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4 УРОВЕНЬ

THE FUNNY STORIES

СМЕШНЫЕ РАССКАЗЫ

словарь • комментарии

Легко читаем по-английски

Марк Твен

Смешные рассказы / The Funny Stories

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Произведения Марка Твена по праву считают классикой американской литературы. Его рассказы известны своим тонким интеллектуальным юмором и оригинальностью образов. В эту книгу вошли его лучшие смешные рассказы. Книга содержит комментарии и словарь, облегчающие чтение. Предназначается для продолжающих изучать английский язык (уровень 4 – Upper-Intermediate).

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Марк Твен / Mark Twain
Смешные рассказы / The Funny Stories

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How to Cure a Cold

It is a good thing, perhaps, to write for the amusement of the public, but it is a far higher and nobler thing to write for their instruction – their profit – their actual benefit. It is the only object of this article.

If it helps to restore the health of one sufferer among my race, to bring back to his dead heart again the quick, generous impulses of other days, I shall be rewarded for my work.

Having led a pure and blameless life, I believe that no man who knows me will reject the suggestions I am about to make, out of fear that I am trying to deceive him.

Let the public do itself the honor to read my experience in curing a cold and then follow in my footsteps.

When the White House was burned in Virginia, I lost my home, my happiness, my constitution and my trunk.

The loss of the two first named articles was a matter of no great consequence, since a home without a mother or a sister, or a distant young female relative in it, who remind you that there are those who think about you and care for you, is easily obtained.

And I did not care about the loss of my happiness. I was not a poet, and it could not be possible that melancholy would stay with me long.

But to lose a good constitution and a better trunk were serious misfortunes.

On the day of the fire, my constitution succumbed to a severe cold.

The first time I began to sneeze, a friend told me to go and bathe my feet in hot water and go to bed.

I did so.

Shortly afterward, another friend advised me to get up and take a cold shower-bath. I did that also.

Within the hour, another friend told me that I had to “feed a cold and starve a fever.”

I had both.

I decided to fill myself up for the cold, and then let the fever starve a while.

I ate pretty heartily; once I went to a stranger who had just opened his restaurant that morning. He waited near me in respectful silence until I had finished feeding my cold, when he asked if the people in Virginia were much afflicted with colds?

I told him I thought they were.

He then went out and took in his sign.[1]

I started down toward the office, and on the way met another friend, who told me that a quart of salt water, taken warm, would cure a cold in no time.

I hardly had room for it, but I tried it anyhow.

The result was surprising; I must have vomited three-quarters of an hour; I believe I threw up my immortal soul.

I believe, warm salt water may be a good enough remedy, but I think it is too severe. If I had another cold, and there was no way out but to take either an earthquake or a quart of warm salt water, I would be glad to choose the earthquake.

After the storm in my stomach I went back to handkerchiefs, as had been my custom in the early stages of my cold, until I came across a lady who said she had lived in a part of the country where doctors were scarce and had from necessity learnt to treat simple “family complaints.”

I knew she must have had much experience, for she seemed to be a hundred and fifty years old.

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[1] *He then went out and took in his sign.* – Тогда он вышел на улицу и снял вывеску.

She mixed a variety of drugs and instructed me to take a wine glass full of it every fifteen minutes.

I never took but one dose; that was enough.

Under its influence, my brain showed miracles of meanness, but my hands were too weak to execute them. Like most other people, I often feel mean, and act so, but until I took that medicine I had never felt proud of it.

At the end of two days, I was ready to go to curing again. I took a few more remedies, and finally drove my cold from my head to my lungs.

I got to coughing, and my voice fell below Zero. I spoke in a thundering bass two octaves below my natural tone.

My case grew more and more serious every day.

Plain gin was recommended; I took it.

Then gin and molasses; I took that also.

Then gin and onions; I added the onions and took all three.

I detected no particular result, however, except that I had acquired a breath like a buzzard's.

I understood I had to travel for my health. I went to Lake Bigler with my comrade reporter, Adair Wilson. My friend took all his baggage with him, consisting of two excellent silk handkerchiefs and his grandmother.

I had my regular gin and onions along.

We sailed and hunted and fished and danced all day, and I treated my cough all night.

But my disease continued to grow worse. A sheet-bath was recommended. I had never refused a remedy yet, and it seemed poor policy[2] to start then.

It was done at midnight, and the weather was very frosty. My breast and back were bared, and a sheet (there appeared to be a thousand yards of it) soaked in ice-water was put all around me.

When the chilly rag touches one's warm flesh, it makes him feel sudden violence and gasp for breath just as men do in the death agony. It stopped the beating of my heart. I thought my time had come.

Never take a sheet-bath – never.

When the sheet-bath failed to cure my cough, a lady friend recommended the application of a mustard plaster to my breast.

I believe that would have cured me, if it had not been for young Wilson.[3]

When I went to bed, I put my mustard plaster – which was an eighteen-inch square – where I could reach it when I was ready for it.

But young Wilson got hungry at night, and ate it up.

I never saw anybody have such an appetite; I am confident that he would have eaten me if I had been healthy.

After a week at Lake Bigler, I went to Steamboat Springs, and besides the steam baths, I took a lot of the worst medicines ever created. They would have cured me, but I had to go back to Virginia, where, in spite of the variety of new remedies I took every day, I managed to aggravate my disease.

I finally went to San Francisco, and the first day I got here one lady told me to drink a quart of whisky every twenty-four hours, and a friend recommended precisely the same.

Each advised me to take a quart – that makes half a gallon. I plan to do it or perish in the attempt.

Now, with the kindest motives in the world, I offer for the consideration of patients the course of treatment I have lately gone through. Let them try it – if it doesn't cure them, it can't more than kill them.

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[2] *poor policy – зд.* плохое решение

[3] *I believe that would have cured me, if it had not been for young Wilson.* – Думаю, меня бы это вылечило, если бы не мой друг Уилсон.

The McWilliamses And The Burglar Alarm

The conversation went smoothly and pleasantly from weather to crops, from crops to literature, from literature to scandal, from scandal to religion; then took a random jump, and landed on the subject of burglar alarms. And now for the first time Mr. McWilliams showed feeling. Whenever I notice this sign on this man's face, I understand it, and keep silence, and give him opportunity to unload his heart.

"I do not spend one single cent on burglar alarms, Mr. Twain – not a single cent – and I will tell you why. When we were finishing our house, we found we had a little cash left over. And Mrs. McWilliams said, let's have a burglar alarm. I agreed. Very well: the man came up from New York and put in the alarm, and charged three hundred and twenty-five dollars for it, and said we could sleep without uneasiness now. So we did for a while – say a month. Then one night we smelled smoke, and I was told to get up and see what the matter was. I lit a candle, and went to the stairs, and met a burglar coming out of a room with a basket of tinware, which he had mistaken for solid silver in the dark.

"He was smoking a pipe. I said, 'My friend, we do not allow smoking in this room.' He said he was a stranger, and could not be expected to know the rules of the house. He said he had been in many houses just as good as this one, and it had never been a problem before. He added that usually such rules had never been considered to apply to burglars, anyway.

"I said: 'Smoke along, then, if it is the custom, though I think that giving a burglar the privilege which is denied to a bishop is a sign of the looseness of the times. But what business do you have in this house, why have you entered it without ringing the burglar alarm?'

"He looked confused and ashamed, and said, with embarrassment: 'I beg a thousand pardons. I did not know you had a burglar alarm, or I would have rung it. I beg you not to mention where my parents may hear of it, for they are old and feeble, and such a breach of the conventionalities of our Christian civilization might disappoint them and affect their health. May I trouble you for a match?'

"I said: 'Here you are. But to return to business: how did you get in here?'

"'Through a window on the second floor.'

"It was even so. I redeemed the tinware at pawnbroker's rates, bade the burglar good-night, closed the window after him, and retired to headquarters to report. Next morning we sent for the burglar-alarm man, and he came up and explained that the reason the alarm did not 'go off' was that no part of the house but the first floor was attached to the alarm. This was simply idiotic; one might as well have no armor on at all but for on his legs. The expert now put the whole second story on the alarm, charged three hundred dollars for it, and went his way. By and by, one night, I found a burglar in the third story, about to go down a ladder with a lot of miscellaneous property. My first impulse was to crack his head with a billiard cue; but I refrained, and proceeded to compromise. I redeemed the property at the familiar rates, after charging ten per cent for use of my ladder. Next day we sent down for the expert once more, and had the third story attached to the alarm, for three hundred dollars.

"By this time the 'annunciator' had grown to formidable dimensions. It had forty-seven tags on it, marked with the names of the various rooms and chimneys, and it occupied the space of an ordinary wardrobe. The gong was the size of a washbowl, and was placed above the head of our bed. There was a wire from the house to the coachman's room in the stable, and a noble gong alongside his pillow.

"We should have been comfortable now but for one defect. Every morning at five the cook opened the kitchen door, and rip went that gong! The first time this happened I thought the last day had come. I didn't think it in bed – no, but out of it – for the first effect of that frightful gong is to hurl you across the house, and slam you against the wall, and then curl you up like a spider on a stove

lid, till somebody closes the kitchen door. Well, this catastrophe happened every morning regularly at five o'clock, and lost us three hours sleep.

"Well, we were gradually fading toward a better land, on account of the daily loss of sleep; so we finally had the expert up again. He ran a wire to the outside of the door, and placed a switch there, where Thomas, the butler, always made one little mistake – he switched the alarm off at night when he went to bed, and switched it on again at daybreak in the morning, just in time for the cook to open the kitchen door, and let that gong slam us across the house, sometimes breaking a window with one or the other of us. At the end of a week we recognized that this switch business was a snare. We also discovered that a band of burglars had been living in the house the whole time – not to steal, for there wasn't much left now, but to hide from the police. They decided that the detectives would never think of a tribe of burglars taking sanctuary in a house notoriously protected by the most elaborate burglar alarm in America.

"Sent down for the expert again, and this time he struck a most dazzling idea – he fixed the thing so that opening the kitchen door would take off the alarm. It was a noble idea, and he charged accordingly. But you already foresee the result. I switched on the alarm every night at bed-time, no longer trusting on Thomas's memory; and as soon as the lights were out the burglars walked in at the kitchen door, thus taking the alarm off without waiting for the cook to do it in the morning. For months we couldn't have any company. Not a spare bed in the house; all occupied by burglars.

"Finally, I got up a cure of my own. The expert answered the call, and ran another wire to the stable, and established a switch there, so that the coachman could put on and take off the alarm. That worked first rate, and we even got to inviting company once more and enjoying life.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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