

THE WESTMINSTER ALICE



# *The Westminster Alice*

SAKI



*ILLUSTRATED BY F. CARRUTHERS GOULD*



RENARD PRESS

## RENARD PRESS LTD

Kemp House  
152–160 City Road  
London EC1V 2NX  
United Kingdom  
info@renardpress.com  
020 8050 2928

www.renardpress.com

*The Westminster Alice* first published in 1902  
This edition first published by Renard Press Ltd in 2021

Edited text, Notes and Biographical Note © Renard Press Ltd, 2021

Cover design by Will Dady

Printed and bound in Great Britain by Clays Ltd, Elcograf S.p.A.



ISBN: 978-1-913724-10-8

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

The pictures in this volume are reprinted with permission or are presumed to be in the public domain. Every effort has been made to ascertain their copyright status, and to acknowledge this status where required, but we will be happy to correct any errors, should any unwitting oversights have been made, in subsequent editions.

All rights reserved. This publication may not be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted, in any form or by any means – electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise – without the prior permission of the publisher.

## CONTENTS

### *The Westminster Alice*

Introduction	9
Alice in Downing Street	10
Alice in Pall Mall	15
Alice at Lambeth	20
Alice and the Liberal Party	24
Alice Anywhere but in Downing Street	28
Alice in Difficulties	32
Alice at St Stephen's	35
Alice Lunches at Westminster	38
Alice in a Fog	41
Alice Has Tea at the Hotel Cecil	45
Alice Goes to Chesterfield	50
The Aged Man	54
Spades in Wonderland	55
Note on the Text	56
Notes	56
A Brief Biographical Note on Saki	61



## THE WESTMINSTER ALICE



*With apologies to Sir John Tenniel and to everybody else concerned, including Messrs Macmillan and Co., Limited, to whose courtesy we are indebted for permission to publish these political applications of the immortal adventures of Lewis Carroll's Alice.*





## INTRODUCTION

Alice, child with dreaming eyes,  
Noting things that come to pass  
Turvy-wise in Wonderland,  
Backwards through a looking glass.

Figures flit across thy dream,  
Muddle through and flicker out;  
Some in cocksure blessedness,  
Some in philosophic doubt.

Some in brackets, some in sulks,  
Some with latchkeys on the ramp,  
Living (in a sort of peace)  
In a concentration camp.

Party moves on either side,  
Checks and feints that don't deceive,  
Knights and bishops, pawns and all,  
In a game of make-believe.

Things that fall contrariwise,  
Difficult to understand,  
Darkly through a looking glass,  
Turvy-wise in Wonderland.

## ALICE IN DOWNING STREET

‘**H**AVE YOU EVER SEEN AN INEPTITUDE?’ asked the Cheshire Cat suddenly; the Cat was nothing if not abrupt.



‘Not in real life,’ said Alice. ‘Have you any about here?’

‘A few,’ answered the Cat comprehensively. ‘Over there, for instance,\* it added, contracting its pupils to the requisite focus, ‘is the most perfect specimen we have.’

Alice followed the direction of its glance and noticed for the first time a figure sitting in a very uncomfortable attitude on nothing in particular. Alice had no time to wonder how it managed to do it; she was busy taking in the appearance of the creature, which was something like a badly written note of interrogation and something like a guillemot, and seemed to have been trying to preen its rather untidy plumage with whitewash.

‘What a dreadful mess it’s in!’ she remarked, after gazing at it for a few moments in silence. ‘What is it, and why is it here?’

‘It hasn’t any meaning,’ said the Cat. ‘It simply *is*.’

‘Can it talk?’ asked Alice eagerly.

‘It has never done anything else,’ chuckled the Cat.

‘Can you tell me what you are doing here?’ Alice enquired politely.

The Ineptitude shook its head with a deprecatory motion and commenced to drawl, ‘I haven’t an idea.’

‘It never has, you know,’ interrupted the Cheshire Cat rudely, ‘but in its leisure moments,’ (Alice thought it must have a good many of them) ‘when it isn’t playing with a gutta-percha ball it unravels the groundwork of what people believe – or don’t believe, I forget which.’

‘It really doesn’t matter which,’ said the Ineptitude, with languid interest.

‘Of course it doesn’t,’ the Cat went on cheerfully, ‘because the unravelling got so tangled that no one could follow it. Its theory is,’ he continued, seeing that Alice was waiting for more, ‘that you mustn’t interfere with the inevitable. Slide and let slide, you know.’

‘But what do you keep it here for?’ asked Alice.

‘Oh, somehow you can’t help it; it’s so perfectly harmless and amiable and says the nastiest things in the nicest

manner, and the King just couldn't do without it. The King is only made of pasteboard, you know, with sharp edges; and the Queen' – here the Cat sank its voice to a whisper – 'the Queen comes from another pack, made of Brummagem ware,\* without polish, but absolutely indestructible; always pushing, you know; but you can't push an Ineptitude. Might as well try to hustle a glacier.'



'That's why you keep so many of them about?' said Alice.  
'Of course. But its temper is not what it used to be. Lots of things have happened to worry it.'  
'What sort of things?'  
'Oh, people have been dying off in round numbers, in the most ostentatious manner, and the Ineptitude dislikes fuss – but hush, here's the King coming.'\*

His Majesty was looking doleful and grumpy, Alice thought, as though he had been disturbed in an afternoon nap. ‘Who is this, and what is that Cat doing here?’ he asked, glancing gloomily at Alice and her companion.



‘I really must ask you to give me notice of these questions,’ said the Ineptitude, with a yawn.

‘There’s a dragon loose somewhere in the garden,’ the King went on peevishly, ‘and I am expected to help in getting it under control. Do I look as if I could control dragons?’

Alice thought he certainly did not.

‘What do you propose doing?’ drawled the Ineptitude.

‘That’s just it,’ said the King. ‘I say that whatever is done must be done cautiously and deliberately; the Treasurer says that whatever is done must be done cheaply – I am afraid the Treasurer is the weakest member of the pack,’ he added anxiously.

‘Only made of Bristol board, you know,’ explained the Cat aside to Alice.

‘What does the Queen say about it?’ asked the Ineptitude.

‘The Queen says that if something is not done in less than no time there’ll be a dissolution.’

Both looked very grave at this, and nothing was said for some minutes.

The King was the first to break the silence. ‘What are you doing with that whitewash?’ he demanded. ‘The Queen said everything was to be painted khaki.’\*

‘I know,’ said the creature pathetically, ‘but I had run out of khaki; the unforeseen again, you know; and things needed whitewash so badly.’

The Cat had been slowly vanishing during the last few minutes, till nothing remained of it but an eye. At the last remark it gave a wink at Alice and completed its eclipse.

When Alice turned round she found that both the King and the Ineptitude were fast asleep.

‘It’s no good remaining here,’ she thought, and as she did not want to meet either the Queen or the dragon, she turned to make her way out of the street.

‘At any rate,’ she said to herself, ‘I know what an Ineptitude is like.’



*A Brief Biographical  
Note on Saki*

Hector Hugh Munro, better known by his pen name, Saki (a name which is thought to be borrowed from the cupbearer in *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*), was born on the 18th of December 1870 in Myanmar (then Burma) to Charles Munro, an Inspector General in the Burma Police, and Mary Mercer, the daughter of a Rear Admiral.

Mary died just two years after Saki was born, and his father moved the family to England, where they were sent to Barnstaple in Devon to be brought up by their strict grandmother and two aunts – characters who crop up throughout his oeuvre. ‘Aunt Tom’, writes Saki’s sister Ethel in her biography of her brother, ‘was a colossal humbug, and never knew it. The other aunt, Augusta, is the one who, more or less, is depicted in ‘Sredni Vashtar’ (one of Saki’s stories).

Saki was sent to school in Exmouth, and then, aged fifteen, to Bedford Grammar School. It wasn’t until 1896 that he moved to London, hoping to make a career by his pen.

In 1900, he published his first book, *The Rise of the Russian Empire*, a historical study which proved rather unpopular, but was considered very well researched and written.





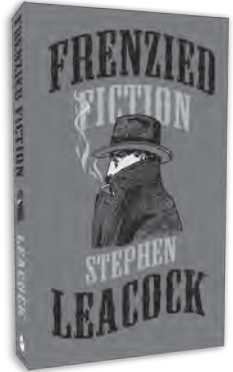
OTHER CLASSIC FICTION FROM  
RENARD PRESS



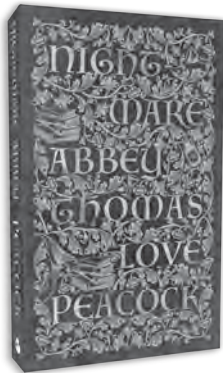
ISBN: 9781913724160  
64pp • Paperback • £6.99



ISBN: 9781913724023  
96pp • Paperback • £6.99



ISBN: 9781913724085  
256pp • Paperback • £6.99



ISBN: 9781913724078  
224pp • Paperback • £7.99



ISBN: 9781913724092  
224pp • Paperback • £7.99



ISBN: 9781913724115  
224pp • Paperback • £7.99

DISCOVER THE FULL COLLECTION AT  
[WWW.RENARDPRESS.COM](http://WWW.RENARDPRESS.COM)