

“When the neighbors are playing their radio too loud, late at night, what do you wish they’d turn down?”

“The awful din,” answered Tock.

“When the street on your block is being repaired and the pneumatic drills are working all day, what does everyone complain of?”

“The dreadful row,” volunteered the Humbug brightly.

“The dreadful RAUW,” cried the anguished DYNNE, “was my grandfather. He perished in the great silence epidemic of 1712.”

Milo felt so sorry for the unhappy DYNNE that he gave him his handkerchief, which was immediately covered in bluish smoggy tears.

“Thank you,” groaned the DYNNE; “that’s very kind. But I certainly can’t understand why you don’t like noise,” he said. “Why, I heard an explosion last week that was so lovely I cried for two days.”

The very thought of it upset him so much that he began to sob all over again in a way that sounded almost exactly like a handful of fingernails being scratched across a mile-long blackboard. He buried his head in the doctor’s lap.

“He’s very sensitive, isn’t he?” asked Milo, trying to comfort the emotional DYNNE.

“It’s true,” agreed Dr. Dischord. “But he’s right, you know, for noise is the most valuable thing in the world.”

“King Azaz says words are,” said Milo.

“NONSENSE,” the doctor roared. “Why, when a baby wants food, how does he ask?”

“He screams!” answered the DYNNE, looking up happily.

“And when an automobile wants gas?”

“It chokes!” he shouted again, jumping for joy.

“When a river wants water, what does it do?”

“It creaks!” bellowed the DYNNE as he collapsed into a fit of uncontrolled laughter.

“And what happens when a new day begins?”

“It breaks!” he gasped joyfully from the floor, a look of utter bliss covering his face.

“You see how simple it is,” the doctor said to Milo, who didn’t see at all. And then, turning to the tearstained, smiling DYNNE, he remarked, “Isn’t it time for you to go?”

“Where to?” asked Milo. “Perhaps we’re going the same way.”

“I think not,” the DYNNE replied, picking up an armful of empty sacks from the table, “for I’m going on my noise collection rounds. You see, once a day I travel throughout the kingdom and collect all the wonderfully horrible and

beautifully unpleasant noises that have been made, pack them into my sacks, and bring them back here for the doctor to make his medicines from.”

“And a good job he does,” said Dr. Dischord, pounding his fist on the table.

“So, wherever the noise is, that’s where you’ll find me,” said the DYNNE with an appreciative smile; “and I must hurry along, for I understand that today there’s to be a screech, several loud crashes, and a bit of pandemonium.”

“And in which direction are you going?” asked the doctor, mixing another brew.

“To Digitopolis,” replied Milo.

“How unfortunate,” he said as the DYNNE shuffled toward the door; “how very unfortunate, for then you must pass through the Valley of Sound.”

“Is that bad?” asked the perpetually worried Humbug. The DYNNE paused in the doorway with a look of extreme horror on his almost featureless face, and the doctor shuddered in a way that sounded very much like a fast-moving freight train being derailed into a mountain of custard.

“Well you might ask, for you will find out soon enough,” was all he would say as he sadly bade them farewell and the DYNNE galloped off on his rounds.

12. THE SILENT VALLEY

“How agreeable and pleasant this valley is,” thought Milo as once again they bounced along the highway, with the Humbug humming snatches of old songs, to his own vast amusement, and Tock sniffing contentedly at the wind.

“I really can’t see what Dr. Dischord was so concerned about; there certainly couldn’t be anything unpleasant along this road.” And just as the thought crossed his mind they passed through a heavy stone gateway and everything was very different. At first it was difficult to tell just what had changed – it all looked the same and it all smelled the same – but, for some reason, nothing sounded the same.

“I wonder what’s happened?” said Milo. At least that’s what he tried to say, for, although his lips moved, not a sound came from his mouth. And suddenly he realized what it was, for Tock was no longer ticking and the Humbug, although happily singing, was doing so in complete silence. The wind no longer rustled the leaves, the car no longer squeaked, and the insects no longer buzzed in the fields. Not the slightest thing could be heard, and it felt as if, in some mysterious way, a switch had been thrown and all the sound in the world had been turned off at the same instant. The Humbug, suddenly realizing what had happened, leaped to his feet in terror, and Tock worriedly checked to see if he

was still keeping time. It was certainly a strange feeling to know that no matter how loudly or softly you chatted or rattled or bumped, it all came out the same way – as nothing.

“How dreadful,” thought Milo as he slowed down the car.

The three of them began to talk and shout at once with absolutely no result until, hardly noticing where they were going, they had driven into the midst of a



large crowd of people marching along the road. Some of them were singing at the tops of their nonexistent voices and the others were carrying large signs which proclaimed:

DOWN WITH SILENCE

ALL QUIET IS NO DIET

IT'S LAUDABLE TO BE AUDIBLE

MORE SOUND FOR ALL

And one enormous banner stated simply:

HEAR HERE

Except for these, and the big brass cannon being pulled along behind, they all looked very much like the residents of any other small valley to which you've never been.

When the car had stopped, one of them held up a placard which said: “WELCOME TO THE VALLEY OF SOUND.” And the others cheered as loudly as possible, which was not very loud at all.

“HAVE YOU COME TO HELP US?” asked another, stepping forward with his question.

“PLEASE!” added a third.

Milo tried desperately to say who he was and where he was going, but to no avail. As he did, four more placards announced:

LISTEN LOOK CAREFULLY

AND WE

WILL TELL YOU

OF OUR TERRIBLE MISFORTUNE

And while two of them held up a large blackboard, a third, writing as fast as he could, explained why there was nothing but quiet in the Valley of Sound.

“At a place in the valley not far from here,” he began, “where the echoes used to gather and the winds came to rest, there is a great stone fortress, and in it lives the Soundkeeper, who rules this land. When the old king of Wisdom drove the demons into the distant mountains, he appointed her guardian of all sounds and noises, past, present, and future.

“For years she ruled as a wise and beloved monarch, each morning at sunrise releasing the day's new sounds, to be borne by the winds throughout the kingdom, and each night at moonset gathering in the old sounds, to be catalogued and filed in the vast storage vaults below.”

The writer paused for a moment to mop his brow and then, since the blackboard was full, erased it completely and continued anew from the top.

“She was generous to a fault and provided us with all the sound we could possibly use: for singing as we worked, for bubbling pots of stew, for the chop of an ax and the crash of a tree, for the creak of a hinge and the hoot of an owl, for the squish of a shoe in the mud and the friendly tapping of rain on the roof, and

for the sweet music of pipes and the sharp snap of winter ice cracking on the ground.”

He paused again as a tear of longing rolled from cheek to lip with the sweet-salty taste of an old memory.

“And all these sounds, when once used, would be carefully placed in alphabetical order and neatly kept for future reference. Everyone lived in peace, and the valley flourished as the happy home of sound. But then things began to change.

“Slowly at first, and then in a rush, more people came to settle here and brought with them new ways and new sounds, some very beautiful and some less so. But everyone was so busy with the things that had to be done that they scarcely had time to listen at all. And, as you know, a sound which is not heard disappears forever and is not to be found again.

“People laughed less and grumbled more, sang less and shouted more, and the sounds they made grew louder and uglier. It became difficult to hear even the birds or the breeze, and soon everyone stopped listening for them.”

He again cleared the blackboard, as the Humbug choked back a sob, and continued writing.

“The Soundkeeper grew worried and disconsolate. Each day there were fewer sounds to be collected, and most of those were hardly worth keeping. Many people thought it was the weather, and others blamed the moon, but the general consensus of opinion held that the trouble began at the time that Rhyme and Reason were banished. But, no matter what the cause, no one knew what to do.

“Then one day Dr. Dischord appeared in the valley with his wagon of medicines and the bluish smoggy DYNNE. He made a thorough examination and promised to cure everyone of everything; and the Soundkeeper let him try.

“He gave several bad-tasting spoonfuls of medicine to every adult and child, and it worked – but not really as expected. For he cured everybody of everything *but* noise. The Soundkeeper became furious. She chased him from the valley forever and then issued the following decree:

“ ‘FROM THIS DAY FORWARD THE VALLEY OF SOUND
SHALL BE SILENT. SINCE SOUND IS NO LONGER APPRECI-
ATED,
I HEREBY ABOLISH IT. PLEASE RETURN ALL UNUSED
AMOUNTS
TO THE FORTRESS IMMEDIATELY.’

“And that’s the way it has been ever since,” he concluded sadly. “There is nothing we can do to change it, and each day new hardships are reported.”

A small man, with his arms full of letters and messages, pushed through the crowd and offered them to Milo. Milo took one which read:

Dear Soundkeeper,

We had a thunderstorm last week and the thunder still hasn’t arrived. How long should we wait?

Yours truly,

A friend

Then he took a telegram which stated:

BAND CONCERT GREAT SUCCESS STOP WHEN MAY WE EX-
PECT THE MUSIC STOP

“Now you see,” continued the writer, “why you must help us attack the fortress and free sound.”

“What can I do?” wrote Milo.

“You must visit the Soundkeeper and bring from the fortress one sound, no matter how small, with which to load our cannon. For, if we can reach the walls with the slightest noise, they will collapse and free the rest. It won’t be easy, for she is hard to deceive, but you must try.”

Milo thought for just a moment and then, with a resolute “I shall,” volunteered to go. Within a few minutes he stood bravely at the fortress door.

“Knock, knock,” he wrote neatly on a piece of paper, which he pushed under the crack. In a moment the great portal swung open, and, as it closed behind him, a gentle voice sang out:

“Right this way; I’m in the parlor.”

“Can I talk now?” cried Milo happily, hearing his voice once again.

“Yes, but only in here,” she replied softly. “Now do come into the parlor.”

Milo walked slowly down the long hallway and into the little room where the Soundkeeper sat listening intently to an enormous radio set, whose switches, dials, knobs, meters, and speaker covered one whole wall, and which at the moment was playing nothing.

“Isn’t that lovely?” she sighed. “It’s my favorite program – fifteen minutes of silence – and after that there’s a half hour of quiet and then an interlude of lull. Why, did you know that there are almost as many kinds of stillness as there are sounds? But, sadly enough, no one pays any attention to them these days.

“Have you ever heard the wonderful silence just before the dawn?” she inquired. “Or the quiet and calm just as a storm ends? Or perhaps you know the silence when you haven’t the answer to a question you’ve been asked, or the hush of a country road at night, or the expectant pause in a roomful of people when someone is just about to speak, or, most beautiful of all, the moment after the door closes and you’re all alone in the whole house? Each one is different, you know, and all very beautiful, if you listen carefully.”

As she spoke, the thousands of little bells and chimes which covered her from head to toe tinkled softly and, as if in reply, the telephone began to ring, too.

“For someone who loves silence, she certainly talks a great deal,” thought Milo.

“At one time I was able to listen to any sound made any place at any time,” the Soundkeeper remarked, pointing towards the radio wall, “but now I merely...”

“Pardon me,” interrupted Milo as the phone continued to ring, “but aren’t you going to answer it?”

“Oh no, not in the middle of the program,” she replied, and turned the silence up a little louder.

“But it may be important,” insisted Milo.

“Not at all,” she assured him; “it’s only me. It gets so lonely around here, with no sounds to distribute or collect, that I call myself seven or eight times a day just to see how I am.”

“How are you?” he asked politely.

“Not very well, I’m afraid. I seem to have a touch of static,” she complained. “But what brings you here? Of course – you’ve come to tour the vaults. Well, they’re usually open to the public only on Mondays from two to four, but since you’ve traveled so far, we’ll have to make an exception. Follow me, please.”

She quickly bounced to her feet with a chorus of jingles and chimes and started down the hallway.



“Don’t you just love jingles and chimes? I do,” she answered quickly. “Besides, they’re very convenient, for I’m always getting lost in this big fortress, and all I have to do is listen for them and then I know exactly where I am.”

They entered a tiny cage-like elevator and traveled down for fully three quarters of a minute, stopping finally in an immense vault, whose long lines of file drawers and storage bins stretched in all directions from where here began to where there ended, and from floor to ceiling.

“Every sound that’s ever been made in history is kept here,” said the Soundkeeper, skipping down one of the corridors with Milo in hand. “For instance, look here.”

She opened one of the drawers and pulled out a small brown envelope. “This is the exact tune George Washington whistled when he crossed the Delaware on that icy night in 1777.”

Milo peered into the envelope and, sure enough, that’s exactly what was in it.

“But why do you collect them all?” he asked as she closed the drawer.

“If we didn’t collect them,” said the Soundkeeper as they continued to stroll through the vault, “the air would be full of old sounds and noises bouncing around and bumping into things. It would be terribly confusing, because you’d never know whether you were listening to an old one or a new one. Besides, I do like to collect things, and there are more sounds than almost anything else. Why, I have everything here from the buzz of a mosquito a million years ago to what your mother said to you this morning, and if you come back here in two days, I’ll tell you what she said tomorrow. It’s really very simple; let me show you. Say a word – any word.”

“Hello,” said Milo, for that was all he could think of.

“Now where do you think it went?” she asked with a smile.

“I don’t know,” said Milo, shrugging his shoulders. “I always thought that...”

“Most people do,” she hummed, peering down one of the corridors. “Now, let me see: first we find the cabinet with today’s sounds. Ah, here it is. Then we look under G for greetings, then under M for Milo, and here it is already in its envelope. So, you see, the whole system is quite automatic. It’s a shame we hardly use it any more.”

“That’s wonderful,” gasped Milo. “May I have one little sound as a souvenir?”

“Certainly,” she said with pride, and then, immediately thinking better of it, added, “not. And don’t try to take one, because it’s strictly against the rules.”

Milo was crestfallen. He had no idea how to steal a sound, even the smallest one, for the Soundkeeper always had at least one eye carefully focused on him.

“Now for a look at the workshops,” she cried, whisking him through another door and into a large abandoned laboratory full of old pieces of equipment, all untended and rusting.

“This is where we used to invent the sounds,” she said wistfully.

“Do they have to be invented?” asked Milo, who seemed surprised at almost everything she told him. “I thought they just *were*.”

“No one realizes how much trouble we go through to make them,” she complained. “Why, at one time this shop was crowded and busy from morning to night.”

“But how do you invent a sound?” Milo inquired.

“Oh, that’s very easy,” she said. “First you must decide exactly what the sound looks like, for each sound has its own exact shape and size. Then you make some of them here in the shop, and grind each one three times into an invisible powder, and throw a little of each into the air every time you need it.”

“But I’ve never seen a sound,” Milo insisted.

“You never see them out there,” she said, waving her arm in the general direction of everywhere, “except every once in a while on a very cold morning when they freeze. But in here we see them all the time. Here, let me show you.”

She picked up a padded stick and struck a nearby bass drum six times. Six large woolly, fluffy cotton balls, each about two feet across, rolled silently out onto the floor.

“You see,” she said, putting some of them into a large grinder. “Now listen.” And she took a pinch of the invisible powder and threw it into the air with a “BOOM, BOOM, BOOM, BOOM.”

“Do you know what a handclap looks like?”

Milo shook his head.

“Try it,” she commanded.

He clapped his hands once and a single sheet of clean white paper fluttered to the floor. He tried it three more times and three more sheets of paper did the very same thing. And then he applauded as fast as he could and a great cascade of papers filled the air.

“Isn’t that simple? And it’s the same for all

sounds. If you think about it, you’ll soon know what each one looks like. Take laughter, for instance,” she said, laughing brightly, and a thousand tiny brightly colored bubbles flew into the air and popped noiselessly. “Or speech,” she continued. “Some of it is light and airy, some sharp and pointed, but most of it, I’m afraid, is just heavy and dull.”

“How about music?” asked Milo excitedly.

“Right over here – we weave it on our looms. Symphonies are the large beautiful carpets with all the rhythms and melodies woven in. Concertos are these tapestries, and all the other bolts of cloth are serenades, waltzes, overtures, and rhapsodies. And we also have some of the songs that you often sing,” she cried, holding up a handful of brightly colored handkerchiefs.

She stopped for a moment and said sadly, “We even had one section over there that did nothing but put the sound of the ocean into sea shells. This was once such a happy place.”

“Then why don’t you make sound for everyone now?” he shouted, so eagerly that the Soundkeeper leaped back in surprise.

“Don’t shout so, young man! If there’s one thing we need more of around here, it’s less noise. Now come with me and I’ll tell you all about it – and put that down immediately!” Her last remark was directed toward Milo’s efforts to stuff one of the large drumbeats into his back pocket.

They returned quickly to the parlor, and when the Soundkeeper had settled herself in a chair and carefully tuned the radio to a special hour of hush, Milo asked his question once again, in a somewhat lower voice.

“It doesn’t make me happy to hold back the sounds,” she began softly, “for if we listen to them carefully they can sometimes tell us things far better than words.”

“But if that is so,” asked Milo – and he had no doubt that it was – “shouldn’t you release them?”

“NEVER!” she cried. “They just use them to make horrible noises which are ugly to see and worse to hear. I leave all that to Dr. Dischord and that awful, awful DYNNE.”

“But some noises are good sounds, aren’t they?” he insisted.

“That may be true,” she replied stubbornly, “but if they won’t make the sounds that I like, they won’t make any.”

“But “ he started to say, and it got no further than that. For while he was about to say that he didn’t think that that was quite fair (a thought to which the obstinate Soundkeeper might not have taken kindly) he suddenly discovered the way he would carry his little sound from the fortress. In the instant between say-



ing the word and before it sailed off into the air he had clamped his lips shut – and the “but” was trapped in his mouth, all made but not spoken.

“Well, I mustn’t keep you all day,” she said impatiently. “Now turn your pockets out so that I can see that you didn’t steal anything and you can be on your way.”

When he had satisfied the Soundkeeper, he nodded his farewell – for it would have been most impractical to say “Thank you” or “Good afternoon” – and raced out the door.

13. UNFORTUNATE CONCLUSIONS

With his mouth shut tight, and his feet moving as fast as thoughts could make them, Milo ran all the way back to the car. There was great excitement when he arrived, as Tock raced happily down the road to greet him. The Humbug personally accepted all congratulations from the crowd.

“Where is the sound?” someone hastily scribbled on the blackboard, and they all waited anxiously for the reply.

Milo caught his breath, picked up the chalk, and explained simply, “It’s on the tip of my tongue.”

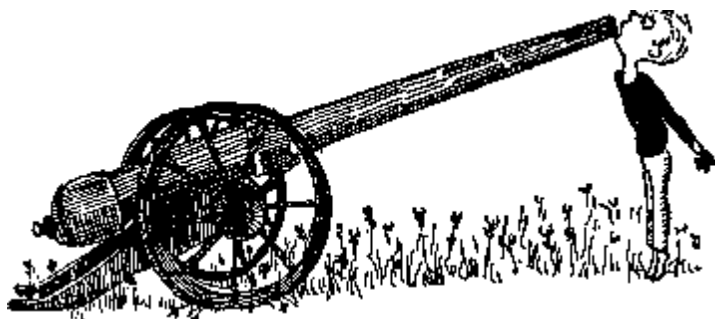
Several people excitedly threw their hats into the air, some shouted what would have been a loud hurrah, and the rest pushed the heavy cannon into place. They aimed it directly at the thickest part of the fortress wall and packed it full of gunpowder. Milo stood on tiptoe, leaned over into the cannon’s mouth, and parted his lips. The small sound dropped silently to the bottom and everything was ready. In another moment the fuse was lit and sputtering.

“I hope no one gets hurt,” thought Milo, and, before he had time to think again, an

immense
cloud of gray
and white
smoke
leaped from
the gun and,
along with
it, so softly
that it was
hardly heard,

came the sound of –

BUT



It flew toward the wall for several seconds in a high, lazy arc and then struck ever so lightly just to the right of the big door. For an instant there was an ominous stillness, quieter and more silent than ever before, as if even the air was holding its breath. And then, almost immediately, there was a blasting, roaring, thundering smash, followed by a crushing, shattering, bursting crash, as every stone in the fortress came toppling to the ground and the vaults burst open, spilling the sounds of history into the wind.

Every sound that had ever been uttered or made, from way back to when there were none, to way up when there were too many, came hurtling out of the debris in a way that sounded as though everyone in the world was laughing, whistling, shouting, crying, singing, whispering, humming, screaming, coughing, and sneezing, all at the same time. There were bits of old speeches floating about, as well as recited lessons, gunshots from old wars, babies’ cries, auto horns, waterfalls, electric fans, galloping horses, and a great deal of everything else.

For a while there was total and deafening confusion and then, almost as quickly as they’d come, all the old sounds disappeared over the hill in search of their new freedom, and things were normal again. The people quickly went about their busy talkative business and, as the smoke and dust cleared, only Milo, Tock, and the Humbug noticed the Soundkeeper sitting disconsolately on a pile of rubble.

“I’m terribly sorry,” said Milo sympathetically as the three of them went to console her.

“But we had to do it,” added Tock, sniffing around the ruins.

“What a terrible mess,” observed the Humbug, with his knack for saying exactly the wrong thing.

The Soundkeeper looked around with an expression of unrelieved sadness on her unhappy face,

“It will take years to collect all those sounds again,” she sobbed, “and even longer to put them back in proper order. But it’s all my fault. For you can’t improve sound by having only silence.”



The problem is to use each at the proper time.”

As she spoke, the familiar and unmistakable *squinchsquanch, squinchsquanch* of the DYNNE’s heavy footsteps could be heard plodding over the hill, and when he finally appeared he was dragging an incredibly large sack behind him.

“Can anyone use these sounds?” he puffed, mopping his forehead. “They all came over the hill at once and none of them are awful enough for me.”

The Soundkeeper peered into the sack, and there were all the sounds which had burst from the vaults.

“How nice of you to return them!” she cried happily.

“You and the doctor must come by for an evening of beautiful music when my fortress is repaired.”

The thought of it so horrified the DYNNE that he excused himself immediately and dashed off down the road in a great panic.

“I hope I haven’t offended him,” she said with some concern.

“He only likes unpleasant sounds,” volunteered Tock.

“Ah yes,” she sighed; “I keep forgetting that many people do. But I suppose they are necessary, for you’d never really know how pleasant one was unless you knew how unpleasant it wasn’t.” She paused for a moment, then continued: “If only Rhyme and Reason were here, I’m sure things would improve.”

“That’s why we’re going to rescue them,” said Milo proudly.

“What a long, hard journey that will be! You’ll need some nourishment,” she cried, handing Milo a small brown package, neatly wrapped and tied with string.

“Now remember: they’re not for eating, but for listening, because you’ll often be hungry for sounds as well as food. Here are street noises at night, train whistles a long way off, dry leaves burning, busy department stores, crunching toast, creaking bedsprings, and, of course, all kinds of laughter. There’s a little of each, and in far-off lonely places I think you’ll be glad to have them.”

“I’m sure we will,” replied Milo gratefully.

“Just take this road to the sea and turn left,” she told them. “You’ll soon be in Digitopolis.”

Arid almost before she had finished, they had said good-by and left the valley behind them. The shore line was peaceful and flat, and the calm sea bumped it playfully along the sandy beach. In the distance a beautiful island covered with palm trees and flowers beckoned invitingly from the sparkling water.

“Nothing can possibly go wrong now,” cried the Humbug happily, and as soon as he’d said it he leaped from the car, as if stuck by a pin, and sailed all the way to the little island.

“And we’ll have plenty of time,” answered Tock, who hadn’t noticed that the bug was missing – and he, too, suddenly leaped into the air and disappeared.

“It certainly couldn’t be a nicer day,” agreed Milo, who was too busy looking at the road to see that the others had gone. And in a split second he was gone also.

He landed next to Tock and the terrified Humbug on the tiny island, which now looked completely different. Instead of palms and flowers, there were only rocks and the twisted stumps of long-dead trees. It certainly didn’t seem like the same place they had seen from the road.

“Pardon me,” said Milo to the first man who happened by; “can you tell me where I am?”

“Pardon me,” replied the man; “can you tell me *who* I am?”

The man was dressed in a shaggy tweed jacket and knickers with long woolen stockings and a cap that had a peak both front and back, and he seemed as confused as he could be.

“You must know who you are,” said Milo impatiently.

“You must know where you are,” he replied with equal annoyance.

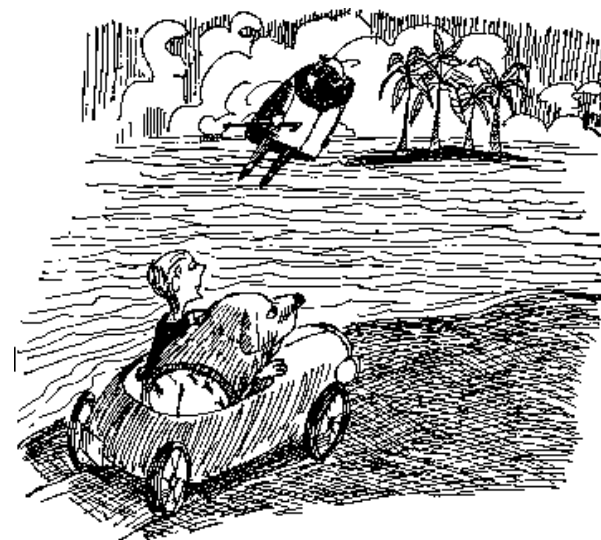
“Oh dear, this is going to be difficult,” Milo whispered to Tock. “I wonder if we can help him.”

They conferred for a few minutes and finally the bug looked up and said, “Can you describe yourself?”

“Yes, indeed,” the man replied happily. “I’m as tall as can be” – and he grew straight up until all that could be seen of him were his shoes and stockings – “and I’m as short as can be” – and he shrank down to the size of a pebble.

“I’m as generous as can be,” he said, handing each of them a large red apple, “and I’m as selfish as can be,” he snarled, grabbing them back again.

“I’m as strong as can be,” he roared, lifting an enormous boulder over his head, “and I’m as weak as can be,” he gasped, staggering under the weight of his hat.



"I'm as smart as can be," he remarked in twelve different languages, "and I'm as stupid as can be," he admitted, putting both feet in one shoe.

"I'm as graceful as can be," he hummed, balancing on one toe, "and I'm as clumsy as can be," he cried, sticking his thumb in his eye.

"I'm as fast as can be," he announced, running around the island twice in no time at all, "and I'm as slow as can be," he complained, waving good-by to a snail. "Is that any help to you?"

Once again they conferred in busy whispers until all three agreed.

"It's really very simple," said the Humbug, twirling his cane.

"If everything you say is true," added Tock.

"Then, without a doubt," Milo concluded brightly, "you must be Canby."

"Of course, yes, of course," the man shouted. "Why didn't I think of that? I'm as happy as can be." Then he quickly sat down, put his head in his hands, and sighed. "But I'm also as sad as can be."

"Now will you tell me where we are?" asked Tock as he looked around the desolate island.

"To be sure," said Canby; "you're on the Island of Conclusions. Make yourself at home. You're apt to be here for some time."

"But how did we get here?" asked Milo, who was still a bit puzzled by being there at all.



"You jumped, of course," explained Canby. "That's the way most everyone gets here. It's really quite simple: every time you decide something without having a good reason, you jump to Conclusions whether you like it or not. It's such an easy trip to make that I've been here hundreds of times."

"But this is such an unpleasant-looking place," Milo remarked.

"Yes, that's true," admitted Canby;

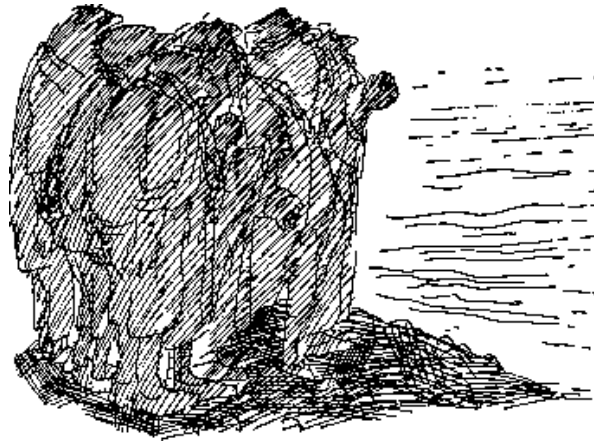
"it does look much better from a distance."

As he spoke, at least eight or nine more people sailed onto the island from every direction possible.

"Well, I'm going to jump right back," announced the Humbug, who took two or three practice bends, leaped as far as he could, and landed in a heap two feet away.

"That won't do at all," scolded Canby, helping him to his feet. "You can never jump away from Conclusions. Getting back is not so easy. That's why we're so terribly crowded here."

That was certainly the truth, for all along the bleak shore and clustered on the rocks for as far as anyone could see were enormous crowds of people, all sadly looking out to sea.



"Isn't there even a boat?" asked Milo, anxious to get on with his trip.

"Oh no," replied Canby, shaking his head. "The only way back is to swim, and that's a very long and a very hard way."

"I don't like to get wet," moaned the unhappy bug, and he

shuddered at the thought.

"Neither do they," said Canby sadly. "That's what keeps them here. But I wouldn't worry too much about it, for you can swim all day in the Sea of Knowledge and still come out completely dry. Most people do. But you must excuse me now. I have to greet the new arrivals. As you know, I'm as friendly as can be."

Over the Humbug's strenuous objections, Milo and Tock decided to swim, and, protesting loudly, the bug was dragged along with them toward the sea. Canby hurried off to answer more questions, and the last thing he was heard to say was "Pardon me, can you tell me who I am?"

They swam and swam and swam for what seemed like hours, and only Tock's firm encouragement kept Milo struggling through the icy water. At last they reached the shore, thoroughly exhausted and, except for the bug, completely soaked.

"That wasn't bad at all," the Humbug said, straightening his tie and brushing himself off. "I must visit there again."

"I'm sure you will," gasped Milo. "But from now on I'm going to have a very good reason before I make up my mind about anything. You can lose too much time jumping to Conclusions."

The car was just where they'd left it, and in a moment they were on their way again as the road turned away from the sea and began its long climb into the mountains. The warm sun and billowy breezes dried them as they went.

"I hope we reach Digitopolis soon," said Milo, thinking of the breakfast they hadn't eaten. "I wonder how far it is."

14. THE DODECAHEDRON LEADS THE WAY

Up ahead, the road divided into three and, as if in reply to Milo's question, an enormous road sign, pointing in all three directions, stated clearly:

DIGITOPOLIS

5 Miles

1,600 Rods

8,800 Yards

26,400 Feet

316,800 Inches

633,600 Half inches

AND THEN SOME

"Let's travel by miles," advised the Humbug; "it's shorter."

"Let's travel by half inches," suggested Milo; "it's quicker."

"But which road should we take?" asked Tock. "It must make a difference."

As they argued, a most peculiar little figure stepped nimbly from behind the sign and approached them, talking all the while. "Yes, indeed; indeed it does; certainly; my, yes; it does make a difference; undoubtedly."

He was constructed (for that's really the only way to describe him) of a large assortment of lines and angles connected together into one solid many-sided shape – somewhat like a cube that's had all its corners cut off and then had all its corners cut off again. Each of the edges was neatly labeled with a small letter, and each of the angles with a large one. He wore a handsome beret on top, and peering intently from one of his several surfaces was a very serious face. Perhaps if you look at the picture you'll know what I mean.

When he reached the car, the figure doffed his cap and recited in a loud clear voice:

"My angles are many.
My sides are not few.

I'm the Dodecahedron.

Who are you?"

"What's a Dodecahedron?" inquired Milo, who was barely able to pronounce the strange word.

"See for yourself," he said, turning around slowly. "A Dodecahedron is a mathematical shape with twelve faces."

Just as he said it, eleven other faces appeared, one on each surface, and each one wore a different expression. "I usually use one at a time," he confided, as all but the smiling one disappeared again. "It saves wear and tear. What are you called?"

"Milo," said Milo.

"That is an odd name," he said, changing his smiling face for a frowning one. "And you only have one face."

"Is that bad?" asked Milo, making sure it was still there.

"You'll soon wear it out using it for everything," replied the Dodecahedron. "Now I have one for smiling, one for laughing, one for crying, one for frowning, one for thinking, one for pouting, and six more besides. Is everyone with one face called a Milo?"

"Oh no," Milo replied; "some are called Henry or George or Robert or John or lots of other things."

"How terribly confusing," he cried. "Everything here is called exactly what it is. The triangles are called triangles, the circles are called circles, and even the same numbers have the same name. Why, can you imagine what would happen if we named all the twos Henry or George or Robert or John or lots of other things? You'd have to say Robert plus John equals four, and if the four's name were Albert, things would be hopeless."

"I never thought of it that way," Milo admitted.

"Then I suggest you begin at once," admonished the Dodecahedron from his admonishing face, "for here in Digitopolis everything is quite precise."

"Then perhaps you can help us decide which road to take," said Milo.

"By all means," he replied happily. "There's nothing to it. If a small car carrying three people at thirty miles an hour for ten minutes along a road five miles long at 11:35 in the morning starts at the same time as three people who have been traveling in a little automobile at twenty miles an hour for fifteen minutes on another road exactly twice as long as one half the distance of the other, while a dog, a bug, and a boy travel an equal distance in the same time or the same

