

The Houma Courier.

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BENEATH A PALM.

Stretched on a web of some old Persian loom,
The sand beyond me shimmering in the sun,
I mark the graceful palm leaves, dull and dim,
That cast upon my couch a grateful gloom.
Here are no wafts of attar to perfume
The pensive quiet; no cool breeze run
Across the wide waste reaches whence
This shelter from the desert's blinding doom.
I cannot marvel that the Mussulman,
His burning thirst at yonder well allayed,
Knelling apart from all the caravan
Beneath this palm-tree in the desert
glade,
His lean face glowing through its swarthy
net tan,
Gives thanks to Allah for his gift of shade!
—Clinton Scollard, in Youth's Companion.

HAD THINGS TANGLED

Mrs. Wilkins is one of the 9,000,000 women who have been trying to buy a silk petticoat by the endless chain coupon system. Whoever first thought of applying the endless chain to commerce was shrewd beyond the common, for there is nothing that so appeals to the average woman as the seductive rustle of a silk petticoat. So now the land is full of women trying to get a silk petticoat for a quarter of a dollar.

Mrs. Wilkins fell a willing victim to the scheme when Mrs. Daniels came up from the floor below armed with a coupon book and many arguments.

"It's just as simple as daylight," Mrs. Daniels announced. "I bought my coupon of my cousin Agnes Caldwell, who lives in Amesbury, Mass. And just to think of getting a silk skirt for a quarter! Isn't it fine?"

Mrs. Wilkins said that it was, and asked to have the scheme explained to her. "I'm not very good at figures," she said, "so you must explain it all to me so I can tell it to other people."

"Well, it's this way," Mrs. Daniels said. "I bought a coupon of my cousin for 25 cents and then I send my coupon in to the man that makes the skirts with \$1.25; then he sends me a whole book of coupons—five of them—and then I sell them to five different people, and then they each send in \$1.25 and then they each get a coupon book with five coupons in it, and then they sell the coupons to five other people, and those other people send in \$1.25 apiece and then they each get a coupon book, and then each of them sell five coupons and—"

Mrs. Wilkins put her hand to her head. "Don't tell me any more just now," she said. "It makes me kinda dizzy."

"Why, it's just as simple as anything," Mrs. Daniels answered, "and you get a ten-dollar skirt for a quarter!"

"But I'm afraid we'll cheat the man that makes 'em," Mrs. Wilkins said faintly. "I don't see how he can afford to make skirts for 25 cents."

Mrs. Daniels took a piece of paper and a pencil to convince her friend that the silk petticoat man was not a philanthropist, but was making money. The more she explained the more muddled Mrs. Wilkins became, but in all her confusion of mind she clung to the one fact that she would get a beautiful silk skirt for 25 cents. She could not withstand this alluring vision, so after Mrs. Daniels had explained the system to her for the tenth time she brought forth a quarter and bought a coupon. "I guess I can get along now," she said, hopefully, when Mrs. Daniels cautioned her for the last time not to delay in writing for her coupon book.

She was anxious to tell Mr. Wilkins about the plan, and all day she went around the flat saying to herself: "I buy a coupon and then I sell five for \$1.25 apiece and then they buy five books and then I send in to the man and he sends me a coupon and then when they've sold five coupons apiece I get a silk petticoat for a quarter."

When Mr. Wilkins had settled down to his cigar after dinner she brought out her coupon and explained the beauties of the scheme. Mr. Wilkins was very tired, and he dozed once or twice during the telling, but he said he thought it was a beautiful plan if you were sure of your silk petticoat at the end of your labors.

Within five days Mrs. Wilkins had sent in and received her book of five coupons. The first morning she took it with her when she went to market. She asked her grocer if he didn't want to surprise his wife with a perfectly lovely silk petticoat. He sent some new kind of a raffle, but she was a good customer, so he only said he didn't care if he did. "How much do I owe you up, Mrs. Wilkins?" he asked, going into his pocket.

"A dollar and a quarter, please," Mrs. Wilkins replied, tearing a coupon out of her book, "and then you send in to the address in the corner with a quarter and you'll get a book and then have a lovely silk skirt—sny color, cerise, blue, purple, green or black—for a quarter."

The grocer had to attend to the complaint of an old lady, who said that his last mackerel was even stronger than the butter he sent her with it, so he put the coupon in his pocketbook and said he would study it out when he had more time. Mrs. Wilkins went on to the meat market. After she had selected a rib roast and some sweetbreads she asked the butcher if he wouldn't like a perfectly lovely silk petticoat. When he seemed astonished at her question she explained that it would make a nice gift for some woman if he had no wife of his own, and that she was selling coupons. "Well, I don't care if I do have a try, seeing it's you, Mrs. Wilkins," he said, gallantly. He paid over his \$1.25. Mrs. Wilkins gave him a coupon, and made a long if not lucid explanation of the endless chain system. "I do hope you'll like your skirt, Mr. Quirk," she said, as she turned to leave. He looked after her, his eyes filmy with his attempt to understand. "If I send in for a coupon book and send \$1.25 and then sell five coupons for a quarter and get five other people to buy coupon books for a quarter, then I get a beautiful silk skirt for a quarter," he murmured, brokenly. "Well, I will be dogoned if I see how I'll do it without landin' me in the detention hospital!"

Mrs. Wilkins went home much exhilarated by the success of the morning. She felt of the \$2.50 snugly laid away in her pocketbook and smiled to herself. "I believe I'll just ask all men," she said, "for probably nobody else will think of it, and they'll be glad to get the skirts for their women relatives."

The next afternoon she went to her dentist to have a tooth filled. She sold a coupon to him and received his \$1.25—Mrs. Wilkins did her business on a strictly cash basis. She explained how he could get the petticoat. "It's very simple," she said.

The dentist shuffled about uneasily and said: "Yes." He was a timid man, and he was afraid that Mrs. Wilkins would think him a stupid one if he asked her to explain her explanation. He hoped, too, that he would get light on the subject of how he was to obtain the skirt for 25 cents when he had time to study the coupon in his possession.

Mrs. Wilkins disposed of her last two coupons by a brilliant stroke of diplomacy. Herbert Candee and L. Murphy Sanger are both in love with her cousin Josephine, who lives over on California avenue. It chanced that on the evening Mrs. Wilkins went over to interest her cousin in the silk petticoat scheme the two young men were glaring at each other in the front parlor while they waited for Josephine to come in. Mrs. Wilkins approached Candee first about buying a coupon. He, of course, was anxious to ingratiate himself with his adored one's family, so he promptly handed over \$1.25 and received his coupon. L. Murphy Sanger was not to be outdone by a rival, so he begged the privilege of buying Mrs. Wilkins' last coupon. She explained to them the system and the two young men listened with smiles which they meant to be intelligent. "Now, be sure to write at once for your coupon books," she said, at parting.

The next morning she told Mrs. Daniels that she expected her silk petticoat within the week, as she had sold all her coupons to reliable parties. But the week went by and the next without result. Then Mrs. Wilkins grew impatient, and wrote to the man who held one end of the endless chain. He replied that three of her coupon buyers had not sent in for new books. So Mrs. Wilkins made a round of her victims and discovered that the grocer, the butcher and L. Murphy Sanger had neglected this important part of the deal. "You'll never get those petticoats of yours for a quarter if you don't send in," she said, reproachfully, "and I won't, either."

She superintended the writing of the three letters. The grocer and the butcher felt that it was better to throw another \$1.25 after the first ones rather than lose a good paying customer, and L. Murphy Sanger gave his money that he might not lag behind his loathed rival.

In a few days more she received a bright red silk petticoat. She showed it to Mr. Wilkins, and told him of her wonderful economy. "Only cost me a quarter!" she said, proudly. Then she stopped short, and a great light came into her face. "Why, I've made

money!" she cried, running to a drawer in her writing desk, where she had placed the money given to her by the purchasers of her coupons. "Why, here's \$6.25, and altogether I only paid out \$1.50! So I made \$4.75 on my skirt. I'm going right down to tell Mrs. Daniels. I don't believe she knew that she was making money and getting the skirt at the same time!"

"Hold on a minute," Mr. Wilkins said, "there's something rotten in Denmark. I was half asleep when you told me about the scheme. You'd better bring Mrs. Daniels up here, for you've been cheating somebody."

"I never cheated anybody in my whole life," Mrs. Wilkins said, with indignation. "I'll have Mrs. Daniels tell you about it."

Mrs. Daniels came upstairs, and Mr. Wilkins listened to her explanation of the beauties of the endless chain. He discovered that Mrs. Wilkins had been charging her victims \$1.25, when she should have charged but 25 cents. She was reduced almost to tears when she learned this, and Mr. Wilkins said he must start out on the next Sunday and return her ill-gotten gains. "And I was so proud," she said, "because I was sure that if they sent in for a coupon book and paid \$1.25 and then sold their coupons to five people and then those five people—"

"Don't weaken your mind any more with that rigmarole," Mr. Wilkins said, sternly. "I'll start out on Sunday and I'm going to give \$2.50 to each one of these men, for you let them in for it. The next time you try any 'coon' games—"

"It wasn't a 'coon' game," Mrs. Wilkins replied, "for they all get perfectly lovely silk skirts if they only sell their coupons, but you make me feel just like those folks that send money to the government because they stole a long time ago, when it was only that I got mixed up a little. You can tell them—"

"I won't tell them anything," Mr. Wilkins said, as he started out on his errand of restitution. The victims all laughed when he explained that Mrs. Wilkins was rather weak in mathematics and had made a mistake and overcharged them for coupons. The butcher said that it was a great relief to him to hear this, because he had been lying awake of nights to figure how he was going to get his silk petticoat for 25 cents.

"Now," said Mr. Wilkins, when he returned home, "your silk skirt has cost you \$12.75, not to speak of the time and labor in explaining your method, and it's lucky that you weren't arrested for selling coupons on false pretenses."

"Well, if men weren't always so stupid," replied Mrs. Wilkins, "they'd have understood that I was making a mistake and told me about it. Then they could have gotten perfectly lovely silk skirts for a quarter. If they hadn't been unusually dumb—all of them—they'd have understood that I meant a quarter when I said \$1.25."—Chicago Chronicle.

A SUGAR BARREL.

Fun for Boys in the Vicinity of a Country Store.

"A sugar barrel, boys!" What a scampering that announcement used to cause among the boys in the vicinity of the country store, a few years ago, when much soft brown sugar was used. The emptied hogsheads, with a lucious coat of sweetness adhering to the rough staves, were cast out in the back yard, much to the boys' delight. John B. Grozier, who spent his youth in Canada, recalls these "sugar-barrel" scenes from his own experience.

One of the boys was always on the watch as informal scout, to give notice to the rest of anything interesting and available in the way of fun. The empty sugar hogshead used to appear with considerable regularity. The scout would see it, and after a liberal taste himself, would rush to the mill-pond, where he would probably find the rest of us bathing.

"A sugar barrel, boys!" was his greeting. It was enough. Putting on half of our clothes as we went, we would dash off after our guide, like a scattered train of camp-followers.

It must have been comical to see a dozen urchins scrambling along, picking their way barnfooted over the rocks and rough ground; struggling to put on a ragged vest or coat, while maintaining a sort of Indian jog-trot for fear of losing a share in the feast. Then, lo, the hogshead; and into it the first comers rushed pell-mell. Those who came after contented themselves with hoping there would be enough for all; or possibly they obtained a morsel or two by clever reaching from the outside.—Youth's Companion.

BREVITIES OF FUN

One Way.—"Miss Bird sent two dollars for a sure method to preserve the voice." "What was it?" "Sing it to a phonograph."—Philadelphia Bulletin.

He—"Your father is going to propose me at his club." She—"Yes. He told me he thought it would be a good place for you to pass your evenings."—The Smart Set.

Willie—"Pa, what's the difference between 'insurance' and 'assurance'?" Pa—"Well, the latter is what the agent has, and the former is what he tries to sell you."—Philadelphia Press.

At the Dinner Table.—"George, don't stare at Mr. Crumley that way. It isn't polite." "I was just waitin' to see him pick up his glass of water, ma. I heard pa tell you that he drinks like a fish."—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

Fare—"What's the legal fare, cabby?" Cabby—"The legal miser's fare is a shillin', the mean man's fare is one-an'-three, and the gentleman's fare is one-an'-six." (Aggressively.) "Now, which are you, gov'nor?"—London Tit-Bits.

A Cold Snap.—"I haven't had a bite for three days," said the hungry tramp. "Poor man," remarked the kind-hearted old woman; "I haven't any dog to set on you, but if you stay out long enough perhaps you will get frost-bitten."—Philadelphia Record.

How He Carried the Baby.—"My husband has a great advantage over most men." "Indeed?" "Yes. He walks in his sleep." "I don't see what advantage that can be to a person." "Why, he can carry the baby all night long, and still get his natural rest."—Buffalo Express.

Jones (after listening to Smith's account of what his baby could do), said: "Oh, that's nothing; my little Eleanor can speak French and German as well as she speaks English." Smith—"How old is your little Eleanor?" Jones—"Six months." Smith—"Good day."—Buffalo News.

A SNOB WELL SNUBBED.

Prussian Officers Average Slight Offered One of Their Number.

Mr. B. Fletcher Robinson, writing on "The Guards of Europe," tells the following story illustrating the esprit de corps prevailing among the officers of the Prussian guards.

A rich banker, who had bought his title of "von" by some means or other, managed to squeeze his son into a regiment of the guards. Once admitted he was, of course, treated by the other officers as one of themselves. One day the banker gave a splendid dinner, to which he invited, through his son, all the officers of the regiment, save one, a very nice fellow, who, however, was not noble, having no aristocratic "von" prefixed to his name. All accepted the invitation, perfectly unconscious that one of their number had been so badly treated. When, however, they took their seats at the table, the absence of their comrade was immediately noticed. Someone remarked the fact to the host, who said, in a loud voice: "Ah, you see, we are going to be entre nous to-night, a really select party, you know."

"Then we must not disturb you," said the senior officer present, rising from his chair, and one after another the guardsmen solemnly fled out of the room, thus amply avenging the slight to which an officer of their regiment had been subjected.—London Tit-Bits.

RELIC IN A FRENCH ABBEY.

Bandage with Which Christ Is Said to Have Been Blindfolded.

The little chapel of St. Julian, at Lunegarde, France, is said to contain the bandages with which Christ was blindfolded by the Roman soldiers. The relic looks like a linen pocket handkerchief folded, and it is stained all over. The church is not a wealthy one, but the relic is incased in a beautiful shrine of pure gold, exhibiting the most exquisite workmanship of the middle ages.

The church still treasures the document by which Charlemagne transferred the relic to St. Namphasus at the time when he gave him lands and money to found the abbey of Marcellas. There the relic was first set up in a shrine to become at once an object of pilgrimage and great veneration.

The bandage is of Egyptian linen, and of fine texture. In Charlemagne's letter it is called "sudarrium," which means handkerchief, and it is further said that it belonged to one of the soldiers or servants who lent it to cover Christ's face during the mockery which followed when Jesus was delivered to them to be scourged and crucified.—Louisville Courier-Journal.

CHARACTER AND FOOD.

A Scientist Tells Us That They Have a Marked Relation.

The effect of environment upon animals and plants has been a recognized fact for many years, but the influence of food upon all members of the animal kingdom, including man, is not so well attested. Some years ago a reverend naturalist, bearing this fact in mind, decided to make some experiments on fishes and other creatures. He fed about a dozen kinds of fish on a diet into which pepper entered to a large extent, and was much gratified when he found that the skins of his patients changed color. Other similar experiments in dieting were attended with like results, and the naturalist soon came to the conclusion that food must have a marked effect upon the character and physical condition of the individual.

This gentleman, confident of the result, did not think it necessary to make experiments on man, and consequently was not able to propound any satisfactory theory—satisfactory to others, that is. But several European experts in physiology have pursued the subject of the influence of food upon human beings, and one of these gentlemen has recently given us his ideas—or, rather, has given expression to his convictions on this important point.

If you wish to make a perfect savage of the mildest man in existence, says this physiologist, feed him exclusively on beef. In about two months he would have become energetic and foolhardy to a degree; after three months, in most cases, that man would have become as untameable as a wild bull, and it would be dangerous to go near him.

It is well known that indigestion is likely to wait upon him who has an appetite for pork, and this may serve to explain the statement of the physiologist in question that an exclusive diet of pork will lead to melancholy and suicide. Even the most refined person would become coarse after a few weeks dieting on pork, and the man who feeds in the ordinary way the greatest amount of happiness in life would, under the influence of pork, speedily wish to shuffle off this mortal coil.

A lamb is usually regarded as the symbol of innocence, but it also is an emblem of stupidity, and similar in this respect will the person become who confines himself to the flesh of the lamb for food—no green peas allowed. Dull-witted and unhappy also will be the condition of the brightest individual who feeds continuously on the festive "baa."

Veal tends to make the muscles flaccid and the intellect weak; soldiers, who have need of courage, and athletes, who require strength, should eat sparingly of this viand.

The young lady who wishes to obtain a very beautiful, soft and white skin should subsist constantly on milk and eggs; and the individual, whether male or female, who desires to brighten the intellect and preserve it fresh and vigorous should eat largely of eggs. Butter has the effect of making us sleek, pacific and lazy, if taken in quantities daily; the person who thus indulges in this oleaginous aliment will so soon become fatigued that he will be unfit for any kind of work or exercise.

Strong cheese is recommended in moderation; it is suitable to those who suffer from "nerves," for it acts as a sedative. But if eaten to excess its effects resemble those of pork.

It is a matter of common belief that mustard, taken internally, is a preventive of rheumatism. Our physiologist does not, unfortunately, touch on this point, but he tells us something else in connection with this condiment which is of great importance, namely, that mustard and memory go together. If you wish to have a good memory and to preserve it unimpaired as long as you live, you must eat plenty of mustard.

The proportion of fruit which may be eaten varies with the temperament; many people might subsist on a diet of which one-half was fruit.—N. Y. Journal.

The Soldier's Shoe.

The shoe of the soldier must be broad of sole, easy on the foot and stoutly made; for its wearer covers many weary miles of ground and spends a large part of his time on his feet.

A Precaution.

When you jump to a conclusion be careful to land on both feet.—Chicago Democrat.

A Test of Friendship.

Friendship never amounts to much where people don't appreciate each other's jokes.—Chicago Democrat.

OUR CALENDAR.

Facts Concerning the Days and Months of the Year.

Prof. G. W. Fritchett, of the Morrison observatory at Glasgow, Mo., has collated some interesting facts concerning the question of leap year and the authority of the calendar which the unscientific reader will find easy to comprehend.

In the first place, he calls attention to the fact that the calendar is purely artificial, conventional and arbitrary. It was the custom of the pontiffs on the first day of the month to call out to the people to announce judicial and sacred days, and so from the Greek word "kalein"—to call—came the word "calendar."

It is the design of the modern calendar to distribute time into periods, so as to subserve the purposes of society. The first requisite is the establishment of a convenient and unvarying unit of time measure. Nature herself does not give this standard unit of measure. It is purely conventional and is the gift of astronomy to the world. It is the mean solar day, as distinguished from the apparent solar day, and from the sidereal or star day. This day commences at midnight and ends at the following midnight. This is the civil day recognized in all civilized countries.

Our second unit of time, expressed in terms of the standard unit, is the tropical year, or the interval between two successive returns of the true sun's center to the vernal equinox, expressed in mean solar days. This unit is so nearly invariable that it only diminishes .595 of a second in 100 years. The latest value determined for it is 365 days, 5 hours, 48 minutes, 46.045 seconds, or 365.2421996 days. It is easy to see that the mean solar day is not contained in the tropical year an exact number of times, but society cannot take account of a fraction of a day to fill out every year, and this fact, together with the fact that the units are not commensurate, constitute the reason for leap years; 365 mean solar days are too small and 366 too long to fill exactly the tropical year. The problem then is to find a year of mean or average length which shall differ from the tropical year by a quantity as small as practicable. By a mathematical process a series of approximate fractions may be found for the decimal .2421996, each approaching nearer to the true value until the limit is reached. Julius Caesar was the first to introduce this system of intercalation, and because of the fact that the calendar had fallen into such error that the civil year differed from the true equinox three months, Caesar decreed that after three successive years of 365 days the fourth year should consist of 366 days. He changed the beginning of the year from the winter solstice to January 1. He ordained that the odd months should have 31 days and the even 30, except February, which was to have 29, and in leap year 30. But when Augustus came to the throne he desired that his month, August, should have as many days as July, so one day was taken from February and given to August.

Easter Sunday, according to the council of Nice, must be the Sunday following the fourteenth day of the Paschal moon, the moon whose fourteenth day falls on or follows the 21st of March, the vernal equinox. Pope Gregory, in order to reconcile the church and civil year, ordered ten days to be stricken out of the calendar in October, 1582, and he omitted the intercalation in centennial years unless divided by 400. The annual error of the Gregorian calendar is still 25.92 seconds, amounting to a whole day in 3,328 years.

The Gregorian calendar was not adopted in England until 1752, the error of the Julian calendar then amounting to 11 days. The act of parliament decreed that the day following September 2, 1752, should be counted the 14th of September, and at the same time the beginning of the year was changed from March 25 to January 1, thus shortening the year 1751 nearly three months. In many places the populace objected strenuously, and riots occurred, in which they shouted: "Give us back our fortnight!"—St. Louis Globe-Democrat.

Woman and Opportunity.

"Woman is an opportunity," says a misguided lecturer. Everybody knows that when an opportunity arises it goes without hanging around in the hall for half an hour saying good-by.—Chicago Daily News.

A Store in Your Shoe.

A Nuremberg merchant has invented a new kind of boot, with an apparatus in the heel by means of which the whole boot can be warmed.