

IX—WHO STOLE THE TARTS?

The King and Queen of Hearts were seated on their throne when they arrived, with a great crowd assembled about them—all sorts of little birds and beasts, as well as the whole pack of cards: the Knave was standing before them, in chains, with a soldier on each side to guard him; and near the King was the White Rabbit, with a trumpet in one hand and a scroll of parchment in the other. In the very middle of the court was a table, with a large dish of tarts upon it. "I wish they'd get the trial done," Alice thought, "and hand 'round the refreshments!"

The judge, by the way, was the King and he wore his crown over his great wig. "That's the jury-box," thought Alice; "and those twelve creatures (some were animals and some were birds) I suppose they are the jurors."

Just then the White Rabbit cried out "Silence in the court!"

"Herald, read the accusation!" said the King.

On this, the White Rabbit blew three blasts on the trumpet, then unrolled the parchment-scroll and read as follows:

"The Queen of Hearts, she made some tarts,
All on a summer day;
The Knave of Hearts, he stole those tarts
And took them quite away!"

"Call the first witness," said the King; and the White Rabbit blew three blasts on the trumpet and called out, "First witness!"

The first witness was the Hatter. He came in with a teacup in one hand and a piece of bread and butter in the other.

"You ought to have finished," said the King. "When did you begin?"

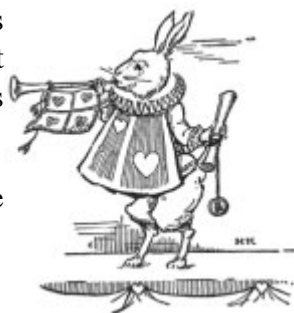
The Hatter looked at the March Hare, who had followed him into the court, arm in arm with the Dormouse. "Fourteenth of March, I *think* it was," he said.

"Give your evidence," said the King, "and don't be nervous, or I'll have you executed on the spot."

This did not seem to encourage the witness at all; he kept shifting from one foot to the other, looking uneasily at the Queen, and, in his confusion, he bit a large piece out of his teacup instead of the bread and butter.

Just at this moment Alice felt a very curious sensation—she was beginning to grow larger again.

The miserable Hatter dropped his teacup and bread and butter and went down on one knee. "I'm a poor man, Your Majesty," he began.



"You're a *very* poor *speaker*," said the King.

"You may go," said the King, and the Hatter hurriedly left the court.

"Call the next witness!" said the King.

The next witness was the Duchess's cook. She carried the pepper-box in her hand and the people near the door began sneezing all at once.

"Give your evidence," said the King.

"Sha'n't," said the cook.

The King looked anxiously at the White Rabbit, who said, in a low voice, "Your Majesty must cross-examine *this* witness."

"Well, if I must, I must," the King said. "What are tarts made of?"

"Pepper, mostly," said the cook.

For some minutes the whole court was in confusion and by the time they had settled down again, the cook had disappeared.

"Never mind!" said the King, "call the next witness."

Alice watched the White Rabbit as he fumbled over the list. Imagine her surprise when he read out, at the top of his shrill little voice, the name "Alice!"