

Savile Clarke *Alice* Productions

Reviews

Production: 1900-1901, Ellaline Terriss

Performance: Vaudeville Theatre, 19 December 1900

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VAUDEVILLE THEATRE.

The stage version of *Alice in Wonderland* prepared a good many years ago by Messrs. H. Savile Clarke and Walter Slaughter – to apply so dignified a name as “dramatization” to so artless a piece of work would scarcely be fitting – has become a kind of classic for revival at or near Christmas. The reproduction given yesterday afternoon for the first time is certainly much better than any of its predecessors, for it goes with much more spirit, and in Miss Ellaline Terriss there is a representative of Alice in whom is lacking none of the childish simplicity of the original, while she is entirely free from the terrible self-consciousness of the average child-prodigy to whom the part has fallen before. Her part, it is true, yields few of the opportunities that are looked for in a leading character, but she is seldom off the stage, and is always a winsome figure, though she is as far as any of her predecessors from attempting the interesting experiment of copying the famous designs of Tenniel. The part of the hatter has been a good deal written up for Mr. Seymour Hicks, who “makes-up” wonderfully, and is carried into the “Looking-glass” section of the piece, where he performs some of the functions of the White Knight, though without altering his costume. In this act he has a scene in which his madness is insisted on perhaps rather too realistically for the enjoyment of very young spectators; his song, “Follow my Leader,” is not one of the most successful things in the entertainment. There is a multitude of clever child performers, chief among whom comes Master George Hersee, whose “Cheshire Cat” is a charming little figure, and who says his words with a great deal of point. The March Hare (Miss Kate Courtney) and the Dormouse (Miss Winifred Hall) are deliciously sedate; and the dancing of Miss Enid Sass, as Second Lobster in the first act and the Cornflower in the second, is a very pretty exhibition of juvenile skill; a hornpipe dances by one of the ghosts of the oysters (unnamed) in the scene with the Walrus and the Carpenter made a great hit. Miss Emily Miller as the Duchess and the Red Queen was duly terrifying; and Messrs. W. Cheesman and Murray King were good, both as the Mock Turtle and Gryphon and as Tweedledum and Tweedledee. There are a great many other characters quite adequately performed and the general level is remarkably high. Mr. Slaughter’s music is of a kind that certainly does not weary the hearer with repetition, for it is so lacking in individuality that scarcely any listener could recognise it again after an interval. Among the additional numbers is a very pretty little duet, “Poor mad hatter,” in the course of which Miss Ellaline Terriss substitutes her hands for those of Mr. Hicks’s in some ingenious gesticulations after the manner of a familiar domestic entertainment. The music of this and of a few other numbers is by Aubrey Hopwood*, and is decidedly tuneful. The entertainment was conducted yesterday by the composer, and at the *matinées* it is preceded by a little piece, *The Showman’s Story*, by J. C. Buckstone, which provides a slight framework for a Punch and Judy show. Between the acts a number of photographs are shown on the screen, among them some of Mr. Louis Wain’s studies of cats.

[*The programme states clearly that the *lyrics* of this, and the other extra songs, are by Aubrey Hopwood, and the *music* is all by Walter Slaughter.]