A penetrating work that explores the amazing imagination and mathematical genius of the man who wrote Alice's Adventures in Wonderland. Just when we thought we knew everything about Lewis Carroll, here comes a highly original biography that will appeal to Alice fans everywhere. Fascinated by the inner life of Charles Lutwidge Dodson, Robin Wilson, a Carroll scholar and a noted mathematics professor, has produced this revelatory book—filled with more than one hundred striking and often playful illustrations—that examines the many inspirations and sources for Carroll's fantastical writings, mathematical and otherwise. As Wilson demonstrates, Carroll—who published serious, if occasionally eccentric, works in the fields of geometry, logic, and algebra—made significant contributions to subjects as varied as voting patterns and the design of tennis tournaments, in the process creating imaginative recreational puzzles based on mathematical ideas. In the tradition of Sylvia Nasar's A Beautiful Mind and Andrew Hodges' Alan Turing, this is an engaging look at the incredible genius of one of mathematics and literatures most enigmatic minds.

Features:
* Click here to view our Condition Guide and Shipping Prices

My Personal Review:
It is certainly enough for his reputation that Lewis Carroll wrote the two Alice books, whose whimsy will be part of literature (and not just children's literature) for the ages. Carroll never regretted the fame the books gave him, but he might have regretted that the world did not take him more seriously in his day job, that of mathematician. There is, for those who want to look for it, mathematics in the Alice books, but it is distorted and
jocular just as is everything else in the books. Alice fans will be happy to learn more about Carrolls mathematical pursuits, and in _Lewis Carroll in Numberland: His Fantastical Mathematical Logical Life_ (Norton) mathematician Robin Wilson has summarized for non-mathematicians the serious mathematical efforts (often leavened with irrepressible wit) of the Reverend Charles Dodgson - to differentiate him from his pen name. Some of the math is daunting; Wilson invites readers to skip portions of it, but any reader will come away with a better understanding of this curious mans interests and the happy way he was able to handle pure mathematics as well as pure fantasy.

Wilsons book is generally chronological, based on Carrolls life which was a fairly dull and conventional Victorian existence, except for his child friends, most (but not all) of them little girls who loved his jokes and stories. Carroll all his life was adept at making puzzles; as a child he designed mazes both on paper and in the snow. Carroll may not have had passions for adults, but he had a passion for Euclid, which in his time was thought the ideal method for teaching reason and logic. He defended Euclid against modern geometry texts in 1879 in _Euclid and his Modern Rivals_; to lighten it, he wrote it as a play in four acts! Carrolls mathematics intruded into his humor and vice versa. He wrote a young friend, Please give my kindest regards to your mother, & ½ of a kiss to Nellie, & 1/200 of a kiss to Emsie, & 1/2000000 of a kiss to yourself. When he wrote seriously about syllogisms, the premises tended to be absurd, which is all the funnier since it affects the logic not at all:

A prudent man shuns hyaenas.
No banker is imprudent.
Conclusion: No banker fails to shun hyaenas.

He drew Bertrand Russells admiration for contributions to logic with his hypotheticals, including a funny dialogue between Achilles and the Tortoise that seems to indicate that there is an infinite regress that must occur before we can accept any idea, just like the infinite steps that Zenos Achilles must make before he can outrace the Tortoise. (This dialogue was happily a starting point in theme and style for _Gödel, Escher, Bach_.) But plenty of Carrolls logical and mathematical musings were serious and practical; Wilson notes that his work on voting systems (voting has unexpected mathematical complexities) was well regarded in the succeeding decades. He also developed a fairer system of tournaments whereby athletes compete and are eliminated until one is the victor; this work was the best of its kind at the time, and no one for sixty more years looked at the problem in such depth.

There are many puzzles in this volume, and the merciful Wilson has provided answers. Carroll called many of them Pillow Problems, as he solved them in his head, lying down; his capacity for calculation and reasoning without resort to diagrams or equations seems to have been prodigious. It has to be said that _Lewis Carroll in Numberland_ is not
nearly so much fun as either of the Alice books (what could be?), but those of us who are devoted to Alice will get much pleasure in learning the often serious, often outlandish mathematical pursuits of her creator.

For More 5 Star Customer Reviews and Lowest Price:

Lewis Carroll in Numberland: His Fantastical Mathematical Logical Life by Robin Wilson - 5 Star Customer Reviews and Lowest Price!