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The Six Sillies

Andrew Lang

Once there was a young woman who reached the age of thirty-seven without ever having had a suitor, because she was so silly that nobody wanted to marry her.

At last a young man came to court her. Her mother, beaming with joy, sent her down to the cellar to draw a jug of beer.

The girl never came back. After a while her mother went to see what had happened, and found her sitting on the stairs with her head in her hands, while beside her the beer ran all over the floor, because she had forgotten to close the tap.

"What are you doing?" asked her mother.

"I was thinking what I'll call my first child when I marry that young man. All the names in the calendar are taken already."

The mother sat down on the step beside her. "I'll think about it with you, dear."



Upstairs, the father waited with the young man. When neither wife nor daughter returned, he went down to look. There they both sat on the stairs, with the beer running across the floor from the open tap.

"What are you doing? The beer's pouring all over the cellar!"

"We're thinking what to call our daughter's children when she marries that young man. All the names in the calendar are taken."

"Well," said the father, "I'll think about it with you." And he sat down too.

At last the young man grew impatient and went down to see what the three of them were doing. He found them on the stairs, with the beer pouring across the floor.

"What on earth are you all doing, letting the beer run all over the cellar?"

"I know, my boy," said the father, "but if you marry our daughter, what will you

call your children? All the names in the calendar are taken."

The young man listened. Then he said, "Goodbye. I'm leaving. When I've found three people sillier than you, I'll come back and marry your daughter."

He walked a long way, until he came to an orchard. People there were beating nuts from the trees and trying to toss them into a cart with a pitchfork.

"What are you doing?"

"We want to fill the cart with walnuts, but we can't manage it."

He told them to use a basket and tip the walnuts into the cart. "That's one more silly than the three," he thought.

He went on until he reached a wood. A man was trying with all his might to make his pig climb an oak tree to eat acorns.

"What are you doing, my good man?"

"I want my pig to eat acorns, and I can't get him up the tree."

"If you climbed up and shook the acorns down, the pig could eat them off the ground."

"Oh! I never thought of that."

"Here's the second silly," thought the young man.

Farther along the road he met a man who had never worn trousers and was trying to put on a pair. He had hung them from a tree and was jumping up and down, trying to land with a leg in each hole.

"It would be easier," said the young man, "to hold them in your hands and put your legs in one at a time."

"Goodness! You're cleverer than I am. That never occurred to me."

Now the young man had found three people even sillier than his sweetheart, her father, and her mother. So he went home and married the young woman.

In time they had a great many children.

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