

Diamond Cut Diamond.

TWO YOUNG LADIES TRY TO BEAT AN AUTOMATIC WEIGHING MACHINE, BUT THE MACHINE COMES OUT AHEAD.

Probably they would have resented any imputations upon their honesty, yet they stood before the helpless penny-in-the-slot weighing machine with guile, fraud and intent to cheat in their souls. The younger one—she was a slim, tailor made girl—held a cent between her well-gloved finger and thumb. Only one cent for both of them. Now, no penny-in-the-slot machine proposes to weigh ladies, no matter of what degree of fairness, at the rate of two for a cent, yet the thing can be done, and these two proposed to do it.

"We ought both to get on before we drop the penny in," said the elder, who looked as if she alone would be a pretty good one-cent contract for anything short of a hay scale.

"Yes, but if you get on there won't be much room for me," said her companion. "I'll just be hanging to your outskirts, as it were, and I'll be hanging to you so hard that it will take away part of my weight."

"What a goose you are, Madeline," cried the other. "How can it lessen the weight when all the weight is on the scales anyway?"

"Yes, that's true," assented the younger one, thoughtfully. "It's all on the scale, of course; but it isn't my weight, is it, if part of it comes on you?"

"Well, you can let go as soon as you get fairly on. Now, are you all ready? I'm going to get on."

Up she got with much swishing of skirts, and her companion walked around her, looking for the side affording the most room. At length, after much balancing and see-sawing, she was fairly settled, and she raised the penny, but instead of dropping it in, said to the other:

"How stupid of you, Allie. You've got your parasol in your hand."

"And you've got your satchel," retorted Allie. "That weighs more than my parasol."

"Why, of course. I didn't think of that. Here, give me the parasol, and I'll put them both down."

That being satisfactorily accomplished, the younger prepared to mount the machine again, but paused as a thought struck her.

"If we both get on how can we tell what each of us weighs?" she inquired. "We'll both get weighed together."

"Why, divide it by two, you goose," cried her friend, triumphantly. "Come, get up."

"But I don't believe that would be right," objected the tailor-made one, "because that would make it just half for each of us, wouldn't it? And I don't weigh nearly as much as you."

This was a stickler for a moment, but the mathematical brain rose superior to it after some pondering.

"We both get on," was its decision, "and it weighs us both. Then I get off and it weighs you, and then we subtract."

"Subtract what?" demanded the slender one, suspiciously. "I don't believe you know what you're talking about. It's just like those horrid x and y things we used to have in school. Let x equal you and y equals me, and z equals the scales; then you mix 'em all up, and at the end you've got the answer—wrong."

"Do stop talking and get on. I'll do the figuring. We both get weighed. Then we subtract my weight from your weight and that gives us—gracious! what would it give us?"

"Fits," replied her friend, flippantly; "at least it would me. I'm sure any attempt to solve it would result in epilepsy."

"Well, I know my weight, anyway," said the bigger one, "so we can tell what your weight is by subtracting that."

"Then, if you know your weight, what is the use of your getting weighed at all?"

"Why, it may have changed, mayn't it? Allie, do be sensible."

"I'm trying hard, but I haven't much of an example to spur me on."

"If I could only spur you on to this platform I'd be satisfied. Goodness! Don't push me off! There, are you fixed? All right. Drop in the cent and I'll do the figuring."

There was a click and a rattle from the interior of the machine; then silence. The indicator remained motionless. In vain did the girls pound its face and jig wadly upon the platform. Not a wiggle could they get out of the needle. Then they started in and denounced, with the wrath of outraged honesty, the machine, its owner and inventor, and the railroad company in whose station it stood. They declared that they would write to the newspapers and the police. They were very much excited, indeed. Quite a crowd had gathered around to watch their manoeuvres, and remained to hear their oratory. When the first force of wrath was spent, a prim and severe-looking

twelve-year-old girl came forward to the machine that had swallowed the coin and turned over a white placard which the two had not noticed.

"I think," she said, with a judicial emphasis on the pronoun, "that it served you right. To cheat a machine! Two for a cent!"

With a Lady Macbeth sort of gesture she pointed to the placard. It read: "THIS MACHINE IS OUT OF ORDER."

Some Curious Rivers.

THEY NEVER REACH THE SEA—A RIVER OF INK—ONE OF COPPER—A SOUR RIVER—CHINA'S SORROW.

One of the most curious rivers that have come to the knowledge of men is Webbe Shebeyli of Eastern Africa, a deep and rapid stream, abounding in strange fish and ferocious crocodiles. Although in flows for hundreds of miles through fertile lands, the immense volume of water never reaches the sea. A short distance north of the equator the river is lost in a desert region, a few miles from the Indian ocean.

Some of the more recent explorers of Alaska and British America claim that the Mississippi can no longer be regarded as the largest river on the North American continent. This distinction is claimed for the great Yukon river. According to Ivan Petroff, who spent over two years in Alaska collecting materials for the last census, the Yukon empties into Norton sound about one-third more water than the Mississippi pours into the Gulf of Mexico. The Yukon basin comprises the larger part of Northern Alaska, and 600 miles from its mouth the river is a mile in width. Many centuries before it was discovered by white men it very likely served as a water highway into the interior for tribes whom we believe to have crossed from Asia to the American continent. The Yukon river is over 2000 miles in length.

A RIVER OF INK.

Travellers report that in Algeria there exists a small stream which the chemistry of nature has turned into ink. It is formed by the union of two rivulets, one of which is very strongly impregnated with iron, while the other, meandering through a peat marsh, imbues large quantities of gallic acid, which forms this small, yet wonderful stream. The Rio de Vinagre, in Columbia, is a stream the waters of which by admixture with sulphuric acid become so sour that the river has been appropriately named the Rio de Vinagre, or Vinegar river.

The Orange or Garich river in Southern Africa rises in the mountains which separate Natal from the Orange Free State. The length of this stream is 1,000 miles. In banks around it are found rich copper ores. In this stream are many varieties of fish which are found until the river passes through a rocky region containing copper, below which the water is said to be poisonous, almost instantly killing the fish that venture near it.

CHANGES ITS COURSE.

"China's Sorrows," is the title bestowed upon the great Hoang Ho which rises in the mountains of Thibet, and follows a wonderfully circuitous channel for 2,500 miles to the Yellow Sea. The waywardness of this mighty volume of water makes the river a constant source of anxiety and danger to the 170,000,000 of people inhabiting the central plain of Asia. It is known to have suddenly changed its course nine times. It has moved its mouth four degrees of latitude each time, emptying its vast floods in different directions, and finding a new channel for itself, where scores of towns and villages have stood. The river has greatly changed the physical character of a wide area, converting fertile regions into a sandy desert or making shallows of them. Whether it is within the power of modern science to save this great plain from disastrous overflow and changes of the river's bed, is a question which during late years has been widely discussed, especially in the scientific circles of London and Paris.

LOST AND IS FOUND.

Another remarkable river is the Indus, a great stream in Hindustan. It rises in Thibet, and its course is a wonderful one. On reaching Sussu, its most northern point, it turns southward, loses itself in the hills and reappears in Takot in Kohistan. The Indus is 1,000 miles in length. After receiving the waters of many tributaries its channel grows narrow, and here it is divided into many channels, some of which never return to the parent stream. It abounds in fish and crocodiles.

That classic river, the Ganges, is erratic in its course, like the Hoang Ho. It is prominent both in the religion and the geography of India. It varies not only from season to season but from year to year, and frequently exchanges old passages for new ones. It has been said that the Ganges delivers into the sea every year 534,000,000 tons of mud, sand and other solid matter.—San Francisco Chronicle.

A RUNAWAY

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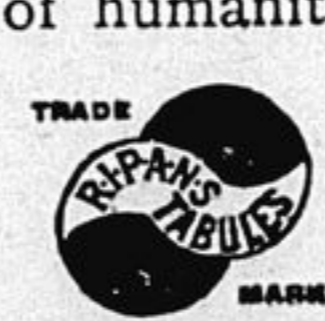
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