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CURIOUSER and CURIOUSER

Dressing-up Under Difficulties

THE Wellington Repertory Society's production, *Alice in Wonderland*, is an ambitious undertaking in every way, but not the least ambitious part of it is the costuming, as we discovered when we went to see the "wardrobe." Elaborate costumes had to be made for the cast of approximately 60, including about 16 "animals" and four different Alices. "Ordinary Alice" is being shared

by two actresses playing on alternate nights, and each has her own blue frock and white apron, and there are also "Big Alice" and "Little Alice" with a large and a small frock in the same style.

"The Alice frocks were about the worst to do," said Miss Molly Cook, who made the costumes, "for I'm not a dressmaker. There are 48 yards of tape on those four dresses."

The Kings', Queens' and Knaves' costumes were real works of art. The Hearts were blue, gold, white, and red, and the Diamonds yellow, red, and green. "I made the costumes up first," said Miss Cook, "and then painted them. Each one took about three days to paint—and I mean whole days, generally till about 1 a.m. As far as possible I followed Sir John Tenniel, but quite often in his illustrations I couldn't see round the back so had to use my imagination. There were no drawings of the Diamonds so I painted them from a pack of cards. I'm heartily sick of the sight of playing cards!"

In the middle of September, when the costumes were started, Miss Cook bought a bolt each of white signwriter's cloth, book muslin, and red casement cloth—and used the lot. Except for Alice frocks practically the only other materials she used were cardboard, paint, paper fasteners, and sticking plaster.

We were shown other costumes lying round the hall. "These are parts of the March Hare. More painting spots! This is the Duchess. I painted the material by the yard and then made it up. Here is his hat and wig."

"His?"

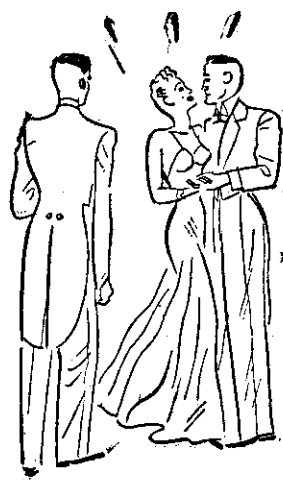
"Yes, several of the characters, like the Cook, the Duchess, and the Chess Queens are being played by men. Women aren't the right type at all!"

Humpty Dumpty Sat on a Stove

In another room we saw G. E. Coward at work on the animals' heads and frames. Here we were truly in Wonderland. On a bench at one side were the Griffin and the Mock-turtle. Sitting on a stove, drying, was Humpty-Dumpty. A sheep's head and birds' beaks were lying on a shelf, and the Dodo, a frog, and a fish were gazing from the other side at a splendid horse's head erect on the table in the centre. Mr. Coward told us that it took two of them a whole day to make the armature or wooden framework for the horse's head.

Miss Dorothy Buck had charge of the rest of the animals, and was making the skins for Griffin and the Mock-turtle—from blind material and calico dyed green.

Eaglets' brown scalloped tunics and wings surrounded the sewing machine. "Each wing took two hours to wire," said Miss Buck. "I had trouble getting wire, so used part of a clothes line in the end. . . . I spent a lot of time at the zoo studying the parrots for colourings. These are the parrot's wings and tail, and here is the Lory. I used Arthur Mee for reference and copied the eagles' wings from a photo of the Air Force Memorial by the Thames. My next job," she added, "is to find a broom with long enough whiskers for the Cheshire Cat."



THIS IS WHERE WAR CAME IN

Just when the name Berlei had become a symbol of beauty and suppleness, and the old word 'corset' forgotten, war stepped in.

Beauty was no longer in Berlei's hands. Suppleness, too, departed. For industrial regulations reduced the amount of elastic in a garment to a bare few inches, and the time and material allowed for beauty's sake alone, to absolutely nil.

Berlei went to war—turning out battledress and other necessary clothing for the Services—and this supple Berlei beauty of 1939 became virtually a museum piece!

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