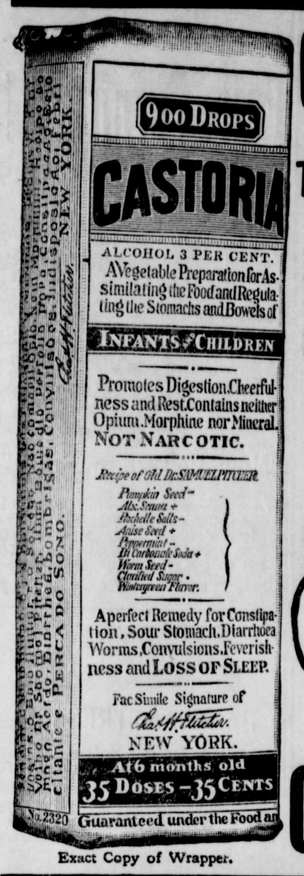

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LENGTH OF THE DAYS

Difference Between the Star Day and the Sun Day.

IT IS GREATEST IN WINTER.

Why the Difference Occurs and How It May Be Observed—Oddly Enough the Shortest Day In the Year Is Really the Longest Day In Time.

How long, after all, is a day? The geographies say that it is the time required for the earth to turn once on its axis, that it measures twenty-four hours by the clock and that a fraction more than 365 of them are to be found in a year.

It is a good plan when one reads anything in a book to test it when he can for himself. We want to see just how long it takes the earth to turn over once. Let us take any one of the fixed stars that chances to be in line with some convenient point and, watch in hand, notice the precise moment at which the star touches, let us say, a particular tree, branch or steeple on the horizon line. If on the next evening we stand at precisely the same spot and sight the same star again in line with the same point as before, then we shall know that the earth has turned on its axis just once.

Curiously enough, however, we shall discover, if this is done carefully, that, in spite of what the books say, it does not require twenty-four hours for the earth to turn over once. About four minutes before the day is up, by the clock, the earth has revolved once and brought the star back to its old position in the sky. Really, then, the earth turns on its axis once in twenty-three hours, fifty-six minutes and four seconds and, as one can easily reckon, makes something more than 366 revolutions in a year.

But human beings are not so much interested in the stars as in the sun. We really don't care much how long it takes the earth to turn over and bring a star back again to the same point in the sky or how many times in a year a star seems to go by. We set our clocks and reckon our year by the turning of the earth under the sun, and because the earth not only turns under the sun, but also goes round it, it takes about four minutes longer to bring the sun up to its old place in the sky than to bring back a star. This comes about simply enough. Suppose one is in a room looking out the window at a tree. If he turns round once exactly he will find himself looking straight at the tree again, but if he tried the same thing when he was on a moving train he would find that while he was making the turn the tree had fallen behind. He would then, according to the way he twirled, have to turn a little more or a little less to bring the tree straight before his nose.

Therefore it is not quite true that a day is the time required for the earth to turn once on its axis. It really is this time plus the four minutes or so required for it to turn and look back at the sun. The time required for this extra turn is not the same at all times in the year. One can easily see in the case of the moving train that the faster the cars were moving or the nearer the track the tree stood the more the latter would seem to shift its position. Since the earth is some 3,000,000 miles nearer the sun in winter than in summer, and since also the nearer the sun it is the faster it travels, the difference between star day and sun day is greatest in winter.

Oddly enough, it happens that Dec. 22, which has the least daylight of any day in the year and is therefore commonly said to be the shortest of all days, is really the longest. It does, as a matter of fact, run almost half a minute over twenty-four hours, while the true shortest day, which comes on Sept. 17, falls short by about the same time.

So we really have three different "days." There is the star day, which is the time during which the earth turns over once. This, because the earth spins steadily, is always the same length, twenty-three hours, fifty-six minutes, four and nine-hundredths seconds, and there are 366 of them in a year. Then there is the ordinary legal day, which is the time required for a proper clock to get round twice. This is just twenty-four hours. Besides these, there is the sun day, its time told by the sundial, which, taking short with long, averages twenty-four hours, but is never found to be exactly the same length for two days in succession.

There is a string of long days in the winter, followed by a series of short ones in the spring. In the summer the sun days get long again, though not quite so long as in the winter. In the autumn come the shortest days of all. Only occasionally are clock day and sun day of the same length. Only four times a year do clock noon by the clock hands and sun noon by the sundial occur at the same moment, while, because the long and short sun days are found in sets, they oftentimes may be more than fifteen minutes apart.

The vast majority of the people reckon their time by the sun. But time for civilized men is time by the clock. The days are all twenty-four hours long, and no matter where the sun is it is noon for us when the clock strikes 12. Nevertheless, astronomers often go by star time, get in an extra day in each year and have their noon fall at all times of the day or night.—E. T. Brewster in Chicago Record-Herald.

It is a kingly act to help the fallen.—Ovid.

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DIET AND SLEEP.

Eating Before Retiring and Digestion During Slumber.

Diet has little influence on sleep except in so far as it may produce disturbances of digestion and through these of the general balance of health.

The hypnotic effects of certain foods, such as onions, lettuce, milk, etc., are chiefly imaginary. Even the time of the last meal of the day is of relatively little importance except that it is well to let this be at least two or three hours before retiring. But even this rule has many exceptions, as many healthy laboring men habitually fall asleep over their pipes directly after supper, and children after poking the spoon into their little eyes nod off over the tea table, with the bread and butter still clutched in their chubby fists.

The processes of digestion probably go on more slowly during sleep, but they are perfectly carried out, as is illustrated by the almost invariable habit among animals of going to sleep directly after a meal.

Indeed, a moderate amount of food in the stomach or intestines seems to promote slumber. Many night workers, for instance, sleep much better for taking a light or even full supper just before retiring.—Dr. Woods Hutchinson in American Magazine.

The Tenors' Parts.

Probably the composers are largely responsible for tenor worship. In Verdi's operas, with hardly an exception, the tenor plays a more important part than the baritone or bass, and the same is true of other opera writers, Mozart's "Don Giovanni" being a notable exception. Wagner wrote one opera, "The Flying Dutchman," in which the baritone is king, whereas in six of his works the supremacy of the tenor is indicated by the very titles—"Rienzi," "Tannhauser," "Lohengrin," "Tristan und Isolde," "Siegfried," "Parsifal." This being so, we shall probably continue to be subject to the tyranny of one tenor or another, unless it be true, as was maintained at a conclave of French savants, that the tenor voice is a relic of barbarism, destined to become extinct.—Argonaut.

Poems, Pictures and Songs.

It takes all kinds of people to make up a world and all kinds of poetry to make up a world literature. Despite the efforts of the critics to lay down definite canons of judgment for the literary, pictorial and musical arts most of us continue to like a poem, a picture or a song for no better reason than because we like it. It appeals to us, and if it does that it is for us a true poem, picture or song. Whether it is to be classed among the great products of art is another question. That depends upon the universality and permanence of the appeal it makes.—Current Literature.

Trifling Favors.

Mrs. Jones—That old maid next door is the most brazen borrower I know! Mrs. Brown — Indeed! Mrs. Jones—Yes. Why, only yesterday she came over to inquire if she could borrow my husband for an hour to clean her sewing machine, thrash a man who had insulted her and discharge her cook.—London Scraps.

Pretty Bad.

"Well," asked Stinjay, "what do you think of the cigar? My doctor especially recommended that brand to me."

"H'm!" coughed Knox. "So he wants to cure you of the tobacco habit, eh?"—Philadelphia Press.

Her Mission.

"She always reminds me of a public office."

"That's curious."

"Not so very. She's continually seeking the man, you know."—Chicago Record-Herald.

Suspicious.

Horse Dealer—'E jumps well, 'e trots beautiful, 'e's as quiet as a lamb, and I'll let you 'ave 'im cheap. Possible Purchaser—Why, what's wrong with him?—London Answers.

Woman is a thing of beauty and an expense forever.—Life.

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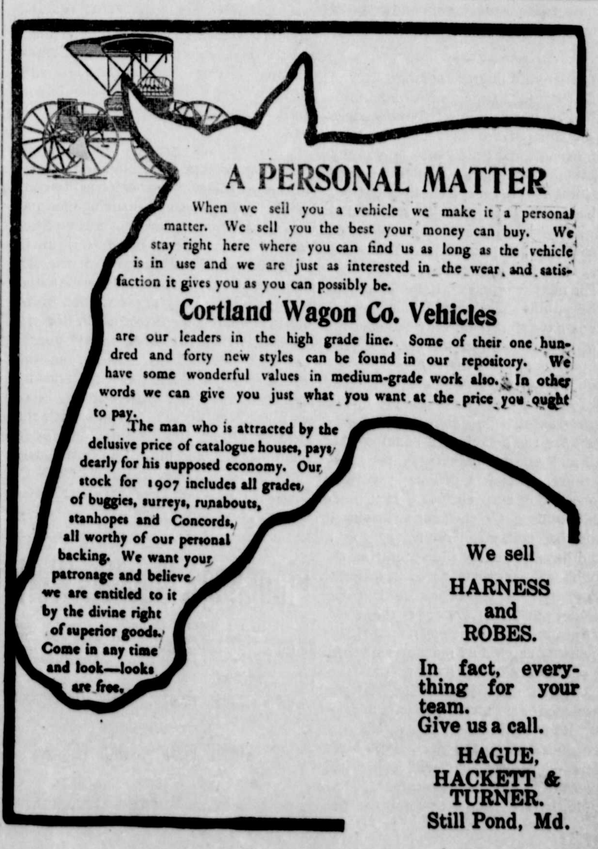

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