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The Discontented Pendulum

Emilie Poulsson

An old clock that had stood for fifty years in a farmer's kitchen without giving its owner any cause of complaint, early one summer's morning, before the family was stirring, suddenly stopped. Upon this, the dial plate (if we may credit the fable) changed countenance with alarm; the hands made a vain effort to continue their course; the wheels remained motionless with surprise; the weights hung speechless; each member felt disposed to lay the blame on the others. At length, the dial instituted an inquiry as to the cause of the stagnation, when hands, wheels, weights, with one voice, protested their innocence.
But now, a faint tick was heard below from the pendulum, who thus spoke: "I confess myself to be the sole cause of the present stoppage, and I am willing, for the general satisfaction, to assign my reasons. The truth is, that I am tired of ticking." Upon hearing this, the old clock became so enraged that it was on the very point of striking.



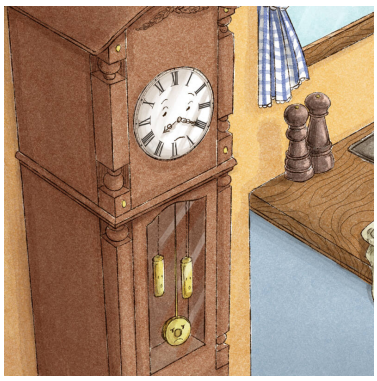
"Lazy wire!" exclaimed the dial plate, holding up its hands.

"Very good!" replied the pendulum; "it is vastly easy for you, Mistress Dial, who have always, as everybody knows, set yourself up above me -- it is vastly easy for you, I say, to accuse other people of laziness! You, who have had nothing to do all the days of your life but to stare people in the face, and to amuse yourself with watching all that goes on in the kitchen! Think, I beseech you, how would you like to be shut up for life in this dark closet, and to wag backwards and forwards year after year, as I do."

"As to that," said the dial, "is there not a window in your house for you to look through?"

"For all that," resumed the pendulum, "it is very dark here, and, although there is a window, I dare not stop, even for an instant, to look out at it. Besides, I am really tired of my way of life; and if you wish, I'll tell you how I took this disgust at my employment. I happened this morning to be calculating how many times I should have to tick in the course of only the next twenty-four hours; perhaps

some of you there above can give me the exact sum."
The minute-hand, being quick at figures, replied, "Eighty-six thousand four hundred times."



"Exactly so," replied the pendulum. "Well, I appeal to you all, if the very thought of this was not enough to fatigue one; and when I began to multiply the strokes of one day by those of months and years, really it is no wonder if I felt discouraged at the prospect; so, after a great deal of reasoning and hesitation, thinks I to myself, 'I'll stop.'"

The dial could scarcely keep its countenance during this harangue, but, resuming its gravity, thus replied: "Dear Mr. Pendulum, I am really astonished that such a useful, industrious person as yourself should have been overcome by this sudden suggestion. It is true, you have done a good deal of work in your time; so have we all, and are likely to do, which, although it may fatigue us to think of, the question is, whether it will fatigue us to do. Will you now give about half a dozen strokes to illustrate my argument?"

The pendulum complied, and ticked six times in its usual pace. "Now," resumed the dial, "may I be allowed to inquire if that exertion was at all fatiguing or disagreeable to you?"

"Not in the least," replied the pendulum; "it is not of six strokes that I complain, nor of sixty, but of millions."

"Very good," replied the dial, "but, recollect that, though you may think of a million strokes in an instant, you are required to execute but one; and that, however often you may hereafter have to swing, a moment will always be given you to swing in."

"Then I hope," resumed the dial plate, "we shall all immediately return to our duty, for the maids will lie in bed if we stand idling thus." Upon this, the weights, who had never been accused of light conduct, used all their influence in urging him to proceed; when, as with one consent, the wheels began to turn, the hands began to move, and the pendulum began to swing; while a beam of the rising sun, that streamed through a hole in the kitchen window, shone full upon the dial plate, when it brightened up as if nothing had been the matter. When the farmer came down to breakfast that morning, upon looking at the clock, he declared that his watch had gained half an hour in the night.



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