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Dramatic Publishing

ALICE IN WONDERLAND



Adapted From Lewis Carroll

by

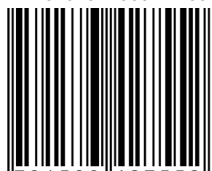
MADGE MILLER

ALICE IN WONDERLAND

Suspenseful version of Lewis Carroll's story.

Drama. Adapted by Madge Miller. Based on the story by Lewis Carroll. Cast: 2m., 4w., 3 either gender with doubling, or up to 13 (2m., 4w., 7 either gender). Alice is cautioned by the White Rabbit to take good care of the Queen's tarts, which are to be served shortly at the croquet match. While Alice's back is turned, the tarts are stolen. Alice, realizing that the White Rabbit will lose his head if the tarts are not discovered in time, goes in search of the thief. Her quest leads her through a maze of incredible and suspenseful adventures, endeared to everybody by Lewis Carroll's memorable story, climaxed by a trial scene, where the thief is discovered. Bare stage, with set pieces that slide on and off. Fantastic costumes. Suitable for all-female cast. Approximate running time: 55 minutes. Code: AD6.

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Alice in Wonderland (Miller)



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(ALICE IN WONDERLAND)

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ALICE IN WONDERLAND

Adapted from Lewis Carroll by Madge Miller.

CAST (In Order of Appearance)

ALICE

MARGARET, Her Sister

THE WHITE RABBIT

THE CHESHIRE CAT

THE DUCHESS

THE KNAVE OF HEARTS

THE KING OF HEARTS

THE MAD HATTER

THE MARCH HARE

THE DORMOUSE

THE QUEEN OF HEARTS

THE GRYPHON

THE MOCK TURTLE

TIME: The Present

PLACE: In the Park

In Wonderland:

Scene One—The White Rabbit's House

Scene Two—The Palace Kitchen

Scene Three—The Forest

Intermission

Scene Four—The Croquet Field

Scene Five—The Seashore

Scene Six—The Court Room

In the Park

The premiere production of this play was given by the Pittsburgh Children's Theatre, under the direction of Miss Grace Price.

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Alice In Wonderland

PROLOGUE

(Alice, facing downstage, is sitting back to back with her older sister, Margaret on a small, grassy bank extreme left. Margaret is reading a book; Alice is idly brushing leaves and bits of grass from her skirt. There is a picnic basket on the grass beside them. Music, gentle and rustic, is heard faintly in the background.)

(Alice sighs, absent-mindedly takes a small cookie from the basket and eats it, while staring off into space. Then she yawns, looks about restlessly, and speaks.)

ALICE *(softly)*: Margaret. *(more loudly)* Margaret!

MARGARET: Yes, dear?

ALICE: Play a game with me.

MARGARET: Not just now, Alice. I'm reading.

ALICE: Then read to me!

MARGARET: You wouldn't like this book, I shouldn't think.

ALICE *(who is looking over her sister's shoulder)*: It hasn't any pictures!

What's the use of a book without pictures or conversation?

MARGARET: Hush, darling. I want to finish.

ALICE *(turning about again, waiting a moment)*: Margaret!

MARGARET: Yes?

ALICE *(earnestly, elbows on knees)*: I'm hungry!

MARGARET: Look in the picnic basket. There are sugar tarts.

ALICE *(looking eagerly, then crestfallen)*: I don't see any!

MARGARET *(patiently)*: Look again. I know we didn't eat them all.

ALICE: There isn't a one. *(becoming excited)* Someone must have taken them!

MARGARET *(affectionately)*: Don't be a goose. You've been nibbling at them ever since tea.

ALICE: I have? *(making a game of it; sternly)*: Now then, Alice, tell

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the truth. Did you steal the tarts? (*meeekly*) Oh no, sir, I don't think so. If I did, then why am I hungry? (*sternly*) Then was it Dinah? (*meeekly*) Dinah, my own dear cat? (*yawning*) But she's at home, sir! (*sternly*) Your sister Margaret? (*meeekly and sleepily*) No, sir . . . she's busy reading. I don't know . . . *who stole . . . those tarts . . . "and took them quite away" . . .* (*Her head droops against her sister's shoulder. The lights dim; the music changes to a quaint, brisk tempo and comes up loudly for a moment. The lights brighten as the White Rabbit hurries on L. At the sound of his voice, Alice raises her head abruptly, wide awake.*)

RABBIT: Oh, dear! Oh, dear! I shall be too late! (*As Alice watches in growing amazement, the Rabbit stops C, fumbles in his waistcoat pocket, draws out a watch, gazes at it, and gives a little jump of horror*). The hour—oh, so late, so late! My ears and whiskers! Won't the Duchess be savage! (*A small section of hedge slides in extreme R. The Rabbit approaches it, stoops, draws aside the bushes, and pops out of sight. Alice, meanwhile, has risen and drawn C. The bank on which Margaret sits moves off L.*)

ALICE: A rabbit . . . but a rabbit as tall as I . . . and it spoke . . . and took a watch out of its pocket! (*running R*) Oh, I must follow it! (*approaches the hedge*) But where . . . under the hedge . . . why, there's a rabbit-hole here! Should I pop down it too? (*looking back L hesitantly*) Yes, I think I will! (*As she drops to her knees and creeps through the hedge, the curtains close slowly. The White Rabbit comes on L in front of the curtain and proceeds across the stage abreast of it while it closes.*)

RABBIT (*as he crosses without a pause*): Oh, the Duchess, the Duchess! Oh, won't she be savage if I've kept her waiting! (*He draws out his watch again, holds it to his ear, shakes it, then replaces it as he hurries along. A pair of white gloves fall from his pocket unnoticed.*) How late, how very late it is! (*with a little hop of horror*) And the Queen—the Croquet Game! Oh, my ears and whiskers! (*Just as he exits R, the curtains part to reveal Alice sitting on the floor, gazing up at the rabbit hole through which she fell. The stage is bare except for a section of wall upstage with a covered plate on it.*)

MADGE MILLER
PART ONE

(Just as Alice rises and begins to brush off her skirt, the White Rabbit scurries on R, looking about anxiously. He barely glances at Alice even when he does notice her.)

WHITE RABBIT: My gloves! Oh, dear me, my best gloves! Where could I have dropped them? *(giving a little jump of fright when he first sees Alice)* OH! Mary Ann! What are you doing here? Quick now, help me to find my gloves!

ALICE *(after looking behind her)*: Mary Ann . . . he can't mean me. Or am I someone else?

WHITE RABBIT *(who continues to search)*: Well, well . . . have you found them?

ALICE: What? The gloves? *(beginning to look)* Why, no, sir.

WHITE RABBIT: Then fetch another pair! Run! I must hurry to the Hatter's. *(starting off R as he talks)* He has promised me my new green silk . . . oh, such a handsome high hat, very high . . . *(stopping abruptly and whirling about)* Mary Ann! *(Alice, who has been looking after him, confused, leaps to attention.)* Remember now, those sugar tarts are for the Croquet Match. Don't touch a single one, mind you. Not so much as a crumb!

ALICE *(looking about hungrily)*: Sugar tarts?

WHITE RABBIT *(who has turned to go)*: Yes! *(Indicating the covered plate on the section of wall upstage)* The Queen's own sugar tarts!

ALICE *(surprised)*: She baked them?

WHITE RABBIT *(jumping convulsively)*: Eh? What? How did you know? Have you been listening at keyholes or down chimneys? *(as Alice shakes her head vigorously and is about to speak)*. Well, no matter. Yes, the Queen did bake these all herself. They're for the Great Croquet Match. And I'm going to take them there . . . The Queen's Page, that's who I am! . . . oh, quite an honor. Yes, indeed! But not a word to anyone. It's to be a surprise! Now, what was I . . . oh, my hat! *(waving wildly to Alice as he dashes off R)* And gloves, Mary Ann! Fetch them for me, there's a good girl! The Duchess—oh, my paws and whiskers! Mustn't keep the Duchess waiting! *(He exits R. Alice runs after him.)*

ALICE: But wait, please! Where — ? He's gone! *(coming back)* Mary Ann . . . I'm Alice! *(doubtfully)* At least, I think I am. Dear me! How queer everything is today. I wonder if I've changed during the night. Let me think: was I the same when I got up this morning? I almost think I can remember feeling a *little* different. But if I'm not Alice any longer, who in the world am I? I'm sure I'm not Ada, *(pulling a strand of her hair forward to examine)* for her hair goes in such long ringlets, and mine doesn't go in ringlets at all. And I'm sure I can't be Mabel, for I know all sorts of things, and she . . . oh, she

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knows such a very little! Besides, she's she, and I'm I, and—oh, dear, how puzzling it all is! I'll try if I know all the things I used to know. Let me see: four times five is twelve, and four times six is thirteen, and four times seven is—oh, I shall never get to twenty at that rate! Let's try geography: London is the capital of Paris, and Paris is the capital of Rome, (*clutching her hair in desperation*) and . . . and Rome is . . . no, that's all wrong, I'm certain. I must be Mabel, after all! Or Mary Ann, and have to be servant to a rabbit! "Fetch my gloves—don't touch the sugar tarts!" (*going up to the plate*) But surely I can look. (*lifting the lid*) Ummm . . . beautiful! (*as she replaces the lid*) They're in the shape of hearts. And baked by a Queen! The Queen of what, I wonder? I should love to have one. (*with sudden inspiration*) Perhaps if I found his gloves, the White Rabbit would let me! (*searching*) Now, where could they—here! (*As she comes downstage L to retrieve the gloves, a pair of gloved hands appear over the wall, circling and swooping in a sinister way. One lifts the lid, the other removes the sugar tarts. The lid is replaced; the hands, with a final wave, vanish. Alice talks throughout, unaware of what is happening.*) Oh, poor things, they're very dusty! (*following her own instructions.*) If I brush and spank them, they may look a little better. Yes! Now perhaps he won't be late to meet the Duchess. Wouldn't I like just a glimpse of her! But only that, if she's dreadfully savage. And the Queen! I've never met a Queen or King. Perhaps they'd let me play in the Croquet Match (*looking in her dress pocket*). Have I money for a ticket? (*The White Rabbit enters R, wearing an emerald-green high silk hat. He goes directly to Alice and extends a paw imperiously.*)

WHITE RABBIT: Mary Ann! My gloves. Quickly! Do you have them?

ALICE: Oh, the gloves . . . (*extending them*) Here they are, sir.

WHITE RABBIT: Can't keep the Duchess waiting another—(*looking at her directly as he takes the gloves, then leaping quickly away*) Oh! Oh, good gracious! Who are you?

ALICE: I hardly know, sir, just at present.

WHITE RABBIT (*nervously, backing away*): What do you mean by that? Oughn't you to explain yourself?

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

WHITE RABBIT (*edging toward the door*): Dear me, no, I don't see!

ALICE: I'm afraid I can't put it more clearly, for I can't understand it myself to begin with!

WHITE RABBIT: You can't?

ALICE: Could you understand being one person one place the first minute, and someone else some place else the next? Just what country is this?

WHITE RABBIT: Why, Wonderland, to be sure!

ALICE: And the Queen—

WHITE RABBIT: Is the Queen of Hearts, of course. The Queen! Oh,

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my ear-tips! The Croquet Match! The Duchess will be waiting for me at the Refreshment Booth! I must fly!

ALICE: But the sugar tarts! Oughn't you to take them with you?

WHITE RABBIT: My paws and whiskers! I'd forgotten! (*going to the wall*) Of course, of course! The Queen's sugar tarts! (*lifting the lid*) I'll just make sure—EEK! Gone! Vanished! What shall I do? She'll have me executed as sure as ferrets are ferrets!

ALICE: Gone! But they couldn't be! I've been here all the time!

WHITE RABBIT (*stopping his mad dashing about*): A-HA! Yes, you were here, weren't you? (*making a dart at her and seizing her arm*) And you took them, didn't you? Now, don't deny it! They were here, and so were you, and now they're gone! Yes, Miss Whatever-Your-Name-Is . . .

ALICE: Alice. But I—

WHITE RABBIT: Alice, I arrest you in the name of the Queen of Hearts. Now, come along with me.

ALICE: But I didn't take them, I tell you! And I do see now how someone else might have. (*going up to the wall*) You see, he or she could crouch behind the wall . . .

WHITE RABBIT (*as she goes behind the wall to demonstrate*): What? Trying to escape? Oh, no, you don't! Come out at once! (*as Alice's hand comes up over the wall*). Eek!

ALICE (*coming out*): While I was picking up your gloves and brushing them, the thief must have stolen the tarts!

WHITE RABBIT: You're quite certain, are you, that it wasn't you?

ALICE (*firmly*): Positive.

WHITE RABBIT (*ringing his paws*): Then what am I to do? The tarts are gone! The Duchess is waiting! And the Queen will surely have my head when she opens that dish! Oh, dear, oh, dear!

ALICE (*thinking hard*): When she opens the dish. But when will that be?

WHITE RABBIT (*opening his eyes very wide*): Why, when the Croquet Match is over! Then the Duchess and I are to serve the refreshments. But the game begins in one half-hour!

ALICE: That isn't much time, to be sure. But I'll do my best. You must go to meet the Duchess. (*handing him the empty dish*): Here!

WHITE RABBIT (*confused*): But—but, Alice . . . if the dish is empty . . . I don't understand . . .

ALICE: No one will know till the dish is opened! And by that time, I may find the thief!

WHITE RABBIT: But the Duchess—

ALICE: Tell her that no one must open up the dish except the Queen. Say that it's a surprise!

WHITE RABBIT (*moaning*): A surprise indeed!

ALICE: Now go along. And don't be nervous, or they'll notice.

WHITE RABBIT: Don't be nervous! When I'll very likely lose my head . . . before this day is over?

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ALICE: Oh, surely not. It's only a dish of sugar tarts.

WHITE RABBIT: But baked by the Queen's own hands! Brrr! You don't know the Queen! (*drawing out his watch and giving a bound when he looks at it*) How late—oh, how late—the Duchess—the Queen—my nose and ear-tips! (*The White Rabbit scurries off R, moaning and shaking his head. Alice suddenly thinks of something and starts after him. The section of outer wall slides silently off.*)

ALICE: Oh, wait! Who knew about—(*stopping*). No, he mustn't be any later. I'll just find out for myself who knew the tarts were baked this morning. Let me see: if there's a Queen of Hearts, there must be a palace. And the palace would have a kitchen, surely. Then that must be where she baked them, of course! If I could find the kitchen, and speak with a servant . . . (*As she is speaking, a section of corridor wall with a door in it slides onstage behind her. There begins to be a faint banging of pots and pans.*) But which way should I go? I can't see anything in either direction. Listen! That's the sound of—(*turning and discovering the set*) Oh, good gracious, where did this hallway come from? (*looking off*): Why, I must be in the palace now! There are guards in some kind of uniform. (*looking off the other side*) And benches . . . and a marble staircase . . . (*There is a sudden loud clatter from behind the door.*) And that is the banging of pots and pans! This door must lead to the kitchen. (*becoming timid*) Well, then, Alice, knock! (*She knocks timidly, then harder, but nothing happens.*) I know someone's inside. Why don't they answer? (*The large head of a cat suddenly slides from behind a picture on the wall, and hangs there, watching her.*)

CHESHIRE CAT: Answer?

ALICE (*badly frightened, and retreating*): Ohhhh! Answer the door . . .

CHESHIRE CAT: What's it been asking?

ALICE (*faintly*): I don't know what you mean.

CAT: I speak English, don't I? What did it ask you?

ALICE (*growing braver and drawing near again*): Nothing. I've been knocking at it.

CAT: Shouldn't do that. Angers it. (*The door suddenly flies open, and pots, pans, and loud noises issue; the door flies shut.*) You see? Let it alone, and it'll let you alone. (*Alice, who is staring at the door, does not notice that the Cat slides out of sight.*)

ALICE: My goodness! But there is someone inside, then . . . more than one, I think, and I must ask them who knew about the—(*looking for the Cat*) Why, it's gone! What am I to do? There's no one else about. I must think of the poor White Rabbit, and knock again! (*She knocks briskly. The Cheshire Cat re-appears, either from behind the picture, or—preferably—on the other side of the stage, from behind a potted palm or piece of drapery. As always, only his grinning head shows.*)

CAT: There's no sort of use in knocking. They're making such a noise inside, no one could possibly hear you.

ALICE (*recovering from her start*): Please, then, how am I to get in?

CAT: Are you to get in at all? That's the first question.

ALICE (*a bit impatiently*): You're not a bit helpful! And must you always grin—(*The door flies open once more, objects are hurled out, the clatter and considerable sneezing continue from within. Alice bravely rushes toward the door, but it closes almost in her face. She is overcome with a fit of sneezing.*)

DUCHESS (*from behind the door*): Pepper! More pepper for the pitcher!

CAT: That's the Duchess!

ALICE: Kerchoo! *More pepper . . . there's much too much already! Kerchoo! (The Cat vanishes again)* But I must go in, regardless. Perhaps the best thing—it's gone again! Well, good riddance. Since I know the door's not locked, I could walk right in . . . (*picking up the objects thrown out the door*) . . . and return these in the bargain. (*While she is running about, gathering the articles, the corridor wall slides off, revealing behind it the palace kitchen. The only essentials are a table, littered with kitchen equipment including a large pitcher and a car labeled clearly PEPPER, and a chair L of it. There should be a painted cut-out of a cupboard, or a window with curtains, from behind which the Cat's head may appear. The Duchess is at work behind the table, stirring the contents of the pitcher and occasionally flinging something else into it. The Knave of Hearts sits beside the table, holding a baby in his left arm and rocking it negligently, and with his right hand reaching out frequently to try to snatch a tidbit from the table.*)

DUCHESS (*staring at Alice as she approaches timidly*): Name?

ALICE (*attempting a curtsey*): Alice, Your — Your —

DUCHESS: Alice—Knave, Knave — Alice!

KNAVE (*carelessly, snatching several tidbits*): Have a peppermint? (*The Duchess strikes at his hand with the ladle. Alice nevertheless manages to return the articles she carries to the table.*)

ALICE: How do you do? (*accepting the peppermint*) Thank you. (*The Cat's head slowly appears from behind the window curtain, or out of the cupboard. The Duchess, without even looking around, indicates it with a wave of her hand in her next introduction.*)

DUCHESS: Alice—Cat, Cat—Alice. You are thinking of a question?

ALICE (*startled*): Why, yes! Please, would you tell me why your cat grins like that?

DUCHESS: It's a Cheshire Cat, and that's why. (*snatching the baby from the Knave, shaking it, and tossing it back*) Pig!

ALICE (*recovering her composure*): I didn't know that cats could grin.

DUCHESS: They all can, and most of 'em do.

ALICE (*pleased at being in a conversation*): I don't know of any that do!

DUCHESS: You don't know much, and that's a fact. (*The Knave and the Duchess both laugh heartily, and the Duchess shakes the pepper*

can vigorously over the pitcher, bringing forth a round of sneezes.)

ALICE (*when she has her breath again*): May I ask what it is you're making?

DUCHESS (*grandly*): Yes.

KNAVE (*snickering, as Alice waits for the explanation*): Ask, then. You have her permission.

ALICE: Oh. What is that in the pitcher?

DUCHESS: Pepperade.

ALICE (*puzzled*): Pepperade?

DUCHESS (*scornfully*): You've heard of lemonade, I suppose?

ALICE: Of course!

DUCHESS: Then if you don't know what pepperade is, you *are* a dunce!
(She and the Knave laugh again. He attempts to steal another tidbit, but she whacks his hand while shaking more pepper in the pitcher. Another session of sneezing results.)

ALICE (*through sneezes, somewhat huffily*): It's for the croquet match, isn't it? Kerchoo! I do know *that*!

DUCHESS (*genially*): Just so, just so! The White Rabbit is to fetch the sugar tarts, and I the pepperade. Kerchoo!

ALICE (*with a worried frown*): Oh, yes . . . the sugar tarts.

KNAVE: What do *you* know about them?

ALICE (*hesitating, then deciding that she can trust them*): I know that they've been stolen!

DUCHESS: Stolen!

KNAVE: *Stolen!*

CAT: STOLEN?

ALICE: Yes, just now. I must find the thief before the Queen discovers that they're missing?

DUCHESS (*holding her head*): Oh, what a temper she'll be in! What a dreadful temper!

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- KNAVE (*mischievously, to the Duchess*): And you quarreled with her this morning, didn't you? (*indicating a knife along his throat*) O-ho!
- CAT: It's very likely the White Rabbit who will lose his head. The sugar tarts were in his keeping!
- ALICE: Oh, no, he won't. I mean to find the thief first! Now then, tell me: who was here this morning while the Queen was baking them? If they were to be a surprise, not many people could have known about them, could they? (*pointing to the Duchess, who jumps back in alarm*) You did, though!
- KNAVE (*slyly*): They quarreled because the Queen wouldn't use as much pepper in them as the Duchess wanted!
- DUCHESS (*hastily*): But I didn't touch them! Why, how could I, with the pepperaide to be prepared! I've worked for hours!
- ALICE (*to the Knave*): And if you heard them quarrel, you were here and knew about the sugar tarts!
- KNAVE (*raising his eyebrows and shrugging*): Or course! (*indicating the Cat*) And so was he!
- CAT: And then at ten the Hatter came.
- DUCHESS: That's right—to borrow sugar for his tea. Bah! Sugar! Pepper's better.
- KNAVE (*stealing a lump from the table and popping it into his mouth*): Sugar!
- DUCHESS (*rapping him over the head with the pepper can*): Pepper!
- ALICE: Stop! Kerchoo! Please stop! This won't help the Rabbit. Who is the Hatter you speak of, and where can I find him?
- CAT: He's the Mad Hatter who lives in the forest.
- KNAVE (*to Duchess*): And your friend the Gryphon stopped by too.
- DUCHESS (*beaming*): Dear thing! He wanted pepper for the turtle soup.
- ALICE (*alarmed*): A Gryphon? What's that?
- KNAVE: You've never seen a Gryphon? Well, it's rather like a lizard . . .
- DUCHESS: And rather like a dragon . . .
- CAT: And like an eagle too!
- ALICE (*unhappily*): Oh, dear! A Hatter who's mad, and a creature called a Gryphon! Yet if one of them's the thief, I must try to find it out. There's so little time.
- DUCHESS (*grandly*): Time? Is that all you want? (*handing Alice a small clock from among the jumble on the table*) I make you a present of all the time there is! Here—take twelve hours, or twenty-four.
- ALICE (*exasperated*): But that won't help matters! Even if I *did* turn the clock back, it would—(*The clock strikes three and she almost drops it.*) Oh! (*She drops it on the table.*) Good gracious!
- DUCHESS: Ah! Time for the baby's nap! Come, baby, come! (*She snatches the baby from the Knave, who has been holding it upside down for some time, and begins to toss it up into the air, catching it as it comes down. The alarm rings on, unheeded.*)

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ALICE (*becoming more and more alarmed*): Oh! Oh, please mind what you're doing! You might drop him!

DUCHESS (*stopping to peer into the baby's face*): What? Not asleep yet? Then I'll sing to you!

KNAVE (*covering his ears*): Oh, no!

DUCHESS (*singing*):

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

(*Chorus: joined by Knaves and Cats*)

Wow! Wow! Wow!
Wow! Wow! Wow!

I speak severely to my boy,
I beat him when he sneezes,
For he can thoroughly enjoy

(*taking the pepper can and shaking it*)
The pepper when he pleases!

(*Chorus: joined by Knaves and Cats*)

Wow! Kerchoo! Wow!
Wow! Kerchoo! Wow!

(*Everyone breaks into a fit of sneezing, including Alice. Just then the King of Hearts, a gentle, absentminded soul, patters on R and into the cloud of pepper before he realizes it.*)

DUCHESS (*to Alice*): Here! You may nurse it a bit if you like! (*But she throws it past Alice and into the bewildered King's arms.*)

KING (*who had been about to speak*): I—I—I—KERCHOO!

DUCHESS (*apologetic*): Your Majesty!

KNAVE (*with an exaggeratedly low bow*): Your Majesty!

CAT (*sinking from sight*): His Majesty!

ALICE (*to the King, who is staring at the baby in horror*): I'll just take him from you, if it please Your Majesty.

KING (*as Alice takes the baby*): It does, it does indeed! (*peering at her nearsightedly*) Dear me, now who is this?

DUCHESS: Her name is Alice.

KNAVE (*impudently*): So she says!

ALICE (*indignantly*): It is! (*doubtfully*) I think . . .

KING (*in admiration*): She thinks. How grand! Do you suppose that you could teach *me* how one day?

ALICE (*embarrassed*): Oh, no, Your Majesty! I mean, I'm quite sure that you can already.

KING (*patting her kindly on the head*): What a nice child it is! The Queen must meet you. (*opening his eyes very wide*) I know! Do you play croquet?