Extract From the Carrollian Catalog of J. Phildrop

by ellen_fremedon

(346.) The Cuffnells Fragment. MS, 6 pp. Author unknown. Date unknown.

Though found among Alice Liddell Hargreaves' effects, it is in neither her hand nor Dodgson's. Carrollian scholars have assumed it to be the work of Lorina Charlotte ('Ina') Liddell, Alice's elder sister; however, this is conjecture, based more on the content than on the hand, which has not been conclusively identified.

The fragment, reproduced here in its entirety, begins near the end of Chapter 12 of AAiW, and diverges nearly immediately from the published text. (See appendices for a line-by-line comparison with extant MS drafts of AAiW and TiLG.)

[Fragment begins:]

"Wake up, Alice dear!" said her sister. "Why, what a long sleep you've had!"

"Oh, I've had such a curious dream!" said Alice, and she told her sister, as well as she could remember them, all these strange Adventures of hers that you have just been reading about; and when she had finished them, her sister kissed her, and said, "It was a curious dream, dear, certainly: but now run in to your tea; it's getting late." So Alice got up and ran off, thinking while she ran, as well she might, what a wonderful dream it had been.

But her sister sat still just as she left her, leaning her head on her hand and thinking of little Alice and all her wonderful Adventures, till the whole place around her became alive with the strange creatures of her little sister's dream.

"If I open my eyes," she said to herself, "it will all change back-- the rattling tea-cups will become sheep-bells, and the Queen's voice will become the shepherd-boy; and the pig-baby, why, I can hear him changing back and forth now, and all the crockery shattering around him, and yet I know if I should open my eyes, that whole queer household should turn out to be the barnyard down the lane. And yet as long as I shut my eyes tight, why, I could half believe I am in Wonderland myself." Lorina Charlotte-- for that was Alice's sister's name-- screwed her eyes shut tight and listened, enjoying the game of make-believe far more than she would ever have admitted to her younger sisters. "Why, yes-- those aren't cattle lowing in the distance-- that is the Mock Turtle
sobbing, and that shriek like a goose is the Gryphon, of course. And that is no brook lapping—it is the sea, where they are walking. Oh, how loud it roars! Why, if I opened my eyes right now, I should not be surprised to see myself right on the shingle—and, oh!” she exclaimed, for she must peek through her fingers just then—"I declare, such a wind is stirring the rushes, they might almost be by the sea. And how tall they've grown," said Ina (as she was called), running down the bank to where they towered. "Or else I have shrunk; why, they're all the way over my head!" And with that she darted through a arch formed by two dense clusters of reeds nodding to each other, and she was on the seashore, after all.

XIII: Ina In Wonderland

"Well, this is most curious," said Ina, turning and looking all around her. "Those reeds are only half as tall as I am from this side, but when I came from that side, they went right up over my head. And I can't see the bank or the lane or the house at all—just woods, and a sort of garden beyond. Oh, can it be the Queen of Hearts's garden? Or," she added, for that did not sound at all right to her, "should it be the Queen's garden of Hearts? One could always say 'the garden of the Queen of Hearts,' but there must be a way to do it without so many 'of's. But how bright the trees are!" exclaimed Ina, running up the beach a little ways so as to see them better. "Why, they're already turning colours—red, and yellow, and rust-coloured. How extraordinarily odd!"

"And why shouldn't they turn colours, with you staring at them like that. It's rude, that's what it is. I daresay you'd turn red if I stood and stared at you," said a voice from behind her. Ina turned and gasped with surprise: there on the path stood a Gryphon, as fierce-looking a creature, with his sharp claws and his cruelly curved beak, as she had ever seen. But Ina was only frightened for a moment, "for," she thought, "this is no doubt the Gryphon that Alice spoke to, and if she was not frightened it would be disgraceful for me to be." And so she curtseyed to the Gryphon, very prettily, and said, "Please, sir, I didn't mean to make them blush. I was only surprised; where I come from, trees only change the colour of their leaves in the fall."

"I don't know what you're saying 'please,' to me for," said the Gryphon. "It's not up to me what colour the trees are. And in any case, it's September in the woods."

"Why, that can't be," said Ina. "It's the fourth of May."

"It's the fourth of May on the seashore," said the Gryphon. "Up in the woods, it's already the twentieth of September."

"But how can that be?"

"I'll tell you," said the Gryphon, offering Ina his arm; she took it before it occurred to her that there was anything odd about walking arm in arm with a Gryphon, to whom she had not been introduced, and who in any case did not even have proper arms, but talons like an eagle's. "You see, there's a Hatter who lives in those woods, and yesterday—or by here," he said, and led her over a little bridge, "it would be more like last week—the Queen of Hearts had him arrested for contempt of court and sent to prison. Well, he served time for three months, and by the time he was released tomorrow—" and the Gryphon ran a few yards up the path, "or, day before yesterday, I mean—Time was so pleased with his service that he gave him a present—for his un-birthday, you know. He made it so that time runs faster at the Mad Hatter's house, and slower at the house of his great friend, the March Hare. Well, that was a month ago," said the Gryphon, helping her over a fallen branch, "and you can imagine how useful they've found it."

Ina thought about this. "I know I should find it useful if I could go to a place where time ran slower," she said, "because if I hadn't done my lessons, or if I wanted to keep on reading a book and it was almost dinner-time, I could go there and stay until I had finished. But what would be the use of having time go faster?"
"You must be very dull indeed," said the Gryphon. "Why, just think about it. Just around that bend in the path, the Mad Hatter has been free for six weeks, when down on the seashore or up in the garden he has three months to serve in prison. He can run down from his house to the prison every morning and bring cakes to himself-- and when the Queen of Hearts catches him out, why, he can take her to the prison and show her himself, sitting quietly behind bars eating cake!" The Gryphon laughed and shook his head. "Here, let's see if he's in."

They rounded the bend in the path, and there before them was the house of the Mad Hatter. It had a tall, flat roof, just like a hat, and two windows in front that looked almost like eyes, peering out from under the brim. "Or, from the eaves, I suppose," thought Ina, "but it does look very like the brim of a hat."

There was a fire burning inside, for smoke curled out of the chimney, rising and spinning very fast through the air, like Alice's ribbons spun when she twirled herself around to make herself dizzy; and there were flowers growing along the walk which seemed to open and fade and wither right before Ina's eyes. But there seemed to be no one at home, though the Gryphon pounded on the door for long minutes, and called out loudly for the Hatter. "Hrmph," the Gryphon grumbled at last. "He must be over at the March Hare's again. Come along. There's no one here, except Time, of course."

"Is he here?" said Ina. "I don't see him."

"Well, of course not; he's running too fast. He runs faster here than anywhere else; that's why he likes to stay here." The Gryphon nodded to a bare chalk pathway in the garden, which had been marked out like a race-track. If Ina looked closely, she thought she could see clouds of dust, hanging above the path as though someone very fast had kicked them up, and kicked them up again each time they settled-- but as for the runner himself, she could only see a faint shimmer in the air above the track.

"Leave him," said the Gryphon. "He'll be running all day. Let's go to the Hare's; the Mock Turtle should be up there by now." He led her onto another path through the woods, along which they had walked for only a few minutes-- "Or," thought Ina, "I suppose it must be a few days earlier by now"-- when they were hailed by a loud "Ahoy! Ahoy!" Out of the forest, a knight came crashing, dressed in pale tin armour and riding a pure white horse.

XIV: The White Knight

The knight's hair was white as well, and thin and wispy over his balding pate. For a knight, Ina thought, he sat a horse very poorly-- "but then," she said to herself, "it cannot be easy to balance with so many things hanging from one's saddle." For in place of ordinary saddle-bags, the knight appeared to have two large birdcages, each jammed full of spinning-tops and butter dishes and candlesticks and all sort of things, which clanked and jangled as he rode. There was a large beehive tied to the saddle-bow, and two thick braids of onions slung across the horse's neck.

"Ahoy!" the knight cried again, shouting to be heard over the din of the clanging birdcages. "Ahoy! Whoa!" He reined his horse in, and slid forward in the saddle as the horse stopped still-- and then slid back as he tried to regain his balance-- and bobbed and swayed back and forth, once losing his seat altogether and hanging by a single stirrup, until Ina and the Gryphon each took one of his arms and hauled him back into the saddle. "Whoa, whoa there," he shouted, a few more times, until they had contrived between them to get him upright again. "I am on a quest," he announced, after thanking them profusely for their help. "I seek the messengers of the White King."

The Gryphon frowned. "I don't know of any White King in these parts, nor his messengers"
neither."

The knight shook his shaggy head. "Oh, no, no. They aren't his messengers now. They haven't entered the White King's service yet. In fact," he said, stroking his chin thoughtfully, "they probably don't know that they are to become the White King's messengers, unless they've got one of these already." And he drew from one of the birdcages-- with, it must be said, some noise and no little difficulty-- two large letters, very nearly as tall as he once he had unfolded them.

"Well, let's have a look, then," said the Gryphon, but the knight snatched the letter out of his talon. "Oh, no-- that's meant for a particular person."

"That would be the Mad Hatter, then," said the Gryphon. "I never met anyone so particular. About his shirt-cuffs, especially."

The knight took a pen out of his vambrace (this was the piece of armour that covered the knight's wrist, and Ina felt very grown-up for knowing it) and wrote, in big looping script, "To the Mad Hatter" on the outside of the letter.

"What about the other one," asked the Gryphon, trying to pry up the other letter's flap with his claws.

"No, no; that's for a certain person as well."

"That would be the March Hare," said the Gryphon sagely. "You'll never meet a man-- or a Hare, for that matter-- so certain of everything." And the Knight wrote "To the March Hare" on the second letter.

"I thank you, sir; I thank you." The knight tried to shake the Gryphon's hand, but this set him to swaying so violently in the saddle that Ina was nearly seasick. "I thank you. And can you tell me where-- if I may beg one more favour from you-- I might find these two certain and particular men?"

"I can show you as easy as tell you," the Gryphon said. "I'm taking this human child there just now."

"Good gracious!" exclaimed the knight, noticing Ina for the first time. "It is a human child. I had believed they were rare in these parts."

"And so they are," said the Gryphon. "This one's so rare she's still walking."

"I would offer to let her ride," said the knight, "only as you can see, my dear child--" addressing this last to Ina-- "it would be rather crowded for two up here. And I am not sure that, if I got down and let you ride by yourself, I should be able to get back up again."

"Then I'll walk, if that's quite all right," said Ina. "Because after all," she thought, "he must find walking even more of an ordeal than riding, with those strange shoes on his feet-- why, surely that's not a mattock fixed to the bottom of the left one? And a hoe on the right-- it is!"

"I see you are admiring my shoes," the knight said. "They're my own invention." He inclined his head, modestly, and had to catch himself with the reins when this set him to swaying perilously.

"They're certainly... unique," said Ina. "I've never seen shoes like them. What are they for?"

"They are to protect against pains in the feet," said the knight.

"I should think," said Ina, "that a soft shoe would be better for that."
"No, no, no," said the knight. "I've thought about this carefully. It's not that the shoe is too hard, you see-- it's that the ground is too hard. If the ground were softer, then, when you stepped on it, it would be just like stepping onto a pillow!"

Ina studied the knight's shoes again. They looked terribly uncomfortable. "Do they work?"

"Well-- not as such, no." He shook his head sadly. "No, in fact I'm afraid they don't. The hoe didn't work at all, and so I replaced the sole of the left shoe with a mattock, but that's no better. And now I'm quite out of ideas for how to make the ground softer. Unless," he said, brightening a little, "I might try a watering can."

The knight was silent for a while, considering this. Ina cast back through his last few remarks for something else to say, and finally asked, "Do you suffer from pains in the feet, then?"

"Ah," sighed the knight. "I never used to. But ever since-- oh, it's a long story. I can't tell it properly and ride at the same time. Here, help me to stop the horse again. Whoa!" he cried, and Ina and the Gryphon ran to help steady him in the saddle.

"That's better," he said. Somehow, they had got him turned around, so he faced backwards on the horse, but he refused to dismount and get back up, and said that the view in this direction was quite superior to what he had been accustomed to.

"Please, sir, you were going to tell us your story," said Ina. She felt rather foolish and childlike for being so eager to hear it-- "but then," she thought, "if I am to believe Alice, the people here have such interesting stories to tell, even if they don't make terribly good sense."

"Ah, yes," said the knight. "You see, it began when I rode out upon Errantry--"

"Upon what?" said the Gryphon.

"Errantry. My horse," the knight explained. "I rode out upon Errantry and- oh, it's far too painful to speak of."

"Oh," said Ina sadly.

"So I'll sing it to you instead," he said, and folding his hands in front of him, the knight sang this song:

I wandered clammy as a squid  
That swims the ocean wide and blue,  
Until I found myself amid  
A herd of wooly caribou,  
Out on the tundra, standing still,  
Huddled against the arctic chill.

As motionless as oysters on  
A silver tray at dinner-time
They stood, their noses cold and wan,
Encrusted thick in icy rime.
Eleven thousand forty-three
I counted ere they noticed me!

Then one stag lifted up his head
And stamped upon the frozen ground.
A poet could not help but dread
On hearing such a fearsome sound!
I ran-- I ran my boots clean through,
Pursuèd by the caribou.

And now when on my crutch I lean
And dip into the foaming tide
My frostbit toes, I see that scene
Upon my eyelids' inward side.
And then my feet turn cold and blue
And flee, once more, the caribou.

The knight ended his song on a long note that turned into a sob halfway through. Ina dug into her pocket and offered him her handkerchief. He took it from her gravely and blotted his streaming eyes. The Gryphon let out a sigh. "As bad as the Mock Turtle," he muttered. "Speaking of whom--there he is, waiting for us." And sure enough, there at the end of the path was a thatched cottage that must be the March Hare's house, and standing in the garden, speaking with the Hare himself, was a creature that could only have been the Mock Turtle.

[Here the MS ends.]