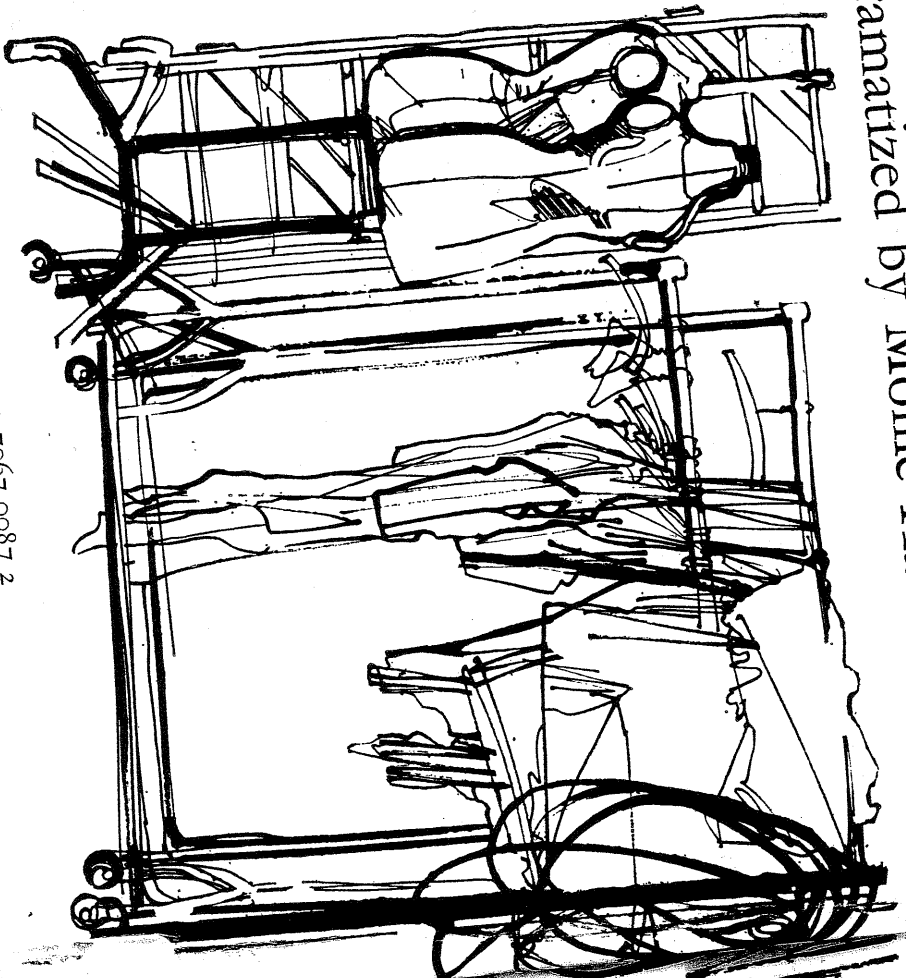


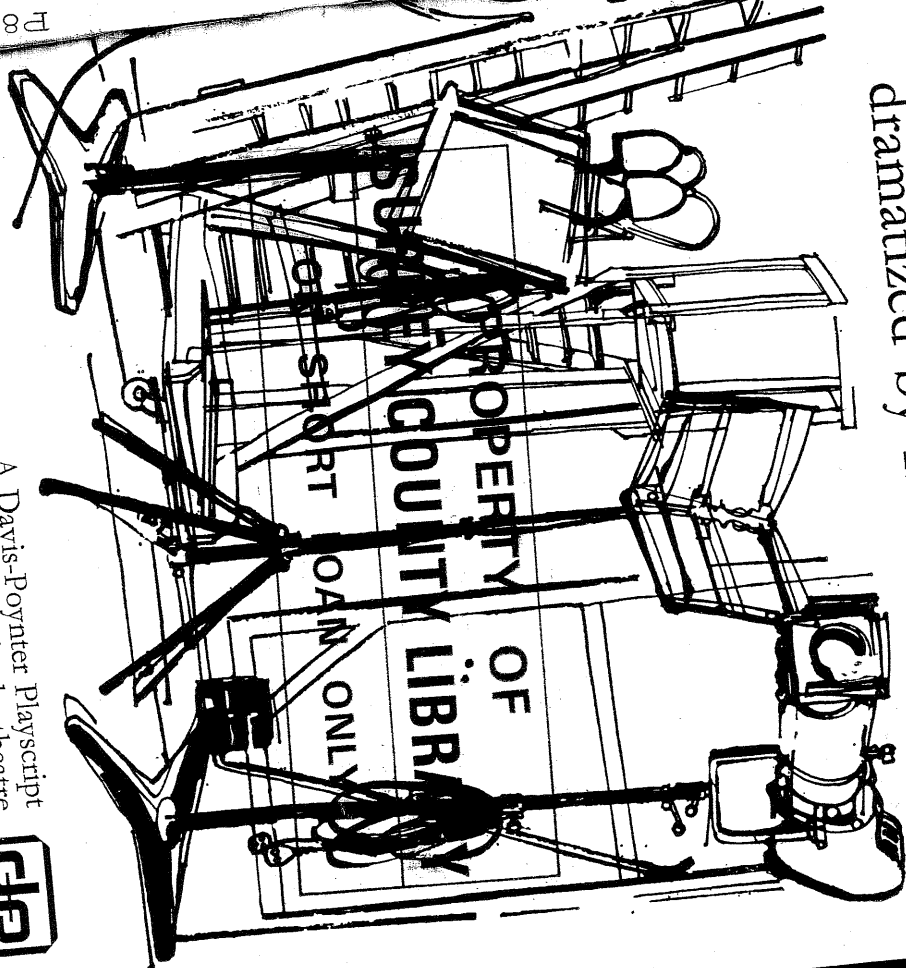
Alice in Wonderland

by Lewis Carroll
dramatized by Mollie Hardwick



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A Davis-Poynter Playscript
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cc in Wonderland
Lewis Carroll

LEWIS CARROLL is sitting at the side of the stage in a setting suggestive of the countryside in summer: perhaps a tree and the impression of a grassy bank.

Alice lies or sits, a small figure, dressed as Tenniel drew her, at the feet of the grave young clergyman in mid-Victorian clothes. An open book lies beside her. They are lit by a sunny radiance. He is telling her a story which absorbs her attention.

CARROLL: It was a hot summer afternoon when the tale of Wonderland began - just like this afternoon.

ALICE: (Interrupting eagerly.) Yes, just like!

CARROLL: And Alice - her name was Alice, you know, just like yours -

ALICE: Yes, just like!

CARROLL: Alice was sitting on the grass, feeling rather sleepy. She could have read her sister's book, of course; but it had no pictures or conversations in it.

ALICE: And what's the use of a book without pictures or conversations?

CARROLL: What, indeed? Well, Alice was feeling sleepy, as I said, very sleepy. The bees were humming, and she could hear the river quietly rippling by... it was dreamy weather...

(A sleepy strain of music. ALICE's head has been nodding; now she subsides on the grass, asleep. CARROLL smiles at her.)

And then - suddenly - a White Rabbit with pink eyes ran close by her.

(The WHITE RABBIT enters briskly, a sporting figure wearing a jacket and waistcoat. He stops and takes out his watch.)

WHITE RABBIT:

Oh dear! Oh dear! I shall be too late!
(He replaces the watch and hurries off.)

(ALICE stirs and sits up, looking after him. When she speaks her voice is bemused.)

ALICE:

You know, I've never seen a rabbit before that took its watch out of its waistcoat pocket. Or a rabbit with a waistcoat pocket - or a watch! I must see where he's going... (She gets up and runs off in the same direction as the WHITE RABBIT; as soon as she is out of sight she gives a loud squeal.)

CARROLL:

Alice was just in time to see the rabbit pop down a large rabbit-hole. In another moment, down went Alice after it!

(CARROLL is dimmed out. In a spot of light ALICE appears, her arms above her head in the attitude of one falling down a narrow tunnel. She is outlined against the white screen in background, and the effect of falling could be made by projecting a roller-action of black and white lines in a ladder pattern.)

ALICE:

Oh dear! It's a very deep well - or else I'm falling very slowly! Well! After such a fall as this, I shall think nothing of tumbling downstairs! How brave they'll think me at home! Why, I wouldn't say anything about it, even if I fell off the top of the house! I wonder how many miles I've fallen by this time? I must be getting somewhere near the centre of the earth? Down, down, down. Dinah will miss me very much tonight, I should think. Dinah, my dear, I wish you were down here with me. There are no mice in the air, I'm afraid, but you might catch a bat, and that's very like a mouse,

ALICE:
(Cont)

you know. But do cats eat bats, I wonder? (Dreamily) Do - cats - eat - bats? Do - bats - eat - cats? Do - cats -

(The projection stops and there is a loud bump. ALICE is standing alone in a dim green light. She looks round in wonder.)

So this is the bottom of the well. I wonder how I can get out? (She looks round her into the dimness, pointing with her finger.) One - two - three - three doors. (She runs to each in turn and comes back disappointed.) All locked. Oh, what am I to do? Oh! Perhaps there's another one here. (She draws aside a corner of curtain, behind which is a very small door, but large enough to be seen by the audience; the size a medium-sized dog could get through.) Oh, what a dear little door! I wonder what it leads to. If only I had the key -

(A gold key is thrown on from the wings and lands at her feet. ALICE picks up the key, kneels down and opens the door. She gazes through.)

Oh, what a beautiful garden! Rose-trees and green grass and sparkling fountains! How I wish I could get into it! (She tries to crawl through it but fails.) Oh, I wish I could shut up like a telescope! I think I could, if I only knew how to begin... (She turns and finds beside her a small coloured bottle with a large label.) Well! I'm sure that wasn't there before. What does it say? 'DRINK ME'. (Turning bottle round.) It doesn't say 'POISON'. (Removing stopper and sniffing, after which she takes a sip.) M'm. Rather nice. A bit like cherry-tart - and

ALICE:
(Cont)

custard - and pineapple - and roast turkey - and toffee - and hot buttered toast. (Between each item she takes a sip, and finally turns the bottle upside down. A chord of mysterious music.) What a curious feeling! As though I were shutting up like a telescope...

(Music, several bars, during which ALICE is dimmed out. When it finishes ALICE has vanished behind the adjacent curtain. In her place on the stage sits a doll dressed exactly like her, and her voice comes from as near to it as possible.)

Good gracious! I'm glad I didn't shrink any more, for I might have gone out altogether, like a candle. Well, now I can get into the garden. But now I haven't got the key any more.

(She begins to cry. If possible the doll is manipulated enough for it to cover its face with its hands or turn its head.)

Come, there's no use in crying like that! Leave off this minute! Oh! what's that? A little cake -

(The doll bends forward from the waist to examine something the audience cannot see.)

And it says 'EAT ME'.

(The doll is dimmed out to the accompaniment of electronic music, and on the screen are projected strange whirling images. As the music slows down they fade, to be replaced by a large, grotesque figure of ALICE, three times her own size and with a long giraffe-like neck - Tenniel's drawing at the beginning of Chapter II.)

ALICE:

(Voice amplified, with slight distort.)
 Curiouser and curiouser! Now I've
 opened out like the largest telescope
 that ever was! Goodbye, feet! Oh, my
 poor little feet, I wonder who will put on
 your shoes and stockings for you now,
 dears? I'm sure I shan't be able. You
 must manage the best way you can. But
 I must be kind to them, or perhaps they
 won't walk the way I want to go! Let me
 see: I'll give them a new pair of boots
 every Christmas. How funny it'll seem,
 sending presents to one's own feet!
 'Alice's Right Foot, Esquire, Hearthrug,
 near the Fender, with Alice's love'. Oh
 dear, what nonsense I'm talking! And
 now I'm even further from getting through
 the little door! (She begins to cry again,
 and the giant figure dims out to be
 replaced by a pattern suggesting waves.)

CARROLL:

(Voice) Alice went on shedding gallons
 of tears, until there was a large pool all
 round her, about four inches deep and
 reaching half down the hall. After a time
 she heard a little pattering of feet in the
 distance. It was the White Rabbit
 returning, with a pair of kid gloves in
 one hand and a large fan in the other,
 muttering to himself as he went.

(The WHITE RABBIT appears and trots
 hurriedly across the stage.)

WHITE RABBIT:

(As he passes.) Oh! The Duchess!
 The Duchess! Oh, won't she be savage
 if I've kept her waiting!

ALICE:

(Voice) If you please, sir -
 (The WHITE RABBIT gives a frightened
 look upwards and scurries off, dropping
 the gloves and fan. The wave-pattern is
 still moving on the screen. After a
 slight pause ALICE, her normal size
 again, appears, gazing after him.)

ALICE:

Sir! Sir! You've dropped these!
(Shrieks) Ow! I've fallen in the Pool of Tears! (She begins to move about the stage making swimming movements with her arms, in green lighting.) I wish I hadn't cried so much! I shall be punished for it now, I suppose, by being drowned in my own tears! Oh, here's a mouse!

(The MOUSE appears from top left, also swimming.)

Poor little thing, it's fallen in as well. Mouse, do you know the way out of this pool? (As the MOUSE ignores her.) Perhaps it doesn't understand English. I daresay it's a French mouse, so I'd better speak French to it. (Slowly)
Où est ma chatte?

(The MOUSE gives a start and a squeak of fright and begins to swim away.)

Oh, I beg your pardon! I quite forgot you didn't like cats.

MOUSE:
Not like cats! Would you like cats if you were me?

ALICE:
Well, perhaps not. But I wish I could show you our cat Dinah. She's such a dear quiet thing, and she sits purring so nicely by the fire, licking her paws and washing her face - and she's so good at catching mice - oh, I beg your pardon! We won't talk about her any more.

MOUSE:
(Quivering with rage.) We, indeed! As if I would talk on such a subject! Our family always hated cats - nasty, low, vulgar things! (It has been swimming away from her, and has now disappeared.)

ALICE:
Oh dear, I've offended it, and it's gone!

(The green lighting changes to a
sunshine gold.)

ALICE: And the Pool of Tears has gone, too!
How puzzling it all is. I'll try if I know
all the things I used to know. I'll try
and say 'How doth the little'. (She
stands in a reciter's position, hands
folded.)

'How doth the little crocodile
Improve his shining tail,
And pour the waters of the Nile
On every golden scale!
How cheerfully he seems to grin,
How neatly spread his claws,
And welcomes little fishes in
With gently smiling jaws!'

I'm sure those aren't the right words. I
do wish I knew where I am, and who I
am! I'm sure I'm not really me.

(The light illuminates the
CATERPILLAR, perched cross-legged
on a mushroom - a round table with
single leg. He is smoking a hookah.)

CATERPILLAR: (Coldly) Who are you?

ALICE: I - I hardly know, sir, just at present -
at least I know who I was when I got up
this morning, but I think I must have
been changed several times since then.

CATERPILLAR: What do you mean by that? Explain
yourself.

ALICE: I can't explain myself, I'm afraid, sir,
because I'm not myself, you see.

CATERPILLAR: I don't see.

ALICE: I'm afraid I can't put it more clearly -
but being so many different sizes in a
day is very confusing.

CATERPILLAR: It isn't.

ALICE: Well, perhaps you haven't found it so yet, but when you have to turn into a chrysalis - you will some day, you know - and then after that into a butterfly, I should think you'll feel it a little queer, won't you?

CATERPILLAR: Not a bit.

ALICE: Well, perhaps your feelings may be different - all I know is, it would feel very queer to me.

CATERPILLAR: You! Who are you?

(ALICE looks at him in bafflement, then shrugs her shoulders and turns away.)
Come back! I've something important to say.

(ALICE turns back towards him.)

Keep your temper.

ALICE: (Angry) Is that all?

(The CATERPILLAR, without replying, takes a few more puffs at its hookah, then slowly crawls off the mushroom and off the stage. She stands looking at the mushroom, and is dimmed out. The figure of CARROLL is illuminated in his pastoral setting.)

CARROLL: Alice remained thoughtfully looking at the mushroom, then wandered away, wondering what would be the next startling change that would happen to her, and whether she would ever get through the little door into the beautiful garden. Suddenly she came to an open clearing in the wood, with a little house in it; and as she stood looking at the house, a footman

CARROLL:
(Cont)

in livery came running out of the wood - she considered him to be a footman because he was in livery - otherwise, judging by his face, she would have called him a fish - and rapped loudly at the door. It was opened by another footman in livery, with a round face and large eyes like a frog. Alice felt very curious to know what it was all about, and crept a little way out of the wood to listen.

(The Stage is in sunshine lighting again, the FISH FOOTMAN and the FROG FOOTMAN en tableau, the FISH FOOTMAN with an enormous crested envelope in his hand. ALICE crouches near.)

FISH FOOTMAN:

(Handing over letter.) For the Duchess. An invitation from the Queen to play croquet.

FROG FOOTMAN:

From the Queen. An invitation for the Duchess to play croquet.

(They bow simultaneously and bang their heads together. ALICE laughs. The FISH FOOTMAN makes a stately exit, the FROG FOOTMAN sits down on a doorstep and gazes heavenwards. Off stage a babel of noise swells up, a baby's howls mixed with violent sneezes and an occasional crash.)

(Unperturbed) I shall sit here till tomorrow -

(A large plate comes skimming in and lands near him.)

- or next day, maybe -

(A dish follows the plate.)

- I shall sit here, on and off, for days and days.

ALICE: But what am I to do?

FROG FOOTMAN: Anything you like. (He begins to whistle 'Frog he would a wooing go'.)

ALICE: Oh, there's no use talking to you - you're perfectly idiotic!

(She is turning to go when a procession moves on to the stage: the UGLY DUCHESS, holding a wrapped bundle, and the COOK, bearing a cauldron which she stirs, alternately with shaking pepper into it. A baby howls very loud off stage. DUCHESS and COOK both sneeze in rotation. Behind them comes the CHESHIRE CAT, who sits down sedately. ALICE timidly approaches the DUCHESS.)

Please would you tell me why your cat grins like that?

DUCHESS: (Gruff) It's a Cheshire cat, that's why. (To the baby.) Pig! (She shakes it violently. Howls continue.)

ALICE: I didn't know that Cheshire cats always grinned. In fact, I didn't know that cats could grin.

DUCHESS: They all can. And most of 'em do.

ALICE: I don't know of any that do.

DUCHESS: You don't know much, and that's a fact. (The COOK turns and begins to hurl objects from her apron pocket at the DUCHESS: spoons, plates, cups and saucers, all of which the DUCHESS ignores, continuing to rock the baby violently.)

ALICE: Oh, please mind what you're doing! Oh, mind baby's precious nose!

DUCHESS: If everybody minded their own business,

DUCHESS: the world would go round a deal faster than it does. (She begins to sing hoarsely, giving the baby a shake at the end of every line.)

'Speak roughly to your little boy,
And beat him when he sneezes;
He only does it to annoy,
Because he knows it teases.'

COOK FROG FOOTMAN) : (Together) Wow, wow, wow!

DUCHESS: I speak severely to my boy,
I beat him when he sneezes,
For he can thoroughly enjoy
The pepper when he pleases!

COOK FROG FOOTMAN) : (Together) Wow, wow, wow!

(Howls and sneezes off stage.)

DUCHESS: Here, you can nurse it a bit, if you like! I must go and get ready to play croquet with the Queen. (She tosses the baby to ALICE, who catches it neatly, and hurries out, followed by the COOK, still hurling the odd article of plate after her, and the FROG FOOTMAN bearing one of the large dishes with the invitation envelope on it.)

ALICE: If I don't take this poor little thing away with me, they're sure to kill it in a day or two. (She rocks the baby affectionately. Its off-stage howls die down and are replaced by loud grunts of an unmistakable piggy nature.) Don't grunt, baby! That's not at all a proper way of expressing yourself.

(The grunts continue. ALICE draws back the wrapping from the baby's face and peers at it.)

Dear me! You have a very turned-up nose,

ALICE:
(Cont)

child. Really rather like a snout. And your eyes are getting extremely small. If you're going to turn into a pig, my dear, I'll have nothing more to do with you, mind! (She unwraps it, to reveal an unmistakable small pig wearing a frilly baby's bonnet.) There! I knew it. You'd have made a dreadfully ugly child, dear, but you make rather a handsome pig, I think. I'm going to put you down in the wood and you can find your way home for yourself. (She takes it to the side of the stage and places it down out of sight.) Come to think of it, I know quite a lot of children who would do very well as pigs. There's Ada, and Mabel... (She begins ticking them off on her fingers.) but suddenly notices that the CHESHIRE CAT has approached and is sitting looking at her.) Cheshire Puss, would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?

CHESHIRE CAT:
That depends a good deal on where you want to get to.

ALICE:
I don't much care where -

CHESHIRE CAT:
Then it doesn't matter which way you go.

ALICE:
- so long as I get somewhere.

CHESHIRE CAT:
Oh, you're sure to do that, if you only walk long enough.

ALICE:
What sort of people live about here?

CHESHIRE CAT:
In that direction (Waving right paw.) lives a Hatter. And in that direction (Waving left paw.) lives a March Hare. Visit either you like; they're both mad.

ALICE:
But I don't want to go among mad people!

CHESHIRE CAT:
Oh, you can't help that, we're all mad here. I'm mad. You're mad.

ALICE:
How do you know I'm mad?

CHESHIRE CAT: You must be, or you wouldn't have come here.

ALICE: And how do you know that you're mad?

CHESHIRE CAT: To begin with, a dog's not mad. You admit that?

ALICE: I suppose so.

CHESHIRE CAT: Well, then, you see, a dog growls when it's angry, and wags its tail when it's pleased. Now I growl when I'm pleased and wag my tail when I'm angry. Therefore I'm mad.

ALICE: I call it purring, not growling.

CHESHIRE CAT: Call it what you like. Do you play croquet with the Queen today?

ALICE: I should like it very much, but I haven't been invited yet.

CHESHIRE CAT: You'll see me there. By the bye, what became of the baby?

ALICE: (Matter-of-fact.) It turned into a pig.

CHESHIRE CAT: I thought it would.

(The CHESHIRE CAT strokes its whiskers and strolls off.)

ALICE: That way the Hatter lives, it said, and that way the March Hare. Now which shall I visit? I've seen hatters before. The March Hare will be much the most interesting, and perhaps, as this is May, it won't be raving mad - at least not so mad as it was in March. (She crosses the stage and exits.)

CARROLL: She had not gone far when she came in sight of the house of the March Hare; she thought it must be the right house, because the chimneys were shaped like ears and the roof was thatched with fur. It was so large a house that she did not like to go near it at first.

(ALICE enters from opposite side to her exit, and looks fearfully up at the house.)

ALICE: Suppose it should be raving mad after all! I almost wish I'd gone to see the Hatter instead.

(The MARCH HARE and the HATTER enter, carrying a table set with tea-things. Behind them the DORMOUSE stumbles, rubbing its eyes sleepily. They set the table down, and the MARCH HARE goes off and reappears with three chairs or stools, on which they seat themselves facing the audience. The DORMOUSE slumps to the ground and begins to snore.)

HATTER: Come on, Dormouse, wake up, there's a good chap.

(They drag him on to the chair in the middle, where he immediately falls asleep with his head on the table. The other two converse across him, occasionally leaning their elbows on his head as if it were a cushion.)

ALICE: So the Hatter's here as well! They don't look very mad. I might as well join them.

(As she approaches the table, the HATTER and the MARCH HARE jump up and gesture her away.)

MARCH HARE)
HATTER)

(Together) No room! No room!

ALICE: Nonsense! There's plenty of room. (She brings another chair from the wings, and sits down at the head of the table, at which the others are now re-seated.)

MARCH HARE: Have some wine.

ALICE: I don't see any wine.

MARCH HARE: There isn't any.

ALICE: Then it wasn't very civil of you to offer it.

MARCH HARE: It wasn't very civil of you to sit down without being invited.

ALICE: The table's laid for a great deal more than three.

HATTER: Your hair wants cutting.

ALICE: You should learn not to make personal remarks, it's very rude.

HATTER: Why is a raven like a writing-desk?

ALICE: Oh, I'm glad you've begun asking riddles - now we shall have some fun. Why is a raven like a writing-desk? I think I can guess that.

MARCH HARE: Do you mean that you think you can find out the answer to it?

ALICE: Exactly so.

MARCH HARE: Then you should say what you mean.

ALICE: I do! At least, I mean what I say - that's the same thing, you know.

HATTER: Not the same thing a bit! Why, you might just as well say that 'I see what I eat' is the same thing as 'I eat what I see'!

MARCH HARE: You might just as well say that 'I like what I get' is the same thing as 'I get what I like'!

DORMOUSE: (Wakes up with a sharp snort and rubs its eyes.) You might as well say that 'I breathe when I sleep' is the same thing as 'I sleep when I breathe'.

HATTER: It is the same thing, with you.

ALICE: (To herself.) Raven... writing-desk... raven... writing-desk...

(The HATTER takes a large watch out of his pocket, shakes it, and holds it to his ear.)

HATTER: What day of the month is it?

ALICE: The fourth.

HATTER: (Sighing and regarding the watch.) Two days wrong! (To MARCH HARE.) I told you butter wouldn't suit the works!

MARCH HARE: It was the best butter.

HATTER: Yes, but some crumbs must have got in as well. You shouldn't have put it in with the bread-knife.

ALICE: What a funny watch! It tells the day of the month, and doesn't tell what time it is!

HATTER: Why should it? Does your watch tell you what year it is?

ALICE: Of course not. But that's because it stays the same year for such a long time together.

HATTER: Which is just the case with mine.

ALICE: I don't quite understand.

(DORMOUSE snores: HATTER pours tea on its nose. It shakes its head but remains prone as it mutters:)

DORMOUSE: Of course, of course; just what I was going to remark myself.

HATTER: Have you guessed the riddle yet?

ALICE: No, I give it up - what's the answer?

HATTER: (With a wild laugh.) I haven't the slightest idea!

MARCH HARE: Nor me.

ALICE: Really, I think you might do something better with the time than waste it asking riddles with no answers.

HATTER: If you know Time as well as I do, you wouldn't talk about wasting it. It's him.

ALICE: I don't know what you mean.

HATTER: Of course you don't! I dare say you've never even spoken to Time!

ALICE: Perhaps not. But I know I have to beat time when I learn music.

HATTER: Ah! that accounts for it. He won't stand beating. Now, if only you kept on good terms with him, he'd do almost anything you liked with the clock. For instance, suppose it were nine o'clock in the morning, just time to begin lessons; you'd only have to whisper a hint to Time, and round goes the clock in a twinkling! Half-past one, time for dinner!

MARCH HARE: I only wish it was!

ALICE: But then I shouldn't be hungry for it, you know.

HATTER: Not at first, perhaps, but you could keep it to half-past-one as long as you liked.

ALICE: Is that the way you manage?

HATTER: (Sadly) Not I. We quarrelled last March - just before he went mad, you know. (Pointing to MARCH HARE.) It was at the great concert given by the Queen of Hearts, and I had to sing:

Twinkle, twinkle, little bat!
How I wonder what you're at.

You know the song, perhaps?

ALICE: I've heard something like it.

HATTER: It goes on like this:

Up above the world you fly,
Like a tea-tray in the sky.
Twinkle, twinkle . . .

DORMOUSE: (Shaking itself awake.) Twinkle, twinkle,
twinkle, twinkle, twinkle -

(HATTER and MARCH HARE pinch it violently and its murmurs die down.)

HATTER: Well, I'd hardly finished the first verse when the Queen jumped up and bawled out 'He's murdering the time! Off with his head!'

ALICE: How dreadfully savage!

HATTER: (Weeping) And ever since that, he won't do a thing I ask. It's always six o'clock now.

MARCH HARE: (Yawning) Suppose we change the subject - I'm getting tired of this. I vote the young lady tells us a story.

ALICE: I'm afraid I don't know one.

HATTER)
MARCH HARE) : (Together) Then the Dormouse shall!
Wake up, Dormouse! (They pinch him.)

DORMOUSE: (Raising its head languidly.) I wasn't asleep. I heard every word you fellows were saying.

MARCH HARE: Tell us a story!

HATTER: And be quick about it, or you'll be asleep again before it's done.

DORMOUSE: (Gabbling) Once upon a time there were three little sisters, and their names were Elsie, Lacie and Tillie; and they lived at the bottom of a well -

ALICE: What did they live on?

DORMOUSE: Treacle.

ALICE: They couldn't have done that, you know they'd have been ill.

DORMOUSE: So they were - very ill.

ALICE: But why did they live at the bottom of a well?

DORMOUSE: It was a treacle-well.

ALICE: There's no such thing!

HATTER) :
MARCH HARE) :

(Together) Sh! Sh!

DORMOUSE:

(Sulky) If you can't be civil, you'd better finish the story yourself.

ALICE:

No, please go on, I won't interrupt you again. I daresay there may be one.

DORMOUSE:

One, indeed! And so these three little sisters - they were learning to draw, you know -

ALICE:

What did they draw?

DORMOUSE:

Treacle.

HATTER:

I want a clean cup. Let's all move one place on.

(They do; when they are re-seated
ALICE asks:)

ALICE:

But where did they draw the treacle from?

HATTER:

You can draw water out of a water-well, so I should think you could draw treacle out of a treacle-well - eh, stupid?

ALICE:

But they were in the well.

DORMOUSE:

Of course they were. Well in. They were learning to draw (Yawning and rubbing its eyes.) and they drew all manner of things - everything that begins with an M -

ALICE:

Why with an M?

MARCH HARE:

Why not?

DORMOUSE:

(Drowsy) - that begins with an M, such as mouse-traps, and the moon, and memory, and muchness - you know you say things are 'Much of a muchness' - did you ever see a drawing of a muchness?

ALICE:

Really, now you ask me, I don't think -

HATTER:

Then you shouldn't talk.

ALICE:

Oh! How dreadfully rude you are!

(She gets up, tosses her head, and walks away from them. The stage darkens, and the HATTER and MARCH HARE get up and remove the table and their own and ALICE's chairs. The DORMOUSE remains on his, slumped in sleep. They return and carry him and his chair off, his snores receding as they do so.)

(Standing still, and scratching her head.) Oh dear, it's all so confusing! I wonder what will happen next.

(As she speaks, the stage lightens again, a bright sunshiny light, and the FOUR GARDENERS enter in file, each carrying a small rose-tree, a pot of paint and a brush. They set the trees down and commence painting the white flowers with red paint.)

What a very curious thing to do!

GARDENER ONE:
Look out, Four! Don't go splashing paint over me like that!

FOUR:
I couldn't help it - Three jogged my elbow.

THREE:
That's right, Four - always lay the blame on others!

FOUR:
You'd better not talk! I heard the Queen say only yesterday you deserved to be beheaded.

TWO:
What for?

ONE:
That's none of your business, Two!

FOUR:
Yes, it is his business! And I'll tell him - it was for bringing the cook tulip-roots instead of onions.

THREE:
Well! Of all the unjust things!

(He is squaring up to fight FOUR when ALICE approaches and drops them a curtsey. They gaze at her open-mouthed and bow simultaneously.)

ALICE: Would you mind telling me why you are painting those roses?

TWO: Why, the fact is, you see, Miss, this here ought to have been a red rose-tree, and we put a white one in by mistake; and if the Queen were to find it out, we should all have our heads cut off, you know. So you see, Miss, we're doing our best afore she comes, to -

ONE: The Queen! The Queen! Here she comes!
(They all fall flat on their faces. From top left enters the WHITE RABBIT, hurrying and nervously consulting its watch. He is closely followed by the KNAVE OF HEARTS, carrying a crown on a cushion; a SOLDIER with a spear; then come the KING and QUEEN OF HEARTS, stiff, slow and pompous. Stately march music accompanies them and stops when they do. The QUEEN looks severely at ALICE, and turns to the KNAVE.)

QUEEN: Who is this?

(The KNAVE bows and smiles vacantly.)

Idiot! What's your name, child?

ALICE: My name is Alice, so please your Majesty.

QUEEN: And who are these? (She points to the prostrate GARDENERS.)

ALICE: How should I know? It's no business of mine.

QUEEN: (Roaring) Off with her head! Off with her head!

ALICE:

Nonsense!

(The QUEEN looks astonished, then gives one of the GARDENERS a kick and says to the KNAVE.)

QUEEN:

Turn them over.

(He obeys. The GARDENER'S jump up and begin bowing to everyone rapidly.)

Leave off that! You make me giddy.

(Points to the rose-tree.) What have you been doing here?

TWO:

(Kneeling) May it please your Majesty, we were trying -

QUEEN:

I see. (Roaring) Off with their heads!

(The KING, QUEEN and KNAVE leave. ALICE runs to the GARDENERS and hurries them off, so that when the SOLDIER returns they have departed. He wanders vaguely about, hand shading eyes, looking for them, then shrugs and exits. The QUEEN reappears.)

Are their heads off?

SOLDIER:

Their heads are gone, if it please your Majesty.

QUEEN:

That's right. Can you play croquet?

(The SOLDIER looks dumb.)

ALICE:

Yes!

QUEEN:

Come on, then!

(She goes off. ALICE shakes her head in bewilderment and makes a few mimed passes at a croquet-ball. The WHITE RABBIT hurries on and taps her on the shoulder, flurried as usual.)

WHITE RABBIT: It's - it's a very fine day.

ALICE: Very. Where's the Duchess?

WHITE RABBIT: Hush, hush! (He peers fearfully over his shoulder.) She's under sentence of execution.

ALICE: What for?

WHITE RABBIT: Did you say 'What a pity'?

ALICE: No, I didn't. I don't think it's at all a pity. I said 'What for'?

WHITE RABBIT: She boxed the Queen's ears.

(ALICE laughs.)

Oh, hush! the Queen will hear you! You see she came rather late, and the Queen said -

QUEEN: (Reappearing, roars.) Get to your places!

(ALICE and the WHITE RABBIT run off after her. Off-stage there is a confused noise of shouts, squeals, and grunts, while vari-coloured spots play on the stage itself. The CHESHIRE CAT enters, sits down, and begins to wash. After a loud cry of 'Off with her head!' from the QUEEN, off-stage, ALICE runs on.)

CHESHIRE CAT: How are you getting on?

ALICE: Oh, dreadfully - I don't think they play at all fairly. The mallets are flamingoes and the balls are hedgehogs which keep rolling themselves up when they're hit, and the arches are soldiers doubled up, and the flamingoes will keep twisting round and looking in one's face so oddly. And they all quarrel so much one can't hear oneself speak. I should have croqueted the Queen's hedgehog just now, only it ran away when it saw mine coming...

(During the last speech, while ALICE has been glancing back over her shoulder apprehensively, the CHESHIRE CAT has quietly left. Now its head - a replica greatly enlarged - appears high above the heads of the actors, through a hole in the backcloth or projected on screen. The KING and QUEEN come on towards the end of ALICE's speech.)

KING:

Who are you talking to?

ALICE:

It's a friend of mine - a Cheshire Cat - allow me to introduce - oh! (She looks round for the CHESHIRE CAT, and looking upward sees the head.)

KING:

I don't like the look of it at all. However, it may kiss my hand if it likes.

CAT'S VOICE:

I'd rather not.

KING:

Don't be impertinent, and don't look at me like that!

ALICE:

A cat may look at a King - I've read that in some book.

KING:

Well, it must be removed. My dear!
(Turns to the QUEEN.)

QUEEN:

Off with his head!

KING:

(Beckoning) Executioner, do your duty!

(The SOLDIER marches on with an axe over his shoulder. The QUEEN points to the CHESHIRE CAT's head.)

SOLDIER:

Sorry, your Majesty - I can't cut a head off unless it's got a body.

KING:

Nonsense! anything that's got a head can be beheaded.

SOLDIER:

I've never done such a thing before and I'm not going to start now. (He folds his arms and looks implacable.)

QUEEN: If that Cat's head isn't off in no time, I'll have you all executed all round.

(The SOLDIER unfolds his arms and fidgets. The CHESHIRE CAT's head begins slowly to fade away.)

KING: It's gone! Come on, everybody, we must find it. (KING, QUEEN and SOLDIER run confusedly about.)

ALICE: It belongs to the Duchess - you'd better ask her.

QUEEN: She's in prison. Come on! (She runs off followed by KING and SOLDIER.)

(From the opposite side of the stage the DUCHESS appears, looking furtively round. When she sees the coast is clear she steals up to ALICE and slips an arm through hers. ALICE jumps with surprise.)

DUCHESS: You're thinking about something my dear, and so you didn't hear me coming. I can't tell you just now what the moral of that is, but I shall remember it in a bit.

ALICE: Perhaps it hasn't one.

DUCHESS: Tut, tut, child! Everything's got a moral, if only you can find it. And the moral of that is -

(The QUEEN appears and stands frowning terribly at the DUCHESS.)

(A quavering voice.) A fine day, Your Majesty!

QUEEN: Now, I give you fair warning, either you or your head must be off, and that in about half no time! Take your choice!

(The DUCHESS picks up her skirts and scampers off.)

QUEEN: (Abruptly) Have you seen the Mock Turtle yet?

ALICE: No. I don't even know what a Mock Turtle is.

QUEEN: It's the thing Mock Turtle Soup is made from. I'll introduce you to one. (She beckons loftily.)

(The GRYPHON appears, followed by the MOCK TURTLE gently sobbing into its handkerchief.)

Introduce yourselves. I must go back and see after executions I've ordered. (She stalks off, leaving the GRYPHON chuckling to itself.)

GRYPHON: What fun!

ALICE: What is the fun?

GRYPHON: Why, she is. It's all her fancy, that; they never executes nobody, you know.

(The MOCK TURTLE gives a loud sob.)

ALICE regards him pityingly.)

ALICE: What is his sorrow?

GRYPHON: He hasn't got no sorrow; it's all his fancy. (Prodding MOCK TURTLE.)

This here young lady, she wants for to know your history, she do.

MOCK TURTLE: (Hollowly) I'll tell it her. Sit down, and don't speak a word till I've finished.

(ALICE and GRYPHON sit and wait while the MOCK TURTLE collects itself.)

Once I was a real Turtle. (Sighs) When we were little, we went to school in the sea. The master was an old Turtle - we used to call him Tortoise -

ALICE: Why did you call him Tortoise, if he wasn't one?

MOCK TURTLE: We called him Tortoise because he taught us. Really, you are very dull!

GRYPHON: You ought to be ashamed of yourself for asking such a simple question. Drive on, old fellow - don't be all day about it!

MOCK TURTLE: (Gulping) We had the best of educations - in fact, we went to school every day -

ALICE: I go to a day-school, too; you needn't be so proud as all that.

MOCK TURTLE: With extras?

ALICE: Yes, French and music.

MOCK TURTLE: And washing?

ALICE: Certainly not!

MOCK TURTLE: Ah! then yours isn't a really good school. Now at ours they had at the end of the bill, 'French, music, and washing - extra.'

ALICE: You couldn't have wanted it much, living at the bottom of the sea.

MOCK TURTLE: I couldn't afford to learn it. I only took the regular course.

ALICE: What was that?

MOCK TURTLE: Reeling and Writhing, of course, to begin with, and then the different branches of Arithmetic - Ambition, Distraction, Uglification, and Derision.

ALICE: I never heard of Uglification. What is it?

GRYPHON: Never heard of uglifying! You know what to beautify is, I suppose?

ALICE: Yes - it means to make anything prettier.

GRYPHON: Well, then, if you don't know what to uglify is, you're a simpleton.

ALICE: What else had you to learn, Mock Turtle?

MOCK TURTLE: Well, there was Mystery, ancient and modern, with Seaography; then Drawing - the Drawing was a conger-eel, that used to come once a week; he taught us Drawing, Stretching, and Fainting in Coils.

ALICE: What was that like?

MOCK TURTLE: Well, I can't show it to you myself, I'm too stiff. And the Gryphon never learnt it.

GRYPHON: Hadn't time. I went to the Classical master, though. He was an old crab, he was.

MOCK TURTLE: I never went to him. He taught Laughing and Grief, they used to say.

GRYPHON: So he did, so he did.

ALICE: And how many hours a day did you do lessons?

MOCK TURTLE: Ten hours the first day, nine the next, and so on. That's the reason they're called lessons, because they lessen from day to day.

GRYPHON: That's enough about lessons, tell her something about the games now.

MOCK TURTLE: (After a few sobs.) You may not have lived much under the sea -

ALICE: I haven't.

MOCK TURTLE: And perhaps you were never even introduced to a lobster.

ALICE: I once tasted... er, no, never.

MOCK TURTLE: So you can have no idea what a delightful thing a Lobster Quadrille is!

ALICE: No, indeed. What sort of a dance is it?

GRYPHON: Why, you first form into a line along the sea-shore -

MOCK TURTLE: Two lines! Seals, turtles, and so on;

MOCK TURTLE: then, when you've cleared the jelly-fish
(Cont) out of the way -

GRYPHON: That generally takes some time -

MOCK TURTLE: You advance twice -

GRYPHON: Each with a lobster as a partner!

MOCK TURTLE: Of course; advance twice, set to
partners -

GRYPHON: - change lobsters, and retire in same
order.

MOCK TURTLE: Then, you know, you throw the -

GRYPHON: (Shouting excitedly.) The lobsters!

MOCK TURTLE: - as far out to sea as you can -

GRYPHON: Swim after them!

MOCK TURTLE: Turn a somersault in the sea!

GRYPHON: (Yelling) Change lobsters again!

MOCK TURTLE: Back to land, and - that's all the first
figure.

(They both subside and sit down, looking
mournfully at ALICE.)

ALICE: It must be a very pretty dance.

MOCK TURTLE: Would you like to see a little of it?

ALICE: Very much indeed.

MOCK TURTLE: Come, let's try the first figure. We can
do it without lobsters. Which shall sing?

GRYPHON: Oh, you sing; I've forgotten the words.

(They begin a slow, ritualistic dance
round ALICE.)

MOCK TURTLE: (Singing)

'Will you walk a little faster?' said a

whiting to a snail,

'There's a porpoise close behind us, and
he's treading on my tail.'

MOCK TURTLE:
(Cont)

See how eagerly the lobsters and the
turtles all advance!
They are waiting on the shingle - will
you come and join the dance?
Will you, won't you, will you, won't you
will you join the dance?
Will you, won't you, will you, won't you,
won't you join the dance?

'You can really have no notion how
delightful it will be
When they take us up and throw us, with
the lobsters, out to sea.'
But the snail replied 'Too far, too far!'
and gave a look askance -
Said he thanked the whiting kindly, but he
would not join the dance.
Would not, could not, would not, could
not, would not join the dance.
Would not, could not, would not, could
not, could not join the dance.

'What matters it how far we go? his
scaly friend replied.
'There is another shore, you know, upon
the other side.
The further off from England, the nearer
is to France -
Then turn not pale, beloved snail, but
come and join the dance.
Will you, won't you, will you, won't you,
will you join the dance?
Will you, won't you, will you, won't you,
won't you join the dance?

ALICE:
If I'd been the whiting, I'd have said to
the porpoise 'Keep back, please, we
don't want you with us!'

MOCK TURTLE:
They were obliged to have him with
them. No wise fish would go anywhere
without a porpoise.

ALICE:
Don't you mean 'purpose'?

MOCK TURTLE:
I mean what I say. Come, let's hear
one of your songs.

ALICE:

I'm afraid I don't know -

GRYPHON:

Stand up and repeat 'Tis the voice of the
sluggard'.

ALICE:

(Standing in reciter's attitude.)

'Tis the voice of the Lobster, I heard
him declare

'You have baked me too brown, I must
sugar my hair.'

As a duck with its eyelids, so he with his
nose

Trims his belt and his buttons, and
turns out his toes.

When the sands are all dry, he is gay as
a lark,

And will talk in contemptuous tones of
the Shark:

But, when the tide rises and sharks are
around,

His voice has a timid and tremulous
sound.

GRYPHON:

That's different from what I used to say
when I was a child.

ALICE:

I'm afraid it did come out all wrong, sir.

GRYPHON:

Would you like the Mock Turtle to sing
you another song?

ALICE:

Oh yes, please, if he would be so kind.

MOCK TURTLE:

(Sighs and sings to the tune of 'Sing me
to sleep, the shadows fall'.)

Beautiful Soup, so rich and green,

Waiting in a hot tureen,

Who for such dainties would not stoop?
Soup of the evening, beautiful Soup!

Beautiful Soup! who cares for fish,

Game, or any other dish,

Who would not give all else for two p-

Ennyworth only of beautiful Soup?

(As the song dies away there is a shout,

off, of 'The Trial's beginning!' MARCH HARE and HATTER enter carrying a table with a plate of colourful jam tarts on it; they place it centre stage. The WHITE RABBIT enters and takes up his position - he holds a trumpet and a scroll. All the creatures who have been seen earlier file on: the MOUSE, the CHESHIRE CAT, the four GARDENERS, the CATERPILLAR, the DORMOUSE, the DUCHESS, the PIG BABY - this time a live actor. They are all carrying slates, or paper and pencil. ALICE looks wonderingly at them as they begin to scribble unannouncedly.)

ALICE: What are they all doing? They can't have anything to put down yet, before the trial's begun.

GRYPHON: They're putting down their names, for fear they should forget them before the end of the trial.

ALICE: Stupid things!

WHITE RABBIT: Silence in Court! (He blows a fanfare on his trumpet.)

(The KING and QUEEN enter in stately fashion, he with a crown perched on top of a large legal wig. The FROG FOOTMAN and the FISH FOOTMAN bring on two stools on which the KING and QUEEN sit, then join the rest of the JURORS.)

Bring in the Prisoner!

(The KNAVE OF HEARTS is led on by the SOLDIER, his wrists bound by a large and showy chain, and stands dejectedly before the KING.)

KING: Herald, read the accusation.

WHITE RABBIT: (Blows three trumpet-blasts, then reads from the scroll!)

The Queen of Hearts, she made some tarts,
All on a summer day:
The Knave of Hearts, he stole those tarts,
And took them quite away!

KING: Consider your verdict!

WHITE RABBIT: Not yet, not yet! There's a great deal to come before that.

KING: Call the first witness.

WHITE RABBIT: (Blows three trumpet-blasts.) First witness!

(The HATTER re-enters carrying a tea-cup and a half-eaten piece of bread and butter.)

HATTER: I beg your pardon, Your Majesty, for bringing these in, but I hadn't quite finished my tea when I was sent for.

KING: You ought to have finished. When did you begin?

HATTER: Fourteenth of March, I think it was.

MARCH HARE: Fifteenth.

DORMOUSE: Sixteenth.

KING: Jury, write that down.

(The JURY scribble industriously. ALICE steps forward and peers over one's shoulder.)

ALICE: (Laughing) They're writing all the figures down and adding them, and reducing them to pounds, shillings and pence! How ridiculous.

KING: (To HATTER.) Take off your hat.

HATTER: It isn't mine.

KING:

Stolen!

(The JURY scribble..)

HATTER:

I keep them to sell. I've none of my own. I'm a Hatter.

QUEEN:

(Donning spectacles and staring fixedly at him.) Give your evidence, and don't be nervous, or I'll have you executed on the spot.

(The HATTER's knees begin to tremble, and he takes a large bite out of his tea-cup, which is made of something edible..)

HATTER:

(Terrified) I'm a poor man, your Majesty - and I hadn't begun my tea - not above a week or so - and what with the bread-and-butter getting so thin - and the twinkling of the tea -

KING:

The twinkling of what?

HATTER:

It began with the tea -

KING:

Of course twinkling begins with a t! Do you take me for a dunce? Go on.

HATTER:

I'm a poor man, your Majesty - and the March Hare said -

MARCH HARE:

I didn't!

HATTER:

You did!

MARCH HARE:

I deny it!

HATTER:

Well, at any rate, the Dormouse said - (He looks at the DORMOUSE, but it is asleep again and snoring..)

JURYMEN:

But what did the Dormouse say?

HATTER:

That I can't remember.

QUEEN:

You must remember, or I'll have you executed.

(The HATTER begins to tremble again..)

HATTER: I'm a poor man, your Majesty.

KING: You're a very poor speaker! (He looks round the court for applause, which is vociferous and accompanied by cheers and whistles.) If that's all you know about it, you may go.

(The HATTER exits hastily.)

Call the next witness.

WHITE RABBIT: (Three trumpet-blasts.) Next witness!

(The DUCHESS'S COOK enters, with a pepper-pot. All begin sneezing. She takes up a militant stand with folded arms.)

KING: Give your evidence.

COOK: Shan't!

(The KING looks anxiously at the WHITE RABBIT.)

WHITE RABBIT: Well, if I must, I must. (Barking at her.) What are the tarts made of?

COOK: Pepper, mostly.

DORMOUSE: Treacle.

QUEEN: Collar that Dormouse! Behad that Dormouse! Turn that Dormouse out of court! Suppress him! Pinch him! Off with his whiskers!

(Everybody gets up and joins in a melée. By the time they settle down the DORMOUSE and the COOK have disappeared.)

KING: (Relieved) Never mind. Call the next witness.

WHITE RABBIT: (Three trumpet-blasts.) Alice!

ALICE: (Surprised, stepping forward.) Here!

KING: What do you know of this business?

ALICE: Nothing.

Nothing whatever?

KING: Nothing whatever.

ALICE: That's very important.

(The JUR Y scribble.)

WHITE RABBIT: Unimportant, your Majesty means, of course.

KING: Unimportant, of course, I meant.

Unimportant - important... (Muttering)

(The DORMOUSE comes on again, rubbing its eyes, and hands the WHITE RABBIT a paper, which the RABBIT reads. The QUEEN catches sight of the DORMOUSE and leaps up, pointing to it with a cry of 'Off with his whiskers!', at which he scurries off.)

WHITE RABBIT: There's more evidence to come yet, please Your Majesty. This paper has just been picked up. It seems to be a letter, written by the prisoner to - to somebody.

KING: It must have been that, unless it was written to nobody, which isn't usual, you know.

(Applause and screams.)

GRYPHON: Who is it directed to?

WHITE RABBIT: It isn't directed at all. In fact it isn't a letter, it's a set of verses.

(The KNAVE cranes to look over his shoulder, pulling the SOLDIER behind him by his chain.)

KNAVE:
Please your Majesty, I didn't write it,
and they can't prove that I did - there's
no name signed at the end.

KING:
If you didn't sign it that only makes the
matter worse. You must have meant
some mischief, or else you'd have
signed your name like an honest man.

(Applause)

QUEEN:
That proves his guilt, of course, so off
with -

ALICE:
It doesn't prove anything of the sort!
Why, you don't even know what they're
about!

KING:
Read them.

WHITE RABBIT:
Where shall I begin, please your
Majesty?

KING:
(Gravely) Begin at the beginning, and go
on till you come to the end; then stop.

WHITE RABBIT:
(Reads)

They told me you had been to her,
And mentioned me to him;
She gave me a good character,
But said I could not swim.

I gave her one, they gave him two,
You gave us three or more;
They all returned from him to you,
Though they were mine before.

If I or she should chance to be
Involved in this affair,
He trusts to you to set them free,
Exactly as we were.

My notion was that you had been
(Before she had this fit)
An obstacle that came between
Him, and ourselves, and it.

WHITE RABBIT: Don't let him know she liked them best,
(Cont) For this must ever be
A secret kept from all the rest,
Between yourself and me.

KING: Come! that's the most important piece
of evidence we've heard yet, so now let
the Jury -

ALICE: If any of them can explain it I'll give him
sixpence! I don't believe there's an atom
of meaning in it.

KING: If there's no meaning in it that saves a
world of trouble, you know. And yet - I
seem to see some meaning in them.
'... said I could not swim'. You can't
swim, can you?

KNAVE: (Pointing to his cardboard tabard.) Do I
look like it?

KING: 'I gave her one, they gave him two - '
why, that must be what he did with the
tarts.

ALICE: But it goes on 'they all returned from
him to you'.

KING: Why, there they are! (Points to the
tarts on the table.) Nothing could be
clearer. Then again - 'before she had
this fit - ' You never had fits, my dear,
I think?

QUEEN: (Furious) Never!

KING: (Smiling fatuously.) Then the words
don't fit you.

(He looks round the Court - dead silence.)

It's a pun!

(Loud laughing.)

Let the Jury consider their verdict.

QUEEN: No, no! Sentence first - verdict afterwards.

ALICE: Stuff and nonsense!

QUEEN: Hold your tongue!

ALICE: I won't!

QUEEN: Off with her head!

ALICE: Who cares for you? You're nothing but a pack of cards!

(Confused electronic noises, animal cries, squeals, etc, as the coat of arms on the screen changes to a jumble of moving psychedelic colours. The noise continues as the stage is blacked out, softening until it is only a kind of distant music. The lights go up again.)

CARROLL is sitting as at the beginning of the play, on the flowery bank,

ALICE lying beside him asleep. He shakes her gently.)

CARROLL: Wake up, Alice! Why, what a long sleep you've had!

(ALICE sits up and rubs her eyes.)

ALICE: Oh, I've had such a curious dream!

First I fell down a rabbit-hole - then there was a Pool of Tears - and the Duchess and the pepper and the baby (only it was really a pig) and a Cheshire Cat - and then... and then... Oh dear, I can't remember! How I wish I could, Mr Carroll!

CARROLL: You will remember it, Alice, I'm sure; and I shall write it down and make it into a story; and we'll call it Alice's Adventures in Wonderland. (He takes her hand.) And now you're awake, shall we go home to tea?

(They go off slowly, ALICE looking up at him as she eagerly chatters.)

ALICE:

... and there was a Mock Turtle and a Gryphon, and a Mad Hatter and a Dormouse....

CURTAIN