

Duchess

40

ALICE IN WONDERLAND

ALICE (*pleased to have got into a real conversation*)
I don't know of any that do.

DUCHESS

You don't know much, and that's a fact. (*The Duchess begins throwing kitchen utensils at the DUCHESS and the BABY, but the DUCHESS takes no notice, and it's impossible to tell whether the blows hurt the BABY or not.*)

ALICE

Oh, please mind what you're doing. Oh, there's his precious nose!

DUCHESS

If everybody minded their own business the world would go around a deal faster than it does.

ALICE

Which would not be an advantage. Just think what work it would make with the day and the night. You see, the earth takes twenty-four hours to turn round on its axis . . .

DUCHESS

Talking of axes—Chop off her head! (*ALICE looks anxiously at the COOK, who is too busy stirring the soup to bother.*)

ALICE

Twenty-four hours, I think, or is it twelve?

DUCHESS

Oh, don't bother me! I never could abide the noise. (*She turns her attention to the BABY, singing it*)

Start

lullaby, and giving it a violent shake at the end of each line . . .)

“Speak roughly to your little boy
And beat him when he sneezes,
He only does it to annoy
Because he knows it teases.”

CHORUS (*in which the COOK and the BABY join*)

“Wow! Wow! Wow!”

DUCHESS

I speak severely to my boy—
I beat him when he sneezes;
For he can thoroughly enjoy
The pepper when he pleases.”

CHORUS

“Wow! Wow! Wow!”

DUCHESS

Here, you may nurse it a bit if you like. (*She throws the BABY at ALICE.*) I must go and get ready to play croquet with the Queen. (*She exits, left. The COOK throws a frying pan after her. BLACKOUT, as ALICE brings the BABY to pinspot, right.*)

ALICE

If I don't take this child away with me, they'll surely kill it in a day or two. Wouldn't it be murder to leave it behind? (*The BABY grunts.*) Don't grunt! That's not at all the proper way of expressing yourself. (*It grunts again.*) If you're going to turn into a pig, my dear, I'll have nothing more to do with you. (*There is a moment's BLACKOUT [* 6a], and when*