

Atlantis, The Lost Continent

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(We are printing Miss Judy Johnston's complete source theme, **The Lost Island of Atlantis**, not only because of its universal interest, but also because of the aid it may offer to those students who are preparing work along the same lines. We recommend it as interesting, informative reading.)

THE FACTUAL BASIS FOR THE STORY OF ATLANTIS, THE LOST CONTINENT OUTLINE

Since the Renaissance, when active interest in the 25,000 year old Platonian story of the lost island-continent of Atlantis was revived, archaeological findings and historical and geological knowledge have given support to the existence of Atlantis, while cultural similarities between European and American civilizations have been the basis for locating Atlantis as a continent in the Atlantic Ocean, where both Plato and the romantically interested students place it.

I The story of Atlantis was first told by Plato in his dialogues "Timaeus" and "Critias."

A. Plato had been told the story, which was already eight thousand years old, by his great grandfather who had heard it from Solon, a wise Greek.

1. Large island empire
2. Great in commerce
3. Highly advanced civilization
4. Destroyed by an earthquake in twenty-four hours

B. Although many passages in ancient literature speak of islands which greatly resemble Atlantis, none call it by name, making Plato's account the only documentary evidence of the lost island's existence.

1. Strabo, the geographer, first to mention Atlantis after Plato
2. Scheria, the land of the Phaeacians, described by Homer in the "Odyssey"
3. Diodorus' description of an island located west of Libya in the ocean
4. Theopompus' reference to the outside world
5. Skepticism in regarding story as a myth because of scientific discoveries

II In addition to the historical and archaeological findings of Schliemann in Russia and Crete, the discovery of lava in 1898 near the Canary and Azora Islands offers concrete historical support to the plausibility of the legend of a lost island empire.

A. Papyrus rolls found in the museum of St. Petersburg, Russia, by Dr. Henry Schliemann refer directly to Atlantis.

1. Expedition by Pharaoh Sent

2. Atlantean civilization at start of Egyptian history

B. Some of the treasures of Priam, found in 1873, are engraved with the name of the king of Atlantis.

C. A history of Atlantis on tablets of clay is preserved in a monastery in Central Asia.

1. Accompanied by map
2. Account of the breaking up of the continent

D. In 1898 it was shown that volcanic action had taken place near the Canary Islands.

1. Laying of a cable
2. Lava, cooled on land, found

III Ocean soundings proving that the Canaries and Azores are peaks of submerged mountains and facts regarding the formation of the Great Central Gas Belt make the geological existence of Atlantis "highly probable."

A. The Dolphin Ridge is a submerged mountain range going from northwest Africa and the Iberian Peninsula to Central America.

1. Azores and Canaries
2. Unorganized masses of rocks
3. Structural similarity of European and American mountain ranges

B. Atlantis was submerged when the Great Central Gas Belt was formed under the

Atlantic, according to one Belt was formed under the geologist.

1. Northern and southern divisions
 2. Gas chambers
- C. The possibility of a flood, instead of an earthquake, destroying Atlantis has been advanced.
1. Melted glaciers
 2. Diamond fields support earthquake theory

IV There are eight main theories of location of Atlantis now in existence.

- A. The theories of Tartessos, North Africa, and Nigeria all are lacking evidence.
1. Depend on archaeological findings
 2. Only suggestive value at present
- B. Three of the theories which

entirely discredit Plato's geography are Atlantis in America, the cosmological idea of Karst, and the theory of land between Ireland and Brittany.

C. The theory which builds on Plato's account most fully is that advanced by Lewis Spence and Ignatius Donnelly that Atlantis was, in reality, an island in the Atlantic Ocean.

1. Spence uses geology for the basis of his conclusion.
2. Donnelly uses the resemblances between the culture of the Americas and Europe and Africa.
3. Theory most popular because of its romantic interest.



A great island-empire, vanishing from the face of the earth in the space of a day and a night

—has ever another story been told to match this one? Twenty-three hundred years ago the story of Atlantis was first told by Plato; today it is still as fascinating and stimulating to the imaginative mind as it then was.

When he was a child, Plato had been told the story, already eight thousand years old, by his great grandfather who had heard it from Solon, one of the wisest of the ancient Greeks. Egyptian priests had related the story of Solon when he was traveling in Egypt.¹ In *Timaeus* Plato describes Atlantis as an island, larger than Asia Minor and Libya combined, lying ten thousand stadia (one thousand miles) beyond the Pillars of Hercules, the ancient name for Gibraltar.

Atlantis was the largest island in the group of islands in the Atlantic Ocean² and could be reached by going from one island to another.³

When the world was divided between the Olympians, the island of Atlantis and the nearby land went to Poseidon, who became the first Atlantean king and founded the Poseidon Dynasty. After a while, Poseidon divided his land among his five sets of male twins. Atlas, the older one of the first sets, was the head of all the rest, and was the one to whom the island was given. The entire island, the capital city, and the surrounding sea were all named after him — thus, Atlantis.⁴

The island consisted of a large, fertile plain bounded on the north by high mountain ranges. The capital city, also called Atlantis, was connected to the sea by a deep, artificial canal and was surrounded by three large stone walls.⁵ The city of Atlantis was famous for three things: two

springs of running water, one hot and one cold, which Poseidon had created; a large harbor with many docks; and a magnificent temple with much gold and silver which was used for the worship of Poseidon.⁶ The Atlanteans made their country a great commercial center and built many ships, temples, and canals; their main city resembled Carthage or Tyre at their peak of wealth and prosperity.⁷

For many years the Atlanteans dwelt in this land, living mainly by commerce and agriculture. After a while, however, they became warlike and conquered much of the territory within and around the Mediterranean. When they tried to conquer Greece, the Athenians rallied and managed to defeat the invaders. They were conquered in approximately 9600 B. C.⁸ While the Athenian army was still occupying the island of Atlantis, an earthquake came and in a day and a night the entire land, with its temples, cities, civilization, and people, disappeared from the face of the earth. This is the essential material contained in Plato's dialogues, **Timaeus** and **Critias**, "not only the earliest but the sole documentary evidence of the existence of Atlantis."⁹

Strabo, the geographer, who was born in 54 B. C. is the first to mention Atlantis after Plato.¹⁰ Although he did not believe the tale, he tells of a first century Stoic, Poseidonius, who did believe it to be true. There are many passages in ancient literature which are thought to refer to Atlantis although they don't call it by name. Scheria, land of the Phaeacians, told of by Homer in the *Odyssey*, resembles Atlantis in many ways. It, too, is located beyond Gibraltar in the ocean; according to Homer, Scheria was mountainous; and the word 'scheria', itself, comes from the Phoenician language and

means 'a center for commercial exchange.'¹¹ Before the Phaeacians had lived in Scheria, they had lived in Hypereia near the Cyclopes who are said to have lived in Sicily. They were brought west to Scheria by Nausithons, a son of Poseidon.¹² Because of these resemblances, "it is quite possible that Scheria, the island of the Phaeacians in the **Odyssey**, is connected with Plato's island."¹³ "But in spite of the resemblances, the differences are marked enough to exclude the possibility of a direct relation between the **Critias** and the **Odyssey**. It is more likely that both contain elements of the same tradition, or elements of different versions of the same tradition."¹⁴

A famous passage describing a somewhat similar island located in the ocean west of Libya is contained in the **Historical Library** of Diodorus, a Sicilian historian living in Caesar's time.¹⁵ Another possible literary reference to Atlantis is given by Theopompus of Chios, a contemporary of Plato's. This Greek historian wrote that Europe, Asia, and Libya, the three islands making up the known world, were surrounded by the sea with nothing outside but a huge continent with much gold and silver.¹⁶

Atlantis was regarded only as an invention of Plato's until recent years.¹⁷ After the Renaissance when interest in the classics was revived, many men such as Voltaire and Buffon seriously debated the possibility of the island's real existence.¹⁸ One reason for considering the story as fiction is that no writer before Plato — even Herodotus who had visited Egypt one hundred years after Solon — ever mentioned it.¹⁹ Another fact which discolors the story is that Plato states the exact measurement of the canals and buildings; this would call for a most re-

markable memory. On the other hand, "if Plato had sought to draw from his imagination a wonderful and pleasing story, we should not have had so plain and reasonable a narrative."²⁰ Scientists, for centuries, paid no attention to the story, but now because of recent findings, it is admitted that "Atlantis is a possibility."²¹

Dr. Henry Schliemann, excavator and archaeologist, is one of the men who has done much to strengthen the theory of the existence of Atlantis. In the museum in St. Petersburg, Russia, he unearthed a papyrus roll saying that Pharaoh Sent of the Second Egyptian Dynasty had sent an expedition to the west to search for traces of Atlantis. After five years, however, the expedition returned having found nothing. The same papyrus goes on to say that the ancestors of the Egyptians came from this land, i.e. Atlantis.²² In the same museum there is another papyrus saying that the height of Atlantean civilization coincided with the first beginnings of Egyptian history.²³

In 1873 when Dr. Schliemann was excavating Troy and found the treasures of Priam, he discovered some engraved in Phoenician hieroglyphics saying, 'From the king Chronos of Atlantis.'²⁴

On the Lion Gate, Maycarne, Crete, Schliemann discovered an inscription which read: "The Egyptians descended from Misor. Misor was the child of Thoth, the god of history. Thoth was the emigrated son of a priest of Atlantis, who having fallen in love with the daughter of King Chronos, escaped, and after many wanderings landed in Egypt. He built the first temple at Sais and there taught the wisdom of his native land."²⁵

In addition to these significant archaeological findings of Dr. Schliemann, the discovery of a monastery near the head-

waters of the Brahmaputra River in Central Asia which contains tablets of clay giving a long history of Atlantis is important. On these tablets it is written that "Atlantis was joined to both America, Europe, and Africa. A great volcanic convulsion took place and the American end was broken and a number of islands formed. Subsequently another great volcanic convulsion took place on the other side of Atlantis. Land was submerged and a sea formed. Then Atlantis became a great island with water on all sides."²⁶ These findings would seem to prove that there is a firm basis of fact for regarding Atlantis as a once existent island.

Another purely historical finding to strengthen the plausibility of the story was made at the turn of the century. A cable, being laid from Cape Cod to Brest in 1898, broke when it was about 1700 fathoms deep and 500 miles north of the Azores. In fishing for the broken strand the grappling-irons brought up lava. Further examinations, showing that the lava had cooled in the open air and not in the ocean, proved that the volcanic action had taken place on land.²⁷ By geological estimation the eruption took place less than 15,000 years ago.

After the lava was discovered, ocean soundings were taken which showed that the ocean bed in this region was very mountainous, with deep valleys and high peaks. The summits of this submerged mountain range going from Northwestern Africa and the Iberian Peninsula to Central America, sometimes called the Dolphin Ridge, are in reality the Canary and Azore Islands.²⁸ As early as the seventeenth century Father Kircher, a Jesuit, had advanced the theory that the Canaries and Azores were the peaks of the submerged Atlantean mountains.²⁹ To prove this theory it will only be necessary now

to show that Atlantis was actually located where Plato described it.

Much of the Dolphin Ridge around these two groups of islands is composed of unorganized masses of rocks. "No such confusion and disturbance could be accomplished except by the material falling."³⁰ Other geological information which has some bearing on the case concerns the Great Central Gas Belt which encircles the world underground.

The Great Central Gas Belt is divided into two lines; the Northern going under the Atlantic beneath the Azores, and the Southern passing below the Canary Islands. Atlantis was held upon the level of the water by isolated gas chambers and was immediately above the route of the Gas Belt which was forming. When the Belt tapped these chambers, they were blown out and the land went down.³¹ If there had been no chambers holding up Atlantis, instead of the land going down, mountains would have come up. The formation of the Northern Division of the Belt, which, in itself, is not too deep in the earth, first pulled the land down so that it was awash at low tide. Later, when the Southern division formed, the land sank to its present level.³² This geological theory agrees with Plato's statement that the Atlantic Ocean was impassable because of mud shoals after the catastrophe. "From a geological standpoint there is no date shown when Atlantis was submerged except that it went down when the Great Central Gas Belt was formed under the North Atlantic Ocean."³³

Geologically, the disappearance of Atlantis is not impossible. Not only have islands been completely swallowed up by the ocean before, but they have also been thrown up above the surface of the ocean by titanic energy. The two islands of

Santorini and Julia in the Mediterranean were formed in this way.³⁴ Another related point is that "the geological formation of the diamond fields of Brazil and of Africa can only be accounted for by such a catastrophe as is described in the account of the destruction of Atlantis. Any physicist knows that diamonds are only formed under the intense heat and pressure that such a catastrophe would entail."³⁵

It is possible that instead of the continent sinking, the Atlantic Ridge Plateau was exposed by a subsiding sea and left bare and later flooded when the sea arose due to the melted polar ice. One geologist³⁶ has said that the sea during the glacial period was 12,000 feet below the present sea level.³⁷ The rising sea could not have been told from a falling land by the people living on the island. Probably the suddenness of the sinking was added by the people who escaped to make the story more dramatic. Geologically speaking it is the rapidity of the submersion, and not the sinking itself, which makes the whole story so unusual.

In 1912 Pierre Termier, a distinguished geologist published a volume supporting the idea that the Atlantis story had many facts for a basis.³⁸ He said that "the Platonian history of Atlantis is highly probable."³⁹ On the other hand, however, Schuchert in 1917 wrote that "there are no known geologic data that prove or even help to prove the existence of Plato's Atlantis in historic times."⁴⁰

There have been many efforts to place the island of Atlantis. One of the most fantastic theories was given in 1679 by Olof Rudbeck who tried to prove that Sweden was Atlantis.⁴¹ In the main, however, there are eight theories regarding the location of the island. They are as follows:

"Atlantis in America, in North Africa, and in Nigeria; Atlantis as an island in the Atlantic Ocean; Atlantis as Tartessos; Karst's theory of a two-fold Atlantis; Gidon's theory of the land subsidences between Ireland and Brittany in the Bronze Age; and the theory that Plato's Atlantis represents a memory of the flooding of the Mediterranean basin."⁴²

The theories of Tartessos, North Africa, and Nigeria all are lacking evidence. Adolf Schulten was the first one who connected Tartessos⁴³, an ancient Bronze Age city located at the mouth of the Guadalquivir and approximately the modern Cadiz, with Plato's island. In Plato's time Tartessos was thought by the Greeks to have disappeared about one hundred years before then in approximately 500 B. C. The city disappeared in this way. In 533 B. C. the Carthaginians sacked Tartessos and became its masters. By 509 B. C., because of a treaty made with Rome, the Carthaginians were the only people who possessed the right to navigate beyond the Pillars of Hercules—thus, this made Tartessos disappear in a sense from the rest of the world.⁴⁴ All searches for this ancient city were failures and "in 1926 Schulten had to admit that Tartessos must be buried under the sea, for he could find no trace of it at the mouth of Guadalquivir."⁴⁵

Professor Paul Borchardt of Munich, Germany, advanced the theory that Atlantis was located in North Africa on the Syrtis Minor.⁴⁶ His reasoning is based on Atlas, one of the kings of Atlantis. According to mythology Atlas was an ancestor of a great people near the Syrtis Minor. It follows then that the Syrtis Minor and Atlantis are identical. A slightly different African location was proposed by Felix Berlioux, a French archaeologist in 1874. He claimed to have found Atlantis, which he thought was the capital city of large empire and not an

island, in Morocco, opposite the Canary Islands.⁴⁷

The theory that Atlantis was in the Yoruba country, part of Nigeria, was advanced by the African explorer, Leo Frobenius. The Yoruba country has many lagoons and canals along its borders—both on its coast, facing the Gulf of Guinea, and along the banks of the Niger River which separates it from the rest of Nigeria.⁴⁸

It is evident that the theories of these three locations — Tartessos, North Africa, and Morocco—all depend on archaeological evidence. Until this evidence or some other concrete support is discovered they will be nothing more than suggestive theories.

A Spaniard, Francisco Lopez de Gamara, became in 1553 the first to identify Atlantis with America.⁴⁹ Francis Bacon was one of the men who accepted this theory. This theory of identification has changed so that now it is thought that the eastern part of America, once a much larger continent, is submerged under the Atlantic.⁵⁰

An entirely different and original theory is that there were two islands of Atlantis, a theory making use of the cosmological thought of a Pillars of Hercules both to the east and west. According to the orientalist Karst, the originator of the idea, there was one island of Atlantis in the Indo-Persian Ocean which disappeared at the beginning of the Ice Age and another in North Africa. The second was destroyed by flood.⁵¹

Dr. Gidon, the man who thinks that a vague knowledge of the land subsidences between Brittany and Ireland might have begun the Atlantean legend, has a case which is primarily botanical. He doesn't claim that the submergence will fit the entire legend. He does, how-

ever, think that the speed of the disaster is very probable because all of the Zuyder Zee was submerged in 1282 in one day.⁵²

Many of the theorists who have attempted to locate Atlantis believe in the details but not the framework which Plato gives. They claim that his dates and geography are wrong, but, in trying to prove their theories, they use his topographical and architectural details. The theory which builds on Plato's account, disregarding none of its aspects, is that Atlantis was really an island in the Atlantic Ocean. Cadet, a Frenchman, was the first to advance this theory in 1787. Ignatius Donnelly's book, "Atlantis: the Antediluvian World," published in 1882 made this theory popular.⁵³

Donnelly's entire theory was founded on the similarity between ancient civilization in the old and new world.⁵⁴ A great deal of his book dwells on the supposition that because of all the resemblances between the two worlds, a contact between the two was necessary. He states that the customs, manners of living, ceremonies, painting, agriculture, and various building materials of these two civilizations were all so similar that "it is absurd to pretend that all these similarities could have been the result of accidental coincidences."⁵⁵

Although another of Donnelly's claims is that Atlantis was the land where civilization began, Lewis Spence, who has published three books on the subject of Atlantis,⁵⁶ says that this is both fantastic and unscientific. Spence, who was more accurate and less prejudiced in his views, uses geology as the basis of his theory that Atlantis was an island in the Atlantic. He quotes many geologists to show that there was at one time a bridge of land between the old world and the new. He then states that this land bridge, or

continent, broke up, until, in 25,000 B. C., all that was left was two continental islands: Atlantis, near Gibraltar, and Antilia, now the islands of Antilles, off the coast of America. The breaking up process continued until, in approximately 10,000 B. C., Atlantis was submerged, except for the summits of her mountains.⁵⁷

The last theory, that of Atlantis as an island in the Atlantic, gains the support of all people interested in the story from the romantic view. To them "either Atlantis is an island in the Atlantic Ocean, or it is not 'Atlantis' at all."⁵⁸ Human interest is aroused by the idea of a civilization existing on a large continent struck by disaster from the face of the earth.

Thus the case of Atlantis rests. If the Platonian story is ever to be completely proved, "a great array of substantial evidence"⁵⁹ will have to be presented. Almost every branch of science will have to be represented and a great deal of research will need to be done. But whether or not the story of the lost continent can ever be proved, it will no doubt continue to live, "for it was chiefly to the ideal imagination — the portion of the mind which prefers to believe the impossible just because it is impossible — that the dream of Atlantis appealed."⁶⁰



FOOTNOTES

1. Clavering. "In Quest of the Lost Atlantis." *Current History*. vol. 39. p. 439. January, 1934.
2. *ibid.*
3. Bertarelli. "Atlantis Questions." *Living Age*. vol. 332. p. 170. January 15, 1927.
4. Bjorkman, Edwin. *The Search for*

- Atlantis.** A. A. Knopf. New York. 1927. p. 26.
5. **ibid.** p. 29.
 6. **ibid.** p. 30.
 7. **ibid.**
 8. Clavering. **op.cit.** p. 440.
 9. Bramwell, James. **Lost Atlantis.** Cobden-Sanderson. London. 1937. p. 59.
 10. **ibid.** p. 64.
 11. Bjorkman. **op. cit.** pp. 39-42.
 12. **ibid.** p. 45.
 13. Bramwell. **op.cit.** p. 68.
 14. **ibid.** p. 70.
 15. **ibid.** p. 65.
 16. **ibid.** p. 66.
 17. Aristotle was one of the foremost men who considered the story as fiction.
 18. Hopkins, A. A. "Legendary Islands of the North Atlantic." **Scientific American Monthly.** vol. 4. p. 14. July, 1921.
 19. Bramwell. **op.cit.** p. 67.
 20. Donnelly, Ignatius. **Atlantis: the Antediluvian World.** Harper and Brothers. New York. 1910. p. 23.
 21. Bramwell. **op.cit.** p. 187.
 22. Churchward, James. **The Children of Mu.** Washburn. New York, 1931, p. 106
 23. **ibid.**
 24. **ibid.** p. 107.
 25. **ibid.**
 26. **ibid.** p. 110.
 27. Bertarelli, **loc. cit.**
 28. **ibid.**
 29. **ibid.**
 30. Churchward. **op.cit.** p. 111.
 31. **ibid.** p. 113.
 32. **ibid.** pp. 112-113.
 33. **ibid.** p. 113.
 34. "Atlantis, the Lost Continent." **Review of Reviews.** vol. 72. p. 216. August, 1925.
 35. Hall, L. G. "Legendary Islands of the North Atlantic." **Scientific American Monthly.** vol. 4. p. 362. October, 1921.
 36. A. C. Veatch.
 37. Ingalls, A. G. "Myth? Part Truth? Lost Atlantis Tradition and a Hypothesis of Sea Level Changes." **Scientific American.** vol. 163. p. 179. October, 1940.
 38. Bertarelli, **loc. cit.**
 39. "How Recent Geology Confirms the Legend of the Lost Atlantis." **Current Opinion.** vol. 61. p. 182. September, 1916.
 40. Schuchert. "Atlantis and the Permanency of the North Atlantic Ocean Bottom." **Scientific American Supplement.** vol. 83. p. 259. April 28, 1917.
 41. Bjorkman. **op.cit.** pp. 32-33.
 42. Bramwell. **op.cit.** p. 107.
 43. Tartessos is the Biblical Tarshish.
 44. Bramwell. **op.cit.** p. 124.
 45. **ibid.**
 46. "Atlantis and Troy." **Living Age.** vol. 334. p. 839. May 1, 1928.
 47. Bramwell. **op. cit.** p. 110,
 48. **ibid.** p. 120,
 49. Bjorkman. **op.cit.** pp. 31-32.
 50. Bramwell. **op.cit.** pp. 107-109.
 51. **ibid.** p. 132.
 52. **ibid.** pp. 130-131.
 53. **ibid.** p. 137.
 54. **ibid.** p. 138.
 55. Donnelly. **op.cit.** p. 163.
 56. **Problem of Atlantis, 1924; Atlantis in America, 1925; The History of Atlantis, 1928.**
 57. Spence. "In Quest of the Lost Continent; Review of the Problem of Atlantis." **Travel.** vol. 45. p. 32. July, 1925.
 58. Bramwell, **op.cit.** p. 137.
 59. "Unlearned Lesson of the Titanic." **Atlantic Monthly.** vol. 112. p. 184. August, 1913.
 60. "Proving Atlantis." **Nation.** vol. 120. p. 536. May 13, 1925.

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Bramwell, James. **Lost Atlantis.** Cobden-Sanderson. London. 1937. This was one of the best reference works on the subject, especially on the theories of location.

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SIGNED MAGAZINE ARTICLES

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Clavering. "In Quest of the Lost Atlantis." **Current History.** vol. 39. pp. 439-444. January, 1934. This was mediocre.

Hall, L. G., "Legendary Islands of the North Atlantic." **Scientific American Monthly.** vol. 4. pp. 362-363. October, 1921. This was of little help.

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UNSIGNED MAGAZINE ARTICLES

"Atlantis and Troy." **Living Age**, vol.

334, pp. 838-839. May 1, 1928. This was of no help.

"Atlantis, the Lost Continent." **Review of Reviews**, vol. 72, pp. 216-217. August, 1925. This was helpful.

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"Legendary Islands of the Atlantic." **Scientific American**, vol. 127, p. 183. September, 1922. Much of the material contained in this wasn't related to the immediate subject, but the material which was relevant was fair.

"Proving Atlantis." **Nation**, vol. 120, p. 536. May 13, 1925. This was repetitious.

"Unlearned Lesson of the Titanic." **Atlantic Monthly**, vol. 112, pp. 157-166. August, 1913. Too much of this article was entirely unrelated to the subject.

TO A HOUSE THAT IS LOVED

Verse Forms Class

It stands alone, deserted now and stark,
The house where hearthfires blazed with living light
To warm the little children's hands, make bright
A wrinkled face for four decades. The spark
Of fireside talk has burned a lasting mark
Upon the minds of visitors who might
Absorb the love and peace of friendly night
And warmth of sunlit day. That house is dark.

Whatever alien feet may climb that stair,
Or strange new laughter echo through the halls,
That house for those to whom it was so dear
Remains engraved upon their minds, as clear
As when they lived so richly in its walls;
Not empty and not dark to those who care.