THE HUNTING OF THE SNARK
Acknowledgement is made to Messrs. Macmillan & Co. for their courteous permission to use the poems in this book.
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'Just the place for a Snark!' the Bellman cried,
As he landed his crew with care;
Supporting each man on the top of the tide
By a finger entwined in his hair.

'Just the place for a Snark! I have said it twice:
That alone should encourage the crew.
Just the place for a Snark! I have said it thrice:
What I tell you three times is true.'

The crew was complete: it included a Boots—
A maker of Bonnets and Hoods—
A Barrister, brought to arrange their disputes—
And a Broker, to value their goods.

A Billiard-marker, whose skill was immense,
Might perhaps have won more than his share—
But a Banker, engaged at enormous expense,
Had the whole of their cash in his care.

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There was also a Beaver, that paced on the deck,
    Or would sit making lace in the bow:
And had often (the Bellman said) saved them from wreck,
    Though none of the sailors knew how.

There was one who was famed for the number of things
    He forgot when he entered the ship:
His umbrella, his watch, all his jewels and rings,
    And the clothes he had bought for the trip.

He had forty-two boxes, all carefully packed,
    With his name painted clearly on each:
But, since he omitted to mention the fact,
    They were all left behind on the beach.

The loss of his clothes hardly mattered, because
    He had seven coats on when he came,
With three pair of boots—but the worst of it was,
    He had wholly forgotten his name.

He would answer to 'Hi!' or to any loud cry,
    Such as 'Fry me!' or 'Fritter my wig!'
To 'What-you-may-call-um!' or 'What-was-his-name!'
    But especially 'Thing-um-a-jig!'
The Hunting of the Snark

While, for those who preferred a more forcible word,
He had different names from these:
His intimate friends called him ‘Candle-ends,’
And his enemies ‘Toasted-cheese.’

‘His form is ungainly—his intellect small—’
(So the Bellman would often remark)
‘But his courage is perfect! And that, after all,
Is the thing that one needs with a Snark.’

He would joke with hyænas, returning their stare
With an impudent wag of the head:
And he once went a walk, paw-in-paw, with a bear,
‘Just to keep up its spirits,’ he said.

He came as a Baker: but owned when too late—
And it drove the poor Bellman half-mad—
He could only bake Bridecake—for which, I may state,
No materials were to be had.

The last of the crew needs especial remark,
Though he looked an incredible dunce:
He had just one idea—but, that one being ‘Snark,’
The good Bellman engaged him at once.

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The Hunting of the Snark

He came as a Butcher: but gravely declared,
   When the ship had been sailing a week,
He could only kill Beavers. The Bellman looked scared,
   And was almost too frightened to speak:

But at length he explained, in a tremulous tone,
   There was only one Beaver on board;
And that was a tame one he had of his own,
   Whose death would be deeply deplored.

The Beaver, who happened to hear the remark,
   Protested, with tears in its eyes,
That not even the rapture of hunting the Snark
   Could atone for that dismal surprise!

It strongly advised that the Butcher should be
   Conveyed in a separate ship:
But the Bellman declared that would never agree
   With the plans he had made for the trip:

Navigation was always a difficult art,
   Though with only one ship and one bell:
And he feared he must really decline, for his part,
   Undertaking another as well.

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The Beaver's best course was, no doubt, to procure
A second-hand dagger-proof coat—
So the Baker advised it—and next, to insure
Its life in some Office of note:

This the Banker suggested, and offered for hire
(On moderate terms), or for sale,
Two excellent Policies, one Against Fire,
And one Against Damage From Hail.

Yet still, ever after that sorrowful day,
Whenever the Butcher was by,
The Beaver kept looking the opposite way,
And appeared unaccountably shy.

FIT THE SECOND

THE BELLMAN'S SPEECH

The Bellman himself they all praised to the skies—
Such a carriage, such ease and such grace!
Such solemnity, too! One could see he was wise,
The moment one looked in his face!

He had bought a large map representing the sea,
Without the least vestige of land:
And the crew were much pleased when they found
it to be
A map they could all understand.
'What's the good of Mercator's North Poles and Equators,
Tropics, Zones, and Meridian Lines?'
So the Bellman would cry: and the crew would reply,
'They are merely conventional signs!

'Other maps are such shapes, with their islands and capes!
But we've got our brave Captain to thank'
(So the crew would protest) 'that he's bought us the best—
A perfect and absolute blank!'

This was charming, no doubt: but they shortly found out
That the Captain they trusted so well
Had only one notion for crossing the ocean,
And that was to tingle his bell.

He was thoughtful and grave—but the orders he gave
Were enough to bewilder a crew.
When he cried, 'Steer to starboard, but keep her head larboard!'
What on earth was the helmsman to do?
The Hunting of the Snark

Then the bowsprit got mixed with the rudder sometimes:
   A thing, as the Bellman remarked,
That frequently happens in tropical climes,
   When a vessel is, so to speak, ‘snarked.’

But the principal failing occurred in the sailing,
   And the Bellman, perplexed and distressed,
Said he had hoped, at least, when the wind blew due East
   That the ship would not travel due West!

But the danger was past—they had landed at last,
   With their boxes, portmanteaux, and bags:
Yet at first sight the crew were not pleased with the view,
   Which consisted of chasms and crags.

The Bellman perceived that their spirits were low,
   And repeated in musical tone
Some jokes he had kept for a season of woe—
   But the crew would do nothing but groan.

He served out some grog with a liberal hand,
   And bade them sit down on the beach:
And they could not but own that their Captain looked grand,
   As he stood and delivered his speech.
The Hunting of the Snark

‘Friends, Romans, and countrymen, lend me your ears!’

(They were all of them fond of quotations:
So they drank to his health, and they gave him three cheers,
While he served out additional rations.)

‘We have sailed many months, we have sailed many weeks
(Four weeks to the month you may mark),
But never as yet (‘tis your Captain who speaks)
Have we caught the least glimpse of a Snark!

‘We have sailed many weeks, we have sailed many days
(Seven days to the week I allow),
But a Snark, on the which we might lovingly gaze,
We have never beheld till now!

‘Come, listen, my men, while I tell you again
The five unmistakable marks
By which you may know, wheresoever you go,
The warranted genuine Snarks.

‘Let us take them in order. The first is the taste,
Which is meagre and hollow, but crisp:
Like a coat that is rather too tight in the waist,
With a flavour of Will-o’-the-wisp.

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The Hunting of the Snark

Its habit of getting up late you'll agree
That it carries too far, when I say
That it frequently breakfasts at five-o'clock tea,
And dines on the following day.

The third is its slowness in taking a jest,
Should you happen to venture on one,
It will sigh like a thing that is deeply distressed:
And it always looks grave at a pun.

The fourth is its fondness for bathing-machines,
Which it constantly carries about,
And believes that they add to the beauty of scenes—
A sentiment open to doubt.

The fifth is ambition. It next will be right
To describe each particular batch:
Distinguishing those that have feathers, and bite,
From those that have whiskers, and scratch.

For, although common Snarks do no manner of harm,
Yet, I feel it my duty to say,
Some are Boojums—' The Bellman broke off in alarm,
For the Baker had fainted away.
The Hunting of the Snark

FIT THE THIRD

THE BAKER'S TALE

They roused him with muffins—they roused him with ice—
They roused him with mustard and cress—
They roused him with jam and judicious advice—
They set him conundrums to guess.

When at length he sat up and was able to speak,
His sad story he offered to tell;
And the Bellman cried, 'Silence! not even a shriek!'
And excitedly tingled his bell.

There was silence supreme! Not a shriek, not a scream,
Scarcely even a howl or a groan,
As the man they called 'Ho!' told his story of woe
In an antediluvian tone.

'My father and mother were honest, though poor——'
'Skip all that!' cried the Bellman in haste.
'If it once becomes dark, there's no chance of a Snark—
We have hardly a minute to waste!'

'I skip forty years,' said the Baker, in tears,
'And proceed without further remark
To the day when you took me aboard of your ship
To help you in hunting the Snark.

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'A dear uncle of mine (after whom I was named)
Remarked, when I bade him farewell—'
'Oh, skip your dear uncle!' the Bellman exclaimed,
As he angrily tingled his bell.

'He remarked to me then,' said that mildest of men,
"If your Snark be a Snark, that is right:
Fetch it home by all means—you may serve it with greens,
And it's handy for striking a light.

"You may seek it with thimbles—and seek it with care;
You may hunt it with forks and hope;
You may threaten its life with a railway-share;
You may charm it with smiles and soap—"

(That's exactly the method,' the Bellman bold
In a hasty parenthesis cried,
That's exactly the way I have always been told
That the capture of Snarks should be tried!)

"But oh, beamish nephew, beware of the day,
If your Snark be a Boojum! For then
You will softly and suddenly vanish away,
And never be met with again!"
The Hunting of the Snark

'It is this, it is this that oppresses my soul,
When I think of my uncle’s last words:
And my heart is like nothing so much as a bowl
Brimming over with quivering curds!

'It is this, it is this——' 'We have had that before!' The Bellman indignantly said.
And the Baker replied, 'Let me say it once more.
It is this, it is this that I dread!

'I engage with the Snark——every night after dark—
In a dreamy delirious fight:
I serve it with greens in those shadowy scenes,
And I use it for striking a light;

'But if ever I meet with a Boojum, that day,
In a moment (of this I am sure),
I shall softly and suddenly vanish away—
And the notion I cannot endure!'

FIT THE FOURTH

THE HUNTING

The Bellman looked uffish, and wrinkled his brow.
'If only you’d spoken before!
It’s excessively awkward to mention it now,
With the Snark, so to speak, at the door!
The Hunting of the Snark

'We should all of us grieve, as you well may believe,
If you never were met with again—
But surely, my man, when the voyage began,
You might have suggested it then?

'It's excessively awkward to mention it now—
As I think I've already remarked.'
And the man they called 'Hi!' replied, with a sigh,
'I informed you the day we embarked.

'You may charge me with murder—or want of sense—
(We are all of us weak at times):
But the slightest approach to a false pretence
Was never among my crimes!

'I said it in Hebrew—I said it in Dutch—
I said it in German and Greek;
But I wholly forgot (and it vexes me much)
That English is what you speak!'

'Tis a pitiful tale,' said the Bellman, whose face
Had grown longer at every word;
'But, now that you've stated the whole of your case,
More debate would be simply absurd.
The Hunting of the Snark

‘The rest of my speech’ (he explained to his men)
‘You shall hear when I’ve leisure to speak it.
But the Snark is at hand, let me tell you again!
’Tis your glorious duty to seek it!

‘To seek it with thimbles, to seek it with care;
To pursue it with forks and hope;
To threaten its life with a railway-share;
To charm it with smiles and soap!

‘For the Snark’s a peculiar creature, that won’t
Be caught in a commonplace way.
Do all that you know, and try all that you don’t:
Not a chance must be wasted to-day!

‘For England expects—I forbear to proceed:
’Tis a maxim tremendous, but trite:
And you’d best be unpacking the things that you
need
To rig yourselves out for the fight.’

Then the Banker endorsed a blank cheque (which he
crossed),
And changed his loose silver for notes.
The Baker with care combed his whiskers and hair,
And shook the dust out of his coats.
The Hunting of the Snark

The Boots and the Broker were sharpening a spade—
Each working the grindstone in turn;
But the Beaver went on making lace, and displayed
No interest in the concern:

Though the Barrister tried to appeal to its pride,
And vainly proceeded to cite
A number of cases, in which making laces
Had been proved an infringement of right.

The maker of Bonnets ferociously planned
A novel arrangement of bows:
While the Billiard-marker with quivering hand
Was chalking the tip of his nose.

But the Butcher turned nervous, and dressed himself fine,
With yellow kid gloves and a ruff—
Said he felt it exactly like going to dine,
Which the Bellman declared was all 'stuff.'

'Introduce me, now there's a good fellow,' he said,
'If we happen to meet it together!'
And the Bellman, sagaciously nodding his head,
Said, 'That must depend on the weather.'
The Hunting of the Snark

The Beaver went simply galumphing about,
At seeing the Butcher so shy:
And even the Baker, though stupid and stout,
Made an effort to wink with one eye.

'Be a man!' said the Bellman in wrath, as he heard
The Butcher beginning to sob.
'Should we meet with a Jubjub, that desperate bird,
We shall need all our strength for the job!'

FIT THE FIFTH

THE BEAVER'S LESSON

They sought it with thimbles, they sought it with care;
They pursued it with forks and hope;
They threatened its life with a railway-share;
They charmed it with smiles and soap.

Then the Butcher contrived an ingenious plan
For making a separate sally;
And had fixed on a spot unfrequented by man,
A dismal and desolate valley.

But the very same plan to the Beaver occurred:
It had chosen the very same place;
Yet neither betrayed, by a sign or a word,
The disgust that appeared in his face.
The Hunting of the Snark

Each thought he was thinking of nothing but 'Snark'
And the glorious work of the day;
And each tried to pretend that he did not remark
That the other was going that way.

But the valley grew narrow and narrower still,
And the evening got darker and colder,
Till (merely from nervousness, not from goodwill)
They marched along shoulder to shoulder

Then a scream, shrill and high, rent the shuddering sky,
And they knew that some danger was near:
The Beaver turned pale to the tip of its tail,
And even the Butcher felt queer.

He thought of his childhood, left far far behind—
That blissful and innocent state—
The sound so exactly recalled to his mind
A pencil that squeaks on a slate!

'Tis the voice of the Jubjub!' he suddenly cried.
(This man, that they used to call 'Dunce'.)
'As the Bellman would tell you,' he added with pride,
'I have uttered that sentiment once.
The Hunting of the Snark

‘Tis the note of the Jubjub! Keep count, I entreat;
You will find I have told it you twice.
‘Tis the song of the Jubjub! The proof is complete,
If only I’ve stated it thrice.

The Beaver had counted with scrupulous care,
Attending to every word:
But it fairly lost heart, and outgrabe in despair,
When the third repetition occurred.

It felt that, in spite of all possible pains,
It had somehow contrived to lose count,
And the only thing now was to rack its poor brains
By reckoning up the amount.

‘Two added to one—if that could but be done,’
It said, ‘with one’s fingers and thumbs!’
Recollecting with tears how, in earlier years,
It had taken no pains with its sums.

‘The thing can be done,’ said the Butcher, ‘I think.
The thing must be done, I am sure.
The thing shall be done! Bring me paper and ink,
The best there is time to procure.’

The Beaver brought paper, portfolio, pens,
And ink in unfailing supplies:
While strange creepy creatures came out of their dens,
And watched them with wondering eyes.
The Hunting of the Snark

So engrossed was the Butcher, he heeded them not,
   As he wrote with a pen in each hand,
And explained all the while in a popular style
   Which the Beaver could well understand.

'Taking Three as the subject to reason about—
   A convenient number to state—
We add Seven, and Ten, and then multiply out
   By One Thousand diminished by Eight.

'The result we proceed to divide, as you see,
   By Nine Hundred and Ninety and Two:
Then subtract Seventeen, and the answer must be
   Exactly and perfectly true.

'The method employed I would gladly explain,
   While I have it so clear in my head,
If I had but the time and you had but the brain—
   But much yet remains to be said.

'In one moment I've seen what has hitherto been
   Enveloped in absolute mystery,
And without extra charge I will give you at large
   A Lesson in Natural History.'
The Hunting of the Snark

In his genial way he proceeded to say
(Forgetting all laws of propriety,
And that giving instruction, without introduction,
Would have caused quite a thrill in Society),

'As to temper the Jubjub's a desperate bird,
Since it lives in perpetual passion:
Its taste in costume is entirely absurd—
It is ages ahead of the fashion:

'But it knows any friend it has met once before:
It never will look at a bribe:
And in charity-meetings it stands at the door,
And collects—though it does not subscribe.

'Its flavour when cooked is more exquisite far
Than mutton, or oysters, or eggs:
(Some think it keeps best in an ivory jar,
And some, in mahogany kegs):

You boil it in sawdust: you salt it in glue:
You condense it with locusts and tape:
Still keeping one principal object in view—
To preserve its symmetrical shape.'

The Butcher would gladly have talked till next day,
But he felt that the Lesson must end,
And he wept with delight in attempting to say
He considered the Beaver his friend.

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While the Beaver confessed, with affectionate looks
More eloquent even than tears,
It had learnt in ten minutes far more than all books
Would have taught it in seventy years.

They returned hand-in-hand, and the Bellman, unmanned
(For a moment) with noble emotion,
Said, 'This amply repays all the wearisome days
We have spent on the billowy ocean!'

Such friends, as the Beaver and Butcher became,
Have seldom if ever been known;
In winter or summer, 'twas always the same—
You could never meet either alone.

And when quarrels arose—as one frequently finds
Quarrels will, spite of every endeavour—
The song of the Jubjub recurred to their minds,
And cemented their friendship for ever!

FIT THE SIXTH

THE BARRISTER'S DREAM

They sought it with thimbles, they sought it with care;
They pursued it with forks and hope;
They threatened its life with a railway-share;
They charmed it with smiles and soap.
The Hunting of the Snark

But the Barrister, weary of proving in vain
That the Beaver's lace-making was wrong,
Fell asleep, and in dreams saw the creature quite plain
That his fancy had dwelt on so long.

He dreamed that he stood in a shadowy Court,
Where the Snark, with a glass in its eye,
Dressed in gown, bands, and wig, was defending a pig
On the charge of deserting its sty.

The Witnesses proved, without error or flaw,
That the sty was deserted when found:
And the Judge kept explaining the state of the law
In a soft under-current of sound.

The indictment had never been clearly expressed,
And it seemed that the Snark had begun,
And had spoken three hours, before anyone guessed
What the pig was supposed to have done.

The Jury had each formed a different view
(Long before the indictment was read),
And they all spoke at once, so that none of them knew
One word that the others had said.

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‘You must know—’ said the Judge: but the Snark exclaimed, ‘Fudge!
That statute is obsolete quite!
Let me tell you, my friends, the whole question depends
On an ancient manorial right.

‘In the matter of Treason the pig would appear
To have aided, but scarcely abetted:
While the charge of Insolvency fails, it is clear,
If you grant the plea “never indebted.”

‘The fact of Desertion I will not dispute:
But its guilt, as I trust, is removed
(So far as relates to the costs of this suit)
By the Alibi which has been proved.

‘My poor client’s fate now depends on your votes.’
Here the speaker sat down in his place,
And directed the Judge to refer to his notes
And briefly to sum up the case.

But the Judge said he never had summed up before;
So the Snark undertook it instead,
And summed it so well that it came to far more
Than the Witnesses ever had said!

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When the verdict was called for, the Jury declined,
As the word was so puzzling to spell;
But they ventured to hope that the Snark wouldn't
Undertaking that duty as well.

So the Snark found the verdict, although as it owned,
It was spent with the toils of the day:
When it said the word, 'guilty!' the Jury all groaned,
And some of them fainted away.

Then the Snark pronounced sentence, the Judge being quite
Too nervous to utter a word:
When it rose to its feet, there was silence like night,
And the fall of a pin might be heard.

'Transportation for life' was the sentence it gave,
'And then to be fined forty pound.'
The Jury all cheered, though the Judge said he feared
That the phrase was not legally sound.

But their wild exultation was suddenly checked
When the jailer informed them, with tears,
Such a sentence would have not the slightest effect,
As the pig had been dead for some years.

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The Hunting of the Snark

The Judge left the Court, looking deeply disgusted:
But the Snark, though a little aghast,
As the lawyer to whom the defence was entrusted,
Went bellowing on to the last.

Thus the Barrister dreamed, while the bellowing seemed
To grow every moment more clear:
Till he woke to the knell of a furious bell,
Which the Bellman rang close at his ear.

FIT THE SEVENTH
THE BANKER’S FATE

They sought it with thimbles, they sought it with care;
They pursued it with forks and hope;
They threatened its life with a railway-share;
They charmed it with smiles and soap.

And the Banker, inspired with a courage so new
It was matter for general remark,
Rushed madly ahead and was lost to their view
In his zeal to discover the Snark.
The Hunting of the Snark

But while he was seeking with thimbles and care,
A Bandersnatch swiftly drew nigh
And grabbed at the Banker, who shrieked in despair,
For he knew it was useless to fly.

He offered large discount—he offered a cheque
(Drawn ‘to bearer’) for seven-pounds-ten:
But the Bandersnatch merely extended its neck
And grabbed at the Banker again.

Without rest or pause—while those frumious jaws
Went savagely snapping around—
He skipped and he hopped, and he floundered and flopped,
Till fainting he fell to the ground.

The Bandersnatch fled as the others appeared:
Led on by that fear-stricken yell:
And the Bellman remarked, ‘It is just as I feared!’
And solemnly tolled on his bell.

He was black in the face, and they scarcely could trace
The least likeness to what he had been:
While so great was his fright that his waistcoat turned white—
A wonderful thing to be seen!

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The Hunting of the Snark

To the horror of all who were present that day,
    He uprose in full evening dress,
And with senseless grimaces endeavoured to say
    What his tongue could no longer express.

Down he sank in a chair—ran his hands through his hair—
    And chanted in mimsiest tones
Words whose utter inanity proved his insanity,
    While he rattled a couple of bones.

'Leave him here to his fate—it is getting so late!'
    The Bellman exclaimed in a fright.
'Ve have lost half the day. Any further delay,
    And we shan't catch a Snark before night!'

FIT THE EIGHTH

THE VANISHING

They sought it with thimbles, they sought it with care;
    They pursued it with forks and hope;
They threatened its life with a railway-share;
    They charmed it with smiles and soap.
The Hunting of the Snark

They shuddered to think that the chase might fail,
   And the Beaver, excited at last,
Went bounding along on the tip of its tail,
   For the daylight was nearly past.

'There is Thingumbob shouting!' the Bellman said.
   'He is shouting like mad, only hark!
He is waving his hands, he is wagging his head,
   He has certainly found a Snark!'

They gazed in delight, while the Butcher exclaimed
   'He was always a desperate wag!'
They beheld him—their Baker—their hero unnamed—
   On the top of a neighbouring crag,

Erect and sublime, for one moment of time.
   In the next, that wild figure they saw
(As if stung by a spasm) plunge into a chasm,
   While they waited and listened in awe.

'It's a Snark!' was the sound that first came to their ears,
   And seemed almost too good to be true.
Then followed a torrent of laughter and cheers:
   Then the ominous words, 'It's a Boo——'
The Hunting of the Snark

Then, silence. Some fancied they heard in the air
A weary and wandering sigh
That sounded like ‘—jum!’ but the others declare
It was only a breeze that went by.

They hunted till darkness came on, but they found
Not a button, or feather, or mark,
By which they could tell that they stood on the ground
Where the Baker had met with the Snark.

In the midst of the word he was trying to say
In the midst of his laughter and glee,
He had softly and suddenly vanished away——
For the Snark was a Boojum, you see.
VERSES FROM
‘ALICE IN WONDERLAND’

ALICE TO HERSELF

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!

ALICE TO THE CATERPILLAR

You are old, Father William,’ the young man said,
‘And your hair has become very white;
And yet you incessantly stand on your head—
Do you think, at your age, it is right?’

‘In my youth,’ Father William replied to his son,
‘I feared it might injure the brain;
But, now that I’m perfectly sure I have none,
Why, I do it again and again.’
Verses from ‘Alice in Wonderland’

‘You are old,’ said the youth, ‘as I mentioned before,
And have grown most uncommonly fat;
Yet you turned a back-somersault in at the door—
Pray, what is the reason of that?'

‘In my youth,’ said the sage, as he shook his grey locks,
‘I kept all my limbs very supple
By the use of this ointment—one shilling the box—
Allow me to sell you a couple?’

‘You are old,’ said the youth, ‘and your jaws are too weak
For anything tougher than suet;
Yet you finished the goose, with the bones and the beak—
Pray, how did you manage to do it?’

‘In my youth,’ said his father, ‘I took to the law,
And argued each case with my wife;
And the muscular strength, which it gave to my jaw,
Has lasted the rest of my life.’
Verses from ‘Alice in Wonderland’

‘You are old,’ said the youth, ‘one would hardly suppose
That your eye was as steady as ever;
Yet you balanced an eel on the end of your nose—
What made you so awfully clever?’

‘I have answered three questions, and that is enough,’
Said his father; ‘don’t give yourself airs!
Do you think I can listen all day to such stuff?
Be off, or I’ll kick you down stairs!’

THE DUCHESS’S LULLABY

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

CHORUS
(In which the cook and the baby joined):
Wow! wow! wow!

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

CHORUS
Wow! wow! wow!

[41]
Verses from ‘Alice in Wonderland’

THE MAD HATTER’S SONG

Twinkle, twinkle, little bat!
How I wonder what you’re at!
Up above the world you fly,
Like a tea-tray in the sky.

Twinkle, twinkle—

THE MOCK TURTLE’S SONG

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.
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!’
Verses from 'Alice in Wonderland'

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 TO THE GRYPHON

'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.
Verses from ‘Alice in Wonderland’

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.

I passed by his garden, and marked, with one eye,
How the Owl and the Panther were sharing a pie:
The Panther took pie-crust, and gravy, and meat,
While the Owl had the dish as its share of the treat.
When the pie was all finished, the Owl, as a boon,
Was kindly permitted to pocket the spoon:
While the Panther received knife and fork with a growl,
And concluded the banquet by——

THE MOCK TURTLE’S SECOND SONG

BEAUTIFUL Soup, so rich and green,
Waiting in a hot tureen!
Who for such dainties would not stoop?
Soup of the evening, beautiful Soup!
Soup of the evening, beautiful Soup!
   Beau—ootiful Soo—oop!
   Beau—ootiful Soo—oop!
Soo—oop of the e—e—evening,
   Beautiful, beautiful Soup!

[ 44 ]
Verses from ‘Alice in Wonderland’

Beautiful Soup! Who cares for fish, Game, or any other dish? Who would not give all else for two pennyworth only of beautiful Soup? Pennyworth only of beautiful Soup?

Beau—ootiful Soo—oop!
Beau—ootiful Soo—oop!
Soo—oop of the e—e—evening,
Beautiful, beauti—FUL SOUP!

VERSES PRODUCED AT THE TRIAL OF THE KNAVE OF HEARTS

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.

He sent them word I had not gone, (We know it to be true): If she should push the matter on, What would become of you?

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.

[45]
Verses from ‘Alice in Wonderland’

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.

Don’t let him know she liked them best,
For this must ever be
A secret kept from all the rest,
Between yourself and me.
JABBERWOCKY

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe;
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe.

'Beware the Jabberwock, my son!
The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!
Beware the Jubjub bird, and shun
The frumious Bandersnatch!'

He took his vorpal sword in hand:
Long time the manxome foe he sought—
So rested he by the Tumtum tree,
And stood awhile in thought.

And as in uffish thought he stood,
The Jabberwock, with eyes of flame,
Came whiffling through the tulgey wood,
And burbled as it came!

One, two! One, two! And through and through
The vorpal blade went snicker-snack!
He left it dead, and with its head
He went galumphing back.
Verses from "Alice through the Looking-Glass"

'And hast thou slain the Jabberwock?
   Come to my arms, my beamish boy!
O frabjous day! Callooh! Callay!'
   He chortled in his joy.

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
   Did gyre and gimble in the wabe;
All mimsy were the borogoves,
   And the mome raths outgrabe.

THE WALRUS AND THE CARPENTER

The sun was shining on the sea,
   Shining with all his might:
He did his very best to make
   The billows smooth and bright—
And this was odd, because it was
   The middle of the night.

The moon was shining sulkily,
   Because she thought the sun
Had got no business to be there
   After the day was done—
'IT's very rude of him,' she said,
   'To come and spoil the fun!'
Verses from 'Alice through the Looking-Glass'

The sea was wet as wet could be,
    The sands were dry as dry.
You could not see a cloud, because
    No cloud was in the sky:
No birds were flying overhead—
    There were no birds to fly.

The Walrus and the Carpenter
    Were walking close at hand;
They wept like anything to see
    Such quantities of sand:
'If this were only cleared away,)
    They said, 'it would be grand!'

'If seven maids with seven mops
    Swept it for half a year,
Do you suppose,' the Walrus said,
    'That they could get it clear?'
'I doubt it,' said the Carpenter,
    And shed a bitter tear.

'O Oysters, come and walk with us!'
    The Walrus did beseech.
'A pleasant walk, a pleasant talk,
    Along the briny beach:
We cannot do with more than four,
    To give a hand to each.'
Verses from ‘Alice through the Looking-Glass’

The eldest Oyster looked at him,
But never a word he said:
The eldest Oyster winked his eye,
And shook his heavy head—
Meaning to say he did not choose
To leave the oyster-bed.

But four young Oysters hurried up,
All eager for the treat:
Their coats were brushed, their faces washed,
Their shoes were clean and neat—
And this was odd, because, you know,
They hadn’t any feet.

Four other Oysters followed them,
And yet another four;
And thick and fast they came at last,
And more, and more, and more—
All hopping through the frothy waves,
And scrambling to the shore.

The Walrus and the Carpenter
Walked on a mile or so,
And then they rested on a rock
Conveniently low:
And all the little Oysters stood
And waited in a row.
Verses from ‘Alice through the Looking-Glass’

‘The time has come,’ the Walrus said,
‘To talk of many things:
Of shoes—and ships—and sealing-wax—
Of cabbages—and kings—
And why the sea is boiling hot—
And whether pigs have wings.’

‘But, wait a bit,’ the Oysters cried,
‘Before we have our chat;
For some of us are out of breath,
And all of us are fat!’

‘No hurry!’ said the Carpenter.
They thanked him much for that.

‘A loaf of bread,’ the Walrus said,
‘Is what we chiefly need:
Pepper and vinegar besides
Are very good indeed—
Now if you’re ready, Oysters dear,
We can begin to feed.’

‘But not on us!’ the Oysters cried,
Turning a little blue.
‘After such kindness, that would be
A dismal thing to do!’

‘The night is fine,’ the Walrus said.
‘Do you admire the view?’
Verses from 'Alice through the Looking-Glass'

'It was so kind of you to come!
And you are very nice!'
The Carpenter said nothing but
'Cut us another slice:
I wish you were not quite so deaf—
I've had to ask you twice!'

'It seems a shame,' the Walrus said,
'To play them such a trick,
After we've brought them out so far,
And made them trot so quick!'
The Carpenter said nothing but
'The butter's spread too thick!'

'I weep for you,' the Walrus said:
'I deeply sympathize.'
With sobs and tears he sorted out
Those of the largest size,
Holding his pocket-handkerchief
Before his streaming eyes.

'O Oysters,' said the Carpenter,
'You've had a pleasant run!
Shall we be trotting home again?'
But answer came there none—
And this was scarcely odd, because
They'd eaten every one.

[52]
Verses from 'Alice through the Looking-Glass'

HUMPTY DUMPTY'S RECITATION

In winter, when the fields are white,
I sing this song for your delight——

In spring, when woods are getting green,
I'll try and tell you what I mean.

In summer, when the days are long,
Perhaps you'll understand the song:

In autumn, when the leaves are brown,
Take pen and ink, and write it down.

I sent a message to the fish:
I told them 'This is what I wish.'

The little fishes of the sea,
They sent an answer back to me.

The little fishes' answer was
'We cannot do it, Sir, because——'

I sent to them again to say
'It will be better to obey.'

The fishes answered with a grin,
'Why, what a temper you are in!'

I told them once, I told them twice:
They would not listen to advice.

[ 53 ]
Verses from ‘Alice through the Looking-Glass’

I took a kettle large and new,
Fit for the deed I had to do.

My heart went hop, my heart went thump;
I filled the kettle at the pump.

Then some one came to me and said
‘The little fishes are in bed.’

I said to him, I said it plain,
‘Then you must wake them up again.’

I said it very loud and clear;
I went and shouted in his ear.

But he was very stiff and proud;
He said ‘You needn’t shout so loud!’

And he was very proud and stiff;
He said, ‘I’d go and wake them, if——’

I took a corkscrew from the shelf:
I went to wake them up myself.

And when I found the door was locked,
I pulled and pushed and kicked and knocked.

And when I found the door was shut,
I tried to turn the handle, but——

[54]
The White Knight's Song

I'll tell thee everything I can;
There's little to relate.
I saw an aged aged man,
A-sitting on a gate.
'Who are you, aged man?' I said.
'And how is it you live?'
And his answer trickled through my head
Like water through a sieve.

He said 'I look for butterflies
That sleep among the wheat:
I make them into mutton pies,
And sell them in the street.
I sell them unto men,' he said,
'Who sail on stormy seas;
And that's the way I get my bread—
A trifle, if you please.'

But I was thinking of a plan
To dye one's whiskers green,
And always use so large a fan
That they could not be seen.
So, having no reply to give
To what the old man said,
I cried 'Come, tell me how you live!'
And thumped him on the head.
Verses from ‘Alice through the Looking-Glass’

His accents mild took up the tale:
   He said ‘I go my ways,
And when I find a mountain-rill,
   I set it in a blaze;
And thence they make a stuff they call
   Rowlands’ Macassar Oil—
Yet twopence-halfpenny is all
   They give me for my toil.’

But I was thinking of a way
   To feed oneself on batter,
And so go on from day to day
   Getting a little fatter.
I shook him well from side to side,
   Until his face was blue:
‘Come, tell me how you live,’ I cried,
   ‘And what it is you do!’

He said ‘I hunt for haddocks’ eyes
   Among the heather bright,
And work them into waistcoat-buttons
   In the silent night.
And these I do not sell for gold
   Or coin of silvery shine,
But for a copper halfpenny,
   And that will purchase nine.

[ 56 ]
Verses from 'Alice through the Looking-Glass'

'I sometimes dig for buttered rolls,
Or set limed twigs for crabs;
I sometimes search the grassy knolls
For wheels of hansom-cabs.
And that's the way' (he gave a wink)
'By which I get my wealth—
And very gladly will I drink
Your Honour's noble health.'

I heard him then, for I had just
Completed my design
To keep the Menai bridge from rust
By boiling it in wine.
I thanked him much for telling me
The way he got his wealth,
But chiefly for his wish that he
Might drink my noble health.

And now, if e'er by chance I put
My fingers into glue,
Or madly squeeze a right-hand foot
Into a left-hand shoe,
Or if I drop upon my toe
A very heavy weight,
I weep, for it reminds me so
Of that old man I used to know—
Verses from ‘Alice through the Looking-Glass’
Whose look was mild, whose speech was slow,
Whose hair was whiter than the snow,
Whose face was very like a crow,
With eyes, like cinders, all aglow,
Who seemed distracted with his woe,
Who rocked his body to and fro,
And muttered mumblingly and low,
As if his mouth were full of dough,
Who snorted like a buffalo—
That summer evening long ago
A-sitting on a gate.

THE RED QUEEN’S LULLABY

Hush-a-by lady, in Alice’s lap!
Till the feast’s ready, we’ve time for a nap:
When the feast’s over, we’ll go to the ball—
Red Queen, and White Queen, and Alice, and all!

QUEEN ALICE’S SONG

To the Looking-Glass world it was Alice that said,
‘I’ve a sceptre in hand, I’ve a crown on my head;
Let the Looking-Glass creatures, whatever they be,
Come and dine with the Red Queen, the White Queen, and me!’
Verses from 'Alice through the Looking-Glass'

CHORUS

Then fill up the glasses as quick as you can
And sprinkle the table with buttons and bran:
Put cats in the coffee, and mice in the tea—
And welcome Queen Alice with thirty-times-three!

"O Looking-Glass creatures," quoth Alice, "draw near!
'Tis an honour to see me, a favour to hear:
'Tis a privilege high to have dinner and tea
Along with the Red Queen, the White Queen, and me!"

CHORUS

Then fill up the glasses with treacle and ink,
Or anything else that is pleasant to drink;
Mix sand with the cider, and wool with the wine—
And welcome Queen Alice with ninety-times-nine!

THE WHITE QUEEN'S RIDDLE

FIRST the fish must be caught.'
That is easy: a baby, I think, could have caught it.
'Next, the fish must be bought.'
That is easy: a penny, I think, would have bought it.

[59]
Verses from 'Alice through the Looking-Glass'

'Now cook me the fish!'
That is easy, and will not take more than a minute.
'Let it lie in a dish!'  
That is easy, because it already is in it.

'Bring it here! Let me sup!'
It is easy to set such a dish on the table.
'Take the dish-cover up!'
Ah, *that* is so hard that I fear I'm unable!

For it holds it like glue—
Holds the lid to the dish, while it lies in the middle:
Which is easiest to do,
Un-dish-cover the fish, or dishcover the riddle?

*[The answer is: an Oyster.]*
HE thought he saw an Elephant,
That practised on a fife:
He looked again, and found it was
A letter from his wife.
'At length I realize,' he said,
'The bitterness of Life!'

HE thought he saw a Buffalo
Upon the chimney-piece:
He looked again, and found it was
His Sister's Husband's Niece.
'Unless you leave this house,' he said,
'I'll send for the Police!'

HE thought he saw a Rattlesnake
That questioned him in Greek:
He looked again, and found it was
The Middle of Next Week.
'The one thing I regret,' he said,
'Is that it cannot speak!'
He thought he saw a Banker’s Clerk
Descending from the bus:
He looked again, and found it was
A Hippopotamus:
‘If this should stay to dine’, he said,
‘There won’t be much for us!’

He thought he saw a Kangaroo
That worked a coffee-mill:
He looked again, and found it was
A Vegetable-Pill.
‘Were I to swallow this,’ he said,
‘I should be very ill!’

He thought he saw a Coach-and-Four
That stood beside his bed:
He looked again, and found it was
A Bear without a Head.
‘Poor thing,’ he said, ‘poor silly thing!
It’s waiting to be fed!’
Verses from 'Sylvie and Bruno'

He thought he saw an Albatross
That fluttered round the lamp:
He looked again, and found it was
A Penny-Postage-Stamp.
‘You’d best be getting home,’ he said:
‘The nights are very damp!’

He thought he saw a Garden-Door
That opened with a key:
He looked again, and found it was
A Double Rule of Three:
‘And all its mystery,’ he said,
‘Is clear as day to me!’

He thought he saw an Argument
That proved he was the Pope:
He looked again, and found it was
A bar of mottled soap.
‘A fact so dread,’ he faintly said,
‘Extinguishes all hope!’