

COMPLETE WORKS  
OF  
WIS CARROLL



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INTRODUCTION BY  
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## III. SYLVIE AND BRUNO

PREFACE	277
1. Less Bread! More Taxes!	287
2. L'Amie Inconnue	294
3. Birthday-Presents	301
4. A Cunning Conspiracy	309
5. A Beggar's Palace	316
6. The Magic Locket	325
7. The Baron's Embassy	332
8. A Ride on a Lion	339
9. A Jester and a Bear	346
10. The Other Professor	354
11. Peter and Paul	361
12. A Musical Gardener	369
13. A Visit to Dogland	377
14. Fairy-Sylvie	385
15. Bruno's Revenge	397
16. A Changed Crocodile	405
17. The Three Badgers	412
18. Queer Street, Number Forty	423
19. How To Make a Phlizz	432
20. Light Come, Light Go	441
21. Through the Ivory Door	451
22. Crossing the Line	463
23. An Outlandish Watch	475
24. The Frogs' Birthday-Treat	484
25. Looking Eastward	496

## IV. SYLVIE AND BRUNO CONCLUDED

PREFACE	509
1. Bruno's Lessons	523
2. Love's Curfew	533
3. Streaks of Dawn	542
4. The Dog-King	551
5. Matilda Jane	559
6. Willie's Wife	568
7. Mein Herr	575
8. In a Shady Place	584
9. The Farewell-Party	593
10. Jabbering and Jam	604

# CONTENTS

vii

11. The Man in the Moon	613
12. Fairy-Music	620
13. What Tottles Meant	630
14. Bruno's Picnic	641
15. The Little Foxes	653
16. Beyond These Voices	660
17. To the Rescue!	669
18. A Newspaper-Cutting	679
19. A Fairy-Duet	682
20. Gammon and Spinach	695
21. The Professor's Lecture	706
22. The Banquet	715
23. The Pig-Tale	724
24. The Beggar's Return	734
25. Life Out of Death	744

## V. VERSE

### THE HUNTING OF THE SNARK

PREFACE	753
Fit The First	757
(The Landing)	
Fit The Second	760
(The Bellman's Speech)	
Fit The Third	764
(The Baker's Tale)	
Fit The Fourth	766
The Hunting	
Fit The Fifth	769
The Beaver's Lesson	
Fit The Sixth	773
The Barrister's Dream	
Fit The Seventh	776
The Banker's Fate	
Fit The Eighth	777
The Vanishing	

### EARLY VERSE

My Fairy	779
Punctuality	780

Melodies	781
Brother and Sister	782
Facts	783
Rules and Regulations	784
Horrors	786
Misunderstandings	787
As It Fell Upon a Day	788
Ye Fattale Cheyse	789
Lays of Sorrow, No. 1	791
Lays of Sorrow, No. 2	794
The Two Brothers	799
The Lady of the Ladle	805
Coronach	806
She's All My Fancy Painted Him	807
Photography Extraordinary	809
Lays of Mystery, Imagination, and Humour, No. 1:	810
The Palace of Humbug	
The Mock Turtle's Song (Early version)	813
Upon the Lonely Moor	813
Miss Jones	816
PUZZLES FROM WONDERLAND	
Puzzles	819
Solutions	821
PROLOGUES TO PLAYS	
Prologue to "La Guida di Bragia"	823
Prologue	823
Prologue	826
PHANTASMAGORIA	
Phantasmagoria	
Canto I: The Trysting	827
Canto II: Hys Fyve Rules	831
Canto III: Scarmoges	834
Canto IV: Hys Nourytur	838
Canto V: Byckermert	843
Canto VI: Dyscomfytur	847
Canto VII: Sad Souvenaunce	851
Echoes	853
A Sea Dirge	854
Ye Carpette Knyghte	855

# CONTENTS

ix

Hiawatha's Photographing	856
Melancholletta	861
A Valentine	863
The Three Voices	865
Theme with Variations	878
A Game of Fives	879
Poeta Fit, non Nascitur	880
Size and Tears	884
Atalanta in Camden-Town	885
The Lang Coortin'	887
Four Riddles	893
Fame's Penny-Trumpet	898

## COLLEGE RHYMES AND NOTES BY AN OXFORD CHIEL

Ode to Damon	901
Those Horrid Hurdy-Gurdies!	903
My Fancy	904
The Majesty of Justice	905
The Elections to the Hebdomadal Council	908
The Deserted Park	917
Examination Statute	920

## ACROSTICS, INSCRIPTIONS, AND OTHER VERSE

Acrostic: Little maidens, when you look	922
To three puzzled little Girls, from the Author	923
Double Acrostic: I sing a place wherein agree	923
Three Little Maids	925
Puzzle	925
Three Children	926
Two Thieves	927
Two Acrostics: Round the wondrous globe	928
Maidens, if a maid you meet	
Double Acrostic: Two little girls near London dwell	929
Acrostic: "Are you deaf, Father William?"	930
Acrostic: Maidens! if you love the tale	930
Acrostic: Love-lighted eyes, that will not start	931
To M.A.B.	932
Acrostic: Maiden, though thy heart may quail	932
Madrigal	933

Love among the Roses	933
Two Poems to Rachel Daniel	934
The Lyceum	936
Acrostic: Around my lonely hearth, to-night	937
Dreamland	937
To my Child-Friend	938
A Riddle	939
A Limerick	939
Rhyme? and Reason?	940
A Nursery Darling	940
Maggie's Visit to Oxford	941
Maggie B—	945

## THREE SUNSETS AND OTHER POEMS

Three Sunsets	946
The Path of Roses	950
The Valley of the Shadow of Death	953
Solitude	958
Beatrice	960
Stolen Waters	962
The Willow-Tree	966
Only a Woman's Hair	967
The Sailor's Wife	969
After Three Days	972
Faces in the Fire	975
A Lesson in Latin	976
Puck Lost and Found	977

## VI. STORIES

A Tangled Tale	983
Novelty and Romancement	1079
A Photographer's Day Out	1089
Wilhelm von Schmitz	1097
The Legend of Scotland	1111

## VII. A MISCELLANY

The Offer of the Clarendon Trustees	1121
The New Method of Evaluation	1123
The Dynamics of a Parti-cle	1129
The New Belfry of Christ Church, Oxford	1139

# CONTENTS

x

The Vision of the Three T's	1150
The Blank Cheque	1170
Twelve Months in a Curatorship	1177
Three Years in a Curatorship	1182
Resident Women-Students	1185
Some Popular Fallacies about Vivisection	1189
Lawn Tennis Tournaments	1201
Eight or Nine Wise Words about Letter Writing	1211
What the Tortoise Said to Achilles	1225
The Two Clocks	1230
Photography Extraordinary	1231
Hints of Etiquette, or, Dining Out Made Easy	1235
A Hemispherical Problem	1237
A Selection from Symbolic Logic	1238
Rules for Court Circular	1263
Croquet Castles	1269
Mischmasch	1272
Doublets	1274
A Postal Problem	1280
The Alphabet Cipher	1283
Introduction to <i>The Lost Plum Cake</i>	1283

## INDEX OF FIRST LINES OF VERSE

128r





## INTRODUCTION

ON THE fourth of July, 1862, the Reverend Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, a young Oxford Don, who was then, and for nearly half a century remained, Mathematical Lecturer of Christ Church, took the day off and went a-rowing with the small daughters of the Dean. That eventful picnic was duly noted in his neat and interminable diary that night. The entry runs thus:

"I made an expedition up the river to Godstow with the three Liddells; we had tea on the bank there and did not reach Christ Church until half-past eight."

But at that time he did not deem one subsequently enhanced detail of the day sufficiently important to be worth chronicling. He said nothing of the fairy tale he began to spin "all in the golden afternoon" there in the shadow of the hayrick to which the four Argonauts retreated from the heat of the sun. It was a tale about just such a little girl as the gravely attentive Alice Liddell who used to prod him when he ventured to let lapse for a time this story of another Alice falling down a rabbit-hole into the world of the unexpected. In response to such proddings, he carried the story along on that and other afternoons and finally committed it to manuscript as "Alice's Adventures Underground." Somewhat expanded this was published three years later under the *nom de guerre* of Lewis Carroll and under the title of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*.

In the sixty years that have passed since then, this gay,

roving dream story and its sequel have seeped into the folk-lore of the world. It has become as deeply rooted a part of that folk lore as the legend of Cinderella or any other tale first told back in the unfathomable past. Not Tiny Tim, nor Falstaff, nor Rip Van Winkle, nor any other character wrought in the English tongue seems now a more permanent part of that tongue's heritage than do the high-handed Humpty Dumpty, the wistful Mad Hatter, the somewhat arbitrary Queen of Hearts, the evasive Cheshire Cat and the gently pathetic White Knight.

The tale has been read aloud in all the nurseries from Oxford town to the ends of the Empire. And there is no telling how many copies of it have been printed and sold. For when it was new, there was no binding law of international copyright and it was as much the prey of all the freebooters in America as was a somewhat kindred work of genius that came out of England a few years later—the nonsensical and lovely thing called *Pinafore*.

And the Alice books have known no frontier. If you poke about in the bookstalls on the Continent, you will stumble inevitably on *Alice's Abenteuer im Wunderland*. Or *Le Aventure d'Alice nel Paese Meraviglie* (with illustrations, of course, by Giovanni Tenniel). You might even run into *La aventuroj de Alicio en Mirlando* which, if you must know, is life down a rabbit-hole as told in Esperanto. And you are certain to come upon *Les Aventures d'Alice au Pays de Merveilles* with one of the puns of the incorrigible Mock Turtle (*Fausse-Tortue*) rendered thus unrecognizable:

"La maitresse était une vieille tortue; nous l'appelions chélonée."

"Et pourquoi l'appeliez-vous chélonée, si ce n'était pas son nom?"

"Parcequ'on ne pouvait s'empêcher de s'écrier en la voy-

ant: Quel long nez!" dit la Fausse-Tortue d'un ton fâché; "vous êtes vraiment bien borné!"

Then the Alice books have been employed as scenarios for controversy. A long bibliography of such satires as *Alice in Kulturland* or *Malice in Blunderland* would indicate as much. The tale of Alice's adventure down the rabbit-hole and through the looking-glass is still a very source book for withering anecdotes in the House of Commons or malignant cartoons in *Punch*; and even so sedate an orator as Woodrow Wilson, in speaking once of the ceaseless vigilance and aspiration required of a progressive, compared himself to the Red Queen, who, you will remember, had to run as fast as her legs would carry her if she wanted so much as to stay in the same place.

Plays have been wrought from the stuff of the Alice story. Some of these in London have been ambitious harlequinades. Irene Vanbrugh, for instance, could tell you how Lewis Carroll once watched her play the Knave of Hearts. More often, they have been sleazy, amateurish ventures, an outlet for the exhibitionism of grown-ups, who would then have the effrontery to say they were doing it to please the kiddies.

Even the symphony orchestras know Alice; for the chatter of the flowers in the looking-glass garden, the thunder of *Jabberwocky*, the hum of the looking-glass insects and the wistfulness of the White Knight have all been caught up in the lovely music of Deems Taylor. The artists have discovered it; and the book has even undergone the sometimes painful experience of being illustrated by Peter Newell.

Indeed, everything has befallen *Alice*, except the last thing—psychoanalysis. At least the new psychologists have not explored this dream book nor pawed over the gentle, shrinking celibate who wrote it. They have not sub-

jected to their disconcerting scrutiny the extraordinary contrast between the cautious, prissy pace of the man and the mad, gay gait of the tale he told. They have not embarrassingly compared the Rev. Charles L. Dodgson with the immortal Lewis Carroll, two persons whom he himself never liked to see together.

One discrepancy between them has always been a subject of amused reflection—a discrepancy not unfamiliar to a generation which knows that one of its own most hilarious clowns is (in what is sometimes confusedly called real life) the professor of political economy at McGill University. It was the dual nature which, when Lewis Carroll was asked to contribute to a philosophical symposium, compelled the Mathematical Lecturer of Christ Church to reply coldly:

And what mean all these mysteries to me  
Whose life is full of indices and surds?

$$\begin{aligned} x^2 + 7x + 53 \\ =_{\frac{1}{3}}^1 \end{aligned}$$

It was the discrepancy which once proved so embarrassing to him in his relations with his Queen. Victoria had been so good as to be delighted with Mr. Dodgson's photographs, for you may be sure that the then Prince of Wales, when he visited Oxford, did not get away without some samples of Mr. Dodgson's adroitness with a camera. Victoria even went so far as to say that Albert would have appreciated them highly. Then, when *Alice* was published and won her heart, she graciously suggested that Mr. Dodgson dedicate his next book to her. Unfortunately for Her Majesty, his next book was a mathematical opus entitled *An Elementary Treatise on Determinants*.

But the discrepancy which would more deeply interest

those given to a new research into old lives lies in the fact that the man who wrote the most enchanting nonsense in the English language—a just description, surely, of the *Alice* books and *The Hunting of the Snark*—was a puttering, fussy, fastidious, didactic bachelor, who was almost painfully humorless in his relations with the grown-up world around him. You can see that much unconsciously revealed in the fatuous biography written a few months after Lewis Carroll's death in 1898 by his oblivious and too respectful nephew, who was awed by what he called the "purity and refinement" of his uncle's mind. That the shadow of a disappointment fell athwart the uncle's life, his nephew did detect; but he was the kind of biographer who would go on to say: "Those who loved him would not wish to lift the veil from these dead sanctities."

You must picture Lewis Carroll as living precisely in his quarters in the Tom Quad at Christ Church, all his life neatly pigeonholed, all the letters he wrote or received in thirty-seven years elaborately summarized and catalogued, so that by the time he died there were more than 98,000 cross references in the files of his correspondence. He was the kind of man who kept a diagram showing where you sat when you dined with him and what you ate, lest he serve you the same dish when you came again. He was the kind of man who, when an issue of *Jabberwocky*, the school paper of a Boston seminary, published a coarse anecdote from Washington's Diary, wrote to Boston a solemn rebuke of such indelicacy. He was the kind of man who gravely stipulated that no illustrations for a book of his be drawn on Sunday and who could indite the following reproach to a friend of his:

After changing my mind several times, I have at last de-

cided to venture to ask a favour of you, and to trust that you will not misinterpret my motives in doing so.

The favour I would ask is, that you will not tell me any more stories, such as you did on Friday, of remarks which children are said to have made on very sacred subjects—remarks which most people would recognize as irreverent, if made by *grown-up* people, but which are assumed to be innocent when made by children who are unconscious of any irreverence, the strange conclusion being drawn that they are therefore innocent when *repeated* by a grown-up person.

The misinterpretation I would guard against is your supposing that I regard such repetition as always *wrong* in any grown-up person. Let me assure you that I do *not* so regard it. I am always willing to believe that those who repeat such stories differ wholly from myself in their views of what is, and what is not, fitting treatment of sacred things, and I fully recognize that what would certainly be wrong in *me*, is not necessarily so in *them*.

So I simply ask it as a personal favour to myself. The hearing of that anecdote gave me so much pain, and spoiled so much the pleasure of my tiny dinner-party, that I feel sure you will kindly spare me such in future.

Above all he was the kind of man who, in publishing his *Pillow Problems* (part of his series of *Curiosa Mathematica*) recommended these exercises in mental arithmetic not only as an agreeable diversion for a sleepless couch but, more especially, as a way of driving out the skeptical thoughts, the blasphemous thoughts, and "the unholy thoughts, which torture with their hateful presence the fancy that would fain be pure."

And yet in all the anthology of the gentlest art compiled by Mr. Lucas, there are no letters more charming or more frivolous than those which Lewis Carroll wrote to any one of the little girls in whose presence only he was a truly free spirit and at whose courts he was happy to play jester

all his days in the land. Calverley, Ruskin, Millais, Tennyson, the Rossettis, Ellen Terry, these pass by in the long procession of his friends; but the greater part of his thought and his genius and his devotion was given to the children who one by one succeeded Alice Liddell in the garden of his friendship. He met them in railway carriages (for he always carried a few puzzles in his pocket against such chance encounters) and he scraped acquaintance with them on the beach, being well supplied always with safety pins in case they wanted to go in wading. His letters to them would run like this:

*November 30, 1879*

I have been awfully busy, and I've had to write *heaps* of letters—wheelbarrows full, almost. And it tires me so that generally I go to bed again the next minute after I get up: and sometimes I go to bed again a minute *before* I get up! Did you ever hear of any one being so tired as *that*? . . .

Or like this:

*December 26, 1886*

MY DEAR E——,—Though rushing, rapid rivers roar between us (if you refer to the map of England, I think you'll find that to be correct), we still remember each other, and feel a sort of shivery affection for each other. . . .

Or like this:

*December 27, 1873*

MY DEAR GAYNOR,—My name is spelt with a "G," that is to say "*Dodgson*." Any one who spells it the same as that wretch (I mean of course the Chairman of Committees in the House of Commons) offends me *deeply*, and *for ever*! It is a thing I *can* forget, but *never can forgive*! If you do it again, I shall call you "'aynor." Could you live happy with such a name?

As to dancing, my dear, I *never* dance, unless I am allowed to do it *in my own peculiar way*. There is no use trying to describe it: it has to be seen to be believed. The last house I tried it in, the floor broke through. But then it was a poor sort of floor—the beams were only six inches thick, hardly worth calling beams at all; stone arches are much more sensible, when any dancing, *of my peculiar kind*, is to be done. Did you ever see the Rhinoceros and the Hippopotamus, at the Zoölogical Gardens, trying to dance a minuet together? It is a touching sight.

Give any message from me to Amy that you think will be most likely to surprise her, and, believe me,

Your affectionate friend,

LEWIS CARROLL

Lewis Carroll's case was stated in his own words in one comment on *Alice*. He wrote:

"The why of this book cannot, and need not, be put into words. Those for whom a child's mind is a sealed book, and who see no divinity in a child's smile would read such words in vain; while for any one who has ever loved one true child, no words are needed. For he will have known the awe that falls on one in the presence of a spirit fresh from God's hands, on whom no shadow of sin, and but the outermost fringe of the shadow of sorrow, has yet fallen; he will have felt the bitter contrast between the selfishness that spoils his best deeds and the life that is but an overflowing love. For I think a child's first attitude to the world is a simple love for all living things. And he will have learned that the best work a man can do is when he works for love's sake only, with no thought of fame or gain or earthly reward. No deed of ours, I suppose, on this side of the grave, is really unselfish. Yet if one can put forth all one's powers in a task where nothing of reward is hoped for but a little child's whispered thanks and the



airy touch of a little child's pure lips, one seems to come somewhere near to this."

The discrepancy between that solemn dedication and the irresponsible laughter of the book it referred to would, I fear, arouse the most animated curiosity in the clinic of a Dr. Edward Hiram Reede or the library of a Lytton Strachey. They can be pardoned an acute interest in the inner springs of any fellow man who has fallen into thinking of all life as a process of contamination and who, as Newman said of young Hurrell Froude at Oxford, has "a high, severe idea of the intrinsic excellence of virginity." But those of us whose own memories of childhood are inextricably interwoven with all the gay tapestry of *Alice in Wonderland* would rather leave unexplored the shy, retreating man who left so much bubbling laughter in his legacy to the world.

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT