ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND

Lewis Carroll

CHAPTER I

Down the Rabbit-Hole

Alice was beginning to get very tired of sitting by her sister

on the bank, and of having nothing to do: once or twice she had

peeped into the book her sister was reading, but it had no

pictures or conversations in it, `and what is the use of a book,'

thought Alice `without pictures or conversation?'

So she was considering in her own mind (as well as she could,

for the hot day made her feel very sleepy and stupid), whether

the pleasure of making a daisy-chain would be worth the trouble

of getting up and picking the daisies, when suddenly a White

Rabbit with pink eyes ran close by her.

There was nothing so VERY remarkable in that; nor did Alice

think it so VERY much out of the way to hear the Rabbit say to

itself, `Oh dear! Oh dear! I shall be late!' (when she thought

it over afterwards, it occurred to her that she ought to have

wondered at this, but at the time it all seemed quite natural);

but when the Rabbit actually TOOK A WATCH OUT OF ITS WAISTCOAT-

POCKET, and looked at it, and then hurried on, Alice started to

her feet, for it flashed across her mind that she had never

before seen a rabbit with either a waistcoat-pocket, or a watch to

take out of it, and burning with curiosity, she ran across the

field after it, and fortunately was just in time to see it pop

down a large rabbit-hole under the hedge.

In another moment down went Alice after it, never once

considering how in the world she was to get out again.

The rabbit-hole went straight on like a tunnel for some way,

and then dipped suddenly down, so suddenly that Alice had not a

moment to think about stopping herself before she found herself

falling down a very deep well.

Either the well was very deep, or she fell very slowly, for she

had plenty of time as she went down to look about her and to

wonder what was going to happen next. First, she tried to look

down and make out what she was coming to, but it was too dark to

see anything; then she looked at the sides of the well, and

noticed that they were filled with cupboards and book-shelves;

here and there she saw maps and pictures hung upon pegs. She

took down a jar from one of the shelves as she passed; it was

labelled `ORANGE MARMALADE', but to her great disappointment it

was empty: she did not like to drop the jar for fear of killing

somebody, so managed to put it into one of the cupboards as she

fell past it.

`Well!' thought Alice to herself, `after such a fall as this, I

shall think nothing of tumbling down stairs! How brave they'll

all think me at home! Why, I wouldn't say anything about it,

even if I fell off the top of the house!' (Which was very likely

true.)

Down, down, down. Would the fall NEVER come to an end! `I

wonder how many miles I've fallen by this time?' she said aloud.

`I must be getting somewhere near the centre of the earth. Let

me see: that would be four thousand miles down, I think--' (for,

you see, Alice had learnt several things of this sort in her

lessons in the schoolroom, and though this was not a VERY good

opportunity for showing off her knowledge, as there was no one to

listen to her, still it was good practice to say it over) `--yes,

that's about the right distance--but then I wonder what Latitude

or Longitude I've got to?' (Alice had no idea what Latitude was,

or Longitude either, but thought they were nice grand words to

say.)

Presently she began again. `I wonder if I shall fall right

THROUGH the earth! How funny it'll seem to come out among the

people that walk with their heads downward! The Antipathies, I

think--' (she was rather glad there WAS no one listening, this

time, as it didn't sound at all the right word) `--but I shall

have to ask them what the name of the country is, you know.

Please, Ma'am, is this New Zealand or Australia?' (and she tried

to curtsey as she spoke--fancy CURTSEYING as you're falling

through the air! Do you think you could manage it?) `And what

an ignorant little girl she'll think me for asking! No, it'll

never do to ask: perhaps I shall see it written up somewhere.'

Down, down, down. There was nothing else to do, so Alice soon

began talking again. `Dinah'll miss me very much to-night, I

should think!' (Dinah was the cat.) `I hope they'll remember

her saucer of milk at tea-time. 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, you know.

But do cats eat bats, I wonder?' And here Alice began to get

rather sleepy, and went on saying to herself, in a dreamy sort of

way, `Do cats eat bats? Do cats eat bats?' and sometimes, `Do

bats eat cats?' for, you see, as she couldn't answer either

question, it didn't much matter which way she put it. She felt

that she was dozing off, and had just begun to dream that she

was walking hand in hand with Dinah, and saying to her very

earnestly, `Now, Dinah, tell me the truth: did you ever eat a

bat?' when suddenly, thump! thump! down she came upon a heap of

sticks and dry leaves, and the fall was over.

Alice was not a bit hurt, and she jumped up on to her feet in a

moment: she looked up, but it was all dark overhead; before her

was another long passage, and the White Rabbit was still in

sight, hurrying down it. There was not a moment to be lost:

away went Alice like the wind, and was just in time to hear it

say, as it turned a corner, `Oh my ears and whiskers, how late

it's getting!' She was close behind it when she turned the

corner, but the Rabbit was no longer to be seen: she found

herself in a long, low hall, which was lit up by a row of lamps

hanging from the roof.

There were doors all round the hall, but they were all locked;

and when Alice had been all the way down one side and up the

other, trying every door, she walked sadly down the middle,

wondering how she was ever to get out again.

Suddenly she came upon a little three-legged table, all made of

solid glass; there was nothing on it except a tiny golden key,

and Alice's first thought was that it might belong to one of the

doors of the hall; but, alas! either the locks were too large, or

the key was too small, but at any rate it would not open any of

them. However, on the second time round, she came upon a low

curtain she had not noticed before, and behind it was a little

door about fifteen inches high: she tried the little golden key

in the lock, and to her great delight it fitted!

Alice opened the door and found that it led into a small

passage, not much larger than a rat-hole: she knelt down and

looked along the passage into the loveliest garden you ever saw.

How she longed to get out of that dark hall, and wander about

among those beds of bright flowers and those cool fountains, but

she could not even get her head through the doorway; `and even if

my head would go through,' thought poor Alice, `it would be of

very little use without my shoulders. Oh, how I wish

I could shut up like a telescope! I think I could, if I only

know how to begin.' For, you see, so many out-of-the-way things

had happened lately, that Alice had begun to think that very few

things indeed were really impossible.

There seemed to be no use in waiting by the little door, so she

went back to the table, half hoping she might find another key on

it, or at any rate a book of rules for shutting people up like

telescopes: this time she found a little bottle on it, (`which

certainly was not here before,' said Alice,) and round the neck

of the bottle was a paper label, with the words `DRINK ME'

beautifully printed on it in large letters.

It was all very well to say `Drink me,' but the wise little

Alice was not going to do THAT in a hurry. `No, I'll look

first,' she said, `and see whether it's marked "poison" or not';

for she had read several nice little histories about children who

had got burnt, and eaten up by wild beasts and other unpleasant

things, all because they WOULD not remember the simple rules

their friends had taught them: such as, that a red-hot poker

will burn you if you hold it too long; and that if you cut your

finger VERY deeply with a knife, it usually bleeds; and she had

never forgotten that, if you drink much from a bottle marked

`poison,' it is almost certain to disagree with you, sooner or

later.

However, this bottle was NOT marked `poison,' so Alice ventured

to taste it, and finding it very nice, (it had, in fact, a sort

of mixed flavour of cherry-tart, custard, pine-apple, roast

turkey, toffee, and hot buttered toast,) she very soon finished

it off.

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`What a curious feeling!' said Alice; `I must be shutting up

like a telescope.'

And so it was indeed: she was now only ten inches high, and

her face brightened up at the thought that she was now the right

size for going through the little door into that lovely garden.

First, however, she waited for a few minutes to see if she was

going to shrink any further: she felt a little nervous about

this; `for it might end, you know,' said Alice to herself, `in my

going out altogether, like a candle. I wonder what I should be

like then?' And she tried to fancy what the flame of a candle is

like after the candle is blown out, for she could not remember

ever having seen such a thing.

After a while, finding that nothing more happened, she decided

on going into the garden at once; but, alas for poor Alice!

when she got to the door, she found she had forgotten the

little golden key, and when she went back to the table for it,

she found she could not possibly reach it: she could see it

quite plainly through the glass, and she tried her best to climb

up one of the legs of the table, but it was too slippery;

and when she had tired herself out with trying,

the poor little thing sat down and cried.

`Come, there's no use in crying like that!' said Alice to

herself, rather sharply; `I advise you to leave off this minute!'

She generally gave herself very good advice, (though she very

seldom followed it), and sometimes she scolded herself so

severely as to bring tears into her eyes; and once she remembered

trying to box her own ears for having cheated herself in a game

of croquet she was playing against herself, for this curious

child was very fond of pretending to be two people. `But it's no

use now,' thought poor Alice, `to pretend to be two people! Why,

there's hardly enough of me left to make ONE respectable

person!'

Soon her eye fell on a little glass box that was lying under

the table: she opened it, and found in it a very small cake, on

which the words `EAT ME' were beautifully marked in currants.

`Well, I'll eat it,' said Alice, `and if it makes me grow larger,

I can reach the key; and if it makes me grow smaller, I can creep

under the door; so either way I'll get into the garden, and I

don't care which happens!'

She ate a little bit, and said anxiously to herself, `Which

way? Which way?', holding her hand on the top of her head to

feel which way it was growing, and she was quite surprised to

find that she remained the same size: to be sure, this generally

happens when one eats cake, but Alice had got so much into the

way of expecting nothing but out-of-the-way things to happen,

that it seemed quite dull and stupid for life to go on in the

common way.

So she set to work, and very soon finished off the cake.