The child is father to the man, and in no case was this more true than with David Lloyd George – or Dafydd George, as he was first known. Brought up by an adoring uncle – Richard Lloyd – who persuaded him from an early age that he was an exceptional person, with no limits to what he could achieve, he unquestioningly accepted his destiny, and
lived his whole life as if normal rules did not apply to himself, and that anything – or any person – that he desired was within his grasp.

Lloyd George was born in a dismal terrace house in Chorlton-upon-Medlock, Manchester, on 17 January 1863. His father, William George, was a dreamy, unsuccessful schoolmaster, who shortly afterwards resigned his post and returned to his native Pembrokeshire to rent a smallholding, but when Dafydd was only 18 months old caught pneumonia and died, aged 44. As well as Dafydd, he left a daughter, Mary Ellen, who was not yet three, while his widow, Elizabeth Lloyd, was expecting a second son, William, who was born seven months after his father’s death.

Left penniless, and with no one else to depend on, Elizabeth sought help from her brother Richard, a village cobbler and unpaid Baptist pastor, who was living in Llanystumdwy, near Criccieth in North Wales. Without a moment’s hesitation, Richard took his sister and her children into his household and devoted himself to their upbringing. All three children were bright and intelligent, but it was soon evident that he was absolutely enchanted by Dafydd, whose charm, amiability, vitality and vivid imagination knew no bounds. The others were relatively, if not absolutely, neglected. William, who lived to be 102, and when he was 92 published a memoir entitled My Brother and I, recalled somewhat caustically:

He was the apple of Uncle Lloyd’s eye, the king of the castle, and like the other king, could do no wrong ... Whether this unrestrained admiration was wholly good for the lad upon whom it was lavished, and indeed for the man who evolved out of him, is a matter upon which opinions may differ. (George 1958, p.33)

The extraordinary extent to which William was discriminated against was personified by the fact that only Dafydd was permitted by his uncle to add ‘Lloyd’ to his name. When the two brothers qualified as solicitors and set up their own firm it was known as Lloyd George & George. It was William who devoted himself to the running of the firm, working long hours while Dafydd was freed to pursue his political career, which was heavily subsidised by his brother’s toil.

That – coming from a modest but not impoverished background – they were able to become lawyers at all was due to the determination of Uncle Lloyd, as he became known. A self-educated Welsh moralist, he taught Dafydd everything he knew and made sure that he made the most out of the best education then available in rural Wales. When