THE HOOP THAT ROLLED UPHILL

By DON MARK LEMON

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"Haven't you ever investigated it?"

"No, can't say that I ever did."

"Well, you're a singular sort of man to have a phenomenon like that occurring under your eyes every day, and not investigate it."

"I dunno, maybe so."

"Hasn't any one in these parts ever investigated it?"

"Well, now, since you ask, Pearson's boy—right promisin' sort of a lad was Jeff—he did kind o' lay in wait for the pesky hoop one evening long side yonder rock, half way up the hill."

"When was this?"

"About last May, ef I reck'lect."

"And what happened? What did he find out?"

"Well, now, p'raps he found out something and p'raps he didn't. Can't say."

"Can't say! Why not?"

"Well—you—see—Jeff, he never spoke no more after that pesky hoop came a-rollin' up to where he was waitin' longside o' the rock. Jest threw up his hands an' came a-runnin' down the hill ahead o' the hoop like he was bein' chased by some sort o' devil or 'nother, an' hid himself away in the ol' straw stack over there."

"Singular!"

"Ye-es, et was sort o' singular. An' when me an' his father dug him out o' the stack, he was plumb daft, an' he ain't ever spoke since then. But I dunno whether et was somethin' about the pesky black hoop that did et, or whether he was sort o' struck by the lightnin' as he got up in front o' the rock to git a good look at the hoop, for, you see, et was durin' a 'lectric storm that Jeff lay in wait up thar on the hill, an' me an' his father was talkin' down here about what a big fool he was, when we saw a streak o' lightnin' hit the rock whar he was waitin', an' then Jeff came a-tumblin' down the hill in front o' the pesky hoop, an' hid in the ol' straw stack."

"Did any one, after that, attempt to get a close view of the hoop?"

"Not that I know of. Pearson's boy's trouble has kind o' scared everybody away, an' we jest let the hoop roll an' keep out of its road. We're generally o' the opinion hereabouts that the devil's business ain't none of ours."

With this rural philosophy, the old farmer turned and went into the farmhouse, leaving the tourist, with whom he had been conversing standing very much perplexed, gazing off at the skyline of a long slope that began among a clump of trees about a quarter of a mile away and ended at the bank of the river that wound by the old farmer's domain.

Every evening at sundown for almost a year past a black hoop about four feet in diameter had been seen to appear on the sky-line of this slope at a distance of some 40 feet from the clump of trees at the top, and roll rapidly down the incline, to vanish like an apparition within a short distance of the river below.

What this mysterious black hoop was, no one knew; and since Jeff Pearson's misfortune no one had attempted to investigate the phenomenon. The old farmer had even advised the tourist to leave the matter severely alone; but James Moor was determined to investigate for himself, and he started off towards the slope, when suddenly, from a point about 40 feet below the clump of trees at the top of the incline, the black hoop—appearing as unaccountably as if drawn out of thin air—began its usual evening descent, just as if a thick barrel-hoop, lying flat high up on the slope, had suddenly erected itself from the short grass and began to roll down the hill. Only, when this mysterious black wheel had arrived within 20 feet of the river below, it vanished as suddenly and as strangely as it had come.

Three times before James Moor had witnessed this remarkable phenomenon, but he was not less amazed at witnessing it for the fourth time. In fact, the thing grew more uncanny at each successive occurrence, and the tourist felt almost grateful that he had not met with the hoop in its descent. If he had, he might now be hiding in the old farmer's straw stack!

Yet, now that the phenomenon was over for the day, he could safely investigate the track of the black hoop. So, petting off, James Moor climbed to the top of the slope and carefully examined that particular spot where the apparition always made its appearance, but he discovered nothing unusual in the ground thereabout, it being like all the rest of the uncultivated land in those parts—covered with short grass, with a few pebbles and stones scattered about, and here and there a gopher or squirrel hole.

Slowly and painstakingly he made his way down the incline in the late track of the mysterious circle, ending his investigation at the bank of the river near which the apparition had suddenly faded into nothing—and ending it in vain, for the nature of the manifestation remained as profound a mystery as before, and as uncanny.

Returning to the farmhouse, he fell into a deep meditation about the matter; after which he dropped asleep, to dream that the black hoop was made of smoke, and was bowled every evening down the slope by an invisible fiend, who invariably vanished at the river's bank, taking the hoop with him, into a nice, clean hole in the air.

The next evening James Moor lay in wait near the foot of the incline, with a rifle in easy reach, and when the mysterious circle rolled into range he endeavored to put a bullet into it. But he merely succeeded in killing a calf.

This was on Thursday. On the Saturday following James Moor witnessed something all alone that he didn't report to his host, for fear that that old gentleman would think his city guest held the truth altogether too lightly. The mysterious black hoop, instead of appearing some 40 feet below the clump of trees at the top of the slope and bowling down the incline, suddenly appeared at the foot of the slope near the river and bowled rapidly up the hill, to vanish at that particular locality where it usually appeared.

There was something positively unholy in the mysterious circle suddenly appearing and rolling of itself uphill, and the tourist got it into his head that the country air wasn't doing his health any good.

Three times therefore, twice down the hill and once up the hill, the apparition bowled unmolested. Then, on a Thursday evening, as the tourist, his host, and a couple of farm hands were waiting for the uncanny thing to make its appearance an immense sow from some neighboring farm suddenly bove into sight high up on the slope near the clump of trees at the top,

Three Times Before James Moor Had Witnessed the Remarkable Phenomenon.

and as this unwieldy behemoth of the pen came into view the mysterious black hoop also appeared on the sky line of the slope and began to bowl down the incline towards the river.

Perhaps the sow was up there merely for rootings, but when she saw the rolling hoop, instead of tucking her snout down and fleeing, as the men thought she would, she squealed like some monstrous, disgusting fury, and, turning square, hurled her tremendous body with the speed of a vicious horse down upon that apparition.

The spectators saw the uncanny circle let itself out like a frightened thing, and leap and spin through the air towards the river below. But the sow behind was not only racing now—she was being shot down the slope as from a catapult with the weight of her own monstrous body, and in less than 20 seconds she closed her vicious fangs upon the mysterious black hoop.

As she did so, the apparition seemed to vanish into thin air, and the men believed that the sow, too, had been cheated. But instead of giving up the chase, she hurled herself upon something that, instead of going upright like a revolving wheel, went flat in the grass, feeding and grunting as contentedly as if at the trough.

When the four men reached the voracious animal, they beat her off with sticks and stones and investigated her capture. It was a great black snake, fully 12 feet long, and of unusual thickness for that species.

Every evening at sundown, high up near the clump of trees at the top of the slope, this snake had come from its lair—which was a wide-mouthed ground-squirrel hole—and cunningly thrusting its head into its mouth, had erected its body and bowled like a hoop down the incline, to disappear into an opening in the ground near the river bank. Every evening it did this, save on those rare occasions when, either through alarm or to diversify its action, it bowled uphill.

. . . Which proves that nature and not man invented that most useful device—the wheel.

First Woman to Win Chauchard Prize.

Mme. Jeanne Marni has just won the Chauchard prize given by the Societe des Gens de Lettres of France. This is the first time that it has been awarded to a woman. It was given for the general excellence of Mme. Marni's work. Among the noted recipients of the prize have been Guy de Maupassant and Camille Lemonnier.

Summer Item.

"Yes," said the teacher, "you must always remember that all liars will have their portion in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone."

The little scholar looked thoughtful. Suddenly he exclaimed:

"That settles pa's hash. He goes fishin' twice a week!"

Needed It All.

Old Gentleman—Rastus, if you had half of that big watermelon would you be happy?

Little Rastus—No, sah.

Old Gentleman—What more would you want to complete your happiness?

Little Rastus—De odder half ob dat melon, sah.

DRESSES FOR GIRLS

DRESS for Girl from 14 to 16 Years of Age.—Spotted voile is used for this dress; the ground is white, the spots blue. The full skirt is trimmed with bands of blue silk, cut on the cross.

The bodice has a small yoke of lace, to which the voile is gathered; the epaulettes of lace are bound with silk, and are fixed on under braces of silk. The sleeves are finished with cuffs to match the yoke.

Chip hat, trimmed with blue ribbon.

Tweed Costume.—The plaited skirt and a Norfolk jacket are ever favorite styles to be reproduced in tweed or serge, as they are so convenient for everyday wear. The costume shown here is in gray tweed, the Norfolk jack et lined with glace silk.

Hat of green straw, trimmed with ribbon, wings, and a fancy buckle.

KNICKERS IN THE TROUSSEAU.

Each Gown Will Be Worn Directly Over Them Without a Petticoat.

A trousseau being made in Paris at present reveals the very apotheosis of luxurious frivolity. Such wonderful sheets designed to turn down far over the covers, and inset with wonderful pieces of lace. At the corners these are trimmed with wreaths of tiny satin and chiffon flowers in colors, or in gold or silver gauze knotted with cords and tassels. These corners are fastened by means of lingerie buttons to the satin pouff, while similar wreaths decorate the upper corners of the huge lace-inserted pillows. Entire dinner cloths are made of lace, with squares of fine linen damask let in for each service, the cloths thus designed being for eight, twelve or twenty-four covers. The cloth is laid over cloth of gold or silver, the first when white and gold porcelain is used, gold candelabras and masses of fruit for decoration, while the second is used with blue Sevres porcelain, silver plate and centerpiece of black iris and smilax.

One of the interesting features of this trousseau were the dozens of satin culottes or knickers, in black, white and colors, each with its distinctive trimming of lace frill or ribbon and buckle at the knee, each with its detachable lining of fine white batiste or white china silk. And not a petticoat, not one! Each gown is meant to be worn directly over these knickers.—From a Paris Letter to Vogue.

Care of the Forehead.

The forehead to be pretty should be smooth, even, white, and delicate, and unmarred by frowns, which speedily leave their indelible marks on it. Care should be taken in youth not to form the bad habit of raising the eyebrows when talking, as this leaves long straight lines on the forehead which mar its appearance and which give the countenance an early appearance of age.

The forehead should be kept smooth, white, and free from wrinkles with a good cold cream, or skin food and massage. If the skin has become tanned from the wind or sun, it can be bleached with diluted lemon juice.

The only way that wrinkles can be removed is by constant massage and by being careful not to indulge in any of the movements or motions which cause the wrinkles to appear.

Some Silk Advice.

A silk buyer in a department store has this advice to give in regard to the making up of silk:

"Large pins or needles make permanent holes in silk fabrics and, if extra large, break the threads; then the silk tears easily. Put new needles in the sewing machine before working on new silks. With old needles, only slightly blunted, the silk is certain to pucker and draw.

"Be careful in plaiting or ruffling that the iron used is not too hot. An over-heated iron will crack any silk always wear good shields, and avoid, if possible, much trailing of silk gowns, as the fabric frays quickly."

Color Schemes in Dress.

A sleeveless coat of palest gray tussore is worn with a plain skirt over a blouse of damask rose silk muslin, and the red straw hat to go with it is trimmed with a garland of gray clematis and an upstanding aigrette of black and white grasses. Secondly, a pale melon green Shantung tint has a blouse of ciel blue and a hat of marine blue, a deeper shade, with a wreath of vine leaves and two or three long sprays of purple and blue delphiniums, set like quills, slanting backwards. A black Shantung gown, piped and decorated as to buttons with malachite green, owns a black hat lined with malachite and trimmed with white, green and rose scarlet leafless daisies with black centers.—From the Queen.

Return of the Polonaise.

Many of the tunic princess gowns have more than a suggestion of the old polonaise. One sees the effect not only in handsome afternoon costumes, but also in evening gowns. The tunic, whatever its shape, leads itself admirably to the embroideries, braidings and border trimmings, all of which are so much used now.

FROCKS OF JAPANESE CREPE.

Excellent Material for House Gowns Made Up Simply.

Many years ago the girls of the country made Japanese cotton crepe a popular dress fabric. It was intended for kimonos, but its cheapness and its wearing qualities served well for frocks.

Then it went out of fashion for some reason or other. Now it has returned. It sells at a small price and is dyed into all manner of charming colors and tones.

In pale blue, in light green, in white and in cream, it makes up into charming frocks when a girl is wise enough not to add quantities of lace and ribbon.

It does not stand elaboration very well. It should be left to itself. For simple little house gowns, for shirt-waist suits, made up with plaits and tucks and bias folds, it is quite charming.

The wide puritan collar of embroidery or lace gives a dainty touch to the blouse and a girdle of silk or satin finishes the costume up quite smartly.

SATIN DINNER GOWN.

Satin, though never before regarded as a summery material, has in its light, soft qualities firm hold upon feminine favor and has been adopted as an eminently practical material for the hotel dinner and evening frock of the dressy but substantial type. It will stand the wear and tear and sea air moisture better than the soft, flimsy materials, and one sees a great number of these satin frocks. The above model was carried out in straw color satin in conjunction with lace bands which nearly matched in color, on the low-cut bodice. Other than said bands and the lace frills on sleeves there is no foreign decoration; but there is elaborate use of tucking in artistic fashion on both skirt and bodice as sketch indicates.

Bran Water for the Nerves.

Overworked and tired women who have "nerves" that are unruly should drink bran water between meals instead of eating white bread and butter or anything that comes handy when they feel faint. The phosphates in the bran will develop a steadiness of nerve that is unequaled by any other method of cure. To make the bran water add a coffee cupful of wheat bran (the ordinary bran that is fed to horses) to three pints of water that has begun to boil. Be sure the water is boiling before the bran is put in, and continue to boil it until the bran no longer floats on top. Do not put a cover on it while it boils. Shaking the saucepan helps to settle it. When the bran has settled cover it and boil slowly for ten minutes. Strain it into a pitcher and let it settle. This entire quantity should be taken in one day. The bran water does not taste particularly good, but neither does it taste bad, and in this age of white flour it is what every system needs.

To Prevent Rust.

Before storing knives oil them carefully and wrap them in paper to keep them from rusting.

VISITS WITH UNCLE BY

A Hay Stove.

"HEY RUBE" may be a joke, but a hay stove isn't. A housewife can make home happy with a Dobbins range, and any man can build one! There's that old trunk in the attic. Get it down and line it with hay. Set your kettles in the trunk and pack the cow fodder as tightly about them as possible. Then remove the kettles and leave the holes. I am especially explicit about leaving the holes, because a hay stove must have holes. See that your trunk lid fits tightly and that no hot air can escape. In August this is mandatory.

Now place your beans on the wood stove, or the gas range, and heat them thoroughly. Then set the kettle in the hay stove and drop the lid. It will not be necessary to rope the trunk, but be sure and do not remove the beans before placing the kettle in the hay stove, as you are trying to cook the beans and not the kettle. Now go away and forget the Boston market. If you cannot forget, do not grow curious and peek in to see how the beans are doing. This lets all the hot air escape. Just go away and have faith!

When dinner is ready, serve the beans and you will find them delicious. Our maid simply wouldn't believe it, but she does now since the cat crawled into one of the hay holes, mistaking it for a nest and was inadvertently detained while his body was cooked to a perfectly crisp cat. If it had not been for his other eight lives, he would have been a goner sure.

But, trifling aside, where the gasoline smell goes, a hay stove is a great institution. Every married woman should have one, and every married man should cheerfully remove his duffs some night and lighten the woman's burdens by playing baggage smasher and hay press long enough to make one. It saves fuel and heat in the kitchen, and makes it possible to cook several dishes at one time. Only careless people will bake their cats!

Minstrelsy.

As plays the minstrel by the casement wide
And seeks to win applause within,
So we, the players on our puny flutes,
Every one fashioneth to win
With every throb of passion that we know,
With every trick and artifice,
We saw and blow and puff and strive to call
From worldly lips a favored kiss!

All minstrels, in the street we stand and play
Our airs upon a different key;
Each feels his song the greatest song of all,
The ecstasy of symphony!
And each throughout the day, and oft at night,
Lifts ever onward with the song
And falls to see why worlds are made so cold
And why the course of art so long!

O ye, who play for fame within the street
Where dust is thick on everything,
Go back to where the cooling shade is deep
And learn to love the song you sing!
Make music for the soul within the song,
And not for down it comes wide,
For if thy art should fall to fit the key,
Where is thy comfort—and thy pride?

Ah, minstrel, tune thy lute to play an air
That thrills thyself, and then forget
The world that nods within your music's keep—
Play for thyself thy clarinet
Play soft and low—and in thy breath
Put Love and Hope and Life—and care:
Put self within the soulful strains you blow,
And FAME will grovel at your door!

By the Way.

Some sound philosopher, name unknown, says: "Cheerfulness is the rubber tire of the wheels of life's vehicle. It breaks the jolt on the rough places in the road of life."

Wants His Money.

A Missouri newspaper proprietor quickened the memories of his subscribers in the following manner: "All persons knowing themselves indebted to this office are requested to call and settle. All those indebted to this office and not knowing it are requested to call and find out. Those knowing themselves indebted and not wishing to call are requested to stay at one place long enough for us to catch them."

Byron Williams

Plenty of Time.

"Give me a little time," said the literary young man, according to Speed, "and I will do something to house the country." Three months later he had his chance. He was peddling alarm-clocks in a farming community.—Youth's Companion.

Seeing Things Squarely.

So live that you may look every man squarely in the face. You will see many hideous things, but if there be one or two fair you will be wholly requited.—Lincoln (Neb.) Journal.

HOW IT FEELS TO BE HANGED.

Man Who Has "Been There" Declares Sensation Is Delightful.

I will tell you how it feels to be hanged. At Fort Barrancas, Florida, on April 4, 1868, I was hanged as a confederate spy. I spent four minutes physically and spiritually between earth and heaven. Then a Yankee sergeant believing me to be the wrong man, cut me down.

My first sensation when the barrel was kicked from under my feet was that a steam boiler inside me was about to explode. Every vein and blood vessel to and from my heart seemed charged with an oppressive fullness that must find an avenue of escape. The nervous system throughout its length was tingling with a painful, prickling sensation the like of which I never felt before or since. Then followed the sense of an explosion, as if a volcano had erupted. This seemed to give me relief, and the pain gave way to a pleasurable feeling, one very desirable could it be secured without death. With this sensation a light broke in upon my sight, a light of milky whiteness, yet, strange to say, so transparent that it was easier to pierce with the eye than the light of day. Then came into my mouth a taste of sweetness the like of which I have never since known. And I felt myself moving on, with a consciousness of having everything behind. Then I heard the sweetest of music, and it seemed that more than a thousand harps led in each part, accompanied by myriads of voices.

And the sensation of coming back to life after I had been cut down, was not less painful as the first feeling of hanging. It was acute torture. Every nerve seemed to have a pain of its own. My nose and fingers were seats of the most excruciating agony. In half an hour the pain was all gone, but I would not go through the experience again for the wealth of the Indies.—Rev. J. T. Hand, in Spare Moments.

Disagreed with Osler.

Mr. Taft tells of an incident one night at a dinner in Murray Bay, Canada, at which there were among the guests Supreme Court Justice Harlan, who is upward of 80 years old, and Dr. Osler, the Baltimore scientist of "chloroform 'em at 60" fame. It was Dr. Osler's first visit to Murray Bay, and the scenery enchanted him. He was speaking of it with great enthusiasm to Mr. Taft and Justice Harlan. "What a blessing it would be if all men who have made their mark in the world," began Dr. Osler, "and who are growing old, past 50, say, could retire and come to some quiet, beautiful place like this and end their days in peace and tranquility, free from care and from the incessant pressure of work."

The justice had been listening to Dr. Osler with ill concealed impatience. He exploded at the question.

"No, sir," he roared, bringing his fist down on the table, "no, sir, it would not be a grand thing, either for the men themselves or for the world. Why, sir, the world would go to the devil—to the devil, if all the men over 50 were compelled to retire."

Long Flights of Birds.

Birds of passage make their longest flight somewhere near Bering strait. A naturalist says that probably the longest continuous flight made by the feathered travelers in their peregrinations is accomplished by some of the shore and water birds that nest in the islands of Bering sea and spend the winter at Hawaii and Panning Island, 2,200 miles away. As some of the birds live entirely on the shore and are probably unable to rest on the surface of the water, they must accomplish the whole distance in a single flight, yet they make their way to their destination with absolute precision. Among the lost birds of the world it is likely that the Cornish chough before many years will have to be numbered. The bird is becoming scarce. The rook and the jackdaw are ousting it from its habitat. Curiously enough, in Lhassa it has an almost perfect counterpart, so that after its extinction has been complete it will still be in evidence to all intents and purposes.

A Gambler's Father, but Calm.

This is a really true boy story. The boy is the beloved son of an attorney in the Scarritt building. When not engaged in getting other persons out of trouble this attorney puts in his time helping his son out of difficulties. The boy is 12 years old.

The attorney was called to the telephone this morning by his stenographer. A school professor, a friend of the family, was out at the other end of the wire. "Passing along the street," the professor said, "I caught William in a gambling game—dice, craps, I believe it is called. What shall I do about it?"

"Well," the attorney exclaimed, "if I were you I'd bet on William. He'll win."—Kansas City Star.

Women's Hotel Success.

Trowmart Inn is the name of the woman's hotel in New York which has had its full complement of 250 boarders ever since it was erected two years ago. There is a sewing room, furnished with machines; the laundry may be used until nine o'clock at night; library, parlor with piano, and the boarders may come in at any hour of the night if they have a good excuse. It is declared that the investors receive 2 per cent, and the house is in every way a paying institution, but should be able to accommodate 1,000 rather than 250.

Going, Going, Gone!

"Did you ever stop to inquire of yourself where all the pins go?" asked the originator of silly questions.

"I never did," replied the party of the other part, "but I've noticed one thing that seems to have escaped general notice."

"What's that?" queried the querist.

"That umbrellas go pretty much the same way," answered the other.

He Had Hopes.

"Anyway," said the amateur poultry raiser, "if I don't make anything at the game, I have hopes that my hens will soon be self supporting."

"How do you figure that?" queried the gentleman from Missouri.

"They have taken to laying their own eggs," explained the amateur.

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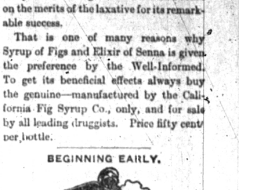

"I have already promised ten cousins to marry them. I ask sec I shall never get through all my divorces."

Few Horses Used in China.

The only places in China where horses are used to any great extent are Shanghai, Eating Tau and Tien-Tsin. Australian "waiers," so called because they originate in New South Wales, are the most popular. These horses are imported into Shanghai in batches of from 20 to 50, are well taken care of on the voyage, and, arriving in excellent condition, are put into use within a couple of weeks after arrival.

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