~ woman to confide in  
 (no sex <sup>in this,</sup> we feel it in man or woman). All secrets of womanhood you ~~felt~~ feel  
 behind these calm eyes<sup>1</sup>

This combination of motherhood and no sex gets to the heart of things; Sylvia Llewelyn Davies has replaced Margaret Ogilvy in Barrie's affections. Barrie's relationship with Sylvia set the pattern for later relationships in Barrie's life, the most important being that with Lady Cynthia Asquith.<sup>2</sup> He worships the woman first as a mother and looks for no return in terms of an intimate love affair. The woman adores her husband and is devoted to her children; this is the state of affairs which Barrie respects and admires and the last thing he would want would be to jeopardise it. The important thing is that he knows he is safe, as the woman is very happily married, although flattered by his attentions and fond of him as a friend. Barrie is still "harmless", that word which caused him such despair in his youth, in that he is no threat to the woman's marriage and there is no danger of his own manhood ever being put to the test. His first letter to Sylvia sets the tone of their involvement; he flirts in writing but wants nothing more serious. This letter was written in 1898, but Barrie dated it 14 August 1892, pretending that he had known Sylvia at the time of her marriage:

Dear Miss du Maurier,

And so you are to be married tomorrow! And I shall not be present. You know why.

Please allow me to wish you great happiness in your married life. And at the same time I hope you will kindly accept the little wedding gift I am sending you. ... It reaches you somewhat late, but that is owing to circumstances too painful to go into.

With warmest wishes to you and Mr Davis, ~~{sic}~~;

1 ANDREW BIRKIN : J M BARRIE AND THE LOST BOYS (LONDON : 1980) p 67

2 This is discussed in the chapter dealing with Ladies of title

Believe me, dear Miss du Maurier,

Yours sincerely,  
J. M. Barrie.<sup>1</sup>

This state of affairs continued for about ten years in spite of the fact that when Arthur became more prosperous the Llewelyn Davies family moved to Egerton House at Berkhamsted in Hertfordshire in 1904. Mackail describes Barrie's rôle in relation to Sylvia Llewelyn Davies now as:

a kind of extra nurse, extremely useful fairy-godmother,<sup>or</sup> ~~and~~ sometimes even errand-boy.<sup>2</sup>

We can only imagine Mary Barrie's despair and humiliation as she watched her husband behave in this way towards a woman who symbolised motherhood for him. However, we cannot blame Sylvia, who had never asked Barrie to do anything in the first place, did not mean to hurt Mary by accepting Barrie's attentions with fond amusement and did not want to hurt Barrie by refusing them. The years 1898-1908 also spanned Barrie's transition from novelist to highly successful dramatist. His last novel, The Little White Bird, was published in 1902 and the same year saw the first production of Quality Street and The Admirable Crichton, which were received with great acclaim. Peter Pan (1904), the first production ever to acquire a popular following, who threw thimbles onto the stage, preceded Alice-Sit-by-the-Fire (1905) and What Every Woman Knows (1908).

But in 1906 tragedy struck. The first blow was the death of Barrie's agent, Arthur Addison Bright, who went to Switzerland and shot himself because he had embezzled £16,000 of Barrie's money and feared prosecution. Barrie identified the body in Switzerland and blamed himself for Bright's death. He believed that his own vagueness over money matters had put temptation in Bright's way. We might interpret this as another example of Barrie's inability to face facts, but Barrie, believing that the money was blood-money, did not even want it back. However, Bright's widow insisted that it be repaid in full. Barrie then transferred his business affairs and his complete trust to Bright's younger brother, who had never been in partnership with the dead man, and now set up on his own. This arrangement lasted for the next thirty-one years and Barrie was never let down.

Barrie was engaged in attending to his business affairs when he heard that Arthur Llewelyn Davies had been admitted to a London nursing-home with a swelling on his face. Investigation proved that he was suffering from a sarcoma, a malignant tumour, which meant that half his upper jaw and palate had to be removed. Barrie cancelled all his other plans, assumed responsibility for Arthur's medical fees and

1 ANDREW BIRKIN : J M BARRIE AND THE LOST BOYS (LONDON : 1980) p 63

2 DENIS MACKAIL : THE STORY OF J M B (LONDON : 1941) p 354

put himself at the family's disposal. (This devotion and generosity to his friends in times of trouble was characteristic of Barrie and was not done purely out of his love for Sylvia.)/ In the Morgue, the family memoirs, Peter Davies later commented:

J. M. B. stepped in to play the leading part; and played it in the grand manner ... I can sympathise in a way with the point of view that it was the last straw for Arthur that he should have had to accept charity from the strange little genius who had become such an increasing irritation to him in recent years. But on the whole I disagree. We don't really know how deep the irritation went; and even if it went deep, I am convinced that the kindness and devotion of which J. M. B. gave such overwhelming proof from now on, far more than outweighed all that, and that the money and promise of future financial responsibility he was so ready with - and with what charm and tact he must have overcome any resistance! - were an incalculable comfort to the doomed Arthur as well as to Sylvia in her anguish.<sup>1</sup>

It must have been galling for Arthur to have to rely on Barrie but he put on a very brave front and it certainly took a great burden from him, in all his mental and physical suffering, to be relieved of his financial responsibilities. Barrie's devotion to the Davies family at this time also deserves praise for it must not be thought that his life was devoid of other interests. The first months of <sup>1906</sup> 1916 had been full of activity: ~~organising a banquet in honour of Frederick Greenwood's seventy-fifth birthday~~; making a friend of Captain Scott; following the writer A E W Mason, who was standing as liberal M P for Coventry, on his campaigns; attending his mother-in-law's funeral; writing two one-act plays, Josephine, which lampooned Joseph Chamberlain, and Punch, which satirised Bernard Shaw. In addition to all this he had been cultivating the friendship of Millicent, Duchess of Sutherland, which was to give him his entree into aristocratic circles.

Dolly <sup>Pansonby</sup> Pansonby, Sylvia's friend, who visited Arthur on June 14 after his operation, described Sylvia looking after Arthur as "a living emblem of tenderness and sorrow" and added:

Little Barrie was of course there, lurking in the background!<sup>2</sup>

Arthur wrote to his son Peter that same evening:

Mr Barrie is now sitting here with me reading the newspaper, and Mother has gone for a little drive in the motor with Mrs Barrie.<sup>3</sup>

We can gather from this that Mary Barrie, like Arthur Llewelyn Davies, had learned to live with Barrie's feeling for Sylvia and was ready to offer sympathy and comfort to the Llewelyn Davies family. In the same letter Arthur refers to Barrie as

1 ANDREW BIRKIN : J M BARRIE AND THE LOST BOYS (LONDON : 1980) p 135

2 ANDREW BIRKIN : J M BARRIE AND THE LOST BOYS (LONDON : 1980) p 137

3 ANDREW BIRKIN : J M BARRIE AND THE LOST BOYS (LONDON : 1980) p 137

"a very good friend to all of us", and Sylvia, writing to her son Michael two days later describes him as "a fairy prince". Before returning home on June 27, Arthur wrote to his sister Margaret, who was looking after the boys at Egerton House, and asked her to send him the only surviving copy of The Boy Castaways. He found comfort in the photographs now that he was separated from his sons.

The Llewelyn Davies family spent part of that summer at Rustington and Barrie was now accepted there as part of the family, Arthur referring to him now as "Jimmy" rather than "Sylvia's friend". Even Dolly Ponsonby, who visited the Rustington household on August 17, gives Barrie grudging credit:

Mr Barrie is always with him (Arthur), a nurse to the children and an extraordinarily tactful and helpful companion to Sylvia and Arthur.<sup>1</sup>

Later that summer the Llewelyn Davies family stayed at Fortingall, where the Barries had rented a house. In mid-September Arthur learned that the tumour had spread and that no further operation was possible. In spite of all the love and kindness which Barrie had shown towards him and his family it must have caused Arthur great pain before he died, on April 18 1907, to read the dedication to Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens which Barrie had intended as a tribute to the Llewelyn Davies family:

To Sylvia and Arthur Llewelyn Davies  
and their boys (my boys).<sup>2</sup>

This possessive streak in Barrie's nature now found fulfilment in those tragic circumstances. He assumed financial responsibility for the boys and Sylvia, helping her to buy a new home in London at 23 Campden Hill Square, not far from Kensington Gardens, and Leinster Corner where the Barries had been living since 1902.

Sylvia, heartbroken and disorientated by Arthur's death, was glad to turn to Barrie for help in practical matters but there was no question of him ever replacing her husband in her affections. By this time Mary Barrie had made far more friends of her own and had given up enamelling; she and her husband were now leading largely separate lives. For the past ten years Mary had shown remarkable self-control and now she was to have her chance of happiness. In the summer of 1908 Captain Scott, who was now a friend of Barrie's, became engaged to Kathleen Bruce, the sculptress. She also had another admirer, a young law student, Gilbert Cannan, who since the previous summer had been secretary to Barrie's Committee campaigning for the abolition of the Censor. Cannan wanted to become a writer and Barrie was flattered by his admiration. Mary listened to his story of his love for Captain Scott's fiancée. Cannan wrote to Kathleen Bruce:

1 ANDREW BIRKIN : J M BARRIE AND THE LOST BOYS (LONDON : 1980) p 141

2 ANDREW BIRKIN : J M BARRIE AND THE LOST BOYS (LONDON : 1980) p 146



Yesterday Lillah (McCarthy) and Mrs Barrie came and had tea - Mrs Barrie suddenly began to talk to me like a mother. She really is a dear thing, and she seems to need a good deal of me - I feel the need and give - gladly.<sup>1</sup>

What Every Woman Knows opened on September 3, 1908, to great praise from the critics. On the previous day Kathleen Bruce had married Captain Scott, and Mary Barrie was happy to console Gilbert Cannan.

During the summer of 1908 Barrie had been involved with the Censorship Committee and work on What Every Woman Knows, and as a result had seen little of Sylvia and the boys, who had been staying in the New Forest. He now proposed that they should join himself and Mary on a skiing holiday of three weeks in Switzerland, at Christmas. Barrie also invited Gilbert Cannan. Was Barrie too preoccupied or unobservant to notice his wife's feelings for Cannan or did he chose not to see? We shall never know for certain. According to Birkin, Jack Davies, aged thirteen, asked Barrie why Mary was always with Cannan, but his reply is unrecorded. There is a possibility that he may have regarded it as an innocent flirtation, like the relationships he had with actresses in the course of his work. We have no evidence of Cannan's allegation that 'Sylvia encouraged and abetted his affair with Mary Barrie', which Birkin quotes from Diana Farr's Gilbert Cannan : A Georgian Prodigy.<sup>2</sup>

At any rate, Barrie did not learn of his wife's adultery with Gilbert Cannan until July 28, 1909, when he was informed of it by Mr Hunt, the gardener at Black Lake. The staff there had known about it since the previous November, when Mary and Cannan had stayed at the cottage in Barrie's absence, but if Mary had not criticised Hunt's gardening skills he might have kept quiet. Barrie's undefended suit for divorce was heard on October 13, 1909, and he was granted a decree nisi with costs; he found an outlet for some of his feelings in The Twelve-Pound Look<sup>3</sup>, which had its first performance in 1910.

When he had first heard of his wife's adultery Barrie offered to forgive her and said he would never refer to it again if she promised to have nothing more to do with Cannan. He offered her a deed of separation virtually on her own terms, but Mary refused that too; she wanted nothing but freedom to marry her lover. Cannan, aware of the damaging effects his involvement in the Barries' divorce case would have on his literary career, hoped to 'share' Mary, but she was adamant. Mary wrote to H.G.Wells early in August 1909:

He (Barrie) seems to have developed the most ardent passion for me now that he has lost me; ... he is distracted and I am dreadfully sorry; ... but I have no fear for my happiness, none at all.<sup>4</sup>

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- 1 ANDREW BIRKIN : J M BARRIE AND THE LOST BOYS (LONDON : 1980) p 167  
 2 ANDREW BIRKIN : J M BARRIE AND THE LOST BOYS (LONDON : 1980) p 170  
 3 This play is discussed in the chapter dealing with Spinsters and Independent Women  
 4 ANDREW BIRKIN : J M BARRIE AND THE LOST BOYS (LONDON : 1980) p 176



Divorce was ~~unthinkable to millions~~ <sup>an appalling prospect</sup> in 1909 and Barrie was afraid of the scandal but he must also have been tormented by the realisation that his wife had turned for fulfilment to another man. Mary wrote to Peter Davies in 1941:

J. M.'s tragedy was that he knew that as a man he was a failure and that love in its fullest sense could never be felt by him or experienced, and it was this knowledge that led to his sentimental philanderings.<sup>1</sup>

In an effort to contradict false rumours that Mary Barrie had had many lovers, Meredith's son, Will, wrote to Charles Scribner, Barrie's American publisher:

The whole truth is that Mrs B is a woman - with a woman's desires - which for many years she had controlled (& she had no children, which made it harder). Barrie / is a son born to a mother - long after the rest of her family<sup>2</sup> - & as so often is the case - with genius but with little virility. ... She loves the man, as a young woman loves a man - & still loves Barrie as a mother loves a helpless child. Barrie urged her to return to him & give up the other - she, having at length after long battling against it, given in to the longing of her heart after a virile man & no doubt the secret woman's longing for the birth of a child, would not.<sup>3</sup>

One of the saddest factors in the matter of the Barries' divorce seems to me to be that each had great understanding of and sympathy for the other. This comes out very strongly in Mary's letter to H G Wells. Will Meredith seems to have summed up the situation quite shrewdly and it is ironic that Mary's feelings for Barrie are those "of a mother for a helpless child". She longs to comfort him and knows that he cannot be blamed for what he cannot help. It is also to Mary's credit that she never once cited her husband's long association with Sylvia, and she made no public defence of her infidelity. Barrie did not like to discuss his own broken marriage: he knew where the fault lay. He would not hear a word against Mary and he did not blame Cannan. Kathleen Scott remained a friend of the Cannans and kept Barrie in touch with their affairs; Barrie wrote to her of Gilbert Cannan:

I always held that he had many fine qualities and I hope they will yet bring him to port.<sup>4</sup>

Mary married Gilbert Cannan in 1910 but remained childless and in 1917 Barrie learned of her marital troubles. There had been rumours that Mary's maid had become pregnant after being seduced by Gilbert and now he had left Mary for another woman and was receiving treatment for a mental disorder. Mary was later to divorce him but meanwhile she also had financial problems and was working in a hospital depôt in

1 ANDREW BIRKIN : J M BARRIE AND THE LOST BOYS (LONDON : 1980) p 180

2 This point is inaccurate. Barrie's sister, Maggie, was three years his junior.

3 ANDREW BIRKIN : J M BARRIE AND THE LOST BOYS (LONDON : 1980) pp 179 & 180

4 ANDREW BIRKIN : J M BARRIE AND THE LOST BOYS (LONDON : 1980) p 259

Chelsea:

Barrie wrote to Mary on March 5, 1917:

My dear Mary,

It would be silly of us not to meet, and indeed I wanted to go to you all day yesterday. I thought perhaps you would rather come here, and of course which ever you prefer is what I prefer, but that is your only option as I mean to see you whether the idea scares you or not. Painful in a way the first time but surely it need not be so afterwards. How about coming here on Wednesday to lunch at 1.30? If you are feeling well enough I wish you were doing war work. There must be posts you are so particularly fitted for. We could have some talk about that. All personal troubles outside the war seem so small nowadays. But, just one thing I should like to say, because no one can know it as well as I, that never in this world could a young literary man have started with ~~a~~ better chances than Mr Cannan, when he had you at the helm.

Yours affectionately,

J.M.B.<sup>1</sup>

Barrie offered to pay Mary an annual allowance and to see her once a year, but that was all.

Having followed Mary Barrie's relationship with Gilbert Cannan to its conclusion, let us now return to 1909 and see how the news of Mary's adultery affected Barrie's friendship with Sylvia Llewelyn Davies. Sir George Lewis, Barrie's solicitor, advised him to restrain his friendship with Sylvia until the divorce was over in case Mary brought her name into the divorce proceedings, but those fears proved groundless. Barrie had been staying in A E W Mason's flat and he went to Switzerland with Mason while Sylvia took the boys on holiday to Devon. There is no record of Sylvia's reaction to the failure of Barrie's marriage but Peter Davies later wrote:

Whether Sylvia regarded the divorce as, ultimately, a simplification of the relation in which she stood to him (Barrie), or the exact reverse, who can say? ... That (she) found him a comforter of infinite sympathy and tact, and a mighty convenient slave, and that she thankfully accepted his money as a gift from the gods to herself and her children - all that is clear enough. I think that she laughed at him a little, too, and was a little sorry for him, with all his success, as anyone who knew him well and liked him was more or less bound to be. I mean sorry for him in a general way, quite apart from the pity which his misery over the fact and machinery and publicity of divorce must have stirred in any generous breast.<sup>2</sup>

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1 ANDREW BIRKIN : J M BARRIE AND THE LOST BOYS (LONDON : 1980) pp 259 & 260

2 ANDREW BIRKIN : J M BARRIE AND THE LOST BOYS (LONDON : 1980) p 177

Barrie wrote to Sylvia from Switzerland, asking for news of the boys, and her own health, which had caused concern since Christmas, but made no mention of his forthcoming divorce. Peter Davies commented:

I doubt if he exposed his wounds much to anyone, being in most ways an exceedingly reserved character himself.<sup>1</sup>

Again we see that Barrie, who revealed so much of himself in his works, found it virtually impossible to discuss his personal problems; neither Mary nor Sylvia ever really won his confidence.

Barrie returned from Switzerland towards the end of September and by the end of November he had moved into the flat in Adelphi Terrace which his old friend, Lady Lewis, had found for him. Helped by Elizabeth Lucas she had organised the move from ~~Leinster~~<sup>Leinster</sup> Corner, and also found staff<sup>2</sup> to look after Barrie when he resumed his bachelor life. Barrie's personal life now revolved round Sylvia and the boys.

But there was to be further tragedy: on October 15 Sylvia collapsed and cancer was diagnosed, too close to the heart to operate. The news was kept from Sylvia, and the Davies boys' nurse, the faithful Mary Hodgson,<sup>3</sup> was sworn to secrecy. By Christmas 1909 Sylvia was confined to her bedroom, attended by Nurse Loosemore, and in the spring she had to use a bath-chair. Barrie was always in attendance, doing everything in his power to alleviate the situation. By July Sylvia was convinced she was seriously ill and in order to be told the truth she suggested taking the boys on holiday to Devon. Barrie approved but her mother was horrified. Ashton Farm was the house chosen for the holiday because of its proximity to the River Oare, which would provide fishing for the boys, but there was no doctor within miles. Sylvia's mother occupied the only spare room in the farmhouse and Barrie had to find accommodation in the nearest village, but he came every day to sit with Sylvia. Sylvia's mother wrote regularly to her daughter May, giving accounts of Sylvia's condition. A doctor was now to sleep in the house and Sylvia cried when she heard this, knowing now that there was no hope. In her will, which she wrote shortly before she died, on August 27, 1910, she says:

J.M.B.I know will do everything in his power to help our boys - to advise, to comfort, to sympathise in all their joys and sorrows.<sup>4</sup>

This trust was fulfilled by Barrie, who became guardian to the boys after Sylvia's death as he had no other immediate family responsibilities and more time and money to devote to the boys than any member of their parents' families.

For twelve years Barrie had worshipped Sylvia as the quintessence of motherhood and she had been the woman who was central to his life. He had apparently been

1 ANDREW BIRKIN : J M BARRIE AND THE LOST BOYS (LONDON : 1980) p 178

2 Barrie's staff are discussed in the chapter dealing with Servants

3 Mary Hodgson is discussed in the chapter dealing with Servants

4 ANDREW BIRKIN : J M BARRIE AND THE LOST BOYS (LONDON : 1980) p 189

content to put her on a pedestal and had respected her obvious love for her husband, to whom he had also proved a devoted friend, but after Arthur's death and his own divorce did Barrie hope for more?

In 1926, when Nico Davies married, Barrie gave his wife some of Sylvia's jewellery, including a diamond and sapphire ring which, he told Nico, he had given to Sylvia as they would have been married if she had lived. In 1952 Jack Davies recalled; that, when he returned from Minehead on the day of his mother's death, Barrie broke the news to him and added that Sylvia had promised to marry him. This would certainly have been a practical solution for both of them. Barrie had adored her for years and loved her children. If that is what Barrie wished, having taken so much from him, she could hardly have refused. It may have been that, knowing she was dying, she agreed. But no mention of marriage was ever made known to Sylvia's family in her lifetime and none survives in later correspondence. There was certainly no possibility of Sylvia ever caring for Barrie as she had cared for Arthur; the fondness and gratitude she felt towards Barrie could never replace what she had shared with her husband. Peter Davies sums up the situation and Barrie's connection with the Llewelyn Davies family:

The two sublime creatures of one's childhood die when one is too young to have much sense of reality, and the naïve impression remains, so that in after life no one who survives to meet the more calculating glance of one's maturity can ever move in the same dimension as the enchanted dead. ... But it does seem to me that a marriage between Sylvia, the widow, still so beautiful in her forty-fourth year, of the splendid Arthur, and the strange little creature who adored her and dreamed, as he surely must have dreamed, of stepping into Arthur's shoes, would have been an affront, really, to any reasonable person's sense of the fitness of things. And I do not believe that Sylvia seriously contemplated it ... Let me not be thought unmindful, in writing what I have written, of the innumerable benefits and kindnesses I have received, at one time and another, from the aforesaid strange little creature, to whom, in the end, his connection with our family brought so much more sorrow than happiness.<sup>1</sup>

We have now examined Barrie's relationship with the three women with whom he was most closely involved up to 1910: Margaret Ogilvy, wife of David Barrie; Mary Ansell, whom he married; and Sylvia, wife of Arthur Llewelyn Davies. Nowhere in Barrie's works is there a scene between husband and wife which illustrates the mature adult relationship which Sylvia and Arthur Llewelyn Davies shared. The wives in Barrie's works are influenced by his experience of two marriages; his mother's

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1 ANDREW BIRKIN : J M BARRIE AND THE LOST BOYS (LONDON : 1980) p 193



and his own. Margaret Ogilvy put her children before her husband and Barrie does not question the supremacy of the mother in the family before 1915, in The New Word. Barrie's father was very much the breadwinner in the background, treated by his wife as another helpless child who had to be humoured. Some wives who are mainly mothers and treat their husbands in this way have already been discussed in the section dealing with Mothers. The remaining wives in this category, with the exception of Maggie Wylie in What Every Woman Knows (1908), are minor characters.

Mrs Meredith in When A Man's Single (1888) exists primarily as the mother of Nell, one of the romantic heroines. Her feelings for her husband are defined thus:

She loved him, but probably no woman can live with a man for many years without having an indulgent contempt for him, and wondering how he is considered a good man of business.<sup>1</sup>

Another point about her which brings Margaret Ogilvy to mind is that she "counted time by the death of her only son."<sup>2</sup>

Mrs Brand appears in Old Friends (1910), a very weak one-act play reminiscent of Ibsen, but the theme of hereditary syphilis is replaced by that of hereditary alcoholism. At the beginning of the play she is described as being as quiet as her husband is cheery but by the end she is a tigress, snarling in defence of her young when her husband, a reformed alcoholic, discovers that his daughter has taken to drink:

When after I married you I found out what you were, I - yes, the love of woman still made me forgive you, pity you, try to help you. But from the day when I discovered what legacy you had given my child - the love of woman changed into something harsher.<sup>3</sup>

When her husband boasts of how he has beaten his drink problem she maintains that it gave him up and he can take no credit. However, they are finally reconciled and resolve to fight together to help their daughter.

Mrs Tovey in Seven Women (1917) mothers and humours her husband and their relationship serves as a background to the main events of the play, which arise from the trick which Mr Tovey plays on his friend the bachelor Captain Rattray by telling him that seven women have been invited to dinner. It turns out that the seven different women he has described are seven aspects of the same woman, Leonora. The Toveys are described as "a pleasant couple of the agreeable age"<sup>4</sup> and this phrase might also be applied to the Coades in Dear Brutus (1917) and the Morlands in Mary Rose (1920).

1 J M BARRIE : WHEN A MAN'S SINGLE (LONDON : 1938) p 52

2 J M BARRIE : WHEN A MAN'S SINGLE (LONDON : 1938) p 56

3 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 660

4 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 633



Mrs Coade is the "nicest" of the ladies who find themselves in Lob's house on Midsummer Eve. Her face is described as "soft", a word which Barrie also applies to Margaret Ogilvy's; there is no mention of their having children but she mothers her husband and has a "kind, beaming smile that children could warm their hands at."<sup>1</sup> When Mr Coade returns from the enchanted wood he does not remember that Mrs Coade is his wife and he proposes to her again. She fishes for compliments, like Barrie's mother:

MRS COADE : ... And are you sure you never spoke to me before? Do think.

COADE : Not to my knowledge. Never ... except in dreams.<sup>2</sup>

He does not think of her as old but remembers her coming across a lawn in a black and green dress, just as Barrie was able to visualise his mother as a child in a white pinafore and a magenta frock. In the wood Mr Coade reverted to the life of a child or a faun, skipping around and playing on his pipe, but he is glad to return to his wife, who is waiting with his muffler.

Ellen, the Colonel's wife in Barbara's Wedding (1918), is the character who is most obviously a mother to her husband, because he has become senile and requires to be constantly tended. Most of the action of the play consists of his visions of the past. Like Margaret Ogilvy and Mrs Morland, Ellen has known sorrow and learned to live with it. This description of her love for her husband reminds me of the love that was shown towards Margaret Ogilvy, by Jane Ann:

No one, you know, understands the Colonel as she does, no one can soothe him and bring him out of his imaginings as she can. He hastens to her. He is no longer cold. That is her great reward for all she does for him.<sup>3</sup>

Mr and Mrs Morland in Mary Rose, (1920) are the parents of Mary Rose, who is discussed elsewhere.<sup>4</sup> Like Margaret Ogilvy, Mrs Morland is the centre of power in the household but she has mothered her husband and boosted his ego for so long without him realising it that she herself is now unaware of it. This description of Mrs Morland sums up this kind of managing woman, typified by Margaret Ogilvy, whose husband never sees through her:

Mrs Morland knows everything about her husband except that she does <sup>nearly</sup> all his work for him. ... She then makes up his mind for him, and is still unaware that she is doing it. He has so often heard her say (believing it, too) that he is difficult to move when once he puts his foot down that he accepts himself modestly as a man of this character, and never tries to remember when it was that he last put down his foot. In the ~~old~~ <sup>odd</sup> talks which the happily married sometimes <sup>hold</sup> have

1 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 522

2 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 521

3 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 792

4 In the chapter dealing with Romantic Heroines and Actresses

about the future he always hopes he will be taken first, being the managing one, and she says little beyond pressing his hand, but privately she has decided that there must be another arrangement.<sup>1</sup>

The character of Maggie Wylie in What Every Woman Knows (1908) is based on Margaret Ogilvy and the play opens in a little town in Scotland where Maggie plays substitute mother to her father and two brothers but longs for a husband and a home of her own. Her concern with appearances is reminiscent of Jess McQuimpha<sup>2</sup>, who is also based on Margaret Ogilvy. If you were to pay a social call on Maggie,

very likely she would exclaim, 'This is a pleasant surprise!' though she has seen you coming up the avenue and has just had time to whip the dustcloths off the chairs.<sup>3</sup>

Maggie's tragedy is that she is not good-looking and is convinced she lacks charm but she has "a passion for romance". Her chance comes when John Shand, a proud but impoverished student, breaks into the Wylies' home to read their books. (The Wylies lack education but have a great respect for it, symbolised by their unread library.) Maggie's father and brothers, who are very concerned for her happiness, put a proposition to John Shand: they will invest £300 in his education if at the end of five years he will marry Maggie. The bargain is struck and Maggie immediately begins to educate herself so that she will be able to keep up with John Shand. Her brother, David, makes those memorable comments:

She's queer, Maggie. I wonder how some clever writer has never noticed how queer women are. It's my belief you could write a whole book about them.... It was very noble of her to tell him she's twenty-six. ... But I thought she was twenty-seven.<sup>4</sup>

Here is the guile of Margaret Ogilvy, combined with the interest she took in her family's education. Maggie Wylie also shares Margaret Ogilvy's ambition. She waits six years for John Shand, until he is elected as a Member of Parliament:

Do you think I grudge not being married to him yet?  
Was I to hamper him till the fight was won?<sup>5</sup>

John Shand is Maggie's "ideal", just as Kenneth is Mrs Dowey's in The Old Lady Shows Her Medals, and like Grizel in Tommy and Grizel part of the attraction of the man she loves lies in the fact that he needs her. However, Maggie is shrewd enough to realise that John's life so far has consisted of work and he has missed out on the fun; he has no sense of humour and his life lacks romance. She tells him:  
if you were to love, what a passion it would be.<sup>6</sup>

1 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 539

2 Jess McQuimpha is discussed in the chapters dealing with Mothers, and Spinsters and Independent Women

3 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 311

4 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 329

5 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 331

6 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 343

and:

You'll miss the prettiest thing in the world, and all owing to me (romance) ...  
 If I were John Shand I would no more want to take Maggie Wylie with me through  
 the beautiful door that has opened <sup>wide</sup> for you than I would want to take an old  
 pair of ~~shoes.~~<sup>shoon.</sup><sup>1</sup>

John Shand is a champion of women's rights:

not for personal ends, but because his blessed days of poverty gave him a light  
 upon their needs.<sup>2</sup>

and he has formed a Ladies' Committee. Maggie's fears are realised when John falls  
 in love with Lady Sybil Tenterden.<sup>3</sup> Maggie confides in Sybil's aunt, the Comtesse  
 de la Brière, after the Comtesse has realised just how vital Maggie is to John:

He loves to think he does it all himself; that's the way of men. I'm six years  
 older than he is. I'm plain, and have no charm. I shouldn't have let him marry  
 me. I'm trying to make up for it.<sup>4</sup>

But in spite of her inferiority to Lady Sybil in beauty and poise Maggie proves  
 her superior intelligence and loyalty. With the Comtesse's help, she arranges for  
 John and Sybil to live together in a cottage and after a short time Sybil tires of  
 John and he is relieved. This exchange between Maggie and her brother David shows  
 Barrie's shrewd understanding of Maggie's love for John which is motherly and for-  
 giving:

DAVID : Does he deserve to be saved after the way he has treated you?

MAGGIE : You stupid David. What has that to do with it?<sup>5</sup>

John returns to Maggie and wonders how he could have made such a mistake with regard  
 to Sybil. Unlike Kate<sup>6</sup> in The Twelve-Pound Look, Maggie, content in her rôle as  
 helpmate, assures him he is a strong man and self-made. Here is Margaret Ogilvy  
 again, flattering and humouring the men in her family. John is sure nobody ever  
 helped him but Maggie suggests that the click of her knitting needles might have  
 played a part. Then she challenges him:

Is it so terrible for you to find that my love for you had made me able to help  
 you in the little things?<sup>7</sup>

Finally, Maggie shares her secret with John and encourages him to laugh at himself,  
 which he does after a struggle:

It's nothing unusual I've done, John. Every man who is high up loves to think

1 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 344

2 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 350

3 Lady Sybil Tenterden is discussed in the chapter dealing with Ladies of Title

4 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 360

5 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 371

6 Kate is discussed in the chapter dealing with Spinsters and Independent Women

7 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 389

that he has done it all himself; and the wife smiles, and lets it go at that. It's our only joke. Every woman knows that.<sup>1</sup>

It was not until 1915 in The New Word and later in A Well-Remembered Voice (1918) that Barrie explored the relationship between father and son. Barrie's own marriage is reflected in both plays in that there is no real communication between the wives and their husbands. Mr Torrance in The New Word;

has the reputation of being a somewhat sarcastic gentleman; he must be dogged, too, otherwise he would have ceased long ago to be sarcastic to his wife, on whom wit falls like pellets on sandbags; all the dents they make are dimples.<sup>2</sup>

Roger Torrance is about to leave for the front as a second lieutenant and his mother wants her husband to show affection for his son. She keeps harping on motherhood:

I am not asking you to be a mother to him, John. ... I quite understand that a man can't think all the time about his son as a mother does.<sup>3</sup>

Mr Torrance tries in vain to tell her that it would terrify his son if he showed warmth towards him, but by the end of the play father and son have reached a closeness which the mother cannot approach and they are conspirators against her, just as Barrie and his mother excluded his father.

In A Well-Remembered Voice (1918) Dick, the son of the family, who has been killed in the war, was on the face of it closer to his mother than his father:

All the lovely things which happened in that house in the days when Dick was alive were between him and her, those two shut the door softly on old Don.<sup>4</sup>

Like Mrs Torrance, Mrs Don underestimates her husband's feelings:

In a sense you may be glad that you don't miss him <sup>in</sup> the way I do.<sup>5</sup>

After a séance, Dick's ghost, who can only be seen by the one who misses him most, appears to his father. Mrs Don had accused her husband of not caring as much as she did about Dick's death but Dick does not want his father to be sentimental:

Mother's a darling, but she doesn't need me as much as you do.<sup>6</sup>

Barrie's treatment of the relationship between father and child reaches its peak in the scene between the single parent, the artist Dearth, and his dream daughter, Margaret, in Dear Brutus (1920). What passes between them is very moving but Dearth shows that over-possessiveness which endangered Barrie's relationship with Michael Davies when he tells Margaret he will even write her love-letters for

1 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 389

2 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 740

3 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 742

4 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 762

5 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 766

6 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 777



her and that he is personally responsible for her ears and dimples. After fifty years of mother worship, Barrie, who had become a surrogate parent himself in 1910, now realised just how selfish women like Margaret Ogilvy could be in monopolising their children's affections and relegating their husbands to the background. He must have looked back and seen his own father in a different light, but in reversing the situation and strengthening the bond between father and child at the expense of the mother he is still insisting on an exclusive affection; it is still an emotionally unbalanced relationship and there is still no real understanding between the parents.

We come now to the wives in Barrie's works whose creation was influenced by the experience of his own marriage to Mary Ansell. Kate in The Twelve-Pound Look (1910) is discussed elsewhere;<sup>1</sup> the others are Emily Ross in The Will (1913), Mabel Purdie and Alice Dearth in Dear Brutus (1917) and, most important, Grizel in Tommy and Grizel (1900), with whom I shall deal last.

When The Will opens Philip Ross and his wife Emily are a devoted young couple whose life looks like being a romance but they grow apart and by the end of the play Sir Philip is a lonely man who ~~bequeaths~~<sup>bequeathes</sup> his property to the men he has beaten in business; his wife is dead, his children are a disappointment and he knows he cannot buy happiness. The root of the trouble is the "black spot"<sup>2</sup> in all of us which will grow and destroy us if it gets the chance. In Philip Ross's case the flaw is his greed for wealth and although he resembles Barrie in his ambition to earn a pound a day we know that it was not materialism which destroyed Barrie's marriage. Philip Ross stresses that his wife was never Lady Ross, which reinforces my opinion that Barrie refused a knighthood because he did not want Mary to have a title. Emily Ross began married life in poverty and was coarsened by success; her marriage to Barrie when he was already a successful novelist did not cause such a drastic change in Mary Barrie, although she boasted of her husband's wealth and spent money to compensate for her unhappiness. It seems to me that Barrie's material prosperity made him even more aware of the sense of personal failure occasioned by his divorce.

We have seen how the Barries ~~concluded~~<sup>conducted</sup> their divorce with dignity and that later Barrie did not malign Gilbert Cannan. Mr Purdie in Dear Brutus (1917) has no basis in reality; he is a caricature, finally forced to recognise that he is "a philanderer", not "a deeply passionate chap".<sup>3</sup> His wife Mabel is not a fully developed character in her own right. She acts as a foil to her husband and is finally forced to accept that he will never change; she warns him that she will only stay with him as long as she feels so inclined. Mabel Purdie's circumstances bear

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1 Kate is discussed in the chapter dealing with Spinsters and Independent Women

2 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 704

3 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 512

some resemblance to Mary Barrie's in her marriage to Gilbert Cannan, whom she finally left, but I think this is coincidence rather than any deliberate intention on Barrie's part. There is irony too in the description of Alice Dearth, in Dear Brutus, which might be applied to Mary Barrie:

there is nothing the matter with her except that she would always choose the wrong man, good man or bad man, but the wrong man for her.<sup>1</sup>

Alice Dearth resembles Mary Barrie in that her husband is an artist and they have no children, which he bitterly regrets. However, unlike the Barries, the Dearths are to have a second chance to make a success of their marriage, although the play ends before we see them "breasting their way into the light".<sup>2</sup>

The childhood and mental breakdown of Grizel, heroine of Tommy and Grizel (1900), are discussed in the section dealing with Independent Women. Here I want to concentrate more closely on how she is affected by the temperament of Tommy Sandys, whom she has loved since childhood. As I have already mentioned, when Barrie began writing this novel his wife was the model for Grizel but she was later replaced by Sylvia Llewelyn Davies. As a result Grizel is one of the most maternal of Barrie's heroines but she has no children of her own; Tommy closely resembles Barrie but we cannot be sure just how closely Grizel resembles Mary Ansell; however, the relationship of those fictitious characters throws further light on Barrie's marriage.

Like Barrie, after six years in London, Tommy Sandys becomes famous as a writer. Tommy's fame rests on his apparent knowledge of women and he has come to be recognised as an authority on them but his knowledge is not based on actual experience of them but on his imaginative sympathy, which enables him to understand them to the extent that he is able to tell them what he thinks they want to hear. His nickname 'Sentimental Tommy' arises from this ability to put himself into other people's shoes, which Barrie does constantly. He closely resembles the young Barrie in that:

It seemed <sup>that</sup> he was only able to speak to ladies when they were not there.<sup>3</sup> In regard to them the artist in him is stirred, but not the man. His friend Pym tells him that he is incapable of experiencing love, just as Mary Barrie described her husband to H.G. Wells. Like Barrie, Tommy "could be most loyal and tender so long as it was understood that he meant nothing in particular". This reminds me of the flirtatious letters Barrie writes to women in his later life. Of prime importance is the fact that Tommy:

dreamt constantly that he was married, to whom scarcely mattered; he saw himself coming out of a church a married man, and the fright woke him up.<sup>4</sup>

1 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 527

2 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 528

3 J M BARRIE : TOMMY AND GRIZEL (LONDON : 1938) p 15

4 J M BARRIE : TOMMY AND GRIZEL (LONDON : 1938) p 35

Grizel, whose outstanding qualities are her independence and honesty sees through Tommy's sentimentality. She always loved him because "he had such need of her". This is reminiscent of Will Meredith's comment that Mary loved Barrie as a woman loves a helpless child. In this respect Grizel is the opposite of Tommy's sister Elspeth<sup>1</sup>, who helped Tommy by her helplessness. I think Barrie's analysis of those two different kinds of women is very shrewd. Grizel and Tommy engage in a duel for mastery. This theme is very common in Barrie's writings; men and women do not meet on equal terms, each having something to give to complement the other. Thus we have the dominant mother figure or the masterful man. Tommy's plight can be summed up in this way:

He did not love, but he was the perfect lover.<sup>2</sup>

When he realises the depth of Grizel's feelings for him, the artist in him is enthralled but the man appalled; this dichotomy describes Barrie's own position. We have previously observed his ability to stand back and watch himself with detachment. I think we are coming very close to Barrie's feelings for Mary when Tommy ponders what he would like to have said to Grizel:

I want to love you, dear one, you are the only woman I ever wanted to love, but apparently I can't. ... He knew it was tragic that such love as hers should be given to him; but what more could he do than he was doing? Ah, if only it could have been a world of boys and girls!<sup>3</sup>

It is in this respect that Barrie never grew up; in his inability to establish a mature loving relationship with his wife. Tommy tries to explain his dilemma to Grizel:

I think I love you in my own way, but I thought I loved you in their way, and it is the only way that counts in this world of theirs.<sup>4</sup>

He says that he is a puzzle to himself and that he does not want to marry anyone but that he would die for Grizel.<sup>4</sup> Grizel is very maternal towards Tommy:

He was the man who had caused her so much agony, and she was looking at him with the eternally forgiving smile of the mother.<sup>5</sup>

She sends him a scathing letter when he writes a very successful book on the theme of unrequited love:

No one was ever loved more truly than you. ... I want you to be a real man. But you will not let me help you.<sup>6</sup>

The nearest that Barrie comes to discussing sex is in the following passage:

1 Elspeth is discussed in the chapter dealing with Romantic Heroines and Actresses

2 J M BARRIE : TOMMY AND GRIZEL (LONDON : 1938) p 159

3 J M BARRIE : TOMMY AND GRIZEL (LONDON : 1938) p-179 pp. 168 + 179

4 J M BARRIE : TOMMY AND GRIZEL (LONDON : 1938) p 278

5 J M BARRIE : TOMMY AND GRIZEL (LONDON : 1938) p 229

6 J M BARRIE : TOMMY AND GRIZEL (LONDON : 1938) pp 304 & 305

(Tommy) shuddered to think of ~~what~~<sup>the</sup> might have been, had a girl, who could love as Grizel did, loved such a man as her father. He thanked his Maker, did Tommy, that he, who was made as ~~an~~<sup>those</sup> other men, had avoided raising passions in her. I wonder how he was so sure? Do we know all that Grizel had to fight?<sup>1</sup>

I think the feelings Grizel expresses for Tommy in the foregoing quotations were shared by Mary Barrie. Grizel in fiction resorts to noble renunciation; knowing that Tommy does not love her as she loves him she originally rejects his offer of marriage and for the same reason she does not want to have his child. Mary Barrie, the real woman, turned to another man for the fulfilment she could not find with her husband, who, like Tommy, was only really capable of sentimental philandering.

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1 J M BARRIE : TOMMY AND GRIZEL (LONDON : 1938) p 292



CHAPTER 4 : SPINSTERS AND INDEPENDENT WOMEN

The most important spinster in Barrie's life was his sister, Jane Ann Adamson Barrie (1847-1895). She was the second daughter of the family and one of Barrie's two unmarried sisters. (The other, Sara, was adopted by her uncle, David Ogilvy, and kept house for him at the manse in Motherwell, where they were joined by Barrie's father in 1895 after the death of his wife and daughter.) Jane Ann's devotion to her mother and the rôle she played in Barrie's life have already been outlined in the chapter dealing with Mothers. Here I should like to illustrate her character and rôle more fully by discussing her portrayal in the two books of Barrie's in which she appears. The first is Margaret Ogilvy (1896), Barrie's portrait of his mother and sister; the second is A Window in Thrums (1889), in which Jane Ann appears thinly disguised as Leeby, the daughter of the McQumpha family.

Barrie concludes Margaret Ogilvy by describing the deaths of his mother and Jane Ann; here is his tribute to his sister:

I saw her (his mother) lying dead, and her face was beautiful and serene. But it was the other room I entered first, and it was by my sister's side that I fell upon my knees. The rounded completeness of a woman's life that was my mother's had not been for her. She would not have it at the price. 'I'll never leave you, mother'. - 'Fine I know you'll never leave me'. The fierce joy of loving too much, it is a terrible thing.<sup>1</sup>

His mother always reassured Jane Ann of her favoured position in relation to her other children:

'I like them fine, but I canna do without you!', My sister, so unselfish in all other things, had an unwearying passion for parading it before us. It was the rich reward of her life ... I knew that night and day she was trying to get ready for a world without her mother in it, but she must remain dumb; none of us was so Scotch as she, she must bear her agony alone, a tragic solitary Scotchwoman.<sup>2</sup>

This description is certainly melodramatic and coloured by the artist's imagination but in the case of Jane Ann I would not question the underlying truth of it, as it is borne out by her life.

George Blake is of the opinion that Barrie's mother was;

a distinctly self-centred old party, wearing out a faithful daughter...to die before herself.<sup>3</sup>

But as J. A. Hammerton comments:

Were it not that her daughter Jane Ann was no less set against a servant in the

1 J M BARRIE : MARGARET OGILVY (LONDON : 1897) p 203

2 J M BARRIE : MARGARET OGILVY (LONDON : 1897) pp 186 & 187

3 GEORGE BLAKE : BARRIE AND THE KAILYARD SCHOOL (LONDON : 1951) p 73

house, it might be argued that the mother, <sup>in this matter</sup> was something to blame for the wearing life of domestic drudgery to which that daughter so cheerfully submitted herself and <sup>which</sup> was not without its part in giving a tragic ending to their long and lovely domestic comedy.<sup>1</sup>

There is no doubt that Jane Ann was very willing to sacrifice herself to her mother, by whom she was constantly eclipsed, although it was very often Jane Ann's good sense which balanced her mother's self-indulgence. We have seen this already<sup>2</sup> in her advice to Barrië at the age of six at the time of his brother David's death; we have seen too how it was Jane Ann who encouraged Barrie's career in journalism; and it was she who thought that the character of his mother was too prevalent in his writing. (It is Barrie who gives us this information but he never makes any comments which might be detrimental to his mother),

I wonder if any instinct told my mother that the great day of her life was when she bore this child; what I am sure of is that from the first the child followed her with <sup>the most</sup> wistful eyes and saw how she needed help and longed to rise and give it.<sup>3</sup>

This fanciful praise of Jane Ann would probably have embarrassed her hugely if she was "double-shuttered", as Barrie describes her in this picture of the intimacy of his family circle:

You only know the shell of a Scot until you have entered his home circle; in his office, in clubs, at social gatherings where you and he seem to be getting on so well he is really a house with all the shutters closed and the door locked. He is not opaque of set purpose, often it is against his will - it is certainly against mine, I try to keep my shutters open and my foot in the door but they will bang to. In many ways my mother was as reticent as myself, though her manners were as gracious as mine were rough ... and my sister was the most <sup>reserved</sup> ~~reticent~~ of us all; ... she was double-shuttered. Now, it seems to be a law of nature that we must show our true selves at some time, and as the Scot must do it at home, and squeeze a day into an hour, what follows is that there he is self-revealing in the superlative degree, the feelings so long dammed up overflow, and thus a Scotch family are probably better acquainted with each other, and more ignorant of the life outside their circle, than any other family in the world. And as knowledge is sympathy, the affection existing between them is almost painful in its intensity; they have not more to give than their neighbours, but it is bestowed upon a few instead of being distributed among many; they are <sup>reputed</sup> ~~reported~~ niggardly, but for family affection at least they pay in gold.<sup>4</sup>

1 J A HAMMERTON : BARRIE, THE STORY OF A GENIUS (LONDON : 1929) p 209

2 Jane Ann's interest in the young Barrie is discussed in the chapter dealing with Mothers.

3 J M BARRIE : MARGARET OGILVY (LONDON : 1897) p 33

4 J M BARRIE : MARGARET OGILVY (LONDON : 1897) pp 154 & 155

We may doubt the truth of Barrie's general observations about the Scotch family but this description does enable us to visualise the outwardly dour Jane Ann whose life revolved round her mother and the other members of her family in the home where she could be most herself. But Barrie really brings her to life for us in this reconstruction of a typical conversation between his mother and Jane Ann, which illustrates his flair for dialogue and makes his sister seem more human, flawed and therefore likeable than she has done so far:

'Just look at that, mother!'

'Is it a dish-cloth?'

'That's what it is now.'

'Losh behears! it's one of the new table-napkins!'

'That's what it was. He has been polishing the kitchen grate with it!'

(I remember!)

'Woe's me! <sup>That is</sup> ~~That's~~ what comes of him not letting me budge from this room!'  
 'O, it is a watery Sabbath when men take to doing women's work!'

'It defies the face of clay, mother, to fathom what makes him so senseless!'

'Oh, it's that weary writing!'

'And the worst of it is ~~that~~ he will talk to-morrow as if he had done wonders!'

'That's the way with the whole <sup>clanjamfray</sup> ~~clanjamfray~~ of them!'

'Yes, but as usual you will humour him, mother!'

'Oh, well, it pleases him, you see', says my mother, 'and we can have our laugh when the door's shut!'

'He is most terribly handless.'

'He <sup>is</sup> ~~is~~ all that, but, poor soul, he does his best.'<sup>1</sup>

Though their attitudes seem old-fashioned to us, we see how Jane Ann's outspoken exasperation is tempered by her mother's gentler wiles. Barrie sees through it all and loves it all.

Barrie's home certainly gives the impression that Victorian Scotland was a matriarchal society. This impression is echoed in the following scene from A Window In Thrums, where mother and daughter (on this occasion called Jess and Leebie) gang up, this time against Hendy, the father of the family.<sup>2</sup> The liveliness of Barrie's dialogue, and his skilful reproduction of the women's obsession with appearances, refute Blake's charge that:

(Barrie) seemed never to have lived with and among real people.<sup>3</sup>

Hendy casually remarked that he had seen Tibbie Mealmaker in the town with her man:

1 J M BARRIE : MARGARET OGILVY (LONDON : 1897) pp 127 & 128

2 Jess and Hendy are discussed in the chapter dealing with Mothers

3 GEORGE BLAKE : BARRIE AND THE KAILYARD SCHOOL (LONDON : 1951) p 56



"The Lord preserve's!" cried Leeby.

Jess looked quickly at the clock.

"Half fower!" she said excitedly.

"Then it canna be dune," said Leeby, falling despairingly into a chair, "for they may be here ony meenute."

"It's most <sup>michty</sup> nichty," said Jess, turning on her husband, "'at ye should tak a pleasure in bringin' this hoose to disgrace. Hoo did ye no tell's suner?"

"I fair forgot," Hendy answered, "but what's a' yer steer?" ...

"Steer!" she exclaimed. "Is't no time we was makkin a steer? They'll be in for their tea ony meenute, an' the room no sae muckle as sweepit. Ay, an' me lookin' like a sweep; an' Tibbie Mealmaker 'at's sae partikler genteel seein' you sic a <sup>sicht</sup> ~~sicht~~ as ye are!"

Jess shook Hendy out of his chair, while Leeby began to sweep with the one hand, and agitatedly to unbutton her wrapper with the other.

"She didna see me," said Hendy, sitting down forlornly <sup>on</sup> ~~at~~ the table.

"Get aff that table!" cried Jess. "See haud o' the besom," she said to Leeby.

"For mercy's sake, mother," said Leeby, "gie yer face a dicht, an' <sup>put</sup> ~~put~~ on a clean mutch!" ...

(Hendy took refuge in the attic with the narrator while the women continued to shout up orders.)

Hendy looked at me apologetically while these instructions came up.

"I winna dive my head wi' sic nonsense," he said; "it's no' for a man body to be <sup>sae</sup> ~~be~~ crammed fu' o' manners." ...

(Further preparations were made, with the emphasis on appearances, and the dramatic climax was in Jess's hypocrisy when she answered the door.)

"Dear me, if it's not Mrs. Curly - and Mr. Curly! And hoo are ye? Come in, by. Weel, this is, indeed, a pleasant surprise!"<sup>1</sup>

Jess's description of Leeby, although exaggerated, is a fair estimate of Jane Ann:

"Her heart was <sup>just</sup> ~~just~~ set on helpin' aboot the hoose, an' though she was but fower year auld she could kindle the fire an' red up the room. Leeby's been my savin' ever since she was fower year auld."<sup>2</sup> ... "There's Leeby 'at I couldna hae done withoot, me bein' sae silly (weak bodily), an' ay<sup>3</sup> Leeby's stuck by me an' <sup>gien</sup> ~~gien~~ up her life, as ye micht say, for me."<sup>3</sup>

The narrator describes Leeby:

From her earliest days, when she was still a child staggering round the garden

1 J M BARRIE : A WINDOW IN THRUMS (LONDON : 1893) pp 19-25

2 J M BARRIE : A WINDOW IN THRUMS (LONDON : 1893) p 54

3 J M BARRIE : A WINDOW IN THRUMS (LONDON : 1893) p 49

with Jamie in her arms, her duty lay before her, straight as the burying-ground road. Jess had need of her in the little <sup>home</sup>house at the top of the brae, where God, looking down upon her as she scrubbed and gossiped and sat up all night with her ailing mother, and never missed the prayer-meeting, and adored the minister, did not perhaps think her the least of His handmaids. Her years were less than thirty when ~~he~~ took her away, but she had few days that were altogether dark. Those who bring sunshine ~~into~~ into the lives of others cannot keep it from themselves.<sup>1</sup>

We have no evidence of Jane Ann's passion for the minister, but in Margaret Ogilvy Barrie describes how a score of times he was summoned from London when his mother was dangerously ill:

These illnesses came as regularly as the backend of the year, but were less regular in going, and through them all, by night and by day, I see my sister moving so unwearingly, so lovingly, though with failing strength, that I bow my head in reverence for her.<sup>2</sup>

We can also recognise Jane Ann's <sup>passionate</sup>possible attachment to her mother in Leebys' reaction when Jess says she has diphtheria. Both Jess and Leebys looked at the narrator:

"It's no, it's no," cried Leebys, and her voice was as a fist shaken at my face. She blamed me for hesitating in my reply.<sup>3</sup>

It is disturbing to think that, like Leebys, Jane Ann was still comparatively young when she died before her mother. Barrie observes of <sup>from</sup>Aren (his younger self) in The Greenwood Hat (1930):

Many things happened to him in later life of which he had already written a fairly accurate account.<sup>4</sup>

Another instance of this apparent clairvoyance occurred in 1921. According to Mackail, the title "The Mortal Blow" was written frequently in Barrie's notebooks, during the early part of that year:

Mysterious, ominous, reappearing again and again, but never expanded or elucidated beyond that.<sup>5</sup>

It was struck on May 19, 1921, when Michael Davies died tragically. . .

Jane Ann was thirteen when Barrie was born and we have seen how she took great interest in his welfare and development. As Barrie had told us she loved her mother too much but we have no evidence that the undemonstrative Jane Ann ever displayed towards her younger brother the passionate feeling which Leebys expressed for Jamie:

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- 1 J M BARRIE : A WINDOW IN THRUMS (LONDON : 1893) pp 165 & 166
  - 2 J M BARRIE : MARGARET OGILVY (LONDON : 1897) pp 148 & 149
  - 3 J M BARRIE : A WINDOW IN THRUMS (LONDON : 1893) p 28
  - 4 J M BARRIE : THE GREENWOOD HAT (LONDON : 1937) p 53
  - 5 DENIS MACKAIL : THE STORY OF J M B (LONDON : 1941) p 554

The love Leebie bore for Jamie was such that in their younger days it shamed him. Other laddies knew of it, and flung it at him until he dared Leebie to let on in public that <sup>he and she</sup> they were related. ...

"Love", he said, "is an awful like word to use when fowk's weel".<sup>1</sup>

Jess entrusts Leebie to Jamie's care and he betrays this trust. Fortunately, in the case of Jane Ann, Barrie and his mother were spared this problem when Jane Ann died two days before his mother in 1895.

Barrie knew other spinsters in Kirriemuir, including the one who asked him about his future plans after his graduation from Edinburgh University in 1882. When he said that he meant to be an author she replied, in horrified tones, "And you an MA!" But the only other identifiable local spinsters he used as models for characters in his works were the Misses Adam. The Misses Adam kept a school in Bank Street, Kirriemuir, not far from Barrie's home, and he attended it for a short spell when he was not quite seven, before he left to spend the best part of a year at the Free Church School at Southmuir to prepare him for Glasgow Academy. Bank Street School was coeducational, concentrated on the three Rs, and was the model for the "Hanky School" in Sentimental Tommy (1896):

which was for the genteel and <sup>for</sup> the common who contemplated soaring.<sup>2</sup>

J A Hammerton describes the Misses Adam and their establishment:

The Misses Adam were the daughters of the Rev. Thomas Adam, who on his retirement from the ministry in the south of Scotland had come to live in Kirriemuir. The ladies were gentle souls, and shrank from the use of the tawse, which used to be so effectively wielded by schoolmasters; but the inattentive scholar at the Hanky School was apt to receive a smart 'dirl' on the knuckles administered by one of the Misses Adam with a ruler, while other misdemeanours were punished by the pupil being locked in the coalhole under the stair that led to the teachers' private residence above. Occasionally some fault was expiated by the pupil having to leave the schoolroom and sit in solitude at the foot of the stairs in the lobby. This was an experience that James did not entirely dislike, as on one occasion when seated there old Mr. Adam, coming down, gave the little culprit a peppermint sweet. The prospect of a repetition made him partial to this particular form of punishment.<sup>3</sup>

The Misses Adam were models for Miss Ailie (and her deceased sister Miss Kitty) in Sentimental Tommy (1896) and Tommy and Grizel (1900) and Miss Susan and Miss Pheobe Throssel in Quality Street (1902). We have no evidence of romance in the

1 J M BARRIE : A WINDOW IN THRUMS (LONDON : 1893) pp 166 & 167 168

2 J M BARRIE : SENTIMENTAL TOMMY (LONDON : 1896) p 152

3 J A HAMMERTON : BARRIE, THE STORY OF A GENIUS (LONDON : 1929) pp 16 & 17

lives of the Misses Adam but Barrie makes good this deficiency by inventing a broken romance for one of the spinster sisters in the novels, with their Thrums setting. He then uses the element of a broken romance in the play, which is a delicate little comedy set in the England of the Napoleonic Wars. The "blue and white" room, which featured in Sentimental Tommy and Quality Street, in real life belonged to Barrie's sister, Isabella, Mrs Murray, when she lived in Bristol.

The Hanky School in Sentimental Tommy is housed in the Dovecot, a prim little cottage with several "dumb" windows with awful blinds painted on them. A notice board in the garden states:

"Persons who come to steal the fruit are requested not to walk on the flower-beds."<sup>1</sup>

(Barrie actually had this notice board in his own garden at Black Lake Cottage), Miss Ailie's desk stands in the middle of the schoolroom, and in the corner there is another desk with a cloth hung over it. This belonged to her sister, Miss Kitty, who died years before:

Dainty Miss Kitty, Miss Kitty with the roguish curls, it is strange to think that you are dead, and that only Miss Ailie hears you singing now at your desk in the corner!<sup>2</sup>

The origin of the term "Hanky School" is amusing. Miss Ailie opens each scholastic day by reading fifteen verses from the Bible and when she says, "Hankies!" all the pupils whip out their handkerchiefs and kneel on them while she repeats the Lord's Prayer. School closes at four o'clock again with hankies. Children are only admitted to the blue and white room on special occasions, when they are given shortbread, but they have to eat it with their heads flung back to avoid crumbs. Nearly everything in the room is blue or white or both:

Here Miss Ailie received visitors in her white with the blue braid, and enrolled new pupils in blue ink with a white pen. Some laughed at her, others remembered that she must have something to love after Miss Kitty died.<sup>3</sup>

Miss Ailie is one of the twelve members of the Thrums Book Club. The dashing young banker (double-chinned and forty) always contributes a romance and Miss Ailie has to pluck up courage to borrow it. She helps Tommy with his reading after school, making him say "stroke" in place of the "D--ns", and "word we have no concern with" instead of "Darling" and "Little One". Romance comes into Miss Kitty's life in the shape of Mr Ivie McLean. Miss Ailie and Miss Kitty had been left enough money to live like ladies; theirs was a quiet life with a daily walk and an inexperienced maid. They took their business affairs to the office of Mr John McLean,

1 J M BARRIE : SENTIMENTAL TOMMY (LONDON : 1896) p 156

2 J M BARRIE : SENTIMENTAL TOMMY (LONDON : 1896) p 157

3 J M BARRIE : SENTIMENTAL TOMMY (LONDON : 1896) p 158



who had once escorted Miss Kitty home from a party without anything coming of it, so that it was quite a psychological novel in several volumes.<sup>1</sup>

In his absence they inadvertently told their story to his brother Ivie, who was home from India on a year's holiday:

He understood that it is a hard world for single women, and knew himself for a very ordinary sort of man. If it ever crossed his head that Miss Kitty would be willing to marry him, he felt genuinely sorry at the same time that she had not done better long ago. He never flattered himself that he could be accepted now, save for the good home he could provide (he was not the man to blame women for being influenced by that), for like most of his sex he was unaware that a woman is never too old to love, or be loved.<sup>2</sup>

Here Barrie uses that intimate tone which gives the illusion that he understands and sympathises completely with the type of woman he happens to be dealing with at the time. He is sentimental in the way that Tommy is, using his imaginative sympathy to identify fully, for the moment, with the subject concerned. The supreme example of this 'understanding' is in Dear Brutus (1917), where he overreaches himself by saying that all the women characters are essentially the same:

What their mirrors say to each of them is, A dear face, not classically perfect but abounding in that changing charm which is the best type of English womanhood; here is a woman who has seen and felt far more than her reticent nature readily betrays; she sometimes smiles, but behind that concession, controlling it in a manner hardly less adorable, lurks the sigh called Knowledge; a strangely interesting face, mysterious; a line for her tombstone might be, 'If I had been a man what adventures I could have had with her who lies here.'<sup>3</sup>

Miss Ailie is pictured as the typical repressed spinster and frustrated mother, arranging the frills on the ottoman, which "might almost have been mistaken for a female child".<sup>4</sup> (Barrie's wife found a similar outlet for her creative impulses in interior decoration). After losing her money and being forced to keep a school, and keeping up the correspondence with Mr McLean after her sister's death, Miss Ailie reaches port. However, when Mr McLean is on the point of proposing, Miss Ailie confesses she is fifty-one, not forty-nine, needs spectacles, is a little deaf, not very accomplished, and forgetful. (Here is Barrie giving hope of romance to all those other women of similar age and condition). Much of her repressed love had been devoted to her sister Kitty (cf Jane Ann and her mother):

"Oh", she cried, "ten years ago it might have been my Kitty. I would that it

1 J M BARRIE : SENTIMENTAL TOMMY (LONDON : 1896) p 281

2 J M BARRIE : SENTIMENTAL TOMMY (LONDON : 1896) pp 283 & 284

3 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 465

4 J M BARRIE : SENTIMENTAL TOMMY (LONDON : 1896) p 322

had been my Kitty!"<sup>1</sup>

When Mr McLean tries to say that he is not sure that he did not always like Miss Ailie best, that hurts her and he has to unsay the words:

"I was ~~such~~ a thoughtless fool ten years ago", he said bitterly, and Miss Ailie's answer came strangely from such timid lips. "Yes you were!" she exclaimed passionately, and all the wrath, long pent up, with very different feelings, in her gentle bosom, against the man who should have adored her Kitty, leapt at that reproachful cry to her mouth and eyes, and so passed out of her for ever.<sup>2</sup>

The characters and plot of Quality Street bear remarkable similarities to Miss Ailie and her experiences. (This duplication of ideas, on a smaller scale, is common in Barrie's writing, eg Miss Ailie's gutta percha tooth<sup>3</sup> is also a characteristic of the nurse Irene<sup>4</sup> in The Little White Bird, and Tommy<sup>5</sup> in Tommy and Grizel meets his death in the same way as Joey Sutie,<sup>6</sup> the pedlar, in Auld Licht Idylls), The ladies of Quality Street are the most ridiculous kind of spinsters, <sup>those</sup> who regard men as alien beings but think at the same time that all their troubles would be over if they were to find one. In his introduction to the play Barrie describes the blue and white room as being "seldom profaned by the foot of man" and Miss Susan refers to it as her "husband". When the play opens the ladies are knitting and Miss Fanny is reading aloud:

Suddenly out of the darkness there emerged a Man.<sup>7</sup>

Miss Willoughby is horrified and Miss Susan, who brought the book from the library, asks her to forgive her partiality for romance, which she is afraid marks her as an old maid. Miss ~~Pheobe~~<sup>Phoebe</sup> Throssel has had her hopes raised by Valentine Brown but he leaves for the Napoleonic Wars without proposing. Ten years later when he returns he finds Phoebe and her sister, Miss Susan, keeping a school; they have lost their money, which they invested on his advice. There is great poignancy in Phoebe's speeches when she laments the loss of her looks:

He thought I was old, because I am weary, and he should not have forgotten....

I am tired of being ladylike ... This is not me, Susan, I want to be myself.<sup>8</sup>

However, her impersonation of her nonexistent eighteen-year-old niece defies credibility, as does Valentine's preference for the older woman, and his declaration:

I will take you back through those years of hardships that have made your sweet eyes too patient. Instead of growing older you shall grow younger. We will

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1 J M BARRIE : SENTIMENTAL TOMMY (LONDON : 1896) p 326  
 2 J M BARRIE : SENTIMENTAL TOMMY (LONDON : 1896) p 327  
 3 J M BARRIE : SENTIMENTAL TOMMY (LONDON : 1896) p 158  
 4 J M BARRIE : THE LITTLE WHITE BIRD (LONDON : 1938) p 105  
 5 J M BARRIE : TOMMY AND GRIZEL (LONDON : 1938) p 420  
 6 J M BARRIE : AULD LICHT IDYLLS (LONDON : 1889) p 13  
 7 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 94  
 8 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) pp 117 & 118

travel back together to pick up the many little joys and pleasures you had to pass by when you trod that thorny path alone.<sup>1</sup>

Geduld comments:

This uncomfortably maudlin play illustrates the sentimentalist's refusal to admit to the harsh realities of life. Barrie's no longer youthful heroine can pass herself off as the belle of the ball, thus effortlessly realising every woman's dream of recapturing her youth; and the hero, with a nobility that transcends belief, declares his preference for age and modesty rather than for youth, beauty, and vitality. This choice, as Barrie wickedly knew, is what every woman over thirty wants - even though it is a lie.<sup>2</sup>

But it is very easy to ridicule the sentiments of Quality Street, judging them as we do by late twentieth-century standards. It is interesting to note Walbrook's comments on the language of the play when it was revived from August 1921 to the middle of 1922:

It is language written to be spoken upon a stage, and to be illustrated and enriched with the pauses, glances and inflections of a highly-practised actress. Read as people ordinarily read prose, it would excite laughter. Spoken by Miss Marion Terry at the Vaudeville, and Miss Mary Jerrold at the Haymarket, it drew tears.<sup>3</sup>

However, in my opinion all the quaint school-mistresses based on the Misses Adam are divorced from reality. This is all the more surprising as some of Barrie's sisters had been teachers. Sara and Maggie were governesses at Miss Oliver's School in Rutland Street, Edinburgh, when Barrie was at University there. Sara had started teaching with her other sister, Isabella, at their uncle's manse in Motherwell. But as usual, Barrie, writing to Quiller-Couch on July 25, 1909, anticipates criticism:

I fancy I try to create an artificial world <sup>to</sup>for myself because the one I really inhabit, and the only one I could do any good in, becomes too sombre. How doggedly my pen searches for gaiety.<sup>4</sup>

At this point I must define my use of the terms "spinsters" and "independent women". They are all unmarried women who have no man to depend on emotionally. Those women whom I have discussed so far in this section, both real and fictitious, I have described as spinsters, which means that I regard them as dependent women. That is, their happiness and personal fulfilment depend on a close relationship with another person; in the case of Jane and Ann and Leebie there is no man in their lives

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1 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 141

2 HARRY M GEDULD : JAMES BARRIE (NEW YORK : 1971) p 112

3 H M WALBROOK : J M BARRIE AND THE THEATRE (LONDON : 1922) p 87

4 J M BARRIE : LETTERS OF J M BARRIE (ed VIOLA MEYNELL) (LONDON : 1942) p 21

but they are emotionally dependent on their mothers and express themselves in the context of home and family. When Miss Susan's hopes of personal happiness are dashed she transfers her affection to her sister and finds personal fulfilment in her sister's happiness with Valentine Brown. Conversely, Miss Ailie's love for her sister Kitty is transferred, after Kitty's death, to Mr McLean, the object of Kitty's affections. Are we to conclude that when Barrie describes Jane Ann's life as lacking the "rounded completeness" of her mother's he is implying that marriage and motherhood are the only really satisfying life for a woman? The overall impression which I have formed after studying his life and works is that Barrie regarded marriage, a home and children as the ultimate personal fulfilment for both men and women. Because of his personal makeup<sup>1</sup> he was denied this and as a result no one valued it more. However, he was also aware that some people can sublimate their creative impulses in their work, as he did himself, and that some can successfully combine marriage, family life and a career. In assessing Barrie's attitude towards those spinsters we must also take into account the social climate of the times in which they lived. The Misses Susan and Pheobe Throssel lived at the time of the Napoleonic Wars and their story spans the years 1805-1815. Miss Kitty and Miss Ailie belong to the Kirriemuir of Barrie's mother's childhood, around 1840. It is not coincidence that they are all schoolmistresses, as teaching was one of the few openings then available to genteel spinsters with some education and limited means. Jane Ann and Leebie belong to the band of spinsters who are needed and choose to remain at home. Jane Ann presumably had the same opportunities as her sisters to leave home and teach and marry but it was her nature to devote her life to her parents and the family home.

Barrie was early acquainted with the independence of his own sisters, and the women with whom he was most involved professionally, as a dramatist, wanted a career on the stage. I have devoted a separate chapter to actresses, and Mary Ansell, the actress whom Barrie married, is discussed elsewhere.<sup>2</sup> There is a great deal of evidence of Barrie's approval of independence and wider opportunities for women. On September 9, 1933, he writes in reply to a letter from Lady Irvine<sup>3</sup> in which she had expressed her anxiety concerning her daughter, Veronica, who was about to leave home for the first time to go to RADA:

Of course her departure must leave anxiety behind it, but the bird of today is stronger in the wing than the young birds of yesteryear - at least the females are, and have a reserve of grit that may almost be called a new thing in life; it is not acquired, it is not necessarily their upbringing, it is in some inexplicable way born with them; it is a sort of sturdy little ~~train~~<sup>train</sup> carrying a

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1 The possible reasons for the failure of Barrie's marriage are discussed in the chapter dealing with Wives.

2 Mary Ansell is discussed in the chapter dealing <sup>with</sup> Wives.

3 Lady Irvine is discussed in the chapter dealing with Ladies of Title.



light; it is perhaps, who knows, the only light lit by the war.<sup>1</sup>

Here Barrie is sacrificing truth to a picturesque turn of phrase. The young women of the 1930s were no braver than his own sisters had been in the 1880s but the war of 1914-1918 had certainly paved the way to greater emancipation and wider opportunities for women.

The sincerity of Barrie's speeches is always in doubt, but as early as 1904 he is welcoming the appearance of ladies for the first time at a dinner to celebrate the 114th anniversary of the Royal Literary Fund, on his own forty-second birthday:

is it not remarkable that, when they were looking for attractive objects to mix us with, they never thought of the ladies? ... I hope, ladies, you will allow me, in the name of the Society, to welcome you to your first dinner with men.<sup>2</sup>

The same flattering tone is present in Barrie's speech of May 4, 1922, when he was given the Freedom of St Andrews:

I think the ladies of Scotland are undoubtedly the most attractive ladies in the world, and that the most attractive of them are the ladies of St Andrews, and that of the ladies of St Andrews there are none who can hold a candle to the red gown students.<sup>3</sup>

In his address given as Chancellor of Edinburgh University on October 25, 1930, the ladies are no longer just attractive objects but 'Female forms whose gestures beam with mind'.<sup>4</sup> More significantly, later in this address Barrie elaborates on the Scottish idea of education:

which I take to be to educate <sup>our</sup> men and women primarily not for their country's good but for their own, not so much to teach them what to think as how to think, not preparing them to give as little trouble as possible in the future but sending them into it in the hope that they will give trouble.<sup>5</sup>

One woman who certainly had a mind of her own was Emily Brontë, and in his address to the Incorporated Society of Authors, Playwrights, and Composers on November 28, 1928, Barrie refers to her as "Our greatest woman".<sup>6</sup> Barrie likes to joke about the question of female emancipation, as he does in his address on July 3, 1925, when he and Kipling were enrolled as Honorary Freemen and Liverymen of the Stationers' Company:

The other sex - if so they may still be called - have long complained that his (Shakespeare's) women, are too subservient to the old enemy for these later days, as if he did not know what times were coming for women.

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- 1 J M BARRIE : LETTERS OF J M BARRIE (ed VIOLA MEYNELL) (LONDON : 1942) p 266
  - 2 J M BARRIE : McCONNACHIE AND J M B (LONDON : 1938) p 15
  - 3 J M BARRIE : McCONNACHIE AND J M B (LONDON : 1938) p 30
  - 4 J M BARRIE : THE ENTRANCING LIFE (LONDON : 1930) p 10
  - 5 J M BARRIE : THE ENTRANCING LIFE (LONDON : 1930) pp 14 + 15
  - 6 J M BARRIE : McCONNACHIE AND J M B (LONDON : 1938) p 159

He maintains that Shakespeare's plays have long been misinterpreted and there is to be another edition called 'The Ladies' Shakespeare'. In conclusion he claims the existence of a document signed by Shakespeare: 'Received from Lady Bacon for fathering her play of Hamlet - five pounds'.<sup>1</sup>

In his address to the girls of Wallasey High School in 1924 Barrie actively encourages practical independence:

To a few of you the glories of Oxford and Cambridge lie ahead, an enchanted land - to the many, practical advantages. You can go from here as members do yearly, equipped, or nearly so, to live intelligently by your own work, to make a fair wage in interesting callings, and to be chosen for your jobs in preference to men because you have proved that you can do them better. ... It ought soon to make a change in the very appearance of young women in this country - to give them a more serene look.<sup>2</sup>

Independence of mind is a quality which Barrie appears to admire in women, as it is a feature of some of his romantic heroines, who are discussed in a separate chapter. An outstanding example is ~~Bobbie~~ <sup>Sabbie</sup> in The Little Minister (1891), who, like the other romantic heroines, is eventually mastered. In the following extract from The Little Minister, Gavin Ogilvy, the Auld Licht Minister, has been invited to tea at old Nanny Webster's cottage. ~~Bobbie~~ <sup>Sabbie</sup>, the girl with whom he is to become romantically involved, is also present:

But Nanny held up her hands in horror.

"Keep us a'!" she exclaimed; "the lassie thinks her and me is to sit down wi' the minister! We're no to gang that length, ~~Bobbie~~ <sup>Sabbie</sup>; we're just to stand and serve him, and syne we'll sit down when he has risen."

"Delightful!" said ~~Bobbie~~ <sup>Sabbie</sup>, clapping her hands.

"Nanny, you kneel on that side of him, and I will kneel on this. You will hold the butter and I the biscuits."

But Gavin, as this girl was always forgetting, was a lord of creation.

"Sit down both of you at once!" he thundered;

"I command you."

Then the two women fell into their seats; Nanny in terror, Bobbie affecting it.<sup>3</sup>

My overall impression is that Barrie thought marriage and motherhood the ideal life for a woman but with smaller families and changing times women should be encouraged to develop their own talents before and within marriage.

The independent women I intend to deal with here are those who have no man in

1 J M BARRIE : McCONNACHIE AND J M B (LONDON : 1938) pp 106-109

2 J M BARRIE : McCONNACHIE AND J M B (LONDON : 1938) p 66

3 J M BARRIE : THE LITTLE MINISTER (LONDON : 1905) pp 131 & 132

their lives and only themselves to depend on. There are very few of them in Barrie's life and works. Mary Hodgson and 'Mrs' Stanley are described elsewhere,<sup>1</sup> as is Nan Herbert, Lady Lucas.<sup>2</sup> Barrie had great affection and respect for Nurse Tomlinson, whom Cynthia Asquith called in to look after him in 1933 and on subsequent occasions. In Peter Pan (1904), Tiger Lily, "the belle of the Piccaninny tribe, whose braves would all have her to wife, but she wards them off with a hatchet",<sup>3</sup> is an independent woman as opposed to the useful spinster fairy Tinker Bell, who mends the pots and pans, is fiercely possessive of Peter and very jealous of Wendy. Of the four independent women I am about to describe here the first two are dedicated career women who find fulfilment in their professions; the third is a divorcee who prefers standing on her own feet to an unhappy marriage; the fourth is an unmarried mother. The first three, having chosen their independence, are happy, successful and well-adjusted. The fourth is one of the most tragic figures in Barrie's fiction because her independence is not a matter of choice but she has been abandoned by the man she loves.

The most successful independent woman in Barrie's own family was his unmarried niece, Lilian, the eldest of his brother Alexander's six children, two sons and four daughters. Those were the children with whom Barrie played when he visited Dumfries while still a student at Edinburgh University. In later life Lilian Barrie often came to stay with Barrie in the Adelphi flat. On two occasions she provided her uncle with copy. In My Lady Nicotine (1890) Barrie describes the most trying evening he and his brother had ever spent together, awaiting Lilian's birth:

Then he said, with affected jocularly, 'Well young man, do you know that you are an uncle?' There was silence again, for I was still trying to think out some appropriate remark. After a time I said, in a weak voice, 'Boy or girl?' 'Girl', he answered. Then I thought hard again, and all at once remembered something. 'Both doing well?' I whispered. 'Yes', he said sternly. I felt that something great was expected of me, but I could not jump up and wring his hand. I was an uncle. I stretched out my arm towards the cigar-box, and firmly lit my first cigar.<sup>4</sup>

The literal truth of this passage, like the rest of the book, is suspect, as at the time when My Lady Nicotine was written Barrie had not yet even started to smoke.

Lilian Barrie, who became Headmistress of Wallasey High School for Girls, is described here by Cynthia Asquith:

The member of Barrie's family whom I knew best and liked most was his delightful niece, Lilian, the shrewd sterling daughter of his elder brother, Alexander

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1 In the chapter dealing with Servants

2 In the chapter dealing with Ladies of Title

3 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 43

4 J M BARRIE : MY LADY NICOTINE (LONDON : 1926) p 18

Barrie, the very able school-inspector, who had helped him so much over his education. Lilian, a redoubtable mathematician, had adopted her father's profession of teaching with great success. I remember how struck I was at first sight by the almost shining commonsense in Lilian Barrie's humorous eyes, and by a certain indomitable look as if nothing on earth could daunt or tire her.<sup>1</sup>

Cynthia was in Kirriemuir with Lilian Barrie for a few days immediately after her uncle's death. This was their first opportunity to talk alone, and Cynthia realised the depth and discernment of her affection for her uncle. Later, Lilian Barrie sent her a few lines which she had written as a tribute to him:

J.M.B.

With loving care we bear you to your hill,  
 Grieving we lay you with your own loved dead.  
 But now-- behold once more your mocking power!  
 Against your standing stone I see you lean  
 Fondling your pipe;  
 You smile your slow sardonic smile;  
 Your eyebrow lifts, without a word  
 You fill my heart,  
 And by the grave  
 I laugh with you.<sup>2</sup>

Barrie publicly ~~shared~~<sup>showed</sup> his respect and affection for his niece on two occasions. In June 1928 a replica of Sir George Frampton's statue of Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens was presented to the city of Liverpool by Mr George Audley, a local benefactor, and was set up in Sefton Park. There was a pageant to mark the occasion and Lilian Barrie represented her uncle at the celebrations. On February 24, 1924, Barrie addressed the girls of Wallasey High School at Wallasey Town Hall. He ingratiates himself with the girls by talking about their Headmistress as a child:

I remember particularly one day when she was about a year old. I think she was dressed - our heroine was dressed in one of those white things that were so fashionable that year, and she wore such a pretty bonnet. The scene was a pleasant Scottish town, and a very great man was passing at the end of our road. So I whipped up our heroine in my arms and ran with her to the gate, in order that she might be able to say in after-years that she had <sup>once</sup> seen Thomas Carlyle. ... ~~From~~<sup>from</sup> that moment she put away frivolous things, including the bonnet, and plucked triangles instead of daisies. I expect <sup>that</sup> Carlyle had pointed with his

1 CYNTHIA ASQUITH : PORTRAIT OF BARRIE (LONDON : 1954) p 115

2 CYNTHIA ASQUITH : PORTRAIT OF BARRIE (LONDON : 1954) p 116



staff to Wallasey.<sup>1</sup>

But instead of just talking about their headmistress Barrie would really prefer to set her pupils an examination paper on her, posing the following questions:

- (1) Is her intimacy with the Differential Calculus quite seemly?
- (2) Give instances in which you have got round her (if any).
- (3) What are your feelings towards her (a) when you are well prepared,  
(b) when she asks you to remain behind?
- (4) What precisely does her uncle mean when he thanks his stars that he never had her for his teacher?
- (5) She is sitting there looking as pleased as if we were all mathematical problems that she had to solve before bed-time, but what is she really thinking? I believe <sup>indent below</sup> I am the only person in the hall who can answer that question. She is thinking it would be very nice if I would get on to some other subject. Her prayer is granted.<sup>2</sup>

I think that there was great affection between Barrie and his niece Lilian in her private capacity but at the same time his attitude to her as a professional woman, as shown in his speech at Wallasey, is one shared by many men: no matter how much you may impress your pupils, patients, etc, do not think that you can impress me in the same way. But Barrie is also very sensitive to the dichotomy between the professional and private personae of the professional woman. I shall illustrate this further by referring to Dr Bodie, in A Kiss for Cinderella (1916), who is the sister of Mr Bodie the artist. Mr Bodie is a painter:

for the nicest of reasons, that it is delightful to live and die in a messy studio.<sup>3</sup>

Remember at this point the smoke-blackened ceiling of Barrie's study in his Adelphi flat.<sup>4</sup> Barrie, in his Wallasey speech, shrewdly and deliberately aims at appearing at his most fanciful in his description of Lilian Barrie, headmistress, the better to cut her down to size - albeit in a good-humoured way, which will appeal to her pupils. Similarly, Mr Bodie is made to appear utterly impractical to <sup>stand out</sup> appear in greater contrast to his efficient sister, Dr Bodie, who in spite of all her virtues is "enough to make any brother wince".<sup>5</sup> Mr Bodie has sent Cinderella to the Convalescent Home for Soldiers which is run by his sister (cf Wrest Park Hospital which was in the charge of Lady Lucas).<sup>6</sup>

The Policeman who is in love with Cinderella has overcome an initial prejudice towards independent women like Dr Bodie:

1 J M BARRIE : McCONNACHIE AND J M B (LONDON : 1938) pp 59 & 60

2 J M BARRIE : McCONNACHIE AND J M B (LONDON : 1938) p 61

3 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 393

4 See Mrs Stanley in the chapter dealing with Servants.

5 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 443

6 See Lady Lucas in the chapter dealing with Ladies of Title.

(The Policeman) felt in his bones that Dr. Bodie was born to command: astonishing thing about her ~~that~~ <sup>how</sup> she did it so natural-like. She was not in the least mannish or bullying; she was a very ladylike sort of person, a bit careful about the doing of her hair, and the set of her hat, and she had a soft voice, though what you might call an arbitrary manner.<sup>1</sup>

This favourable picture seems to fit Lilian Barrie as Cynthia Asquith describes her. The ambivalence of attitudes and confusion of rôles which confront a professional woman are expressed by Danny, one of her patients who was first afraid of Dr Bodie and was then forced to admire her when she discovered he had hidden a fishing-rod down the leg of his trousers:

She's great! Words couldn't express my admiration for that woman - lady - man - doctor.<sup>2</sup>

But Dr Bodie has the last word when she overhears Danny, the Probationer and Cinderella conspiring to defy her. She turns the tables on them by inviting them to tea:

Don't let me forget that I am a woman. I assure you I value that privilege.<sup>3</sup>

Barrie's play The Twelve-Pound Look was first performed at the Duke of York's Theatre on March 1, 1910. In July 1909 he had been told of his wife's adultery with Gilbert Cannan and was divorced on October 13, 1909. Barrie's private world was in ruins and his disillusionment and sense of failure are reflected in this play. There is a note of bitterness in our introduction to the independent heroine, Kate, who returns as a typist to the home of her former husband, Harry Sims, who is about to be knighted:

She came to him in his great hour and told him she did not admire him. Of course he turned her out of the house and was soon himself again, but it spoiled the morning for him.<sup>4</sup>

The failure of Barrie's marriage has already been discussed at length<sup>5</sup> but it is important to note that Barrie, although initially horrified by the possibility of a scandal which a divorce would cause, ultimately accepted responsibility for the failure of his marriage and believed that he should never have married. In The Twelve-Pound Look no blame is attached to Kate, who seeks independence as an alternative to a marriage which has become intolerable, just as Barrie attached none to his wife Mary, who turned to another man in what proved to be a vain attempt to find the personal fulfilment as wife and mother which she had been denied in her life with Barrie. It is significant that Kate's eyes light up when she hears that

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1 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 442

2 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 449

3 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 450

4 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 719

5 In the chapter dealing with Wives.

Harry's second wife is the mother of two boys.

Barrie made the worst part of himself into Sir Harry Sims, the man successful in every worldly respect and yet a failure in his private life. He is described in the play as being too modest to boast about himself but keeping a wife for that purpose. Mary Barrie was given to offering introductions to her husband without his permission and boasting about his wealth but it seems to me that her frustration had turned her into a snob of this kind. Barrie himself appears to have valued fame more than wealth and always claimed to have submerged himself in work as a substitute for romance. The theme of wealth and honours and marital incompatibility is also dealt with in The Will (1913).<sup>1</sup> In 1909 Barrie was offered a knighthood, which he refused, in my opinion because he did not wish his wife to have a title.

Kate is the "disturbing element" introduced into the play to ruffle Harry's complacency. She is described as:

a mere typist, dressed in uncommonly good taste, but at contemptibly small expense, and she is carrying her typewriter in a friendly way rather than as a badge of slavery, as of course it is.<sup>2</sup>

She has been summoned from 'The Flora Type-Writing Agency' to answer the congratulations which Sir Harry has received on his knighthood. The picture she presents is that of a woman who is proud of her independence and the playwright expresses nothing but admiration for her. Before her marriage Mary Barrie too had proved that she could support herself but had gladly relinquished her independence in favour of marriage and family life. It was fortunate for Barrie that his wife had been able for a number of years to make some kind of life for herself within the framework of their marriage, after their estrangement. Kate has proved that she can support herself and is poised and confident, making her successor, Lady Sims, appear at a disadvantage, wishing that she too could lead a useful life instead of being her husband's chattel. The matter of Sir Harry's knighthood fails to impress Kate; as far as she is concerned the only important thing about the letters is that they are ten shillings the hundred. When Sir Harry enters and tries to impress her with the fact that his present wife has four men servants she undermines his confidence by saying:

~~you~~<sup>you</sup> have the old confidence in your profound knowledge of the sex.<sup>3</sup>

This comment applies to Harry's stupidity in thinking that Kate would have been happy to remain a pampered status symbol. It might also be taken to indicate that Barrie's wife's unfaithfulness came as a shock to him - which it did, but Kate's reasons for leaving Harry show both Barrie's understanding of the independent Kate and his advanced thinking with regard to women. Harry has kept the letter which

1 In the chapter dealing with Wives.

2 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 721

3 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 725

Kate had written on the night she left him:

Dear ~~Harry~~<sup>husband</sup> - I call you that for the last time - I am off. I am what you call making a bolt of it. I won't try to excuse myself nor to explain, for you would not accept the excuses nor understand the explanation. It will be a little shock to you, but only to your pride; what will astound you is that any woman could be such a fool as to leave such a man as you. I am taking nothing with me that belongs to you. May you be very happy. - your ungrateful Kate.

P.S. You need not try to find out who he is. You will try, but you won't succeed.<sup>1</sup>

There was no other man and Kate had considered leaving Harry for a year before she finally did so. She saw that if the truth were known he might have difficulty in getting his freedom so she wrote her goodbye in words that would be taken to mean that she had left him for someone else.

Kate now says sarcastically to Harry:

For the law, like you, Harry, has a profound understanding of women,<sup>2</sup>

meaning that no one would believe that Kate would willingly exchange the security of being Harry's wife for independence and the recovery of her self-respect. For Harry, success was a religion and she felt suffocated. Kate admits that he was as good a husband as he was capable of being; he was moral, chatty and philanthropic but Harry loved Kate to be envied and swaddled her in luxury. This is what really drove her away:

How you beamed at me when I sat at the head of your fat dinners in my fat jewellery, surrounded by our fat friends.<sup>3</sup>

Harry boasts that he is worth a quarter of a million but Kate tells him that he is only worth twelve pounds to her. She made up her mind that she would leave him when she had proved her mettle by earning twelve pounds.

In this play Barrie is satirising the Edwardian social system, in which women were very much inferior beings and could only achieve eminence by being married to successful men. Kate is not content to feed her husband's ego by attending to all his wishes and looking attractive. She has made a life for herself independent of her husband. In the cause of female emancipation she is a step ahead of Maggie Wylie<sup>4</sup> in What Every Woman Knows (1908), who settled for the satisfaction of knowing that she was largely responsible for her husband's success. Maggie goes to great lengths to convince John Shand that he can do without her but Kate has proved that she can do without Harry Sims. Both women appear prim and respectable and as a result their boldness in disturbing their husbands' complacency is in danger of

1 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 728

2 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 730

3 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 730

4 Maggie Wylie is discussed in the chapter dealing with Wives.



being underestimated. In order to appreciate just how far ahead of his time Barrie was let us look at what Walbrook has to say about Kate in 1922. He takes the same attitude as Harry Sims:

After all, he (Harry Sims) was not a bad husband, as husbands go. At any rate he made a handsome home for his wife, gave her all she could desire on the material side, and philandered with no other woman. A wife able to put a little brain into her love could have made a good deal of such a partner.<sup>1</sup>

Kate had wanted very much to make a success of her marriage and to believe in her husband and stay with him and she expresses her regret that Harry was not a man:

They are something fine; and every woman is loath to admit to herself that her husband is not one. When she marries, even though she has been a very trivial person, there is in her some vague stirring towards a worthy life, as well as a fear of her capacity for evil. She knows her chance lies in him. If there is something good in him, what is good in her finds it and they join forces against the baser parts. So I didn't give you up willingly, Harry. I invented all sorts of theories to explain you. Your hardness - I said it was a fine want of mawkishness. Your coarseness - I said it goes with strength. Your contempt for the weak - I called it virility. Your want of ideals was clear-sightedness. Your ignoble views of women - I tried to think them funny. Oh, I clung to you to save myself. But I had to let go; you had only the one quality, Harry, success; you had it so strong that it swallowed <sup>all the</sup> others.<sup>2</sup>

Before studying this passage let us see what Lady Lilian,<sup>3</sup> in Barrie's play Half an Hour (1913), has to say about marriage. In Half an Hour it is Lady Lilian's husband, <sup>Carson</sup> ~~Carson~~ the financier, who tells her that she is not a woman:

A woman! You useless thing, that is just what you are not, ... Such a rare exquisite creature, too, as you know yourself to be.<sup>4</sup>

Lady Lilian replies that she longs to be a better person and thinks she could have been if she had married a better man.

It seems to me that Barrie was right to blame himself for the failure of his own marriage, because he placed his wife in the intolerable position of being childless and yet having to suffer her husband's attentions to Sylvia Llewelyn Davies, whom he almost worshipped as the epitome of motherhood. However, I think that in the passages quoted above Barrie is going to extremes in implying that husbands generally are responsible for the success or failure of their marriages. To me it does not make sense to say that a woman who has been before marriage a very trivial person

1 H M WALBROOK : J M BARRIE AND THE THEATRE (LONDON : 1922) p 158

2 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 732

3 Lady Lilian is discussed in the chapter dealing with Ladies of Title.

4 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) pp 615 & 617

is going to hope to change overnight as a result of being married. Barrie has been accused of being a romantic who expects too much of people and I think it is an example of this to say that men are "something fine", as he has Kate say here, without qualifying the statement. On the other hand, apart from this statement, Kate strikes me as being very down to earth, sensible and realistic. She has not opted out of marriage without giving it a fair trial and she took a year to consider leaving Harry, while saving up money to support herself, before she did so. She also appears to have gone out of her way to make allowances for her husband's faults and she does not give the impression of being disillusioned because her husband did not measure up to a vague ideal. I admire her for having the courage to make an independent life for herself rather than choosing to remain the wife of a man for whom she has lost love and respect and staying with him for security and the sake of appearances.

However, I think it is false to claim as Barrie appears to do here that marrying a better man could have the effect of making you a better person. If it were the case that one person could have such an effect on another, by the same token it follows that a better wife could make her husband a better person. It seems to me that Kate is a better person, in the moral sense, than Harry, but she seems to have had no effect on him in that way. It is taking a very idealistic view of marriage to think that one person is capable of changing the other's character in any essential way and in the light of his own marriage Barrie knew this to be untrue. In his creation of the independent Kate, Barrie is making a statement about marriage and expressing a view that was by no means prevalent in his own time. For an intelligent woman capable of supporting herself, life without a husband is preferable to marriage if that marriage is no more than a framework, providing her with financial and social security. In conclusion, it is ironic that a woman like Kate does not opt for independence without a struggle and has higher hopes of what marriage at its best might be than many married women who never question their situation and remain with their husbands. Nor does Kate feel antagonism towards her husband; once she understands his success is just a "fatal gift" she feels amusement and ultimately pity for him.

The fourth independent woman whom Barrie describes is the unmarried mother known as the Painted Lady who appears, along with her daughter Grizel, in the novel Sentimental Tommy (1896). (Grizel is also the heroine of the sequel, Tommy and Grizel (1900).) Her designation "the Painted Lady" and her trips to the Den to await the lover who never comes are melodramatic but I think this element in her portrayal is outweighed by the compassion and sensitivity which Barrie displays towards her.

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What we must remember is that the novel is set in Thrums (alias Kirriemuir) circa 1840, where the moral climate was dictated by the self-righteousness of the Auld Lights.<sup>1</sup> Once again, in his understanding of the Painted Lady's character and his sympathy with her plight, Barrie is ahead of his time, because such an attitude towards an unmarried mother was rarely to be found in London in 1896, far less in Kirriemuir in 1840. This woman had her independence thrust upon her and her emotional vulnerability could not stand the strain. When she was betrayed and deserted she lost her reason. The Painted Lady is a minor character in the novel Sentimental Tommy but her situation was to have a profound effect on her daughter Grizel, who is in my opinion the heroine into whose creation Barrie put most thought and feeling. I shall deal with Grizel briefly here but she is discussed more fully elsewhere.<sup>2</sup>

This passage which gives details of the Painted Lady's appearance and manner show Barrie's powers of description at their best:

She was a little woman, brightly dressed, so fragile that a collie might have knocked her over with his tail, and she had a beautiful white-and-pink face, ... As she tripped along with mincing gait, she was speaking/ confidentially to herself, but when she saw Dite (~~the mole-catcher~~) grinning, she seemed, first, afraid, and then sorry for herself, and then she tried to carry it off with a giggle, cocking her head impudently at him. Even then she looked childish, and a faded ~~gentleness,~~ <sup>guilelessness,</sup> with many pretty airs and graces, still lingered about her, like innocent birds loath to be gone from the spot where their nest ~~had~~ <sup>has</sup> been.

The smith reported that if he made a tinkle with his hammer:

at such times off she went at once, for she was as easily flichtered as a field of crows, that take wing if you tap your pipe on the ~~leaf~~ <sup>loaf</sup> of your hand.<sup>3</sup>

The Painted Lady's history is made to seem all the more moving because we learn it from the few details which are known to the girl Grizel, and which she tries to convey to the boy, Tommy. Grizel thinks that her father was a Scotsman because of her own Scottish name, Grizel, and that her mother came to Scotland to look for him. They have lived in Thrums for four years but they were looking for him before that. Her mother chose Thrums because the Den was like the place where she used to meet Grizel's father. Grizel does not know her father's name; her mother is known as Mary Gray but Grizel does not think that is her real name. The Painted Lady appears to have a private income, as she gets money from the bank. When Grizel tells Tommy that the Painted Lady wants her own mother to think she is dead he asks why this should be the case and Grizel replies:

I am not sure, but I think it is because there is me. I think it was naughty

1 The Auld Lights are mentioned, in relation to Margaret Ogilvy, under Mothers.

2 In the chapter dealing with Wives.

3 J M BARRIE : SENTIMENTAL TOMMY (LONDON : 1896) p-121, pp. 121+123

of me <sup>to</sup> ~~being~~ born. Can you help being born?<sup>1</sup>

This is how Barrie deals with the contemporary stigma of illegitimacy, by making us see it through the eyes of an innocent child.

This innocence is echoed in the reaction of Elspeth, Tommy's younger sister, after she and Tommy have spied on the Painted Lady and her daughter through the window of the Painted Lady's home at Double Dykes. Barrie describes the room where Grizel is on her knees caming the hearthstone a beautiful blue and sometimes looking round to speak to her mother, who is busy among her plants and cut flowers:

It might have been a boudoir through which <sup>a</sup> kitchen and bedroom had wandered, spilling by the way, but though the effect was tawdry, everything had been rubbed clean by that passionate housewife, Grizel.<sup>2</sup>

After her betrayal, the effort of living independently and bringing up her daughter alone had been too much emotionally for the Painted Lady and when she cracked under the strain she came to depend on her daughter, so that their rôles appear to have been reversed. The Painted Lady appears innocent and childlike while Grizel is substitute mother and housewife.

As he looks through the window Tommy is impressed by the velvet glove which gives us a clue to the Painted Lady's former social status:

The Painted Lady always put on this glove before she would touch the coals, which diverted Tommy, who knew that common folk lift ~~the~~ coals with their bare hands, while society uses the fringe of its second petticoat.<sup>3</sup>

Barrie condemns the denizens of Thrums who have ostracised this woman and, in describing her as she appears to Tommy, emphasises her innocent childlike appearance:

Surely they were ~~no~~ <sup>know-</sup>nothings who called this woman silly, and blind who said she painted. It was a little face all of one colour, dingy pale, not chubby, but retaining the soft contours of a child's face, and the features were singularly delicate. She was clad in a soft grey, and her figure was of the smallest; there was such an air of youth about her that Tommy thought she could become a girl again <sup>by</sup> merely ~~by~~ shortening her frock.<sup>4</sup>

Tommy and Elspeth leave the window and retire to a field to compare impressions and Elspeth admits that she likes the Painted Lady and is not afraid of her but Tommy has reservations:

Tommy had liked her also, but being a man he said,

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- 1 J M BARRIE : SENTIMENTAL TOMMY (LONDON : 1896) p 168  
 2 J M BARRIE : SENTIMENTAL TOMMY (LONDON : 1896) p 179  
 3 J M BARRIE : SENTIMENTAL TOMMY (LONDON : 1896) p 179  
 4 J M BARRIE : SENTIMENTAL TOMMY (LONDON : 1896) p 179



"You forget that she's an ill one".

"She looks as if she didna ken that hersel", answered Elspeth, and these words of a child are the best picture we can hope to get of the Painted Lady.<sup>1</sup>

Barrie is often accused of deliberately ignoring the harder facts of life and there are occasions when I think that he does, but this is not so in the case of the Painted Lady. Later he mentions the men who come to visit her and the collection of bottles which is removed from her home after her death but it is not Barrie's style to dwell on and sensationalise illicit sex and alcoholism. He states those facts of her life but implies that they are pitfalls which are a result of her unwilling independence, by stressing her essential innocence.

Barrie skilfully conveys the Painted Lady's emotional history and disturbed mental state when she meets Elspeth and confides in her, after the other children have run off. The last thing she ever wanted was to be independent. She asks Elspeth if she loves Tommy and warns her not to let him know:

"When they know too well, then they have no pity". ... Suddenly she became confidential. "Do you think I showed my love too openly?" she asked eagerly. "I tried to hide it, you know. ... I wanted so to be good, / but it is so difficult to refuse when you love him very much, don't you think?"<sup>2</sup>

The Painted Lady tells Elspeth that it would be very nice if men wanted women to be good but it bores them, and warns her never to say she wants a wedding. When Elspeth is afraid and begins to cry she tells her that women must put on their prettiest gowns and laugh and pretend to be happy, and then men will tell them naughty stories and give them jewels. She thinks it excusable to paint a little to keep a man's interest and tells Elspeth that when they send you a letter rejecting you it is best not to open it. Then she thinks she hears Grizel approaching and pours out a torrent of filthy abuse against her for following her mother.

Tommy appears and takes Elspeth away and when she tells some of the Money-penny women about the incident they tell Aaron Latta (Tommy's and Elspeth's guardian) to keep Grizel away from Tommy and Elspeth. Naturally Elspeth was frightened by the incident but the Painted Lady should have been cared for somewhere rather than being allowed to lead, to all appearances, an independent life with only her child to rely on. Barrie makes us aware of the innate prejudice in the people of Thrums and their fear of what they cannot understand and pity. The tragedy of the situation is summed up in Grizel challenging Tommy and Elspeth to come to her house and when they refuse she says she will never come to theirs because "my mamma thinks your house is not respectable".<sup>3</sup> Barrie describes Grizel as a "Great-hearted, solitary child".<sup>4</sup>

1 J M BARRIE : SENTIMENTAL TOMMY (LONDON : 1896) p 180

2 J M BARRIE : SENTIMENTAL TOMMY (LONDON : 1896) pp 217 & 218

3 J M BARRIE : SENTIMENTAL TOMMY (LONDON : 1896) p 220

4 J M BARRIE : SENTIMENTAL TOMMY (LONDON : 1896) p 263

and she lives up to this in nursing her dying mother by herself. There is certainly something very morbid and melodramatic about her staying alone with the body and in her letter to God, hoping that her father too will be damned. However, what is interesting is to see how Grizel's enforced independence, which was necessarily precipitated by her mother's failure to cope with life as an independent woman, proves to be false but this is not revealed until she reaches adult life and loves Tommy.

After her mother's death Grizel is adopted by Dr McQueen and becomes a woman in Tommy and Grizel (1900). As a girl she considered herself "the child of evil passions", meaning that she thought she had wickedness in her blood, and her greatest wish was to be respectable. She is afraid of meeting a man who resembles her father as she imagines him to have been, both powerful and irresistible. She realises that Tommy is that kind of man and she is attracted to him but at the same time she is afraid of him getting a hold over her. Her maternal instincts find an outlet in looking after Dr McQueen and he describes her as "a masterful little besom". Grizel's outstanding qualities appear to be her independence and her strength of character. She does not tell Tommy that she loves him until she thinks he loves her.

I thought God had made a sort of compact with me that I should <sup>always</sup> be the kind of woman I wanted to be if I resisted the desire to love you until you loved me. <sup>1</sup>

This shows Grizel's emotional intensity, and her self-knowledge is revealed to Dr David Gemmell.

Yes, I admit that I am not quite as I was, but I glory in it. I used to be ostentatiously independent, now I am only independent enough. My pride made me walk on air, now I walk on the earth, where there is less chance of falling. I have still confidence in myself, but I begin to see that ~~my~~ ways are not necessarily right because they are my ways. In short, David, I am evidently on the road to being a model character! ... Because I am <sup>so</sup> happy. ... in the old days I sometimes danced for joy... I could do it now. <sup>2</sup>

Dr McQueen had wanted Grizel to marry David Gemmell, his assistant in the medical practice, but had said nothing of this to Grizel because he thought that to press her was no way to make her care for David. He was afraid that Grizel's morbid fears would come back if she were ever to care for some "false loon". It is David Gemmell who tells all this to Grizel, being prepared to marry her as he had promised the doctor, but Grizel is delighted when he confesses that he really loves Tommy's sister, Elspeth, although she keeps her own love for Tommy secret at this point. David Gemmell was afraid that Tommy was a "false loon" and this later proved to be the case. Grizel had struggled to appear independent rather than love Tommy if he

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- <sup>1</sup> J M BARRIE : TOMMY AND GRIZEL (LONDON : 1938) p 160  
<sup>2</sup> J M BARRIE : TOMMY AND GRIZEL (LONDON : 1938) p 160  
<sup>3</sup> J M BARRIE : TOMMY AND GRIZEL (LONDON : 1938) p 243

did not really love her and when she discovers that he does not love her, because he is constitutionally incapable of really loving a woman, she again resumes the appearance of independence and lets people think that she has rejected Tommy, although it breaks her heart to have them think it.

However, when she learns of Tommy's illness she abandons any pretence of independence, pride and self-respect and leaves for London only to hear that Tommy has left his lodgings there and has gone to the Continent. After a nightmare journey she catches up with him at St Gian only to overhear Tommy's declaration of his love for Lady Pippinworth. Grizel leaves in horror and returns to Thrums, now pursued by Tommy. Once home she becomes delirious and has what appears to be a complete mental breakdown, as a result of what she regards as Tommy's treacherous behaviour. Tommy marries Grizel to prevent her being sent to a mental hospital and eventually she recovers her health:

Grizel progressed imperceptibly as along a dark corridor toward the door that shut out the light, and on a day in early spring the door fell.<sup>1</sup>

She seems to have awakened from a bad dream and cries with joy when she hears of her marriage. Tommy asks her forgiveness but this is unnecessary as Grizel's love for him never changed. Tommy makes his brief married life with Grizel as happy as he possibly can and after his untimely death she resumes her independence and can look back and see that she is the good woman she wanted to be when she was a child. She lives on at Double Dykes, her childhood home, helping David Gemmell in the medical practice and taking an interest in other people's babies:

And to her latest breath she went on loving Tommy just the same.<sup>2</sup>

In my opinion Barrie's portrayal of Spinsters and Independent Women illustrates his perception with regard to women at its keenest. We see how he is ahead of his time in his attitude to the unmarried mother, the Painted Lady, in Sentimental Tommy, and to the divorcée, Kate, in The Twelve-Pound Look. In his speeches he jokes about female emancipation but is also strongly in favour of further education and practical independence for women. At the same time he is very much aware of their emotional needs and knows that it is a rare woman who can find complete personal fulfilment in a career and his admiration of his niece, Lilian Barrie, and Dr Bodie in A Kiss for Cinderella, is tempered with wariness. The women in his life and works reflect the changing times and the repressed sentimental schoolmistresses of Quality Street and Sentimental Tommy appear dated in retrospect but their horizons were limited by the prevailing social climate as well as by their own natures.

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1 J M BARRIE : TOMMY AND GRIZEL (LONDON : 1938) p 392

2 J M BARRIE : TOMMY AND GRIZEL (LONDON : 1938) p 429

In conclusion I would like to quote a passage from Tommy and Grizel (1900) where Barrie deals very sensitively with the problems of sexual stereotyping and rôle-playing which are of great significance in our society. Grizel is one of the most <sup>apparently</sup> independent of Barrie's heroines but her strength depends on having a focal point for her feelings and when this is removed her weakness is revealed. Here Barrie appears to identify fully with Grizel, whose honesty and independence can be rather intimidating until her vulnerability is unmasked. In his own life he shows a preference for women like his mother whose apparent helplessness conceals a will of iron. At this point Grizel has rejected Tommy because she knows he is incapable of really loving her and she is left alone with her troubled thoughts:

Was it helplessness that man loved in woman then? It seemed to be Elspeth's helplessness that had made Tommy such a brother, and how it had always appealed to Aaron! No woman could be less helpless than herself, Grizel knew. She thought back and back, and she could not come to a time when she was not managing someone. Women, she reflected, fell more or less deeply in love with every baby they see, while men, even the best of them, can look calmly at other people's babies. But when the helplessness of the child is in the woman, then other women are unmoved; but the great heart of man is stirred - woman is his baby. ... Instead of needing to be taken care of, she had obviously wanted to take care of him (Tommy); their positions were reversed. Perhaps, said Grizel to herself, I should have been a man.

If this was the true explanation, then, though Tommy, who had tried so hard, could not love her, he might be able to love ... a more womanly woman ... Some other woman might be the right wife for him. She did not shrink from considering this theory ... deciding ultimately, as she did, that there was nothing in it.

The strong like to be leant upon and the weak to lean, and this irrespective of sex.<sup>1</sup>

In his understanding of Grizel Barrie has progressed far beyond his worship of the lifeless Mary Abinger in When a Man's Single (1888). However, just as his attitude towards mothers developed and he showed more sympathy for fathers but not understanding between parents,<sup>2</sup> his conception of a mature adult relationship is marred by the idea of one partner being dominant. Barrie never experienced or wrote about a relationship where a man and a woman pool their strengths and weaknesses and each balances the other.

1 J M BARRIE : TOMMY AND GRIZEL (LONDON : 1938) pp ~~289~~, 290 & 291

2 Those points are discussed in the chapter dealing with Mothers.



CHAPTER 5 : SERVANTS

Now let us examine Barrie's relationship with women at both extremes of the social scale; servants and ladies of title. In Margaret Ogilvy (1896) Barrie recalls his first contact with servants:

The manse had a servant, the bank had another; one of their uses was to pounce upon, and carry away in stately manner, certain naughty boys who played with me. The banker did not seem really great to me, but his servant—oh yes. Her boots cheeped all the way down the church aisle; it was common report that she had flesh every day for her dinner; instead of meeting her lover at the pump she walked him into the country, and he returned with wild roses in his buttonhole, his hand up to hide them, and on his face the troubled look of those who know that if they take this lady they must give up drinking from the saucer for evermore.<sup>1</sup>

This suggestion that the servant was somehow the embodiment of the aura of social superiority and the rarefied atmosphere which surrounded the family for whom she worked was put to the test when Barrie, as a child, paid his first visit to a household which had a servant. This was the Free Church Manse at Motherwell, where Barrie's sister, Sara, acted as housekeeper to Dr David Ogilvy, Margaret Ogilvy's brother:

Afterwards I stopped strangers on the highway with an offer to show her to them through the kitchen window, and I doubt not the first letter I ever wrote told my mother what they are like when they are so near that you can put your fingers into them.<sup>2</sup>

Tantalisingly, he does not elucidate those impressions.

The prospect of a servant in the family home, in Barrie's adult life, was another matter. He was regularly summoned from London when his mother took ill, and on one occasion the doctor advised the family to engage a nurse to relieve his sister, Jane Ann. The idea of a strange nurse in Margaret Ogilvy's room was intolerable, but they were no less reluctant to employ a servant. Barrie voices his fears of an intruder in the family circle:

I saw myself speaking English the long day through.<sup>3</sup>

An earlier chapter in Margaret Ogilvy gives an amusing account of Barrie's own domestic efforts, which may be summed up thus:

The kitchen is now speckless, not an unwashed platter in sight, unless you look beneath the table.<sup>4</sup>

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1 J M BARRIE : MARGARET OGILVY (LONDON : 1897) p 151

2 J M BARRIE : MARGARET OGILVY (LONDON : 1897) p 153

3 J M BARRIE : MARGARET OGILVY (LONDON : 1897) p 154

4 J M BARRIE : MARGARET OGILVY (LONDON : 1897) p 114

The same tone is present in a letter (dated 2 January 1916) to Lady Scott, widow of Captain Scott and mother of Peter Scott, who was Barrie's godson:

Rather needed someone Christmas eve. Brown and wife away, lit my own fire, (tell Peter out of Mrs Brown's go-to-market straw basket), cooked dinner (eggs) and so to bed (after I had made it).<sup>1</sup>

The Browns referred to in this letter were Harry Brown and his wife, who, as butler and cook-housekeeper, entered Barrie's service at 3 Adelphi Terrace in 1909. In 1917 Mrs Brown's heart trouble meant that she could no longer perform her duties and her position as cook-housekeeper was taken over by Mrs Stanley (the "Mrs" being brevet rank). In 1922 Mrs Brown's illness necessitated a move to the country and her husband too was forced to leave Barrie's service. He took up farming, in a small way, in Lincolnshire, but he continued to keep in touch with his employer, and to send him parcels of apples and other produce, for the rest of his life. Just in case we might think the Browns almost too perfect there is a nice touch in a letter which Barrie wrote to Cynthia Asquith, his secretary, on 26 February 1927:

Brown and his wife came in yesterday and you can't think how excited Mrs Stanley was. I expect that with the vitality that lies behind her ordinary quietude she sometimes misses that merrier kitchen where he convulsed them with imitations of me and my visitors.<sup>2</sup>

Cynthia Asquith became Barrie's secretary in 1918 and it was she who found Frank Thurston to replace Brown in 1922. She describes Mrs Stanley as being:

one of the best women I've had the good fortune to know, ... as untiringly devoted and dependable as Brown,<sup>3</sup>

but she had her shortcomings as a cook, and her passion for housework could present problems, as the following passage shows:

Mrs Stanley, like many other gentle souls, could be very obstinate. Armed with a dustpan, she was difficult to deflect; and from time to time her determination to clear away, or at least <sup>to</sup> lower, the great mound of ashes which Barrie liked left forever <sup>undisturbed</sup> on the hearth, collided with another strong will. At times altercations arose. <sup>indent below</sup> 'Mrs Stanley has destroyed my fire again', I can hear Barrie growl; 'but', he added darkly, 'she hasn't yet dared to do what she most wants to do - get at the ceiling of my study'.

Poor Mrs Stanley! She would dearly have liked to whiten that smoke-blackened ceiling.<sup>4</sup>

1 J M BARRIE : LETTERS OF J M BARRIE (ed VIOLA MEYNELL) (LONDON : 1942) p 47

2 J M BARRIE : LETTERS OF J M BARRIE (ed VIOLA MEYNELL) (LONDON : 1942) p 211

3 CYNTHIA ASQUITH : PORTRAIT OF BARRIE (LONDON : 1954) pp 46 & 47

4 CYNTHIA ASQUITH : PORTRAIT OF BARRIE (LONDON : 1954) p 47

Barrie's attitude here is reminiscent of the passage in Sentimental Tommy where Dr McQueen is considering adopting Grizel but, knowing of her mania for housework, he has reservations:

Maggy Ann (his own servant) was a jewel. But it had taken him a dozen years to bring her to this perfection, and well he knew that the curse of Eve, as he called the rage for the duster, slumbered in her rather than was extinguished. — With the volcanic Grizel in the house, Maggy Ann would once more burst into flames<sup>1</sup>, and the horrified doctor looked to right of him, to left of him, before him and behind him, and everywhere he seemed to see two new brooms bearing down.

As final proof of the trust and affection which Barrie shared with his servants at 3 Adelphi Terrace, the last letter which he wrote, before his death in a nursing home in June 1937, was to Frank Thurston:

I have been quite comfortable here though it would be better of course to die in one's own home. No one could have done more for me than you and Mrs Stanley, and I bless your names. I want you besides the monetary bequest to pick for yourself a hundred of my books.... Few persons who have entered that loved flat have done more honour to books.<sup>2</sup>

Now let us look at the women servants of Barrie's creation and see how they were shaped by his adult experience of those in his own service at 3 Adelphi Terrace and his childhood concept of the servant. The qualities of good sense, good humour, courage and loyalty, tempered by social aspirations and a romantic imagination, are present in varying degrees in Jean in the novel The Little Minister (1891), Gavinia (the most fully developed character of this type) in the novels Sentimental Tommy (1896) and Tommy and Grizel (1900), Tweeny in the play The Admirable Crichton (1902) and <sup>Patty</sup> ~~Cathy~~ in Quality Street (1902).<sup>3</sup>

We first meet Jean in The Little Minister when she is as new to service as Gavin Dishart is to the ministry:

So anxious was she to please that when Gavin rang she fired herself at the bedroom, but bells were novelties to her as well as to Margaret, and she cried, excitedly, "What is't?" thinking the house must be on fire.<sup>4</sup>

We may smile at her determination to read her way through the Bible to impress Gavin, or at her fears when she consults Tammas Haggart about the sprig of holly which might be an indication of Gavin's affection for Babbie, but we cannot help but sympathise when she meets Babbie:

Then she looked long at the woman whom her master loved.<sup>5</sup>

1 J M BARRIE : SENTIMENTAL TOMMY (LONDON : 1896) p 382

2 J M BARRIE : LETTERS OF J M BARRIE (ed VIOLA MEYNELL) (LONDON : 1942) p 302

3 There are two important omissions in this section. Cinderella, in A Kiss for Cinderella (1916), is discussed in the chapter dealing with Romantic Heroines and Actresses and Mrs Dowey in The Old Lady Shows Her Medals (1917) under Mothers.

4 J M BARRIE : THE LITTLE MINISTER (LONDON : 1905) p 22

5 J M BARRIE : THE LITTLE MINISTER (LONDON : 1905) p 334



By the end of the novel we have to admire Jean's courage and loyalty when, in spite of this knowledge, she helps Babbie (Gavin's bride) and protects Margaret (Gavin's mother).

Like Jean, Tweeny in The Admirable Crichton is new and raw when we first meet her and, like Jean, inspired by her love for someone who is her social superior, in Tweeny's case the butler, Crichton, she is determined to better herself. Crichton, who has cast "a favourable eye" on Tweeny, proposes her for the position of maid to Lord Loam's daughters on their voyage. This is how he describes her to Lady Mary:

Her appearance, my lady, is homely, and her manners, as you may have observed, deplorable, but she has a heart of gold ... beneath this simple exterior are concealed a very sweet nature, and rare womanly gifts.<sup>1</sup>

Crichton tells Tweeny they will fight her vulgarity together. After the shipwreck we see that Tweeny is much better prepared to adapt to life on the island, where Nature dictates terms, than Lord Loam's daughters. But, ironically, Crichton chooses Lady Mary to be his wife and, like Jean, Tweeny suffers the experience of seeing the man she loves prefer another woman who is her superior in birth and beauty but her inferior in character. However, her loyalty to Crichton never wavers; having refused Ernest Woolley's proposal of marriage, she wants no sympathy from Lady Mary's sisters after Crichton has chosen Lady Mary. She maintains that Crichton promised her nothing and she will not hear a word against him.

Patty, the servant in Quality Street, is described as being:

a buxom young woman, who loves her mistresses and smiles at them, and knows how to terrorise them.<sup>2</sup>

When ~~Pheobe~~ <sup>Phoebe</sup> accuses her of having a follower in the kitchen, she replies, "A glorious soldier to be so treated!" However, she is much more positive, confident and optimistic than ~~Pheobe~~ <sup>Phoebe</sup>, who has been disappointed in Valentine Brown. At forty, she tells Miss Susan she is still hopeful and when she looks at herself in the mirror she always says to herself, "Who is to be the lucky man?" It is Patty who encourages Miss Susan to take ~~Pheobe~~ <sup>Phoebe</sup> to the balls, reminding her:

This will be a great year for females, ma'am. Think how many of the men that marched away strutting to the wars have come back limping. Who is to take off their wooden leg of an evening, Miss Susan? You, ma'am, or me?<sup>3</sup>

Patty's employers, the Misses Susan and ~~Pheobe~~ <sup>Phoebe</sup> Throssel, are genteel spinsters in reduced circumstances who resort to keeping a school. The position of Gavinia's employer, Miss Ailie, (whose sister Miss Kitty is dead), is identical.<sup>4</sup> We first

1 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 178 pp. 178 + 179

2 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 96

3 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 119

4 The Misses Susan and Phoebe Throssel in Quality Street and Miss Ailie and Miss Kitty in Sentimental Tommy are discussed in the chapter dealing with Spinsters and Independent Women.

meet Gavinia, as a girl of fifteen, in Sentimental Tommy. Like her employer Gavinia is a romantic at this stage, but, as the following extract shows, good sense and good humour are also present. Miss Ailie finds a copy of Waverley under Gavinia's mattress and cannot resist asking her about the ending:

"You did not happen to look at the end, did you?"

"That I did", replied Gavinia.

"And did she - did he?"

"No", said Gavinia, sorrowfully.

Miss Ailie sighed. "That's what I think too", said Gavinia.

"Why didn't they?" asked the schoolmistress.

"Because he was just a sumph", answered Gavinia, <sup>scornfully</sup> ~~sorrowfully~~. "If he had been like Fergus, or <sup>like</sup> the chield in 'Ivanhoe', he wouldna have ta'en a 'No/' He would just have whipped her up in his arms and away wi' her. That's the kind for me, Ma'am".

"There <sup>is</sup> a fascination about them", murmured Miss Ailie.

"A what?"

But again Miss Ailie came to. "For shame, Gavinia, for shame!" she said severely; "These are disgraceful sentiments".<sup>1</sup>

Gavinia takes part in the re-enactment of the last Jacobite rising, master-minded by Tommy. She is described going through the Den:

Came Gavinia, a burgess of the besieged city, along the south shore of the Silent Pool. She was but a maid seeking to know what love might be, and as she wandered on, she nibbled dreamily at a <sup>hot</sup> sweet-smelling bridie, whose gravy oozed deliciously through a bursting paper-bag.<sup>2</sup>

Gavinia takes a keen interest in her mistress's romance and her concern for Miss Ailie's happiness is shown in her conversation with Dr McQueen, but when it comes to a husband for herself she is taking no chances:

"And I hope he's <sup>is</sup> good enough for her", continued Miss Ailie's warm-hearted maid, "for she deserves a good ~~one~~".

"She does", McQueen agreed heartily, "ay, and I believe he is, for he breathes through his nose instead of through his mouth; and let me tell you, Gavinia, that's the one thing to be sure of in a man before you take him for better or ~~for~~ worse".

The astounded maid replied, "I'll ken better things than that about my <sup>lad</sup> ~~man~~ <sup>afore</sup> before I take him".<sup>3</sup>

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1 J M BARRIE : SENTIMENTAL TOMMY (LONDON : 1896) p 233  
 2 J M BARRIE : SENTIMENTAL TOMMY (LONDON : 1896) p 271  
 3 J M BARRIE : SENTIMENTAL TOMMY (LONDON : 1896) p 320

In Tommy and Grizel we see Gavinia married to Corp Shiach, a childhood friend who is now a railway porter and ticket collector. Gavinia may have lost her romantic illusions but she is happy with Corp:

To his face she referred to him as a doited sumph, but to Grizel, pleading for him, she admitted that despite his warts and quarrelsome legs he was a great big muckle sonsy, stout, buirdly well-set-up, wise-like, havoring man.<sup>1</sup>

Mrs Otery, the caretaker in the play Mary Rose (1920), appears at first sight to be in a class by herself:

She is an elderly woman of gaunt frame and with a singular control over herself, ... her greatest capacity is for sitting still in the dark.<sup>2</sup>

But as the action of the play progresses we see how her nerves have been shattered by her fear of the ghost in the Morlands' old home, and hear how she has been known to run out into the fields and stay there trembling. Mary Rose's son, Harry, sums her up:

I have heard that ~~the~~<sup>that</sup> caretaker was bold and buxom when she came, and that now she is a scared woman.<sup>3</sup>

He might be describing an older, frightened, Patty or Gavinia.

We have observed the happy relationship which Barrie had with his own servants at Adelphi Terrace and we have seen how their good sense, good humour, courage and loyalty were reflected in the servants of Barrie's creation. Those servants of fiction also show an interest in romance which harks back to Barrie's childhood impression of the servant as a girl who wants to better herself and is invested with an air of social superiority. We come now to the servant in Barrie's life, with whom he was not on good terms, Mary Hodgson, who was nurse to the Llewelyn Davies boys. After Sylvia Llewelyn Davies's death in 1910, Barrie became the boys' guardian and he and Mary Hodgson came into conflict over their upbringing. Barrie had never approved of Mary Hodgson and I shall demonstrate how this was illustrated earlier by his portrayal of nurses in his works.

Mary Hodgson had joined the Llewelyn Davies household as under-nursemaid in 1897 and soon became exclusive nurse to the family, staying with the remaining boys until 1918. She was devoted to the Davies boys, who in return felt great affection for her. The eldest son, George, writes to her from the trenches in France on February 11, 1915:

By Jove, Mary, when I get home I shall never get up in the mornings at all. I

1 J M BARRIE : TOMMY AND GRIZEL (LONDON : 1938) p 51

2 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) pp 531+532

3 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 536

shall be frightfully idle. That is one advantage of the firing-line trenches. As an officer I don't sleep at all in the night, so there is no getting up in the morning. But sheets! And a proper bed! Oh, I hope the war isn't going on for ten years.

Meanwhile life is very bearable here. And when I get back I shall be more conceited than ever. You'll all shudder.

Yours affec.

George.<sup>1</sup>

In 1975 Nico Davies, the last surviving son of Sylvia and Arthur Llewelyn Davies, writes how, after the tragic death of his brother Michael in 1921, his brother Peter brought him back to the flat from Eton and Barrie asked for him to be taken away again:

Strangely, I don't remember feeling hurt by this, rather did I understand in some way how my very closeness to Michael made his more or less uncontrollable grief even more uncontrollable. ... My first duty was to go and break the news to Mary Hodgson, who was working as a midwife for Queen Charlotte's hospital. I was riding on the top of the bus when I saw her, walking along the street. I ran back to her, and she immediately knew what had happened by the look on my face. We stood in a doorway and sobbed together.<sup>2</sup>

Barrie had known Mary Hodgson for ten years before the death of Arthur Llewelyn Davies in 1907. Shortly after Arthur's death, Sylvia wrote out a series of notes or 'Directions' later identified by Barrie as being 'Notes for a Will'. They appear to have been composed on impulse, ending in mid-sentence:

I may die at any time but it's not likely to happen yet as I am strong I think on the whole. However in case it happens (& God forbid because of my precious boys) I will put down a few directions. I wonder if my dear kind Florence Gay (a close family friend) would care to make a home for them till they are out in the world (if she is still single) ... she could always ask advice from Margaret & J.M.B. & Trixie & May & all the kind uncles - (also of course Mama if she is still alive). With dear Mary Hodgson, ~~and~~<sup>&</sup> I hope she will stay with them always (unless she marries) ... Of one thing I am certain - that J. M. Barrie (the best friend in the whole world) will always be ready to advise out of his love for<sup>3</sup>

Peter Davies commented:

When he (Barrie) was strongly attracted by people, he wanted at once to own them and to be dominated by them, whichever their sex. The owning he was often able to

1 ANDREW BIRKIN : J M BARRIE AND THE LOST BOYS (LONDON : 1980) p 235

2 ANDREW BIRKIN : J M BARRIE AND THE LOST BOYS (LONDON : 1980) pp 294 & 295

3 ANDREW BIRKIN : J M BARRIE AND THE LOST BOYS (LONDON : 1980) p 154



manage for a time to a greater or less degree, with the help of his money, which made generosity an easy business for him (not that the rich are usually generous), plus his wit and charm and the aura of success and fame which surrounded him. The being dominated was more difficult of attainment, as he was a pretty strong character in his own strange way. There's no denying that, from Arthur's death onwards, he did increasingly 'own' Sylvia and her boys after his fashion. And Sylvia, a strong character herself, couldn't help dominating him. Later, I think, he achieved something of the same peculiar equilibrium with George, and much more so with Michael.<sup>1</sup>

In 1907, Barrie assumed financial responsibility for Sylvia and the boys and helped her to buy a new home for herself and Mary Hodgson and the boys at 23 Campden Hill Square. It was not until 1910, after Barrie's divorce and Sylvia's death, that open conflict arose between Barrie and Mary Hodgson. Sylvia's will states:

I would like everything to go on as far as possible as it has been lately. Twenty-three (Campden Hill Square) to be kept up for the dear boys with Mary ~~Hodgson~~ (whom I trust with my whole heart) looking after them. ... What I wd like, wd be if Jenny (Mary Hodgson's sister) wd come to Mary & that the two together would be looking after the boys & the house & helping each other. And it would be so nice for Mary. I would like Mama & J. M. B. & Guy & Crompton to be trustees and guardians to the boys & that May & Margaret would give their dear advice and care. ... I would also like the advice of dear Hugh Macnaughten ... J. M. B. I know will do everything in his power to help our boys - to advise, to comfort, to sympathise in all their joys ~~and~~ <sup>&</sup> sorrows.<sup>2</sup>

According to Andrew Birkin,<sup>3</sup> when Sylvia's will was found several months after her death Barrie made a handwritten copy and sent it to Sylvia's mother. As transcribed by Barrie, part of the second paragraph read, 'What I would like would be if Jimmy would come to Mary, & that the two together would be looking after the boys and the house and helping each other'. Sylvia had written 'Jenny' not 'Jimmy'. Jenny was Mary Hodgson's sister. Perhaps this mistranscription was unintentional but the word 'Jenny' is clearly written and there is no way that Barrie can have thought his presence at Campden Hill Square would be 'nice for Mary'. However, no one called upon Jenny's services as Barrie was really the only claimant with the time and the means to take on the boys. At this point he was fifty and had resumed a bachelor life at 3 Adelphi Terrace (where he continued to live), but he regarded himself as in loco parentis to the boys and would do everything in his power on their behalf. Mary Hodgson was by now a confirmed spinster and regarded herself as

1 ANDREW BIRKIN : J M BARRIE AND THE LOST BOYS (LONDON : 1980) p-154, pp. 154-155  
 Unpublished source : Some Davies Letters and Papers, 1874-1915 : Peter Davies.  
 Compiled 1945-51. Known as THE MORGUE

2 ANDREW BIRKIN : J M BARRIE AND THE LOST BOYS (LONDON : 1980) p 189

3 ANDREW BIRKIN : J M BARRIE AND THE LOST BOYS (LONDON : 1980) p 196

the boys' substitute mother. The inevitable conflict that arose from their rivalry was only held in check by the boys themselves, particularly Michael and Nico, who were ten and six at the time of their mother's death. George was at Eton and Peter about to follow him there, while Jack was at the Naval College at Osborne.

Mary Hodgson's niece, Mary Hill, wrote to Andrew Birkin in 1976:

When it was made known that J.M.B. had been made the children's Guardian, she was extremely upset. She only agreed to continue the running of the Campden Hill Square household because she had promised to do so to Mrs Arthur, and her motto in life was 'A promise is a sacred thing'. This task she did not enjoy since she was responsible to J.M.B. He indulged their every wish, and <sup>this</sup> she considered ~~this~~ detrimental to their upbringing. Eventually the time arrived when she considered she had fulfilled her obligation to Mrs Arthur, and that the boys should be handed over to the sole charge of J.M.B. However, her resignation was not accepted, and for the sake of the two youngest, whom she always spoke of as 'my babies' or 'my boys', she stayed on for as long as she could tolerate the situation. Her main concern was that her presence would become more of a hindrance than a help to the boys when they found their loyalties being continually divided between herself and J.M.B., particularly in the case of Michael.<sup>1</sup>

It may be that Barrie did indulge their every wish. Dolly Ponsonby, daughter of Sir Hubert Parry, the composer, and formerly a close friend of Sylvia, records in her diary a visit she had from Margaret Llewelyn Davies, Arthur's sister, who had strong socialist principles, and spent much of her time working in London's slums:

Monday Aug 7th, Bank Holiday (1911) M (argaret) & I talked all morning of Sylvia & Arthur's boys - & Jimmy Barrie. M is very desperate at moments about them & I too have felt the pity of their easy luxurious lives. In fact it has been on my tongue to say to J.M.B. does he want George to be a fashionable gentleman?... Of course In principle he is all for the ragged ragamuffins & says he wants the boys to be for them too. But in his desire to make up to the boys for all they have lost, he gives them every material pleasure.<sup>2</sup>

Barrie did tend to be over-possessive about the Davies boys. On June 20, 1919, he writes to Lady Cynthia Asquith at Thorpeness:

I want to come but I should have done it before Michael got back. They shrink, these boys, from going anywhere; the death of their parents is really at the root of it and down in my soul I know myself to be so poor a substitute that I try to make some sort of amends by hanging on here when there is any chance of my being

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1 ANDREW BIRKIN : J M BARRIE AND THE LOST BOYS (LONDON : 1980) p 270  
Letter from Mary Hill, Mary Hodgson's niece to the author, 1976.

2 ANDREW BIRKIN : J M BARRIE AND THE LOST BOYS (LONDON : 1980) p 201  
Dolly Ponsonby's unpublished Diaries, 1890-1914.

a little use to them.<sup>1</sup>

But let Nico have the last word on Barrie as guardian:

He was never harsh or critical - he always tried to offer advice as a friend, not as a parent, even when I was very young (which, incidentally, is one reason why he got on so well with children - he always treated them as equals). From the time Michael left Eton, I wrote to Uncle Jim every day, which led to my pouring out my thoughts and problems to him - not to a father, not to a brother, rather to a very intimate friend.<sup>2</sup>

We know what Mary Hodgson thought of Barrie but what was his opinion of her? We have the evidence of his work and his later treatment of Mary Hodgson. There are also two passages in Barrie's work which deal with nurses (excluding Nana in Peter Pan). How far they are applicable to Mary Hodgson we must decide for ourselves, considering what we know of her so far, and subsequent events. The first passage occurs in the novel The Little White Bird (1902). (The narrator is a middle-aged bachelor):

The little nurse (Irene) was ever a threatening shadow in the background.... She assumed the airs of an official person, and always talked as if generations of babies had passed through her hands. She was also extremely jealous, and had a way of signifying disapproval of my methods that led to many coldnesses and even bickerings between us, which I now see to have been undignified. I brought the following accusations against her:-

That she prated too much about right and wrong.

That she was a martinet.

That she pretended it was a real cap, with real streamers, when she knew Mary had made the whole thing out of a muslin blind. I regret having used this argument, but it was the only one that really damped her.

On the other hand, she accused me of spoiling him.

Of not thinking of his future.

Of never asking him where he expected to go<sup>to</sup> if he did such things.

Of telling him tales that had no moral application.

Of saying that the handkerchief disappeared into nothingness, when it really disappeared into a small tin cup attached to my person by a piece of elastic.<sup>3</sup>

However, he does give her credit where it is due:

Watching her with children, I learned that partial as they are to fun they are moved almost more profoundly by moral excellence.<sup>4</sup>

1 J M BARRIE : LETTERS OF J M BARRIE (ed VIOLA MEYNELL) (LONDON : 1942) p 170

2 ANDREW BIRKIN : J M BARRIE AND THE LOST BOYS (LONDON : 1980) p 284

Letter from Nico to the author or his co-researcher, written between 1975 & 1978.

3 J M BARRIE : THE LITTLE WHITE BIRD (LONDON : 1938) pp 101 & 102

4 J M BARRIE : THE LITTLE WHITE BIRD (LONDON : 1938) p 107

But, being Barrie, he cannot resist adding a touch of romance:

She knows there are no fairy godmothers nowadays, but she hopes that if she is always true and faithful she may some day turn into a lady; like the mistress whom she adores.<sup>1</sup>

The second nurse appears in the play Alice-Sit-by-the-Fire (1905). The children have been in the nurse's sole charge for five years and their parents, Alice and her husband Colonel Gray, have just returned from India. This nurse's strongest characteristic is her jealousy of the mother and we know that Mary Hodgson was devoted to Sylvia but we shall see presently that she did have a very jealous nature.

She (Nurse) runs a gamut of emotions without words, implies <sup>that</sup> she is a nobody and must submit, nods humbly, sets her teeth, is both indignant and servile, and finally bursts into tears. ... She returns to the nursery, wailing 'My reign is over'.<sup>2</sup>

Later in the play, Nurse tells Alice not to wake the baby or touch her, and warns her the baby is "not fond of <sup>a</sup> canoodlin' way".<sup>3</sup> Alice is demoralised.

One may as well say here that Nurse weathered this and many another gale, and remained in the house for many years to be its comfort and its curse.<sup>4</sup>

I think that those fictitious characters give a rather exaggerated picture of Mary Hodgson as a disciplinarian, <sup>Discipline</sup> which was just what was required to combat Barrie's methods.<sup>5</sup>

Now let us return to the matter of Mary Hodgson's resignation, referred to in her niece's letter. She had offered her resignation in December 1916, but it had taken Barrie by surprise; none of the boys was married and Barrie did not like the idea of having to find someone else to run the house at Campden Hill Square. His second floor flat in Adelphi Terrace (where he had continued to live) was too small to accommodate the boys. This may have been why he acquired the spacious top-floor flat - in readiness for Mary's next offer of resignation. But this did not materialise. Any suggestion of her going would have to come from Mary herself, as Michael and Nico would never forgive Barrie if they felt he had made her go against her will. Barrie's next move was to propose that Jack's wife Gerrie (they had recently married in 1917), should be the new mistress of Campden Hill Square, with Mary acting on her instructions. The move was delayed until Jack came home on sick leave at Christmas. Nico recalls how he and Michael and Mary stood outside the front door to greet Gerrie and Jack. As they started up the steps, Mary turned her back on them and walked inside:

1 J M BARRIE : THE LITTLE WHITE BIRD (LONDON : 1938) p 109

2 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 248 pp. 247 + 248

3 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 255

4 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 255

5 Barrie's relationship with the Davies boys as children is discussed in the chapter dealing with Wives.



Jack was furious, understandably, but Michael and I wouldn't hear a word against her. Don't forget she was the person in our lives - she was the mother. She terrified pretty well everybody else in the family, but to Michael and me she was wholly unique and wholly irreplaceable.<sup>1</sup>

Mary refused to speak to Gerrie. Everything was communicated via Michael or Nico, or written down as messages on bits of paper. Gerrie described Mary as being "completely demented".<sup>2</sup> Barrie spent most of Christmas 1917 at Campden Hill Square but ignored the tension. In early January 1918 things came to a head. Barrie and the boys had gone out before breakfast and Gerrie was alone in the house. She found a note from Mary Hodgson: "Either you leave this house or I do". Gerrie started packing immediately and telephoned Jack, who had gone to see a friend. They went to a hotel off Knightsbridge and Gerrie later had a miscarriage. She never saw Mary Hodgson again and was of the opinion that Barrie was delighted when Mary handed in her notice as a result of it all.

On January 10, 1918, Barrie replied to Mary Hodgson's letter of resignation thus:

My dear Mary,

As I think you find it easier I am answering your note by another. I suppose I must accept your resignation very sorrowfully as the wisest step in circumstances that are very difficult. No need for me to repeat of what inestimable service to me have been your love and devotion to the boys, particularly to Michael and Nicholas who came into our hands when they were so young.

I earnestly hope that you will continue to see much of them in the future and be their friend thro' life. If you care to consult me about your own future I shall be very glad. I also hope you will now let me make the arrangement Mrs Davies asked me to make in the last week of her life and which I told you of a day or two after her death. It is entirely a matter between her and you, and I trust you will allow her earnest wish to be carried out.

Always your most sincere friend,

J. M. Barrie.<sup>3</sup>

There is great hypocrisy in Barrie's accepting Mary Hodgson's resignation "very sorrowfully", and "the circumstances that are very difficult" appear to have been deliberately created by him. Barrie's attempt to oust Mary Hodgson by making Gerrie mistress of Campden Hill Square must have hurt her just as much as his adoration of mothers must have hurt his wife. This side of Barrie can only be explained in terms of a spoilt child who will stop at nothing to get what he wants, regardless of the feelings of others. The "arrangement" referred to in the letter requires explanation.

1 ANDREW BIRKIN : J M BARRIE AND THE LOST BOYS (LONDON : 1980) ~~p-273~~ pp. 271+272

2 ANDREW BIRKIN : J M BARRIE AND THE LOST BOYS (LONDON : 1980) ~~p-276~~ p. 272  
Taped interview with Geraldine Llewelyn Davies. March 1976.

3 ANDREW BIRKIN : J M BARRIE AND THE LOST BOYS (LONDON : 1980) pp 273 & 274

In her will Sylvia had left £500 to Mary Hodgson, to which Barrie offered to add another £500 of his own, but Mary refused to accept either amount. She suffered such guilt over her behaviour to Gerrie that in later life she refused to meet any of the boys' wives in case her jealousy got the better of her. Both Barrie and Mary Hodgson were strong characters, both tended to be over-possessive - perhaps because they did not have a natural link with the children and felt they had to work harder at their relationship with them. However, between them they made a satisfactory job of bringing up the boys, which is ultimately what matters. It is reassuring to know that Peter and Nico wrote to Mary Hodgson frequently until her death in 1962 and that Barrie left her £500 in his will when he died in 1937.

How far did Mary Hodgson resemble the servants at Adelphi Terrace and those others in Barrie's works? Good sense she certainly had but she was not always good-humoured. Her jealousy of Gerrie is proof of this but she was strongly provoked; Nico said she terrified everyone but the boys loved her. What of her social aspirations? Difficult to define, but the standards set for the boys were those of their parents. Here is a fortunately rare example of her romantic imagination: on Sylvia's death she told Nico that his mother might be back at Christmas. Her courage and loyalty were never in doubt but those can be negative qualities in someone when we wish to dispense with his services. Like the servants at Adelphi Terrace, the servants in Barrie's works, with the exception of Nurse in Alice-Sit-by-the-Fire, are devoted to their employers. In his life and works Barrie shows great respect for servants, beginning with his childhood awe of them; Jean, Tweeny, Patty and Gavinia all exhibit qualities of character superior to those of their employers on occasions. Barrie does not underestimate his own servant, Brown, and does not grudge him a laugh at his master's expense. Mary Hodgson was devoted to the Davies family and could not hide her resentment of the intruder, Barrie, who threatened her authority. Hers was not a nature which could be kept 'in its place' unless motivated by love, and, with their opposing viewpoints on the upbringing of children, Barrie and Mary Hodgson were clearly totally incompatible.

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CHAPTER 6 : LADIES OF TITLE

In dealing with ladies of title I shall begin by refuting the charge of snobbery which has been made against Barrie. He had friends from all walks of life and was always a great support to his own family, but for him the aristocracy had a romantic appeal and in his old age it gave him great satisfaction to compare his early and his present life. It is important to note that Barrie lived through a time of great social change. His life spanned forty years of Queen Victoria's reign; the reigns of Edward VII and George V; the First World War and the abdication of Edward VIII. The matter of his own title is interesting; he accepted a baronetcy in 1913, having refused a knighthood in 1909, in my opinion because he did not want his wife to have a title.

There is a vast difference between the ladies of title who actually befriended Barrie and those whom he depicts in his works. There is no titled lady in Barrie's prose works or plays who is admirable or even likeable, with the exception of the Comtesse de la Brière in What Every Woman Knows (1908), and she is a foreigner like Lady Lewis,<sup>1</sup> the only titled lady with whom Barrie was on intimate terms before 1906, who was a native of Mannheim. There are several possible reasons for this. Mackail refers to an incident which none of my other sources elucidates. When the Barries were house-hunting in 1895, "A titled lion-huntress ... swept them both off beneath her roof."<sup>2</sup> Barrie thought he had made a social conquest and then she drew back. In self-defence Barrie regarded all members of the aristocracy as false and treacherous. We can make the excuse that Barrie did not really begin to mix with the aristocracy until 1906, when, as an established playwright, he cultivated the friendship of Millicent, Duchess of Sutherland, who was interested in writers and the arts, and an important social contact, but this does not explain his portrayal of Lady Caroline Laney in Dear Brutus (1917). Another possibility is that in his heart Barrie remained true to his origins, considered no man his superior on the strength of birth, wealth or position and thought that those who claimed social superiority should be cut down to size. In A Window in Thrums (1889) he shows this attitude to a patronising member of the middle class. The minister's bride was "a grand lady from Edinburgh":

On bringing home his bride, the minister showed her to us, and we thought ~~that~~ she would do when she realised that she was not the minister.<sup>3</sup>

I suggest that all these reasons shaped Barrie's attitude towards ladies of title in his works. Lady Sims in The Twelve-Pound Look (1910) is a different case; Barrie's treatment of her is coloured by the bitterness of his own divorce and his disgust with materialism.

1 Lady Lewis is mentioned in the chapter dealing with Wives.

2 DENIS MACKAIL : THE STORY OF J M B (LONDON : 1941) pp 224 & 225

3 J M BARRIE : A WINDOW IN THRUMS (LONDON : 1893) p123



From his many friends among the aristocracy I have chosen to discuss three ladies of title who brought out different aspects of Barrie. His friendship with Lady Lucas covers his involvement in the 1914-1918 War and shows him as a man of action; Lady Irvine is <sup>one of</sup> Barrie's link with St Andrews; Lady Wemyss I have chosen because her home and family were very important to Barrie throughout the last twenty years of his life.

Barrie met Bron Herbert, Lord Lucas, and his younger sister Nan, Lady Lucas, in 1912. Lord Lucas was now parliamentary secretary to the Board of Agriculture but, despite the loss of a leg when he was "The Times" correspondent in the Boer War, he was essentially a man of action and his sister, who was to remain Barrie's lifelong friend, shared his courage and independence of mind. In December, 1912, Barrie wrote to her just after she had left for Montenegro as 'bottle-washer' to the Red Cross Unit there:

there is always satisfaction in trying to do a good thing.<sup>1</sup>

In September, 1914, Barrie and his friends, Mason and Gilmour, went on a 'secret mission' to America to enlist aid against Germany. On his arrival, Barrie received letters informing him on behalf of the British Embassy in Washington that in the present state of American neutrality the mission must be abandoned. Barrie pretended that he had come on private business. On September 22, 1914, he wrote to Nan Herbert from New York:

We dine in a garden restaurant 20 floors up on a higher hotel, ...  
There are inviting targets here for the German siege guns.<sup>2</sup>

Nan Herbert was responsible for the reopening in November, 1914, of <sup>West</sup> ~~West~~ Park Hospital in Bedfordshire for the troops. Barrie sent a cheque for £1,000 and went down constantly, sorting out staff problems and arranging amusements for the men. In 1916 the building was seriously damaged by fire, and then water (fortunately all the patients had been transferred). Lord Lucas, who had returned from Egypt some months before as a flying instructor, was about to leave for France in command of a squadron, but Barrie was summoned and came at once. Staff were in favour of rebuilding the hospital, but enormous expense and the time factor ruled this out. Nan Herbert, who had been mainly responsible for it for two years, was physically exhausted. Lord Lucas decided to sell it as it stood and left for France on October 2, 1916. On November 4 he failed to return from a flight over the German lines and was reported missing. His death was officially announced a month later. In 1915, Barrie had encouraged another close friend, Elizabeth Lucas, and her husband, to organise the Château de Bettancourt, near Revigny, as a hospital for French children,

1 J M BARRIE : LETTERS OF J M BARRIE (ed VIOLA MEYNELL) (LONDON : 1942) p 107

2 J M BARRIE : LETTERS OF J M BARRIE (ed VIOLA MEYNELL) (LONDON : 1942) p 110

and took sole financial responsibility for it. Barrie paid a visit there in July 1915, and on his return, described it in a letter to Nan Herbert which ended grimly;

There are thousands of Germans buried thereabout, ... The dogs have taken to wandering and digging.<sup>1</sup>

For Barrie, Nan Herbert and her brother were aristocrats who justified their wealth and position by their lives of service, and in his involvement with them we see Barrie too as a public-spirited man of action.

Lady Irvine was not an aristocrat; her husband was knighted in 1925. They met in Leipzig in 1901 where James Irvine was studying for his Ph.D, after graduating from St Andrews, and Mabel Williams was studying violin and piano at the conservatorium. They married in 1905 and came to St Andrews, where James Irvine had a lectureship under Professor Purdie. When Purdie retired, James Irvine got his Chair. He became Principal of St Andrews University in 1921 and held that post with great distinction until his death in 1952. Barrie first met the Irvines when he came to St Andrews to deliver his Rectorial address on May 3, 1922. He and Ellen Terry stayed with Principal Irvine and his family; this was the beginning of a close friendship which lasted for the remainder of Barrie's life, and Sir James was one of the pall-bearers at his funeral. Barrie writes to him on May 2, 1926, expressing regret that he is unable to come to St Andrews for Nansen's Rectorial ceremonies:

there is the opportunity lost of revisiting a loved place and ~~loved~~ people.<sup>2</sup>

Barrie's relationship with Lady Irvine is revealed in his letters to her; its pattern is similar to that of his relationship with Sylvia Llewelyn Davies and Lady Cynthia Asquith. First and foremost she is wife and mother and Barrie is devoted to the idea of her devotion to her husband and children. He writes to her on September 9, 1933:

No truer pair have ever come within my ken.

and later that month:

I think you have made for him as happy a home as I know in this world.<sup>3</sup>

On April 7, 1922, he ingratiates himself with her older children, Veronica and Nigel:

Be good but not too good else I won't feel at home with you.<sup>4</sup>

Then Lady Irvine becomes confidante. On December 19, 1933, he tells her:

I had a nice present the other day of a tiny miniature of my mother ... I

1 J M BARRIE : LETTERS OF J M BARRIE (ed VIOLA MEYNELL) (LONDON : 1942) p111  
 2 J M BARRIE : LETTERS OF J M BARRIE (ed VIOLA MEYNELL) (LONDON : 1942) p 264  
 3 J M BARRIE : LETTERS OF J M BARRIE (ed Viola Meynell) (LONDON : 1942) ~~p 265~~ p.266  
 4 J M BARRIE : LETTERS OF J M BARRIE (ed VIOLA MEYNELL) (LONDON : 1942) p 266 264

should like to show it to you.<sup>1</sup>

On May 12, 1935, Barrie is using the tone of familiar flattery. He praises Lady Irvine for performing her part as Principal's wife so conscientiously, but:

<sup>it</sup>  
It is just a job victoriously carried out - the real you begins when the doors are shut on it and you emerge as the imaginative, <sup>artistic</sup> dreamer of dreams, far from sure of yourself, indeed very humble, but nevertheless conscious that you are not as the women among whom your life is mainly cast.<sup>2</sup>

Lady Irvine has become another romantic heroine.

Barrie first met Lady Wemyss shortly after her daughter, Lady Cynthia Asquith, became his secretary in 1918. Lady Cynthia's mother was very practical and kind and from 1921 Barrie spent Christmas and Easter with Lady Wemyss and her family every year until her death, two months before his own, in 1937. From 1921-1932 Barrie rented Lady Wemyss's home, Stanway in Gloucestershire, and acted as host there while she and her husband were in Scotland. Cynthia Asquith describes the appeal which Stanway had for Barrie, who was "no great stickler for comfort, almost averse from luxury":

The restful shabbiness, dignified dilapidation of a quite unmodernised, much lived-in family home exactly suited him, as did the informal atmosphere my mother diffused around her.<sup>3</sup>

Cynthia can afford to be casual about her family home. Mackail describes the impressive features of Stanway, once the summer residence of the Abbots of Tewkesbury:

with its gables, its hall with that vast oriel window, its Jacobean garden front, and its exquisite gatehouse by Inigo Jones. With its church, its tithe-barn of incredible size and antiquity, and its wide, grass terraces ascending to the Pyramid (the summer-house) at the top of the hill. Property, after the dissolution of the monasteries, of the Tracy family, and passing through them, to an ancestor of <sup>its</sup> the present owner.<sup>4</sup>

There is no doubt that Barrie, during his seasons as host at Stanway, enjoyed his life as lord of the manor. He was already familiar with the area, as Stanway was only five miles from Broadway, the village in Worcestershire where he had spent several happy summers in the 1890s and marshalled his cricket team, the Allahakbarries. Barrie began a typical day at Stanway by attending to his correspondence, with his secretary's help. Then he wrote letters and might sketch out characters for charades or a children's play. After lunch he played croquet, except on

1 J M BARRIE : LETTERS OF J M BARRIE (ed VIOLA MEYNELL) (LONDON : 1942) p 268

2 J M BARRIE : LETTERS OF J M BARRIE (ed VIOLA MEYNELL) (LONDON : 1942) p 270

3 CYNTHIA ASQUITH : PORTRAIT OF BARRIE (LONDON : 1954) p 132

4 DENIS MACKAIL : THE STORY OF J M B (LONDON : 1941) p 556

Saturdays, when he watched the village cricket match. He had a siesta before tea and then he might play cricket with the children or walk with a friend, or Cynthia. After dinner and a smoke, depending on the company, there was talk, the shovelboard, reading aloud or charades.

Barrie's guests in 1921 included his sister Maggie and her husband and son, and Jack and Gerrie Davies and their children, who became annual visitors. On other occasions, numerous guests included Galsworthy, Conan Doyle and H G Wells. Barrie was an unpredictable host and Cynthia remembers him at his best when the Australian Test Team, then playing at Cheltenham, visited Stanway. Her diaries are crowded with characters and incidents of those Stanway summers: on her son Simon's birthday in 1926 fifty-two people came to tea on the shovelboard. Barrie also made friends with the village characters, including the gamekeeper, Harry Last, who blamed whatever government was in power for everything - even the weather. Another memorable figure was the old carpenter whom Lady Wemyss had once met trudging up the hill with his empty hands held out in front of him at some distance apart from one another. Cynthia tells us:

'Would her Ledyship please not speak to me', he mumbled, 'I be carryin' the measurements of a door'. ... 'The atmosphere around Stanway fosters idiosyncrasy', declared Barrie approvingly!<sup>1</sup>

Having described some of the happy relationships which Barrie had with ladies of title in his life, I shall deal now with ladies of title in chronological order as they appear in his works, with the exception of those in The Admirable Crichton (1902), whom I shall discuss last. The earliest example is Lady Pippinworth in Tommy and Grizel (1900), who is a caricature on a par with Lord Rintoul in The Little Minister (1891) and Sir Clement Downton in When A Man's Single (1888). All three are villains. In The Greenwood Hat (1930) Barrie includes an article on "shorter heroines and heroines who roll"; they are the aristocratic heroines of romantic fiction who are much given to melodramatic posturings. Lady Pippinworth is a heroine of this type. This is illustrated in the love scene which follows the "duel for mastery" between Tommy and Lady Pippinworth. Barrie's love scenes are notoriously inept and this is a classic example:

He flung out his arms for help, and they fell upon Lady Pippinworth and went round her... "Alice, I love you, for you are love itself" ... ~~(She intends to turn and mock him but)~~ <sup>as she delayed</sup> she was in danger of melting in his arms' ... Her head had fallen on his shoulder. She was to give it but a moment, and then ... Neither of them spoke. Suddenly they jumped apart. Lady Pippinworth stole

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1 CYNTHIA ASQUITH : PORTRAIT OF BARRIE (LONDON : 1954) p 143



to the door. They held their breath and listened ...<sup>1</sup>

It seems almost a pity that Barrie never met anyone like Lady Pippinworth.

The other characters in this section are vastly superior, artistically, to Lady Pippinworth. Darlington describes Lady Sybil Tenterden in What Every Woman Knows (1908) as being in the Lady Pippinworth league, but claims that whereas Lady Pippinworth in a novel is "an author's puppet", Lady Sybil in a play is "an actable part".<sup>2</sup> I would agree with this. Maggie Wylie<sup>3</sup> is shrewd enough to recognise Lady Sybil's intrinsic qualities, which make her aware of her own shortcomings; here she observes the entrance of Lady Sybil and the Comtesse de la Brière:

They are far from intending to be rude; it is not their fault that thus do swans scatter the ducks.<sup>4</sup>

Maggie's instinctive awareness of aristocratic poise and style is reminiscent of Cameron's admiration of Mary Rose in Mary Rose (1920); "a gawky youth of twenty", he considers her "a ferry genteel young Matron".<sup>5</sup> There is, too, Barrie's admiration of the mysterious "something"<sup>6</sup> conferred by the English public schools. However, just as Barrie made up for his "want of allure" and lack of background by his literary gifts and fame, and Cameron asserted himself by his erudition, Maggie Wylie compensates for her want of personal charms by her courage and sharp wits. Lady Sybil, who claimed:

I think if I ever really love it will be like Mary Queen of Scots, who said of her Bothwell that she could follow him / around the world in her nighty,<sup>7</sup>

tires of John Shand, and he of her, after a month. Barrie dismisses Lady Sybil by saying:

in the fulness of time she married successfully in cloth of silver, which was afterwards turned into a bed-spread.<sup>8</sup>

His scorn of her ~~faithfulness~~<sup>faithlessness</sup> is ironic, as while the play was still in its first run Barrie was made aware, in July 1909, of his wife's adultery with Gilbert Cannan.

The Comtesse de la Brière, with her astuteness and Puckish sense of mischief, adds a great deal of sparkle to the play in which she appears, What Every Woman Knows (1908). She crushes Maggie Wylie when she <sup>Maggie</sup> first tries to practise the French she has studied so assiduously, and tells her niece, Lady Sybil, that they can give John Shand the polish he needs to complete his education. But when she learns that it is Maggie who has advanced John's fortunes, her attitude towards Maggie changes and she warns her against Lady Sybil. Courageous and quick-witted herself, she applauds

1 J M BARRIE : TOMMY AND GRIZEL (LONDON : 1938) pp 353 & 354

2 W A DARLINGTON : J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1938) p 85

3 Maggie Wylie is discussed in the chapter dealing with Wives.

4 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 335

5 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) pp 560 & 561

6 J M BARRIE : McCONNACHIE AND J M B (LONDON : 1938) p 65

7 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 338

8 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 384

those qualities in Maggie. She teases the humourless John Shand about his introduction of "a bill to give women an equal right with men to grow beards". She reminisces about her youth with Charles Venables, but is not fooled by his superficial charm. When she sees through Maggie's power over John she congratulates her on it affectionately and helps her to separate John and Sybil. It is her removal of the speech from Maggie's bag which leads to the denouement of the play. The Comtesse is the only lady of title in Barrie's works whose portrayal excites admiration.

Barrie's play The Twelve-Pound Look (1910) reflects the bitterness and disillusionment which he felt over his divorce in the previous year. Lady Sims is not an aristocrat, but her husband is about to be knighted; in this she resembles Barrie's friend, Lady Irvine, but that is all they have in common. Material success and worldly honours are no threat to a happy marriage but they are no substitute for mutual love and trust, as Barrie had discovered.<sup>1</sup> His creation of Sir Harry Sims is an unnecessarily brutal piece of self-flagellation. Success is Harry's religion and it led to his first wife, Kate, leaving him.<sup>2</sup> The present Lady Sims is the most understated of Barrie's ladies of title but no less effective for that:

Her jewelled shoulders proclaim aloud her husband's generosity. She must be an extraordinarily proud and happy woman, yet she has a drawn face and shrinking ways.<sup>3</sup>

Kate left Harry because she felt suffocated. Marriage to Harry is having the same effect on his present wife. Although she appears "a spiritless woman of no account", after Kate has left her house, Lady Sims has "the twelve-pound look" in her eyes.<sup>4</sup> Twelve pounds was the price of the typewriter which liberated Kate.

Lady Lilian in Half an Hour (1913) resembles Lady Sybil Tenterden in What Every Woman Knows (1908) and Lady Mary Lasenby in The Admirable Crichton (1902) in that her feelings for the man she claims to love are not strong enough to withstand the test to which Barrie puts her. Like Lady Sims she is married to a materialist. Garson, the financier, claims to have bought her from her father for £20,000:

Your rotten <sup>old</sup> families, all so poor and well turned out. The come-on look, in the melting eyes of you, and the disdain of you. ... You were the worst, so I chose you.<sup>5</sup>

This is pretty strong stuff from Barrie, who is now mixing with the aristocracy. Lady Lilian thinks she could have been a better person if she had married a better man but Garson tells her:

In the end you will always be true to Number One.<sup>6</sup>

1 Barrie's marriage is discussed in the chapter dealing with Wives.

2 Kate and Harry Sims are discussed in the chapter dealing with Spinsters and Independent Women.

3 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 719

4 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 734

5 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 616

6 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 618

This proves to be the case, when, after the death of her lover, Hugh Paton, Lady Lillian returns to her husband and acts as if nothing had happened. Dr Brodie thinks she might have found a job and lived on true to the dead and then calls himself sentimental for wasting his sympathies on her.

In Dear Brutus (1917) Lady Caroline Laney is the character who is made to look most ridiculous. Like Lady Mary Lasenby on the enchanted island, Lady Caroline in the magic wood finds romance with the butler but ~~whereas~~<sup>whereas</sup> Lady Mary in 1902 was ahead of her time, Lady Caroline in 1917 is an anachronism, and apart from the nature of his calling, Matey, with his criminal tendencies, bears no ~~other~~ resemblance to Crichton. Before they go into the wood Lady Caroline is the one who has been hardest on Matey, insisting that he should be sent to jail. This makes her behaviour in the wood even more comic. There she is "Caroliny", "Jim's lass". Her relationship with Matey is another manifestation of Barrie's master/servant fixation:

I always knew that it was a master I needed.<sup>1</sup>

On her return from the wood, Purdie takes great glee in Lady Caroline's transformation, introducing himself as the Lord Chancellor. The arrogant Lady Caroline has certainly been cut down to size.

After the first performance of Barrie's play The Admirable Crichton on November 4, 1902, Walbrook tells us:

In England and America,<sup>and</sup> even in Paris, it was hailed as one of the most penetrating social pamphlets of the day.<sup>2</sup>

The opening description of the room in Lord Loam's house in Mayfair, and its occupants, certainly presents a picture of aristocratic decadence. Lord Loam's younger daughters, Catherine and Agatha, are described as being:

very fashionable young women indeed, who might wake up for a dance, but they are very lazy.<sup>3</sup>

As for the eldest daughter, Lady Mary:

If she chooses she can make you seem so insignificant that you feel you might be swept away with the crumb-brush.<sup>4</sup>

In 1902 Barrie was not yet moving in aristocratic circles but his attitude to the upper classes was not that of the social revolutionary who wants a levelling down. He wanted the privileges of the upper classes to be more widely enjoyed; this is certainly his attitude to the public school system.<sup>5</sup>

For Barrie, in The Admirable Crichton, nature is the true arbiter, and just as

1 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 490

2 H M WALBROOK : J M BARRIE AND THE THEATRE (LONDON : 1922) p 68

3 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 164

4 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) ~~pp 164 & 165~~ p.165

5 J M BARRIE : McCONNACHIE AND J M B (LONDON : 1938) p 66



a process akin to natural selection designates Lord Loam as leader in a civilised society, Crichton, the butler, is elevated to leadership on the island by the same process.<sup>1</sup> In this play Barrie runs true to form in his attitude to ladies of title and they appear ultimately in a poor light. However, in one sense this play is prophetic. Just as it required a cataclysm in the form of a shipwreck to bring out the best in Lady Mary, the War of 1914-1918 was the liberating force which helped to break down class barriers and the pattern of aristocratic dependence.

In the course of the play we see how the pampered Lady Mary develops after she and her family have been shipwrecked on a desert island in the Pacific. At the outset she is the most arrogant and self-willed character but once the natural law of the island has asserted itself it is Lady Mary who enters most into the spirit of freedom and adventure. Lady Mary is discussed elsewhere<sup>2</sup> as a romantic heroine so I shall concentrate here on her renunciation of Crichton. No sooner has she agreed to be Crichton's consort than the arrival of a ship signals that their life on the island has come to a natural end. Lady Mary vows, "Dear <sup>Gov.,</sup> Crichton I will never give you up", and Crichton replies, "My lady".<sup>3</sup>

On her return to London, Lady Mary confides her feelings about Crichton to her father. She explains that their relationship seemed so natural at the time but that she does not have the "pluck" to go on with it. It is the butler who saves the situation when Lord Loam's family and servants are being interviewed about what happened on the island by Lady Brocklehurst, mother of Lord Brocklehurst, for whom Lady Mary has given up Crichton. She is "a very formidable old lady" with the mischief-making capacity of the Comtesse de la Brière but lacking her redeeming features.

How splendid it would have been if Lady Mary had had as much courage as Maggie Wylie<sup>4</sup> in What Every Woman Knows and Kate in The Twelve-Pound Look<sup>5</sup>, who were prepared to defy convention in defence of their beliefs, instead of giving up the man she loves because he has suffered a set-back in his social status. If we wanted to make excuses for her we might say that she is a prisoner of the class system which decrees that she must marry someone of equal rank and that Crichton approves of the social system which keeps them apart but Barrie's heroines are not in the habit of letting any obstacles stand in their way when they have set their heart on something. A marriage between Lady Mary and the butler would have been no more bizarre than that of the Auld Licht minister and the gypsy in The Little Minister. The only real barrier seems to be the instinct for self-preservation and the lack of courage with which Barrie credits Lady Mary. He lays the same charge against Lady Lillian in Half an Hour. Ladies of title in Barrie's works are conspicuously lacking in strength of character and depth of feeling. This seems to be mainly the result of

1 It was not until January 31, 1920, that the play was revived with a new fourth act. In this version Crichton was made to express a great deal of dissatisfaction with the inequalities of life. He was made to foresee the War of 1914-1918 and to prophesy that when it came all the Bill Crichtons would get their chance.

2 In the chapter dealing with Romantic Heroines and Actresses.

3 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 221

4 Maggie Wylie is discussed in the chapter dealing with Wives.

5 Kate is discussed in the chapter dealing with Spinsters and Independent Women.



a deep-rooted prejudice, too firmly embedded to be removed by any happy contacts Barrie had with them in his life.

The woman who had a major rôle in the last nineteen years of J M Barrie's life was Lady Cynthia Asquith, who acted as his secretary from August 28, 1918, until his death on June 19, 1937. She played the parts of all the different types of women we have studied so far. She was a loving wife and devoted mother but in addition wanted to assert her individuality and help to support her family by making a career for herself. Her aspirations to be a film actress were never realised but her beauty, which might have been exploited on the screen, was what attracted Barrie to make a romantic heroine of her, and in having a lady of title in his employ we see how Barrie's social position had reached its zenith. Barrie's first significant meeting with Lady Cynthia Asquith was on June 23, 1918, at a dinner-party at <sup>the</sup> Berkeley given by Lady Dufferin. She was the eldest daughter of the Earl of Wemyss; now thirty, she had been married for seven years to the former Prime Minister's eldest surviving son, Herbert Asquith, known as Beb. Cynthia exhibited the courage which Barrie's fictitious heroines lacked in defying her father to marry the man she loved. Mr Asquith had not approved of his son's marrying into the family of a High Tory and Cynthia's father had been furious that his daughter should marry a Liberal who had wanted to abolish the House of Lords. Cynthia's sisters each got £5,000 when they married but Cynthia had no dowry. Beb Asquith had read for the Bar at Oxford but he really wanted to write poetry and novels. After practising at the Bar for four years without notable success, Beb Asquith joined the army when war broke out and was now a gunner in France. In addition to his army pay Beb had no private income apart from an allowance from his father and Cynthia's expensive tastes brought financial difficulties.

It is interesting to note the similarities between Cynthia Asquith and Sylvia Llewelyn Davies at the time of their first significant meeting with Barrie. Both were just over thirty and very beautiful; both their husbands had studied for the Bar and both had young sons. Cynthia's younger son, Michael, was four, the same age as George Davies had been when Barrie first got to know him in 1898. (Cynthia's elder son, John, was mentally retarded and lived with a governess in the country. Her third son, Simon, was born in 1919.) Like Sylvia, with her talent for dress-making, Cynthia was artistic but she was much more independent and ambitious than Sylvia had been. After Beb joined the army, Cynthia made extra money by letting her house in Sussex Place and staying with her family or friends. She would have continued her war-work as a voluntary nurse in a London hospital if she had been able to afford it. She had tried to capitalise on her beauty by going to Catford for a

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film test but no film offers had been forthcoming. Cynthia had first met Barrie in April 1916, at a dinner-party given by Lady Violet Bonham-Carter, but that meeting was not a success. She wrote to Barrie the following year asking to be considered for a part in the film of The Admirable Crichton. No reply came to this letter but in August 1917 the Countess of Lytton rang her up and offered her the part of Margaret in Dear Brutus, apparently at Barrie's instigation, but stage work required professional acting and she did not feel able to cope. It was not until their meeting on June 23, 1918, that she saw a different Barrie. He did not refer to Dear Brutus but said he did not approve of her as a film actress, and offered her the post of secretary.

Cynthia was attracted by Barrie's offer. The salary proposed was £500 a year, and in addition there were to be flexible hours and long holidays. She wrote in her diary that night:

It's a very soft job, and I think it would be too silly not to accept.<sup>1</sup>

However, she consulted various friends before she did so. Desmond McCarthy showed insight in his reply to her letter. By then she had made her decision. He wrote:

I am so glad you have taken that situation ... A Dulcinea is a necessity to Barrie. Sentiment is only irritating to an onlooker, and when it is combined with playfulness and real kindness and springs from a cold detached heart, it is a delicate tactful thing, delightful to receive. Barrie, as I read him, is part mother, part hero-worshipping maiden, part grandfather, and part pixie with no man in him at all.<sup>2</sup>

This seems to me to be a fair estimate of Barrie. We have observed his romantic worship of women throughout his life. In him depth of feeling was combined with an amazing self-awareness - as in his analysis of his own marital problems in the guise of Tommy, in Tommy and Grizel. We have seen too how alongside his benevolence ran a streak of selfish callousness which was displayed towards his wife and Mary Hodgson. Above all, he was still 'harmless', in that he was no threat to a woman in the most personal sense.

Beb came home on leave so there was no question of Cynthia starting work immediately. Her husband was not unduly impressed by the prospect of her being Barrie's secretary. He had been taken with a party to see A Kiss for Cinderella, in April, 1916. Cynthia's diary records:

There I was awkwardly placed between dear little Puffin, (Anthony Asquith) who thought it all lovely and sweet, and Beb, who groaned with disgust at nearly every word.<sup>3</sup>

1 JANET DUNBAR : J M BARRIE, THE MAN BEHIND THE IMAGE (LONDON : 1970) p 229

2 JANET DUNBAR : J M BARRIE, THE MAN BEHIND THE IMAGE (LONDON : 1970) pp 229 & 230

3 JANET DUNBAR : J M BARRIE, THE MAN BEHIND THE IMAGE (LONDON : 1970) p 230

This attitude is strongly reminiscent of that of Arthur Llewelyn Davies, but later Beb was to say that Barrie was one of the few civilians with whom he liked to discuss the war, just as Arthur had appreciated his serious conversations with Barrie and had told him that he wished he would write something other than plays.

As their relationship progressed, Barrie hoped that Cynthia Asquith might write his biography but she did not feel able to undertake this. In her book, Portrait of Barrie (1954), she states her intentions:

I could not attempt to sum up so complex a being; but I will try to give my day-to-day impressions of him and such snatches of characteristic speech as I can remember.<sup>1</sup>

Here are some of her initial personal impressions of Barrie which she formed when she started work as his secretary in August, 1918; at this point he was fifty-eight, "but except for that deep hoarded sadness in his blue eyes - <sup>a</sup> sadness, which might have come from aeons of secret experience, or from the death of innumerable dreams - he looked younger".<sup>2</sup> (She saw also amusement and kindness in his eyes), Barrie has often been accused of being an escapist, but this is not Cynthia's opinion:

An 'escapist? With a face like that - those harrowed, harrowing eyes! Whatever his intention may have been, he didn't look as if he'd succeeded in escaping.<sup>3</sup>

She describes his moods thus:

When he's grey ashes, he's devastatingly depressing. It's almost impossible to fight against the influence. On the other hand, on his good days, he's so alive, so full of charm - more than charm - a kind of benign wizardry, that it makes ~~me~~ <sup>one</sup> feel well and happy.<sup>4</sup>

Early in their relationship Barrie confided in Cynthia his opinion of himself as a writer:

"I've <sup>had</sup> so much more luck, than most other contemporary writers", he said almost guiltily. "I've a neat way of putting things", he added belittlingly, "plenty of "(witheringly)" fancy, invention, contrivance and industry/"<sup>5</sup>

In 1918 both Michael and Nico Davies were at Eton (Michael due to go to Oxford in January, 1919), Jack was married, George had been killed in 1915 and Peter, who had been invalided home after the Somme, continued to live with an older woman, Vera Willoughby, helping her to run an antique shop in Soho. Cynthia realised that Barrie was very lonely, despite his many friends, and with Beb in France, if she was free in the evenings, Barrie would often ask her to stay to supper, or to go out to dinner. Soon she became a personal friend and acted as his hostess. Crisis

- 1 CYNTHIA ASQUITH : PORTRAIT OF BARRIE (LONDON : 1954) p 1
- 2 CYNTHIA ASQUITH : PORTRAIT OF BARRIE (LONDON : 1954) p 2
- 3 CYNTHIA ASQUITH : PORTRAIT OF BARRIE (LONDON : 1954) p 9
- 4 CYNTHIA ASQUITH : PORTRAIT OF BARRIE (LONDON : 1954) p 22
- 5 CYNTHIA ASQUITH : PORTRAIT OF BARRIE (LONDON : 1954) p 26

came with Cynthia's third pregnancy. Pamela Lytton broke the news to Barrie and he told Cynthia to retire to Thorpe and to consider herself as still being his secretary. By this time Beb had left the Bar to write poetry and took it for granted that Cynthia would give up her job after Simon's birth on August 20, 1919. She did return, briefly, but angry at the accumulation of work she became ill with nerves. Barrie sent her salary and said nothing about her coming back. However, on May 9, 1920, Cynthia came to dine with Barrie on his sixtieth birthday. She had been taking on more and more of her old work and had now become 'special' to Barrie. At this point in his life Barrie felt recharged. Since the publication of four of his one-act plays as Echoes of the War in 1918, his only published work had been the Preface to The Young Visitors (sic) by Daisy Ashford, aged nine. But on November 1, 1919, he had been elected Rector of St Andrews University and now his latest play, Mary Rose, was having a successful run after its triumphant first night on April 22, 1920.

Barrie paid his first visit to Stanway, Cynthia's family home, at Easter 1921, and was enchanted by it. On his return to London he wrote to Cynthia at Stanway every few days until she resumed her duties at Adelphi Terrace. Extracts from those letters show Barrie writing in a tone of familiarity which is quite different from anything he had ever written to a woman before:

Dearest Mulberry,

Do you know what that tree is? I might have guessed it because it was so unlike the others. However by their fruits ye shall know them, and it was by your fruits I first knew you were a mulberry ...<sup>1</sup>

In every letter he told her how much he missed her:

It's sad my lassie is so far away tho' I know she is being a darling of a mother all the time ...<sup>2</sup>

He urged her to buy a dress at Reville's 'and send the bill to me'. He signed himself 'J M B Your Servant', and in all the letters which followed from then on, 'Master', or 'Loving Master'. Here is that lifelong worship of mothers, and the master/servant relationship which prompted Peter Davies to comment in respect of Sylvia Llewelyn Davies:

When he (Barrie) was strongly attracted by people, he wanted at once to own them and to be dominated by them.<sup>3</sup>

But despite their intimate tone those letters were just a pose. Barrie knew that Cynthia loved money and luxury and that she was not 'in love' with him in the accepted sense of the word: he would have been alarmed if she had been. But she was

1 JANET DUNBAR : J M BARRIE, THE MAN BEHIND THE IMAGE (LONDON : 1970) p 255

2 JANET DUNBAR : J M BARRIE, THE MAN BEHIND THE IMAGE (LONDON : 1970) p 255

3 ANDREW BIRKIN : J M BARRIE AND THE LOST BOYS (LONDON : 1980) p 154



fond of him and had a genuine sense of responsibility towards him, and the emotional security and friendship with which she and her family provided Barrie for the rest of his life were never to be more necessary to him than they were on May 19, 1921, when he heard that Michael Davies had been drowned at Oxford.

On the death of Sylvia Llewelyn Davies in 1910, Barrie had transferred much of his strong possessive affection to Michael<sup>1</sup>, and he had ambitions for him just as if he had been Michael's real father. Michael, who could not swim, had died along with his friend, Rupert Buxton. Lord Boothby was convinced it was a mutual suicide pact and Barrie mentioned the possibility of suicide in later years to Josephine Mitchell Innes but part of him refused to accept it. Sylvia had entrusted Michael to his care:

I do not want my Michael to be pressed at all at work... J.M.B. knows and will be careful and watch.<sup>2</sup>

Undoubtedly, it was Cynthia Asquith who saved Barrie's sanity, if not his life, at this time. She immediately sent her children to Margate, with their nurse while she stayed with Barrie. When he felt well enough to travel, he and Cynthia and Nico holidayed briefly at Margate where, relaxing in the sunshine with Cynthia's children, Barrie began to recover his health. It was Cynthia too who suggested that Barrie should rent Stanway and act as host to his own friends there while her parents were in Scotland. Obviously, this arrangement provided a country holiday for Cynthia and her husband and children in her old home, but as well as being wife and mother during the five and a half weeks' tenancy she was also secretary and hostess. Barrie was a temperamental host who could be very demanding of Cynthia and she must be given credit for keeping everything running smoothly. So successful was this first season at Stanway in 1921 that Barrie continued to rent it every summer until 1932.

But what of Barrie's work? On May 27, 1921, Shall We Join the Ladies?, with a distinguished cast, had its première as part of a triple bill to celebrate the opening of R A D A's new theatre in Gower Street. (This was to be his last play until The Boy David<sup>3</sup> in 1936), In 1921 The Admirable Crichton was the first of Barrie's plays to be filmed. Barrie was disgusted by what he eventually saw but fascinated by the medium. There was now the ordeal of Barrie's Rectorial address at St Andrews to be faced. Cynthia Asquith's help and support were also in evidence here; she travelled from London with Barrie, E V Lucas and Bernard Freyberg and they toured Edinburgh before reaching St Andrews, where Barrie was to be the guest of Principal and Mrs Irvine, who later became close friends. The ceremony took place on May 3, 1922. The students showed little respect for Lord Haig, the Chancellor of the

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1 ANDREW BIRKIN : J M BARRIE AND THE LOST BOYS (LONDON : 1980) p 130  
Letter from Nico to the author.

2 ANDREW BIRKIN : J M BARRIE AND THE LOST BOYS (LONDON : 1980) p 296

3 The Boy David is discussed in relation to Elisabeth Bergner in the chapter dealing with Romantic Heroines and Actresses.

University, and Barrie was very nervous when he rose to speak. He fiddled with a large paper-knife and every movement was marring the delivery of his address. Then a voice from the body of the hall cried, "Put it down, Jamie, or you'll cut your throat!" From that moment Barrie pulled himself together and soon had his audience spellbound. His theme was Courage and he told his audience that it was time for youth to demand a partnership in the running of affairs; his reading of Michael Davies's sonnet and Captain Scott's letter were masterly touches. This occasion was not just a personal triumph for Barrie; it marked a turning-point in his career.

We have traced Barrie's transition from journalist through novelist to dramatist and the next ten years might be described as his '~~oratorical~~ <sup>oratorical</sup> period' when he won public acclaim with his personal appearances and showed his skills as an actor. During this same period he won other honours. He was appointed to the Order of Merit in 1922. On June 23, 1926, he was given the Honorary Degree of D.Litt. by Oxford and that of LL.D. by Cambridge on June 5, 1930. On October 25, 1930, he was installed as Chancellor of Edinburgh University. He pays women an amusing compliment in his address to the First Hundred at Eton College, on July 7, 1927, Captain Hook at Eton:

So far as I can learn there never was any woman in his life. His furrow had therefore to be a lonely one. Perhaps if some dear girl - who can tell? or why so bright a morning had to close in such a cataclysm? Perhaps it was just that at Oxford he fell among bad companions - Harrovians.<sup>1</sup>

However, Barrie took no real pride in this aspect of his career. At an anniversary dinner of the Printers' Pension Corporation on November 12, 1924, the toast was proposed by Winston Churchill and Barrie made a speech. On November 14, 1924, he writes to Cynthia Asquith:

Looking back on that effusion it makes me rather ill, and I am very far from having any pleasure in it. No surer sign of mediocrity I think than being accepted as a successful after-dinner speaker.<sup>2</sup>

Similarly, we have a very rare glimpse of the real Barrie when he writes to Sir James Irvine on October 5, 1934, refusing a request to speak again at St Andrews:

You would be plunging me into woe were I to accept your proposal. St Andrews is the one place where I cannot make a speech again. The last time was the occasion of my only real appearance in public, when I somehow managed to reveal myself instead of to conceal myself, and I want it to stand alone in St Andrews with none of the rest of me beside it. Don't spoil my 'lucky day!'<sup>3</sup>

1 J M BARRIE : McCONNACHIE AND J M B (LONDON : 1938) p 129

2 J M BARRIE : LETTERS OF J M BARRIE (ed VIOLA MEYNELL) (LONDON : 1942) p ~~210~~ 201

3 J M BARRIE : LETTERS OF J M BARRIE (ed VIOLA MEYNELL) (LONDON : 1942) p 268

This letter which Barrie wrote on March 13, 1923, to Cynthia Asquith, pretending to be her son Simon, shows how he had recovered his sense of fun:

My dear James //

I am very unhappy and neglected and so is Michael. U.R the only one we have to look to now. Mother is writing a book about children and she takes notes of all the things we say. Father is writing a book too ... and he squeezes us to make us say literary things ... Michael <sup>has</sup> ~~had~~ begun to write a book about children aged three.

Later. Nannie has begun to write a book about children.

What am I to do? Dear James, I appeal to you as the only person I know who is not writing anything. Simon.

P. S. I am writing a book about the kitten.<sup>1</sup>

Cynthia's first book was about the upbringing of children, and writing it left her less time for her own sons. She also edited Children's Christmas Annuals and collections of new stories for adult readers. Her publisher stipulated that the collection must include a contribution from Barrie. The Princess Elizabeth Gift Book included a letter from Barrie to Princess Elizabeth, aged nine. His contribution to The Flying Carpet (1925) was the story, Neil and Tintinnabulum, the main character based largely on Michael Davies.

From 1930, Barrie, now seventy, turned again to memories and scenes of his youth. The Greenwood Hat (1930) is a collection of articles he had written as an anonymous journalist ('Anon'), in his twenties, with comments by Sir James Barrie, Bart, O M. Mackail notes:

In his own way he was writing his autobiography; even though, in his own way, he had never done anything else.<sup>2</sup>

Barrie reminds us that his grand ambition was "to do things instead of writing about them". Anon's hero was Joseph Thomson, the explorer, and Sir James Barrie's, Captain Scott. The author adds:

No, I never went with either of them. You are right, it might have made a man of me.<sup>3</sup>

The Greenwood Hat was first published privately as an edition of fifty copies which were given to friends but Barrie was disappointed by the response to it. Farewell Miss Julie Logan (1932), set in the same background as Auld Licht Idylls (1888), its narrator a lonely minister, is a mixture of love story and ghost story. It was too short for a novel and Barrie offered it, without payment, to the editor

1 J M BARRIE : LETTERS OF J M BARRIE (ed VIOLA MEYNELL) (LONDON : 1942) p 198

2 DENIS MACKAIL : THE STORY OF J M B (LONDON : 1941) p 632

3 JAMES BARRIE : THE GREENWOOD HAT (LONDON : 1937) p 273

of "The Times". It appeared in a special supplement to the issue published on Christmas Eve. But when it was re-issued on special paper by "The Times", and published by Hodder and Stoughton in 1933, it did not sell well. In August 1933 Barrie rented Balnaboth House in Glen Prosen, about twelve miles from Kirriemuir, and entertained the Asquiths and a floating party of friends. He took great pleasure in showing Cynthia the scenes of his childhood. Ramsay MacDonald, still Prime Minister, drove over from Lossiemouth. The ultimate social accolade was the visit of the Duke and Duchess of York, who, with Princess Elizabeth and Princess Margaret, came over from Glamis. (Queen Mary had visited Stanway when Barrie was acting as host there in 1922.) On the following day Barrie paid a return visit to Glamis and had the privilege of sitting beside Princess Margaret, at tea, on her third birthday.

The remaining holidays of Barrie's life were also shared with Cynthia and her family. In 1934 and 1935 there were Mediterranean cruises, and a trip to Switzerland in 1936. Barrie died on June 19, 1937. He had been in poor health for some time and the failure of his final play, The Boy David, in the previous year was an additional strain. Dunbar deals in detail with Barrie's will.<sup>1</sup> Cynthia Asquith was the main beneficiary. Barclay's Bank, Peter Llewelyn Davies (now a successful publisher) and Lady Cynthia Asquith were appointed executors and trustees, and Peter and Cynthia, literary executors. After numerous other bequests, Barrie's furniture, manuscript books, letters and other papers were to be divided between Peter and Cynthia and they were to share equally in his real and personal estate. In addition, Cynthia also received £30,000 and, with all the attendant problems, the most valuable bequest, all rights in his plays and books, other than Peter Pan, which had been made over to Great Ormond Street Hospital for Sick Children several years before.

In this letter, written to Cynthia Asquith on May 10, 1920, Barrie placed her on the pedestal on which she was to remain till the end of his life:

Such a birthday I had, and all owing to you. I wonder how many years you knocked off me at that little table. I think I must have seemed to be getting young again to everybody at the other tables, and I was revealed to their startled eyes as a stripling - I expect I looked handsome (I felt it), and I talked (this is the impression I carried away) like a Greek God. Here I sit, thinking of myself as a remarkable person - I could rush out and be photographed - I beg to state that I am a wonder. Of course, it is you who are those things, you who are the wonder. You are an artist, and I am your chief work,<sup>and</sup> to think that you made this grand thing out of me in an hour or so, with the Ritz for your atelier!<sup>2</sup>

1 JANET DUNBAR : J M BARRIE, THE MAN BEHIND THE IMAGE (LONDON : 1970) pp 302-305

2 J M BARRIE : LETTERS OF J M BARRIE (ed VIOLA MEYNELL) (LONDON : 1942) p 174



The writer of this letter is the Barrie of Tommy and Grizel; like Sentimental Tommy his ambition is to win the admiration of a woman while he lacks the capacity to sustain an intimate personal relationship with her. This romantic worship apart, for nearly twenty years Cynthia Asquith provided Barrie with friendship and support and the warmth of her own family life. While posing no threat to her husband and family, Barrie was able to admire Cynthia as a wife and mother, as he had admired Sylvia Llewelyn Davies, but Cynthia also acted as his hostess and secretary. In addition Barrie fulfilled his master/servant fantasy in having the object of his affections at his beck and call. The fact that Cynthia was a lady of title was an additional bonus which no doubt afforded Barrie a great deal of satisfaction when he looked back to his own humble family origins.

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CONCLUSION

In his dedication of Peter Pan to the Davies boys Barrie makes this statement:

Some say that we are different people at different periods of our lives, changing not through effort of will, which is a brave affair, but in the easy course of nature every ten years or so. ... I think one remains the same person throughout, merely passing, as it were, in these lapses of time from one room to another, but all in the same house. If we unlock the rooms of the far past we can peer in and see ourselves, busily occupied in beginning to become you <sup>and</sup> ~~or~~ me.<sup>1</sup>

Now that this study of Barrie's relationships with women in his life and his portrayal of them in his works is complete, it remains to sum up our conclusions and to make some assessment of Barrie's personality and contribution to literature.

We have seen how the earliest and the prevailing influence in Barrie's life was his mother. It was the influence of her stories of her childhood upon him which began his transition from being a witty and clever journalist to becoming a creative artist. When he is writing about himself and the one woman he really knows, his mother, Barrie is writing at his best in terms of portraying character, but at the same time his intense attachment to Margaret Ogilvy results in his sentimental glorification of mothers and his depiction of claustrophobic relationships between mothers and sons. Barrie's tendency to make romantic heroines of women, as in the case of his sister Maggie, has the effect of making the women involved seem creations of his own rather than people in their own right, and his fictitious romantic heroines are totally unreal. His attitude to the actresses he knows is a mixture of gallantry and loyalty, with an eye on the professional main chance, but Mrs Page, the actress in Rosalind, lives only for her art and for this reason she is unconvincing. The wives whom Barrie portrays in his works are based on the experience of his own unsuccessful marriage, and the relationship which his parents shared. Barrie's most serious deficiency is his inability to portray a mature, balanced adult relationship; in his works one partner is always dominant, irrespective of sex. In his treatment of the divorcee, Kate, in The Twelve-Pound Look, and the unmarried mother, the Painted Lady, in Tommy and Grizel, Barrie is at his most perceptive and his attitudes are ahead of his time. He is approving of wider opportunities for women but wary of those women who are dedicated to a career at the expense of their personal lives. We have observed Barrie's happy relationship with his own servants, which mirrors the favourable portrayal of servants in his works, and we have seen how the incompatibility of Mary Hodgson and Barrie results in his writing about nurses in such a way as to make them appear over-possessive disciplinarians. Barrie's deep-rooted prejudice against ladies of title was surely finally

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1 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 6

dispelled by his close relationship with Lady Cynthia Asquith but too late to prevent his fictitious ladies of title, with the exception of the Comtesse de la Brière in What Every Woman Knows, being portrayed as lacking strength of character and depth of feeling.

The salient features of Barrie's character which emerge from this study are his mother fixation; the absence of sexuality in his relationships with women; his tendency to romanticise people and events; and his ability to appear to identify completely with a particular woman in a particular situation at a certain moment, which I would define as his imaginative sympathy, his sentimentality in the sense of the word as Barrie applies it to Tommy Sandys in Sentimental Tommy and Tommy and Grizel. There are other points necessary to our understanding of Barrie as a man before we can attempt to assess him as an artist. His multi-faceted personality contains several apparently contradictory features. The first is the combination of the sentimental and the practical in his nature (sentimental in this instance is to be understood as the presence of tender feeling). An example of this occurs in his dedication of Peter Pan to the Davies boys when he refers to the adventures they shared which inspired his creation of Peter:

That was a quarter of a century ago, and I clutch my brows in vain to remember whether it was a last desperate throw to retain the five of you for a little longer, or merely a cold decision to turn you into bread and butter.<sup>1</sup>

Another split in Barrie's personality is between "the ingle-nook man" and "the magerful (masterful) man". In my opinion this stems from Barrie's early awareness that as a young man he was not attractive to women, a complex which persisted to the end of his life. As late as 1928 he is writing to Lady Juliet Trevor:

~~There~~ are all sorts of <sup>other</sup> ways in which I should rejoice to be like you. In appearance, for instance, - what a dash I should cut if I were like you. No more feeble books and plays - no, I'd be out in the open, making women tremble. As it is, I pursue a humdrum life and am ticketed as harmless, ... I sit with knitted teeth watching the play in which I am not permitted to take part.<sup>2</sup>

By 1928 Barrie is no longer a gauche young journalist but an established figure who has made up for his "want of allure" by his fame and wealth, and can appeal to the sympathy of beautiful and aristocratic women. But by now he has experienced the failure of his marriage, which must have reinforced his sense of personal inadequacy. In practice Barrie is "an ingle-nook man", sentimental and whimsical, but his simultaneous desire for mastery takes the form of an overpossessive affection which

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1 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 4

2 J M BARRIE : LETTERS OF J M BARRIE (ed VIOLA MEYNELL) (LONDON : 1942) p 46-116



romanticises its object, as in his relationships with Sylvia Llewelyn Davies and Lady Cynthia Asquith. I shall reiterate the points which Peter Davies makes about Barrie:

I doubt if he brought out or even recognised (or wanted to) the true characteristics of anyone he made much of; he was such a fantasy-weaver that they ended by either playing up to him or clearing out. When he was strongly attracted by people, he wanted at once to own them and <sup>to</sup> be dominated by them, whichever their sex. The owning he was often able to manage for a time to a greater or less degree, with the help of his money, which made generosity an easy business for him (not that the rich are usually generous), plus his wit and charm and the aura of success and fame which surrounded him. The being dominated was more difficult of attainment, as he was a pretty strong character in his own strange way.<sup>1</sup>

The final complication in Barrie's character is that in his private life he was the most reserved of men when it came to discussing his own problems, although he reveals much of his personal history in his works and in his notebooks, but when he is outwardly at his most confidential, in his speeches, <sup>he</sup> is not to be trusted without further corroboration of the points he makes.

In my opinion Barrie gave a reasonably accurate assessment of his own gifts when he confided to Cynthia Asquith<sup>2</sup> that he had a neat way of putting things, and plenty of fancy, invention, contrivance and industry, at the same time claiming that he had had much more luck than most other contemporary writers. His success as a journalist and public speaker were certainly due to the exercise of those qualities. In his days as a journalist Barrie acquired the trick of assuming a character; like an actor he is always happiest when he is hiding behind a part. In My Lady Nicotine (1890), one of his collections of previously published newspaper articles, the mask of flippant cynicism which he has assumed to conceal his natural delicacy with regard to women is seen to slip:

When I hear one of my sex boasting of his "conquests" I turn from him in disgust. ... On the other hand, we must make allowances for our position of advantage. ... They have met us, and the mischief is done.<sup>3</sup>

The sheer industry of Barrie's early years as a journalist is phenomenal. In four years he wrote eight hundred articles and produced five books; Better Dead, Auld Licht Idylls, When a Man's Single, An Edinburgh Eleven and A Window in Thrums. Of the three novels, Better Dead, When a Man's Single and A Window in Thrums, the

1 ANDREW BIRKIN : J M BARRIE AND THE LOST BOYS (LONDON : 1980) pp 154 & 155

2 CYNTHIA ASQUITH : PORTRAIT OF BARRIE (LONDON : 1954) p 26

3 J M BARRIE : MY LADY NICOTINE (LONDON : 1926) p 6169

second is of biographical interest, detailing Barrie's journalistic experience, and the third is worth consideration as a novel mainly due to the realism of the principal characters, based on Barrie's mother and his sister, Jane Ann. Auld Licht Idylls, consisting largely of previously published newspaper articles, is interesting on account of Barrie's use of sympathetic satire in describing the inhabitants of Thrums.

Barrie's ability to enter "for the space of a column" into the minds of other people, combined with those other characteristics which he had developed as a journalist, his fancy and his habit of looking back at the past, stood him in good stead as a public speaker. Although he claimed to despise this branch of his art, it enabled Barrie to express himself as an actor and it seems to me that the theatre is his natural milieu, but before I turn to his career as a dramatist I shall deal with what I consider to be his failure as a novelist.

In a speech to the Edinburgh Institute of Journalists in 1932 Barrie recounts an incident which occurred when he was six:

A few of us boys were playing out of doors at a very messy game, but one was not allowed <sup>to play</sup> in it because he was in his 'blacks', and I suppose the sad way in which he looked at us in play appealed to my better nature, and I offered to change clothes with him. We went up a passage and did this, and then he disported himself playfully and messily in the game, while I sat on a cold stone and wept sadly for I never knew whom. That, O mothers of poets, was literature.<sup>1</sup>

Beware of Barrie when he professes to be opening "the innermost doors", but the point he makes here is repeated elsewhere, illustrated throughout his works and seems to me to be crucial in assessing him as an artist. His description of himself as a child who wept deliberately and without good reason is echoed in his description of Tommy Sandys, the central character in Sentimental Tommy and Tommy and Grizel. Tommy is "a man of sentiment only" and Barrie's Mr Hyde. It is Barrie's sentimentality in its worst sense which mars him as a writer. In this instance sentimentality is to be understood as the display of emotion, or the deliberate exploitation of the emotions of others, without genuine cause, and sometimes denying or falsifying the existence of unpleasant truth.

Barrie's success as a journalist stems from his ability to enter the mind of another "for the space of a column" but his inability to sustain this impersonation for any length of time is responsible for his failure as a novelist. Our study of his life has shown that Barrie had a great capacity for friendship and was a philosopher on paper, but his capacity for love was limited to his mother. Similarly,

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1 J M BARRIE : McCONNACHIE AND J M B (LONDON : 1938) p 237

in the creation of characters in his novels he is only successful when he is writing about himself and the one woman he really knows, Margaret Ogilvy.

In his novels Barrie never escapes his mother's influence, not only in the creation of character but also in their setting, which is the Kirriemuir of his mother's childhood, apart from Rob Angus's sojourn in Silchester (alias Nottingham), but When a Man's Single also begins and ends in Thrums. Barrie's novels, including Sentimental Tommy and Tommy and Grizel, which are the two most deserving of study, revealing most about their author, consist of thinly-veiled autobiography, and such plots as they have are improbable; the melodramatic happenings of The Little Minister are the most striking example. The poor construction of A Window in Thrums is due to the fact that it was originally based on newspaper articles but it is saved by the characters who represent Barrie's parents and sister, Jane Ann. The serialisation of When a Man's Single helps to explain its deplorable construction, and The Little Minister has a curious history; the first version of this novel was sent off to be serialised in "Good Words" as soon as it was completed and a revised version was later published in book form. The Little White Bird was published as a novel but it stands rather in a class by itself and is of great value because of the insights which it gives into Barrie's character and artistic development, and it contains the germs of what were later to be his most successful plays.

It is as a dramatist that Barrie comes into his own. In Courage, the address which he gave at his installation as Rector of St Andrews University on May 3, 1922, Barrie invented 'McConnachie', to explain the dichotomy in his own nature:

McConnachie, I should explain, as I have undertaken to open the innermost doors, is the name I give to the unruly half of myself: the writing half. We are complement and supplement. I am the half that is dour and practical and canny, he is the fanciful half; my desire is to be the family solicitor, standing firm on my hearthrug among the harsh realities of the office furniture; while he prefers to fly around on one wing.<sup>1</sup>

Compare this extract with the following passage from Tommy and Grizel. (Grizel wants to help Tommy to be a real man but first of all they must get rid of his "wings". This is how they refer to his sentiment, meaning his imaginative flights of fancy):

"You know as well as I that the cause of this unhappiness has been - what you call your wings". (The speaker is Grizel).

He (Tommy) was about to thank her for her delicacy in avoiding its real name, when she added, "I mean your sentiment", and he laughed instead. "I flatter myself that I no longer fly, at all events", he said. "I know what I am at last, Grizel".

"It is flattery only", she replied with her old directness. "This thing you are regarding with a morbid satisfaction is not you at all". He groaned. "Which of them all is me, Grizel?" he asked gloomily. "We shall see", she said, "when we have got the wings off".<sup>1</sup>

Tommy on two wings loses touch with reality but Barrie on one strikes the right balance as a dramatist. In this capacity the split in his personality is an asset to Barrie. Darlington, the most theatrically knowledgeable of my sources, claims that:

With the wayward McConnachie to hold the pen and the practical Barrie to watch the performance, it is perhaps not very surprising that the plays came right.<sup>2</sup>

The writing of plays utilises another of Barrie's features which is a drawback to him as a novelist; his ability to feel, and to watch himself at the same time, which <sup>sometimes his</sup> puts sincerity in doubt. As a dramatist he can distance himself from the character on stage who is expressing the emotions. Barrie as a playwright exercises a necessary self-discipline. As he tells us in his introduction to Alice-Sit-by-the-Fire:

the novelist can have sixteen <sup>chapters</sup> ~~pages~~ about the hero's grandparents, but there can be very little rummaging in the past for us; we are expected merely to present our characters as they toe the mark; then the handkerchief falls, and off they go.<sup>3</sup>

Let us readily admit that as a dramatist Barrie has his limits. He belongs to no school and propounds no theories but what he contributes is an original mind. We must judge him on his own ground and not criticise ~~himself~~ as Geduld does because he has no trench scenes in his war plays. Now for the final problem: what is Barrie's ground? His appeal is to the emotions. Barrie's is essentially a subjective world, a blend of fantasy and autobiography, and he fails to be a great dramatist because he never breaks out beyond himself to other subjects. The charges most frequently laid against Barrie are those of escapism and immaturity. Barrie is the first to admit his fondness for islands:

Come to our island ... we will give you grassy huts.<sup>4</sup>

but he adds significantly, and this is often overlooked, "when you have been sufficiently mauled by the rocks of life". Our study has shown Barrie to have experienced perhaps more than his fair share of tragedy. His nostalgia for boyhood is another form of escapism but in my opinion Barrie, at his best, shares the vision of the child and the poet. Wright points out how windows, another means of escape,

1 J M BARRIE : TOMMY AND GRIZEL (LONDON : 1938) pp 286 & 287

2 W A DARLINGTON : J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1938) p 59

3 J M BARRIE : THE PLAYS OF J M BARRIE (LONDON : 1930) p 241

4 J M BARRIE : McCONNACHIE AND J M B (LONDON : 1938) p 57



like magic woods and fantasy islands, figure frequently in Barrie's works, e g A Window in Thrums, Mary Rose, Dear Brutus and Peter Pan, and adds:

this hard-hearted age has barred the windows through which his fancy often took him.<sup>1</sup>

In tribute to his nostalgia for his early life, Barrie was buried, in accordance with his own instructions, with his parents, his sister Jane Ann, his brother David and two other sisters who had died in infancy, in the cemetery on the Hill of Kirriemuir. His own name was added at the foot of the plain, granite gravestone, "with no embellishment of any kind". I have chosen as epitaph those lines from a speech which Barrie made to the Edinburgh Institute of Journalists in 1932:

It is strange to me, <sup>now</sup> to think <sup>...</sup> that when I left my beloved, <sup>little</sup> native town - a weaving town then - I little thought that I was going to be a weaver all my life. All the others have now given weaving up, and I am the only weaver left.<sup>2</sup>

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1 ALLEN WRIGHT : J M BARRIE : GLAMOUR OF TWILIGHT (EDINBURGH : 1976) p 93

2 J M BARRIE : McCONNACHIE AND J M B (LONDON : 1938) p 239

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