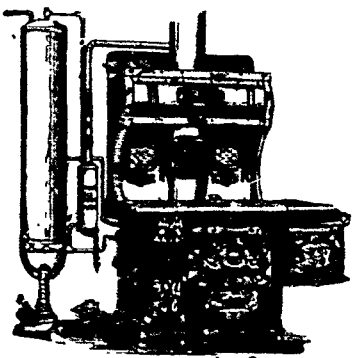


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A Priceless Stolen Hour

The Fairy Queen sat at her little round table for the dinner time. But the Fairy Queen could eat nothing, although a charming collation was spread before her—prime soup, roast corn with roseleaf salad, violet pudding laced with honey, and an acorn cupful of fresh morning dew. She glanced at everything and sighed. She even frowned. For the Fairy Queen was a methodical person, and to waste both the dinner and the dinner hour vexed her exceedingly.

The truth was that the Queen had lost something very precious that morning—something so precious that one just exactly like it could never be obtained again for ever and ever. Then she had lost her temper. Then her appetite, and so finally her dinner.

"That makes four losses this morning," she said angrily.

The fairy hid their faces in their cobweb pinafores, and the elves, mischievous young sprites as they usually were, now sat almost quite still. Only their thumbs twiddled.

Everybody was, in fact, feeling very uncomfortable, for all saw that the Queen was in a mighty temper. With a wave of her wand she caused the round table and the dinner to vanish. Then a bell tinkled. It was the summons for all the members of the household to betake themselves to the Queen's presence.

Presently the audience chamber was crowded with fays and elves and pixies and gnomes and brownies all looking pale and startled by the extraordinary summons.

With another wave of her wand the Queen brought a little golden key tinkling down on to the throne upon which she sat. She held the key up high so that all could see it.

"This is the key to my Time Cupboard," she said, "which key no one can use except myself, and which I keep wrapped up in a scrap of blue cloud where none can find it. And yet, this morning, when I went to my Time Cupboard, I found that an hour had been stolen—a whole beautiful golden hour, with its sixty golden minutes and their sixty golden seconds all complete! It was a priceless hour stolen from a gorgeous summer day. Now each of you must come before me and declare on your fairy honor that you did not steal that hour."

As she spoke the last words a little brown gnome, now cream color with fear, slipped out of the audience chamber. No one noticed him, for all were too intent upon the business before them. One by one they advanced and declared upon their fairy honor that they had not stolen the golden hour.

When the last one had made his declaration, the Queen waved her wand and dismissed them all from her presence.

Then she summoned the Prime Minister and told him the story of the lost hour. He was a giant, with the face and stature of a grandfather's clock, and his voice was as its chimes.

"There is only one way of finding out who is the culprit," said the Prime Minister. "We must examine all the hours you have given out and see which one has been returned blank, and to whom it belongs. For a silver hour and the golden one could not both be used at once."

"Oh, I never thought of that," said the Queen. "We will go through the hour cellars this very afternoon."

To understand the above remarks perfectly you must know that every midnight the Queen served out to each of her household twenty-four silver hours for their use during the following day. In return she received twenty-four silver hours which had been used in the day just passed, and upon each hour was inscribed the work done during the sixty minutes.

Then all these used hours were stored away carefully for reference in the hour cellars. Sometimes, when it was a fete day, such as the Queen's anniversary and similar occasions, half a dozen beautiful golden hours would be served out to the delighted fairies, for a golden hour was a holiday hour. It was one of these that had been stolen!

Now there was among the Queen's retinue a young founding. One day when the Queen was hunting in the forest just beyond the borders of Fairy-Land, she had come across a small boy asleep, with his arm under his curly head. The Fairy Queen took a fancy to him. She learned that he was playing truant from school because he did not like lessons, and because he had made up his mind to go to Fairy-Land, where everyone could do just what he liked.

"So that is your idea of Fairy-Land, is it?" the Queen had said. "Well, you shall go with me to Fairy-Land, and then you will see for yourself."

So Curlypate—thus the Queen christened him—was taken to the Fairy Palace, and because the Queen liked his curly head and pretty manners, he was made her cup-bearer. But as time passed, he had gradually fallen from favor on account of his idleness. One day he actually let the cup fall, spilling all the morning dew, and the Queen had had to go without her refreshing beverage, for, of course, no more could be obtained until the next morning. After that disgraceful act of carelessness, Curlypate lost his curls and his beautiful pink-and-white complexion, and had to take his place among the little brown gnomes, who

lost his curls in the night. When he found he had to work hard like the rest, he was more than a little more discontented with his lot.

Every night the sight of the twenty-four silver hours grow more beautiful, until at last he made up his mind that one golden hour should be his at any rate. So one night as the little blue cloud containing the golden key of the Time Cupboard was floating back toward the sky, he caught it in a net hanging from a kite which he had made for the purpose. And when all the fairies were asleep he had stolen to the Time Cupboard, and taken out the golden hour, believing that no one even the Fairy-Queen herself could discover the thief. He had forgotten the silver hour which he had had to return to the Queen, and its magic powers, which prevented an untruth from remaining inscribed upon it.

All the afternoon and evening were spent by the Queen and prime minister in the Hour cellar, the queen waving her wand as each pile of silver hours was approached.

At last they stood before the pile which bore the signature of Curlypate, and as soon as the queen waved her wand the pile swayed forward and fell in a scattered heap to the ground. Another wave of the wand and one of the silver hours leaped out from the heap and fell at the queen's feet. The prime minister picked it up and examined it. It was blank, except for the date and time and signature. The culprit was found, but where was the golden hour?

Immediately Curlypate was summoned to the presence of the queen and the prime minister. Curlypate stood before them weeping bitterly.

"Forgive me, oh, forgive me!" he cried. "And will you give me back my golden hour? I took it because I was so tired of the silver ones, with their work, work, work."

"If you can bring me back my lost golden hour, I will forgive you," said the queen, solemnly.

Then Curlypate ran away toward the palace garden, smiling through his tears. It would be so easy to give back the golden hour.

He knew where he had laid with the precious thing in his hands, but when he reached the spot, though he searched the long grass through, and peered underneath the rose trees, he could find nothing. The golden hour had vanished!

Sadly he returned to the queen. "Alas, I knew it," said the queen, "for a golden hour once spent can never be recovered for ever and ever. They drop the golden dust as the minutes pass and the seconds fly, and nothing except a memory remains. Only the silver hours of work remain upon them. Alas, my precious golden hour can never, never, be regained!"

For awhile she sat with bowed head. Then she passed sentence upon the culprit.

"Because you have stolen a golden hour and turned it to the base use of bitter idleness, you are banished from Fairyland. To your own land you return, and for a year and a day you shall be a sloth, crawling painfully upon the trees. Then you shall return to your former state, but if ever you play truant from school again you shall come back to Fairyland, but to its prison instead of to its palace. Neither in fairy land nor elsewhere is there room for idlers."

So Curlypate became a sloth for a year and a day. And then he became a boy again, and went back to school. And, strange to say, nobody seemed to have missed him except his mother.

Breaks.

To write a social letter to a man and ask him to reply. Bores are not in society.

To ride one's hobby-horse around the dining table, to the confusion of one's hostess.

To toast "youth" where women of uncertain age predominate.

To ignore one's humble friends for one's snarfy acquaintances. Fortune plays madcap pranks.

To boast of our own. Human nature repeats itself and family prejudices is never convincing.

To be inquisitive. No one cares for a human interrogation point, and he who asks all shall know nothing.

To be too anxious to shine, glitter and glare, conversationally, is not the highest proof of clever polish.

To seek favor. Merit is self-evident. Mediocrity seldom achieves, socially or otherwise.

To pretend. Age has given the world wisdom and a keen eye for sham.

To gush. The being who faces about on all necks has strangling possibilities.

To protest too much. The obvious refuses doubt, and goodness needs no placard.

Queer Chinese Customs.

They drink wine hot.
Old men fly kites.
White is worn as mourning.
Their babies seldom cry.
Soldiers wear petticoats.
Their compass points to the south.
The family name commences first.
Carriages are moved by sails.
Seat of honor at the left.
Visiting cards four feet long.
School children sit with backs to the teacher.
Fireworks are always set off in day time.

If you offend a Chinaman he may tell himself on your doorstep to spite you.

They Live.

The good things that some men live are still walking around on two feet.

Once Ten O'Clock.

An Italian with his wife and two little children got into a New York subway train bound uptown. There were seats enough, so the wife with one child in arms sat down. The man, carrying the other infant, prepared to take a seat.

The moment he sat down the little girl in his arms set up a cry. She wouldn't stop until the man got up. For a time, as long as he remained standing, she was quiet. The moment he started again to be seated she wailed again.

So he had to remain standing. The child then reached for the cord by which the signals are given from car to car. It was too high above her head. So she cried again.

The father tried to divert her attention to the straps as being more worthy of her notice. But she wouldn't be appeased. What was he to do?

Soon answered. He turned the baby over his knee as he sat down firmly and gave her something to cry for. A shocked look came over that little girl's face and then, after a few last howls, she was very silent.

Her father sat there with a look as of one who has solved a problem.

A Narrow Escape.

When Mr. Hartman returned an hour later than usual, Mrs. Hartman asked him the reason, and his good-natured face was solemn as he answered her. "I had had one narrow escape from drowning, Katchen," he said.

"How was that happen?" asked his wife, as she helped him unwind the knitted scarf from his neck. "Tall to me it once, Hans."

"It was at the ferry that I came late," said Mr. Hartman, "from the blocked cars, and the boat she was just starting. A man he called me out, 'Joomp! joomp!' and for one moment I thought to make as he said. But I reminded myself to be cautious, and wait, and in one minute more, Katchen, came a great patch of water showing! Then I took hold of the post whereby I stood, and said to myself, 'Hans, you were the wise man that you joomped not at first when that man advised.'"

The Clarinet.

The clarinet has the richest, sweetest voice of all the wood-wind instruments, although its sound does not travel quite so far as that of the oboe. Whenever, as sometimes happens, there are two melodies to be played at once, the clarinet takes the lower of the two, while the violin plays the upper and more important one. But in a military band, where there are no strings at all, the clarinet plays the chief melody. The bass clarinet is not so smooth or so sweet as the higher ones—it has a rather "chubby" sound, though softer than that of the bassoon—"From the Drum of the Savage to the Great Orchestra" in St. Nicholas.

An Inopportune Interruption.

Prof. Brander Matthews, the brilliant writer and teacher, was discussing literary quaintness at Columbia. In illustration of the quaint, he said: "A little girl I know was very bad one day. She was so bad that other corrections failing, her mother took her to her room to whip her."

"During this proceeding, the little girl's older brother opened the door and was about to enter. But in her prone position, across her mother's knee, the little girl twisted round her head and said severely:

"'Diddle, go out! Can't you see we're busy?'"

Liquid Sheep.

A business communication in Arabic recently reached a Manchester firm, and when translated by a Syrian interpreter proved to contain a request for the price of coppering "two water sheep" of certain given dimensions. The translator was confident of his version, but admitted that he did not know what "water-sheep" could be. For the moment even the heads of the firm were puzzled, until it struck some one that this was the nearest synonym in the vocabulary of a pastoral people for "hydraulic ram."

Life.

Report by a young English school-girl of a lecture on "Phases of Human Life—Youth, Manhood, and Age." "In youth we look forward to the wicked things we will do when we grow up—this is the state of innocence, in manhood we do the wicked things of which we thought in our youth—this is the prime of life; in old age we are sorry for the wicked things we did in manhood—this is the time of our dotage."

Portland's Rose.

Portland, Ore., is called "The Rose City." Her right to the title is borne out by the most perfect roses that are grown in the world, and every home has its rose-garden. Successful business men are equally enthusiastic rosarians, and exhibits of the choicest varieties are held each year, not only by the Rose Society and the Rose Festival, but in the lobbies of office buildings by the tenants, and in clubs.

Why Not?

Popular etymology is always interesting, even if it is sometimes inaccurate. There is the case of the little girl who, according to a humorist, rebuked her brother when he was trying to drive a cow out of the garden by calling "Scat." "You shouldn't say scat," said the little girl. "Scat!"

Staylor's

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