Alice in Wonderland

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 conversations?" 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 too late!" 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 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...

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 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 downwards! Please, Ma'am, is this New Zealand?" She was trying to curtsey as she spoke — fancy curtseying as you're falling through the air! when suddenly, thump! thump! thump! down she came upon a heap of sticks and dry leaves, and the fall was over.
Alice was not a bit hurt. Before her was another long passage, and the White Rabbit was hurrying down it, but when she turned the corner, he was no longer to be seen. She found herself in a long, low hall, lit up by a row of lamps.

There were doors all round the hall, but they were all locked. She wondered 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 but a tiny golden key, and Alice's first idea was that this might belong to one of the doors of the hall; but alas! either the locks were too large, or the key was too small. 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 rathole: 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."

When she went back to the table, she found a little bottle on it ("which certainly was not here before," said Alice), and tied round the neck of the bottle was a paper label, with the words "Drink Me" beautifully printed on it in large letters.

Since the bottle was not marked "poison," Alice ventured to taste it, and, finding it very nice, she very soon finished it off....

"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. But when she got to the door, she found that 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 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. She generally gave herself very good advice and was 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. Which way? Which way?" She set to work, and very soon finished off the cake.

"Curiouser and curiouser!" cried Alice. "Now I'm opening out like the largest telescope that ever was! Good-bye, feet!" (for when she looked down at her feet they seemed to be almost out of sight, they were getting so far off). "Oh, my poor little feet, I wonder who will put on your shoes and stockings for you now, dears?"

Just at this moment her head struck against the roof of the hall: in fact she was now rather more than nine feet high, and she at once took up the little golden key and hurried off to the garden door.
Poor Alice! It was as much as she could do, lying down on one side, to look through into the garden with one eye; but to get through was more hopeless than ever: she sat down and began to cry again.

“You ought to be ashamed of yourself,” said Alice, “a great girl like you,” (she might well say this), “to go on crying in this way! Stop this moment, I tell you!” But she went on all the same, shedding gallons of tears, until there was a large pool all around her, about four inches deep and reaching half down the hall.

After a time she heard a little pattering of feet in the distance, and hastily dried her eyes. It was the White Rabbit returning, with a pair of white kid-gloves in one hand and a large fan in the other. “Oh! The Duchess! the Duchess! Oh! Won’t she be savage if I’ve kept her waiting!”

“If you please, Sir—” said Alice.

The Rabbit started violently, dropped the white kid-gloves and the fan, and scurried away into the darkness as hard as he could go.

Alice took up the fan and gloves, and as the hall was very hot, she began fanning herself. She was surprised to see that she had put on one of the Rabbit’s little white kid-gloves. “How can I have done that?” she thought. “I must be getting small again.” She got up and went to the table to measure herself by it; she was now about two feet high, and was going on shrinking rapidly. She soon found out that the cause of this was the fan she was holding, and she dropped it hastily, just in time to save herself from shrinking away altogether.

“That was a narrow escape!” said Alice. “And now for the garden!” But alas! the little door was shut again, and the little golden key was lying on the glass table as before, “and things are worse than ever,” thought the poor child, “for I never was so small as this before, never!”

As she said these words her foot slipped, and in another moment, splash! she was up to her chin in salt-water. Her first idea was that
she had fallen into the sea; however, she soon made out that she was in the pool of tears she had wept when she was nine feet high.

"I wish I hadn't cried so much!" said Alice, as she swam about, trying to find her way out. "I shall be punished for it now, I suppose, by being drowned in my own tears!"

Just then she heard something splashing about in the pool a little way off, and she soon made out that it was a mouse, that had slipped in like herself.

"Would it be of any use now," thought Alice, "to speak to this mouse?" She began: "O Mouse, do you know the way out of this pool?" (Alice thought this must be the right way of speaking to a mouse: she remembered having seen, in her brother's Latin Grammar, "A Mouse—of a mouse—to a mouse—O mouse!")

"Perhaps it doesn't understand English," thought Alice. "I dare-say it's a French mouse, come over with William the Conqueror." So she began again: "Où est ma chatte?" which was the first sentence in her French lesson-book. The Mouse gave a sudden leap out of the water at this mention of cats, and when Alice spoke about dogs, the Mouse began swimming away from her as hard as it could go.

By now the pool was getting quite crowded with the birds and animals that had fallen into it: a Dodo and an Eaglet, and several other curious creatures. Alice led the way, and the whole party swam to the shore.

The first question was how they were all to get dry again: the birds and animals had a consultation about this, and after a few minutes it seemed quite natural to Alice to find herself talking familiarly with them.

At last the Mouse, who seemed to be a person of some authority among them, called out, "Sit down, all of you, and listen to me!"
I'll soon make you dry enough!” They all sat down in a large ring, with the Mouse in the middle.

“Are you all ready?” the Mouse said. “This is the driest thing I know. ‘...William the Conqueror, whose cause was favoured by the pope, was soon submitted to by the English...’”

“That doesn’t seem to be drying me,” complained Alice.

“The best thing to dry us,” the Dodo said, “would be a Caucus-race.”

“What is a Caucus-race?” asked Alice.

“The best way to explain it is to do it.” The Dodo then marked out a race-course, in a sort of circle, and placed everyone along it, here and there. They all began running when they liked, and left off when they liked. At the end of half an hour, when everyone was quite dry, the Dodo called out suddenly, “The race is over!”

“But who has won?” everybody said.

“Why,” said the Dodo, “everyone has won, and all must have prizes.”

“But who is to give the prizes?”

“Why she, of course,” the Dodo said, pointing to Alice. Alice put her hand in her pocket and found a box of comfits (luckily the salt-water had not got into it) and handed them round as prizes.

“But she must have a prize herself,” said the Mouse.

“Of course,” said the Dodo. “What else do you have in your pocket?”

“Only a thimble,” said Alice. She handed it to the Dodo, who then handed it back saying “We beg your acceptance of this elegant thimble.”

Alice thought the whole thing quite absurd, but they all looked so grave she didn’t dare laugh. “I only wish my cat Dinah were here to see it,” she said, but at this mention of a cat the birds, making different excuses, scattered as fast as possible in all directions.
The White Rabbit now came tripping slowly back, muttering "The Duchess! The Duchess! Where can I have dropped them, I wonder?" Alice guessed that he was looking for the fan and gloves, but they were nowhere to be seen.

"Why, Mary Ann," he said when he saw Alice, "what are you doing out here? Go home this moment, and fetch me a pair of gloves and a fan!" Alice was so frightened that she ran off at once in the direction it pointed to, without trying to explain the mistake that it had made.

"He took me for his housemaid," she said to herself as she ran. "How surprised he'll be when he finds out who I am! But I'd better take him his fan and gloves—that is, if I can find them." As she said this, she came upon a neat little house, on the door of which was a bright brass plate with the name "W. RABBIT" engraved upon it. She went in without knocking, and hurried upstairs, in great fear lest she should meet the real Mary Ann, and he turned out of the house before she had found the fan and gloves.

She was standing in a tidy little room with a table in the window, and on it a fan and two or three pairs of tiny white kid-gloves; she took up the fan and a pair of the gloves, and was just going to leave the room, when her eye fell upon a little bottle that stood near the looking-glass. She uncorked it and put it to her lips. "I know something interesting is sure to happen," she said to herself. "I do hope it'll make me grow large again, for really I'm quite tired of being such a tiny little thing!"

It did so indeed, and much sooner than she had expected: before she had drunk half the bottle, she found her head pressing against the ceiling, and had to stoop to save her neck from being broken. "I wish I hadn't drunk quite so much!"

Alas! It was too late to wish that! She went on growing and growing, and very soon had to kneel down on the floor; in another minute there was not even room for this, and she tried the effect of
lying down with one elbow against the door, and the other arm curled round her head. Still she went on growing, and, as a last resource, she put one arm out of the window, and one foot up the chimney, and said to herself “Now I can do no more, whatever happens. What will become of me?”

After a few minutes, after she stopped growing, she heard a voice outside. “Mary Ann!” said the voice. “Fetch me my gloves this moment!” Then came a little pattering of feet on the stairs. Alice knew it was the Rabbit coming to look for her, and she trembled till she shook the house, quite forgetting that she was now about a thousand times as large as the Rabbit.

Presently the Rabbit came up to the door, and tried to open it; but, as the door opened inwards, and Alice’s elbow was pressed hard against it, that attempt proved a failure. Alice heard it say to itself “Then I’ll go round and get in at the window.”

“That you won’t!” thought Alice, and, after waiting till she fancied she heard the Rabbit just under the window, she suddenly spread out her hand, and made a snatch in the air. She heard a little shriek and a fall, and a crash of broken glass.

Next came an angry voice, and someone saying “Now tell me what’s that in the window?”

“Sure it’s an arm, yer honour.”

“An arm, you goose! Who ever saw one that size? Why, it fills the whole window!”

“Well, it’s got no business there; go and take it away.”

At last Alice spread out her hand again, and made another snatch in the air. This time there were two little shrieks, and more sounds of broken glass. “As for pulling me out of the window,” Alice thought, “I only wish they could! I’m sure I don’t want to stay here any longer!”
She waited for some time without hearing anything more; at last came a rumbling of cartwheels, and the sound of many voices: “Here, Bill! The master says you’ve got to go down the chimney!”

“Oh! So Bill’s got to come down the chimney, has he?” said Alice to herself. “I wouldn’t be in Bill’s place for a good deal: this fireplace is narrow, but I think I can kick a little!”

She waited till she heard a little animal scratching and scrambling about in the chimney close above her; then she gave one sharp kick, and waited to see what would happen next.

“Something come at me like a Jack-in-the-Box,” someone said, panting, “and up I goes like a sky-rocket!” “That must be Bill,” Alice thought.

“We must burn the house down!” said the Rabbit’s voice. And Alice called out, as loud as she could, “If you do, I’ll set my cat Dinah on you!”

There was a dead silence instantly; then Alice heard the Rabbit say “A barrowful will do, to begin with.”

“A barrowful of what?” thought Alice. But she had not long to doubt, for the same moment a shower of little pebbles came rattling in at the window, and some of them hit her in the face. She noticed, with some surprise, that the pebbles were all turning into little cakes as they lay on the floor, and a bright idea came into her head. “If I eat one of these cakes,” she thought, “it’s sure to make some change in my size.”

So she swallowed one of the cakes, and was delighted to find that she began shrinking directly. As soon as she was small enough to get through the door, she ran out of the house, and found quite a crowd of little animals and birds waiting outside. The poor little Lizard, Bill, was in the middle, being held up by two guinea-pigs, who were giving it something out of a bottle. They all made a rush at Alice the moment she appeared; but she ran off as hard as she could, and soon found herself safe in a thick wood.
“The first thing I’ve got to do,” said Alice to herself, “is to grow to my right size again; and the second thing is to find my way into that lovely garden.” A little sharp bark just over her head made her look up in a great hurry.

An enormous puppy was looking down at her with large round eyes, and feebly stretching out one paw, trying to touch her. “Poor little thing!” said Alice, in a coaxing tone, and she tried hard to whistle to it; but she was terribly frightened that it might be hungry, in which case it would be very likely to eat her in spite of all her coaxing.

Hardly knowing what she did, she picked up a little bit of stick, and held it out to the puppy: whereupon the puppy jumped into the air off all its feet at once, with a yelp of delight, and rushed at the stick: then Alice dodged behind a great thistle, to keep herself from being run over. At last it sat down a good way off, panting, with its tongue hanging out of its mouth.

This seemed to Alice a good opportunity for making her escape: so she set off at once and ran until she was quite tired. “And yet what a dear little puppy it was!” said Alice, as she leant against a buttercup to rest herself, and fanned herself with one of its leaves. “I should have liked teaching it some tricks, if I’d only been the right size! Oh dear! I’d nearly forgotten I’ve got to grow up again. I suppose I ought to eat or drink something: the great question is ‘What?’”

There was a large mushroom growing near her, about the same height as herself; and when she had looked under it, and on both sides of it, and behind it, it occurred to her that she might as well see what was on the top of it.

She peeped over the edge of the mushroom, and her eyes immediately met those of a large blue caterpillar, that was sitting on the top, with its arms folded, quietly smoking a long hookah, and taking not the smallest notice of her or of anything else.