

M'Alice in Dunderland.

M'Alice was seated on the roadside near a little pool with her feet dangling in the water when she heard a loud cackling and flapping of wings overhead, and down swooped the "Belge-bat-man."

"Bon jour, M'maxelle," said the Belge-bat affably as he drew out a tape measure and started measuring the footprints in the muddy road.

"Good morning, Belge-bat," said Alice politely. "Please, why are you doing that?"

"Well, you see," said he, picking up a hob-nail, and examining it closely through a magnifying glass, "so many people are walking about, to estaminets and things, wearing out their boots, and costing, oh! ever so much money that HE is going to stop it."

"But can HE stop it?" inquired M'Alice.

The Belge-bat winked, and produced a large card. "You read this card," he said, knowingly, "you compree?"

M'Alice read: "Try 'MURPHINE,' half a franc is better than no franc at all."

"What a nice card!" said M'Alice.

Yes," said the Belge-bat, "a regular Joker running wild; but why are you sitting here, my dear, looking so sad?"

Poor M'Alice burst into tears.

"Oh! the Oh Sea Serpent said a word to me this morning, and I am so stupid that I cannot tell what it means. It seems so silly not to understand one word, doesn't it?"

"A'ha," cried the Belge-bat, "You no understand languages. Me speak seven language. Voila—Comment Pro Bono Publico; Vive La Italiane; Deutschland Uber Sandy Hook; Compree; Git me? You tell me the word—I understand!"

"Well," said M'Alice, it's Whatthellareyoudoing heredontgoawayatoncestopherethisinstantwheresallmy thingsIdon'tknowwhattheh—lsthematterwithyouanyway."

"Oh! La! La!" said the Belge-bat, "some language is different. I no understand THAT."

"No," said M'Alice sadly, "neither does anyone else. So I am waiting for the Oh Sea Serpent to come out of this pool and tell me what it does mean."

"Oh! La! La! La!" cried the Belge-bat, "the Oh Sea Serpent in that little pool! What does he want in a tiny muddy place like that?"

"Oh! I don't know," said M'Alice. "He appears to enjoy it—there may be some mermaids in there. But sssh! here he comes."

They scuttled back to the shelter of some bushes and suddenly the surface of the pool was violently agitated, and out popped the head of the Oh Sea Serpent. It was evident that he was in a terrible rage, for he was threshing and diving about, churning the muddy water into foam while endeavouring to seize a tiny fish that was darting from side to side to avoid the angry serpent.

"I'll get you," roared the infuriated Serpent. "D—n your eyes. You dare to be fresh with me! How dare you be fresh?"

"Oh! sir," piped the tiny fish, barely dodging the murderous rush, and missing the cavernous mouth by the fraction of an inch, "Please, sir, I AM fresh. I can't help it. I was born fresh."

"That don't go with me," roared the Serpent, and made such a terrific lunge that most of the water was splashed out of the pool, and in the flurry the little fish escaped. Muttering and grumbling the Serpent wriggled out on to the grass, and cleaning off the mud and weeds with a few deft shuffles of his shining coils started off up the hill toward the Monastery. As he went by they heard him mumbling in a low tone, "Fresh! I'll fresh him!"

Soon they heard him roaring for the Abb-bat. M'Alice and the Belge-bat crept quietly after him, and found that his loud outcry had disturbed a large colony of "Bat-men" who were roosting amongst the "Eves" of a neighboring estaminet.

"Abb-bat! Abb-bat! Where the H—ls the Abb-bat! Have the Abb-bat braught to me!"

"Oh! sir," piped one of the trembling bat-men, "Abb-bat is very busy, sir, very busy indeed!"

"BUSY," snorted the serpent, "how dare he be busy when I am not here. Hey?"

"Oh! please, sir," faltered the wretched creature, "he's er—er—"

The Serpent gave one threatening twist of his limber tail-end, and with a shriek the bat-man stuttered, "M-Marking time on his own ground, sir."

"Marking WHAT on his own WHAT?" asked the Serpent glowering at the unhappy being.

"Time, sir, ground, sir."

"DON'T say time; ground to me! NEVER say, time; ground, to me.. Time; ground? What the H—I do you say 'time; ground' for?" and waving his flexible tail tip in the air the Serpent administered a sound slap which sent the bat-man howling into the bush where he was discovered some hours later trembling violently by a kindly M.O., who sent him to Blighty as a shell shock case. (I told you this was a fairy story).

And now a fresh young voice was heard from within the Monastery carolling this ancient ballad,

"Ho, this morning I was sick,
And to-morrow I'll be sicker.

But still I'll lick, and lick,
And lick, and lick, my liquor."

The door opened, and tripping lightly down the ancient steps came the Abb-bat himself. He bore himself with the natural dignity which becomes one who severs himself from the petty cares and trials of this sordid world; and with his scholastic countenance enlivened by the inward glow of spiritual well-being he beamed down upon the little group.

At his appearance the Serpent gave a convulsive shudder, and coiling himself into a sort of pedestal, surmounted by his awful head, he surveyed the ABB-BAT with stony fury.

Pausing upon the lower step the Abb-bat broke into a blithsome twostep, accompanied by a melodious chant, "Oh! say, Merry brother, will you say have another? And I'll say, yea! And we'll toss who'll pay. But if you win, I'll—"

Here the Serpent suddenly rose to some seven-sixteenths of his full height, and spitting three distinct jets of flame from his mouth demanded in a voice of thunder, "Wherethellismybillet?"

The Abb-bat stayed his animated action, and bowing gracefully dived his hand into his bosom, and