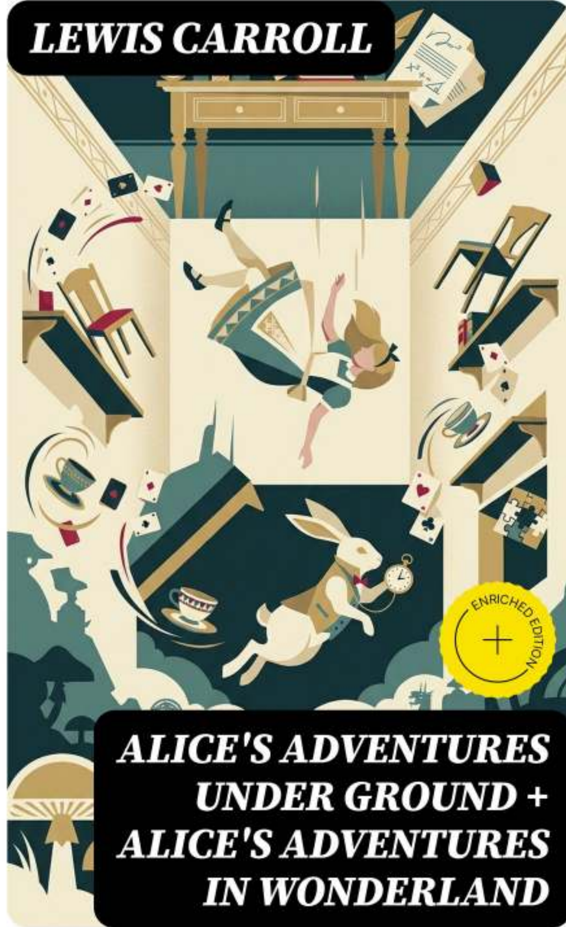
LEWIS CARROLL

ALICE'S ADVENTURES UNDER GROUND + ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND


LEWIS CARROLL
ENRICHED EDITION
ALICE'S ADVENTURES
UNDER GROUND +
ALICE'S ADVENTURES
IN WONDERLAND

Lewis Carroll

Alice's Adventures Under Ground + Alice's Adventures in Wonderland

Enriched edition. Illustrated Edition

Introduction, Studies and Commentaries by Clara Easton

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Table of Contents

Introduction
Author Biography
Historical Context
Synopsis (Selection)

The Original Version of Alice’s Adventures Under Ground + Alice's Adventures in Wonderland

Analysis
Reflection
Memorable Quotes

Introduction

Table of Contents

This collection brings together Lewis Carroll’s Alice’s Adventures Under Ground and Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland, presenting the original manuscript tale alongside the expanded, published narrative. The purpose is comparative and illuminating rather than encyclopedic: to let readers observe how a private story given to a child became a touchstone of literary imagination. By reading the two texts in sequence, one can trace shifts in structure, tone, characterization, and imagery while recognizing a continuous creative impulse. The volume offers a focused window into the making of a classic, highlighting both the germinal conception and the fuller realization that shaped subsequent children’s literature.

Alice’s Adventures Under Ground originated as a handwritten and illustrated manuscript that Carroll presented to Alice Liddell in 1864. He then enlarged and revised the material for commercial publication as Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland, issued by Macmillan in 1865 with illustrations by John Tenniel. The manuscript, with Carroll’s own drawings, was later reproduced in facsimile for a wider public in 1886. The pairing of these two forms—private gift-book and public volume—marks a rare opportunity to study, within a single author’s work, the passage from intimate storytelling to a cultural artifact disseminated through print and illustration.

The texts gathered here are prose narratives designed for young readers, yet they also address older audiences with philosophical play and linguistic invention. They belong to the traditions of fantasy and literary nonsense, and they

incorporate verse as songs or recitations within the tales. There are no separate essays, letters, or diaries in this collection; the focus is on continuous narrative fiction. Under Ground is a shorter manuscript tale with embedded poems, while Wonderland is a fuller children's novel that develops the same premise with added episodes, polished prose, and a distinct visual collaboration through its published illustrations.

The initial premise common to both works is deceptively simple: a curious girl named Alice follows a rabbit underground and finds herself in a realm where ordinary rules do not quite apply. The space she enters tests her sense of proportion, puzzles her with shifting meanings, and offers encounters that challenge straightforward expectations. Movement through this dreamlike setting unfolds as a sequence of scenes rather than a quest toward a single predetermined end. The pleasure lies in the surprises of each encounter and the playful unmooring of everyday logic, all presented with a composure that keeps wonder and bewilderment in close conversation.

Among the unifying themes, curiosity stands foremost. Alice's desire to know leads her across thresholds of size, social convention, and language. The books explore the instability of identity—what it means to be oneself when measures change and names slip. They also consider the claims of authority, custom, and rule-making, measuring them against fairness and common sense. Through gentle satire, Carroll invites readers to notice how adult speech can turn into self-contradiction, and how rules, once abstracted from purpose, grow absurd. Yet the tone remains playful; the critique is carried by whimsy rather than by scolding or instruction.

Carroll’s signature is his handling of language. Puns, paradoxes, riddling questions, and deft parodies of familiar didactic verse animate the dialogue and songs. Logical forms are stretched until their seams show, revealing both the power and the limits of reasoning. Scenes proceed with the momentum of a game whose rules are continually rewritten, and the narrator’s steady voice grounds the reader amid rapid changes. The style balances precise observation with imaginative leaps, making nonsense a vehicle for clarity as well as amusement. This union of verbal wit and narrative poise is a principal reason for the books’ enduring appeal.

Reading Under Ground beside Wonderland makes the process of revision visible. The manuscript is compact, intimate in tone, and accompanied by the author’s own drawings, which underscore its origin as a personal gift. The published book enlarges the world, refines transitions, heightens the comic timing, and introduces a wider cast and additional verse. The changes are not merely additive; they recalibrate the rhythm of episodes and the balance between incident and reflection. The result preserves the spontaneity of the original impulse while opening the story to a broader readership and to the interpretive richness that has sustained it.

Illustration is integral to both versions, though in different registers. Carroll’s drawings, modest and direct, align closely with the text’s immediate occasions, reinforcing the manuscript’s handmade character. Tenniel’s images for the Macmillan edition, realized through wood-engraving for print, supply a visual architecture that has strongly influenced how readers imagine the characters and settings. Text and image enter into a dialogue: pictures clarify, contradict, or complicate the words, and the words in turn animate the pictures. The interplay demonstrates how

visual interpretation can become part of a literary work's identity.

From its publication, Alice's Adventures in Wonderland has enjoyed sustained readership and significant cultural influence. It helped redefine the possibilities of children's fiction by favoring play, imagination, and linguistic experiment over explicit moral instruction. The book has been widely translated and adapted across media, yet its textual core remains compelling on the page. Bringing the original manuscript into the conversation restores a sense of the story's origins and the personal circumstances of its making, without which the magnitude of its later reach can be difficult to appreciate fully.

The lasting significance of these works lies in their openness. Children encounter delight, surprise, and the steady company of a heroine who asks questions. Older readers find a gymnasium for thought, where categories wobble and assumptions are tested through humor. Mathematically inclined readers recognize patterns and inversions that reflect Carroll's professional engagement with logic, while lovers of language relish the texture of sound and sense. That a single narrative can accommodate these different pleasures without exhausting itself is a measure of its resilience and of the craft that sustains it.

As an editorial gathering, this volume proposes a simple method: read the manuscript, then the published novel, and let the differences and continuities register. Attend to diction, to the shape and sequencing of episodes, to the handling of verse, and to the role of illustration. Notice where the voice grows more public or remains private, and how that shift alters humor and pathos. Such attention need not be technical to be rewarding; it is a way of honoring the

artistry that shaped an intimate entertainment into a work that speaks across generations.

Placed together, Alice’s Adventures Under Ground and Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland offer a double vantage: the immediacy of invention and the assurance of craft. Their union in this collection is not a redundancy but a conversation across stages of making. Readers are invited to join that conversation, to enjoy the surprises of each page, and to observe how a playful premise can sustain a world. The journey begins with a leap after a rabbit and continues as long as curiosity does, which is to say, as long as stories invite us to think, to laugh, and to see anew.

Author Biography

Table of Contents

Introduction

Lewis Carroll, the pen name of Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, was an English writer, mathematician, and Anglican deacon whose imaginative fiction reshaped children's literature in the nineteenth century. Best known for Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and its earlier manuscript version, Alice's Adventures Under Ground, he fused logical play with dreamlike fantasy in a manner that appealed to both children and adults. Working in Victorian Britain, he balanced a formal academic life with a vibrant literary persona, crafting narratives that questioned authority, language, and reason without abandoning moral seriousness. His work remains a touchstone for studies of nonsense, logic, and the transformative power of imagination.

Dodgson adopted "Lewis Carroll" for his creative writing while keeping his given name for academic publications, a deliberate separation that helped him navigate differing audiences and expectations. The Alice books, beginning with the compact Under Ground manuscript and blossoming into Wonderland, exemplify the marriage of rigorous logical habits with whimsical narrative invention. They also illustrate a hallmark Victorian paradox: reverence for order alongside curious subversion. Beyond authorship, Carroll pursued mathematics, logic, photography, and pedagogy, all of which inflected his prose. The result is an oeuvre whose most celebrated achievement still sparks global reading, performance, and scholarly interpretation.

Education and Literary Influences

Dodgson’s education followed a strongly mathematical path. After promising early schooling, he entered Oxford and became associated with Christ Church, where he studied and later taught mathematics for many years in the mid to late nineteenth century. His academic life trained him in Euclidean geometry, algebraic method, and rigorous logic. That background proved decisive for the techniques and humor of Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland, which repeatedly mines paradox, categorization, and playful reasoning. Even when he published fiction as Lewis Carroll, the habits of a mathematician remained evident: precise structures underpin seemingly freeform episodes, and puzzles arise naturally from an orderly intelligence at play.

Oxford culture provided Dodgson with access to lectures, sermons, and debates that sharpened his sensitivity to rhetoric and form. He was attentive to the way arguments were built, subverted, or satirized—skills that surface in the ironies of the Alice tales. A love of games, acrostics, and riddles also shaped his imagination. The Victorian enthusiasm for didactic verse and moral instruction gave him materials to parody, while his training helped him reassemble those materials into witty structures that reveal as much about language as about conduct. In Wonderland, playful confusions often mask a well-engineered critique of sloppy reasoning.

Literary influences included fairy-tale traditions and the flourishing Victorian nonsense genre. Carroll’s work resonates with the period’s taste for fantastical journeys, though he insists on internal coherence rather than mere whimsy. Oral storytelling—especially to children in his Oxford circle—was crucial. The narrative that became Alice’s Adventures Under Ground began as an improvised tale on a

summer river outing in the early 1860s. That performance context encouraged episodic structure, vivid incident, and rhythmic phrasing. When he refined the story for manuscript and later for print, he retained the spontaneity of spoken narration while strengthening logic, timing, and the interplay between sense and nonsense.

Literary Career

Alice’s Adventures Under Ground originated as a handwritten, illustrated manuscript Carroll prepared as a gift in the early 1860s, refining the river tale that had delighted its first listeners. The manuscript’s compact form shows him testing voice, pacing, and comic reversals. It also exhibits his visual imagination: he drew his own pictures, exploring how image and text might converse. Under Ground is not simply an early draft; it is a complete, artful experiment that reveals his care with structure and his belief that children’s fantasy could be intellectually robust. The later history of the manuscript has provided scholars a close view of his compositional process.

From this nucleus he developed Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland, expanding episodes, sharpening transitions, and collaborating with a professional illustrator, John Tenniel, for the celebrated printed edition in the mid-1860s. Carroll supervised production closely, attentive to layout and visual rhythm. The result was a book that felt both spontaneous and meticulously engineered. Wonderland moves briskly through a sequence of encounters whose rules flicker between logic and illogic, inviting readers to test definitions, categories, and authority. Immediate curiosity from readers met with growing admiration, and successive printings established the book as a landmark in English-language children’s literature.

Carroll's style in Wonderland blends deadpan narration with precise verbal play. He adapts schoolroom recitations and moral verse into comic misfires, exposing the fault lines between memory, meaning, and performance. Puns serve not as throwaway jokes but as engines of narrative movement and epistemological doubt: each turn of phrase threatens to reorganize the world. The dreamlike framework frees him to press logic to its limits and to satirize bureaucratic or pedagogical habits without naming particular targets. Under Ground demonstrates these strategies in miniature, while the expanded Wonderland refines them into a cohesive architecture that rewards both casual reading and close analysis.

Critically, Wonderland matured from a popular success to a canonical text. Victorian reviewers recognized its unusual blend of child appeal and adult sophistication, and its reputation grew steadily with reprints, translations, and stage adaptations. Publication of a facsimile of the Under Ground manuscript in the late nineteenth century offered readers a window onto the genesis of Wonderland and cemented its status as a crafted artifact rather than a lucky improvisation. Scholars later linked Carroll's techniques to his mathematical and logical writings, arguing that the Alice books occupy a unique crossroads where formal reasoning becomes a source of comedy and wonder.

Beliefs and Advocacy

Dodgson's convictions as a deacon and mathematician shaped his public stance on clarity, civility, and education. He valued logical training for young readers and pursued it explicitly in pedagogical works, presenting stepwise reasoning as both discipline and delight. He also issued practical guidance on manners of communication, reflecting a broader commitment to courteous, lucid discourse in civic

life. His writings on mathematics and logic—developed alongside his fiction—express confidence that reasoning and imagination can coexist fruitfully. In the Alice books, this conviction appears not as sermonizing but as design: playful structures lead readers to think carefully about language, categories, and rules.

Final Years & Legacy

In later years, Carroll devoted increasing energy to logic texts, mathematical expositions, puzzles, and occasional essays, while his imaginative fiction continued to circulate widely in new editions. He maintained a long association with Christ Church and kept up extensive correspondence that reveals his meticulous habits and wry humor. Photography, which had absorbed him earlier, receded as he focused on writing and teaching. The manuscript of Alice's Adventures Under Ground was reproduced as a facsimile before the turn of the century, enabling admirers to trace the evolution of Wonderland and confirming his reputation as a craftsman attentive to every stage of making a book.

Lewis Carroll died in the late 1890s, in Guildford, after an illness associated with the lungs, closing a career that had spanned mathematics, logic, storytelling, and visual culture. His legacy is vast. Alice's Adventures in Wonderland transformed children's literature by demonstrating that intellectual play could be its animating force. The earlier Under Ground manuscript remains a key document for understanding artistic process and the relation between oral tale and print masterpiece. Across media—stage, film, illustration—and across languages, Alice continues to inspire. Scholars still test Carroll's paradoxes, while readers return for the buoyant freedom of his carefully reasoned nonsense.

Historical Context

Table of Contents

Lewis Carroll’s two versions of Alice belong to mid-Victorian Britain, a period marked by rapid industrial expansion, imperial reach, and reform of social institutions. Born Charles Lutwidge Dodgson in 1832 and active under the pseudonym “Lewis Carroll” from the 1850s, he wrote during Queen Victoria’s reign (1837–1901), when literacy rose and mass print culture flourished. The 1860s—when the Wonderland book appeared—saw confidence in progress alongside anxieties about modernization. These works emerged within a culture negotiating the place of children, authority, science, and faith, and they crystallized new expectations for imaginative literature at a moment when the British reading public was expanding dramatically.

Carroll’s professional home at Christ Church, Oxford, situated him amid university reforms and Anglican scholarship. He tutored and lectured in mathematics from 1855 to 1881, during and after the Oxford University Act of 1854, which broadened access and altered governance. The college was led by Dean Henry Liddell (from 1855), co-editor of the widely used Greek–English Lexicon, whose family became central to the story’s genesis. Oxford in this era was a hub for debates about knowledge, pedagogy, and religion, shaped by currents from the earlier Oxford Movement and by efforts to modernize classical education while accommodating new scientific disciplines.

The narrative origin is closely tied to Victorian leisure and oral storytelling. On a boating excursion on the Thames (Isis at Oxford) in July 1862, Carroll improvised a tale for the Liddell sisters—Alice, Edith, and Lorina—accompanied by

the Reverend Robinson Duckworth. Such outings were characteristic of middle-class recreation, reflecting new rhythms of work and leisure fostered by industrial society. The request for a written version prompted Carroll to craft a manuscript narrative over the following years, illustrating it himself. The boat trip’s remembered date, 4 July 1862, became part of the works’ lore and later acquired commemorative status among readers.

Alice’s Adventures Under Ground exists within the Victorian culture of gift manuscripts and albums exchanged in families and friendship circles. Carroll presented the illustrated manuscript to Alice Liddell in late 1864. Its compact scale, pen-and-ink images, and calligraphic text reflect both amateur artistry and the period’s taste for finely made keepsakes. While resembling a private artifact, it also exhibits the era’s fascination with puzzles, recitations, and verse parody. The manuscript remained a personal object until its facsimile publication by Macmillan in 1886, which allowed a broad public to see Carroll’s original conception and drawings alongside the already famous printed book.

The transformation into Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland involved substantial expansion, professional illustration, and entry into a commercial print marketplace. Macmillan published the book in 1865, with drawings by John Tenniel, a prominent cartoonist for Punch. The move from a bespoke manuscript to a mass-produced volume aligned the story with the Victorian gift-book and holiday market, when ornate bindings and picture-rich texts circulated through booksellers and circulating libraries. The published version situates the narrative within a wider national and transatlantic culture of children’s reading, where authors, engravers, and publishers collaborated to meet rising demand for illustrated fiction.

Mid-century children's literature was shifting from strict moral instruction toward playful fantasy and domestic realism. Earlier staples of didactic verse and improving tales remained common, but writers such as Edward Lear had popularized nonsense and linguistic experiment. Carroll's works participate in this pivot, offering exuberant wordplay while still engaging the educational habits of memorization and recitation familiar to Victorian children. The Alice books emerged during a moment when childhood was increasingly idealized, schooling was expanding through legislation and philanthropy, and the family was imagined as a primary site of reading aloud, making the volumes apt for shared, multigenerational audiences.

Illustration technology underwrote the books' impact. Tenniel's designs were engraved on wood by the Dalziel Brothers, leading London specialists, and reproduced via electrotype to ensure consistent impressions. The initial 1865 printing, produced at the Clarendon Press, dissatisifed Tenniel, prompting recall; a newly printed issue appeared in late 1865 and is commonly dated 1866. Sheets from the canceled printing were sent to the New York firm D. Appleton, which issued them with an American title page. Such episodes illustrate the period's high standards for pictorial clarity and the increasingly global circulation of British books.

Carroll's deep interest in photography placed him within a broader Victorian fascination with optics and visual technologies. He began photographing in the mid-1850s, a time when the wet collodion process made portraiture more accessible to dedicated amateurs. The culture of studios, cartes de visite, and image collecting shaped expectations about how pictures could frame identity and narrative. His own manuscript drawings and Tenniel's stylized, highly legible line art exemplify different modes of seeing that

Victorians prized: intimate sketch and public caricature. The interplay of text and image in both versions benefited from audiences newly attuned to visual storytelling.

As a mathematician, Carroll taught algebra and geometry and later published works on logic, including The Game of Logic (1886) and Symbolic Logic (1896). The intellectual climate around him was energized by advances in algebraic logic (notably George Boole’s mid-century work) and by debates about the nature of proof and rigor. Victorian pedagogy emphasized classification, syllogisms, and problem-solving. The Alice narratives absorb this milieu by turning rules, categories, and definitions into sources of comedy and perplexity, enabling readers trained in schoolroom exercises to recognize the playfulness of syllogistic traps, circular explanations, and misapplied rules.

The sciences were rapidly reorganizing public understanding. Darwin’s On the Origin of Species appeared in 1859, and an influential debate on evolution took place at Oxford in 1860. Natural history collecting, taxonomies, and museum culture flourished through societies and exhibitions. Without endorsing specific doctrines, the Alice stories reflect a world preoccupied with naming, ordering, and systematizing, while simultaneously exposing how systems can misfire. A culture of classification—spanning botany, zoology, and philology—supplied a ready-made backdrop in which odd creatures, changing identities, and mislabelled specimens could humorously destabilize confident Victorian habits of arranging knowledge.

Industrialization altered perceptions of time and movement. Railways entangled everyday life with timetables, while standard time—adopted informally by rail companies from the 1840s and made legal in 1880—trained Victorians to synchronize watches and bodies. The era also worried about

punctuality, overwork, and the regimentation of the day. Carroll's readers, living amid whistles, schedules, and mechanical regularity, were primed to appreciate comical disruptions of chronology, duration, and routine. Jokes about acceleration, delays, and perpetual appointments resonated in a society learning to measure and control time with new precision yet experiencing dislocations that modernization introduced.

Questions of law and authority were prominent in Victorian public life. Parliamentary reforms, administrative expansion, and legal modernization redefined citizenship and procedure. While the landmark Judicature Acts arrived in the 1870s, mid-century discussions about evidence, testimony, and courtroom behavior were already pervasive. In Wonderland, scenes involving rules, judgments, and officious officials echo a culture fascinated by due process and rank. Such elements are not documentary but draw humor from the gap between formal procedure and fairness, reflecting the period's ambivalence about institutions that were increasingly codified yet often opaque to lay observers.

Language study underwent its own transformation. The Philological Society initiated the project that became the Oxford English Dictionary in 1857, symbolizing faith in historical lexicography and systematic definition. Schools relied on rote recitation of moral verses and elocutionary pieces. Carroll's parodies of familiar classroom poems and his delight in puns addressed a readership trained to recognize canonical lines and prosody. By exposing how context flips meaning, these works participate in broader Victorian debates about prescriptive grammar, pronunciation, and the authority of reference books—topics central within households like the Liddells', steeped in classical languages and dictionary-making.

Gender and childhood were being reconceived. The ideal of domestic innocence coexisted with campaigns for women's education; Girton College was founded in 1869 and other institutions followed. Centering a girl as the curious, observant protagonist fit with a growing cultural interest in the child's interiority and agency, even as the period upheld conventional norms of propriety. The prominence of a child's perspective in both the Under Ground manuscript and the expanded Wonderland contributed to a wider shift that accorded seriousness to juvenile viewpoints in fiction, aligning with new pedagogical theories that valued play, imagination, and experiential learning.

Victorian modernity fostered a culture of spectacle. The Great Exhibition of 1851 celebrated industry and invention; museums, menageries, and popular entertainments brought curiosities to urban audiences. Cabinets of wonders migrated into public institutions, and readers encountered marvels through travel writing and illustrated periodicals. The Alice books channel this appetite for the marvelous within a controlled, playful frame. The use of dialogues, tableaux, and memorable set-pieces echoes the performative rhythms of pantomime and music-hall, familiar to family audiences. This theatrical sensibility helped the stories bridge private reading and public performance in subsequent adaptations.

The publishing history of Wonderland highlights Victorian and transatlantic print economies. After the 1865 recall and reprint, demand remained strong; new editions followed, and the text was quickly reprinted and pirated in markets lacking international copyright protections. The United States did not grant international copyright to British authors until 1891, enabling American publishers to issue editions freely. Translations spread across Europe by the later nineteenth century. Stage versions became popular; a

notable authorized adaptation by H. Savile Clarke appeared in 1886. The 1886 facsimile of Under Ground further strengthened public interest in the story’s origins and creative process.

Carroll’s social world was shaped by the Church of England, collegiate life, and upper-middle-class domesticity, and his readership spanned families linked by booksellers, circulating libraries, and periodicals. The pseudonym “Lewis Carroll,” first used in print in 1856, allowed Dodgson to separate his mathematical and literary identities, a distinction valued in a culture that increasingly specialized professional roles. The coexistence of private manuscript culture and commercial publishing within the Alice corpus exemplifies Victorian negotiations between intimacy and publicity, friendship circles and national markets, and between an author’s scholarly vocation and popular celebrity.

Synopsis (Selection)

Table of Contents

Alice's Adventures Under Ground

In this compact dream-journey, Alice slips into a topsy-turvy realm where language, size, and social rules keep changing, and every encounter becomes a playful puzzle. The episodes emphasize riddles, puns, and mock logic that test her curiosity and sense of self, giving the tale an intimate, improvisatory feel.

Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland

Following a white rabbit, Alice explores a more expansive Wonderland populated by eccentric creatures and shifting customs, each episode pushing her to question authority, reason, and who she is. The narrative heightens the wordplay and satire, turning games of logic and etiquette into theatrical set-pieces while preserving a buoyant, dreamlike tone that deepens the themes of identity, growth, and the slipperiness of meaning.

The Original Version of Alice’s Adventures Under Ground + Alice's Adventures in Wonderland

Main Table of Contents