

# A CHAT WITH FATHER TIME

By John Kendrick Bangs  
In New York Herald

I was winding up my old fashioned clock the other night, preparatory to retiring, when a muffled groan from within its capacious depths caused me to pause for a moment.

"Ouch!" came the voice from within. "Proper that key, will you? I'm wound up too tight as it is. Another twist will bust my mainspring."

"Who the deuce are you?" I demanded, somewhat nonplussed by the extraordinary incident. Only once before had I heard a voice from the depths of that antique timepiece, and that was when I discovered my friend, Mike Brannigan, the housebreaker, concealed therein. "It isn't you again, is it, Mike?" I added. "Up to your old tricks."

"No, my son," came the voice. "I'm something of a thief, my lad, but not of the Mike Brannigan order. Open up and I will show you who I am."

In a moment I had flung back the clock door wide, and out of the tall, coffin-shaped recess stepped a hoary, bearded old gentleman, with a scythe slung over his back, and an hour glass in his hand.

"Father Time, by all that's lovely!" I cried.

"At your service," said he, with an air of a man who had very much to say on the subject of time. "The hour glass is a first rate thing to measure the hours with, but to pass the time of day, give me that tall, thin, of crystal wherein the high ball rests. Got a wee nip in the house?"

"Ay, many," I replied. "Three for you and three for me, and encores for everybody."

Whereupon the white haired old god of the hour, having from the clock, after adjusting his forelock, tripped lightly into my dining room, where we soon sitting at our ease, discussing a neat jug of Scotch that I had brought home with me from Skibo Castle, after visiting Mr. Carnegie's garden—a former proprietor of my acquaintance from Oshkosh—last summer.

"I tell you, my boy," said the old gentleman, smacking his lips ecstatically, as he put his share of this liquid refreshment where it belonged, "a drink in time gathers no flies. When a chap's only glass holds nothing but a brief moment of stuff like this of yours is a veritable gift of the gods. You have relieved my aridity to such an extent that my gratitude shall know no bounds. What can I do for you?"

"There's lots you can do for me," said I upon reflection. "In the first place slow down a little, will you? I'm growing old, too rapidly. Here it is, almost 1904, and it seems only yesterday that it was 1871. You are exceeding the speed limit as if you were merely a miserable mundane automobilist."

"That I cannot help," sighed the old gentleman. "I wish I could. You don't suppose a fast life has any attractions for a man of my age, do you?"

"I judged so from the scandalous speed at which you are going," said I. "It doesn't seem more than a week between Christmases nowadays, and, in a period when young America's demands upon Santa Claus are satisfied with nothing short of a few dozen Panhard's and diamond tiaras, it's pretty tough on the father of a family. Why don't you slow down a bit and make the years as long as they used to be?"

"I'd lose my job if I did," replied the old man, sadly. "The race is to the swift, my dear fellow, and I am like everybody else, has got to keep up with the procession."

"That's all right," I observed. "Nobody denies that, but if you will pardon me saying so, you don't keep up with the procession. You still go about your business in same stupid old way you have for years, and you are out looking for new animals to christen, but you don't cover the ground. There isn't enough of you to attend to all that work you have, and the result is that nobody has enough of you to accomplish his ends. I don't mean it kindly when I say you are out of foggy in your methods. Why, even that old hour glass and scythe of yours prove that."

"Oh, come now," said the old fellow, reproachfully. "You don't mean that!"

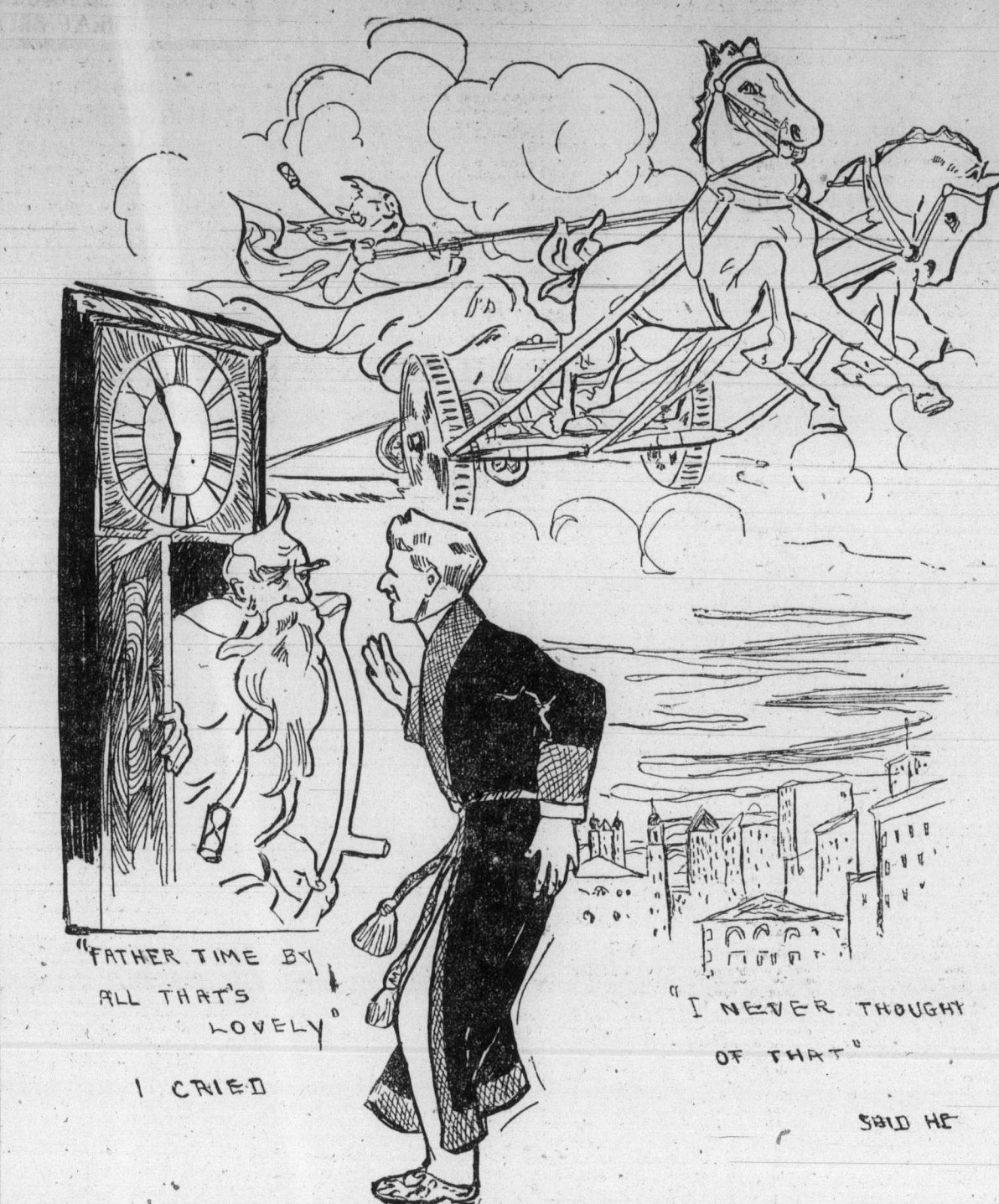
"Of course I do," said I. "You measure the hours with an antiquated thing like an hour glass, which has to be turned over every sixty minutes, when for every dollar you could fit yourself out with a first class, up-to-date meter that would register the seconds as they pass as accurately as a gas meter registers the amount of wind that runs through the pipes of a modern flat. Even a dollar watch would be more up-to-date than that Saharan arrangement of glass bulbs you carry around with you, and as for the scythe, with the work you have to do, you might just as well employ a pair of scissors for all the good it does. Only the little fellows use scythes nowadays. Big enterprises do their mowing with electric engines."

The old gentleman helped himself to another finger from the jug before answering.

"I never thought of that," said he, when he had gulped this down. "Of course you haven't," I retorted. "You haven't stopped to think about anything, but have just plunging ahead with the same archaic machinery you began with, and the result is that people who need you in their business can't get half enough of you."

"But those things cost money," persisted my visitor. "And I haven't got a cent in my pocket—fact is," he added, glancing at his toga, "I haven't even got a pecker."

"There you are again," said I. "Everybody else has got a pecker, though. You haven't one, and you are long enough to get a decent suit of clothes, preferring to fly around in that same old-fashioned night-shirt that you wore when you first got your job. It's a wonder to me that you haven't been arrested long before this for wearing such a costume. I couldn't walk from Herald



Square to Madison in dude like that, being arrested—no, nor anybody else from the President down. If you must wear night clothes, why in thunder don't you try pajamas? Moreover, I'll venture to say you haven't had your beard trimmed or your hair cut for five thousand years. Why don't you spruce up and have some style about you?"

"One excuse I'm a failure all around," sighed the old gentleman, dejectedly. "Where can I get any clothes without money?"

"I'll fit you out if you'll give me an occasional forty-eight hour day so that I can catch up with my work," said I. "What's more, I'll pay for a hair cut and buy you a safety razor if you'll promise to use it."

"Oh, well," said he, reflectively, "after all, clothes don't make the man. I'm not going to worry about my dress. If people don't like my style, I'm sorry, but I've no spare moments to make my money."

"But you are perfectly right when you say I'm overworked. I need an assistant."

"One assistant won't help you," I put in. "What you really need to do is to get yourself incorporated. This is no time for individual effort. It is the corporate age, and the time these days Santa Claus has done it, and it is up to you to follow suit. Capitalize yourself at a billion, turn over all your tangible assets to the corporation and devote the rest of your span to enjoying your own cunn dig."

"An inventory of my tangible assets," observed the old gentleman with a smile, "comprises only the things you have ruthlessly condemned as archaic—one scythe, one hour glass and a pocketless night gown. Who would take stock in a company whose property was so limited as that? I suppose at a forced sale they wouldn't bring more than \$3."

"Then capitalize yourself at \$500,000,000," said I. "That is nearer right, according to the figures of modern high finance. If a thing is worthless it can't be capitalized for more than \$100,000,000. If it is worth a dollar you can generally raise \$250,000,000 on it. In fact times three dollars' worth of real property would justify an issue of \$250,000,000 each of two kinds of stock, preferred, common, and so on. The last is your lay, as I see it. Organize yourself into a general Time Trust. Instead of two kinds of stock, present conditions to give, open headquarters here in New York, where people can come and get all the time they want, and I'll warrant you'll soon be doing a land office business. The advantages of the scheme are obvious. Instead of trying to do the whole business yourself, you'll have a completely

equipped corps of assistants to do it for you—just as Mr. Rockefeller has in the oil business. Next to time, oil is about as essential a commodity to the happiness of man as you ever had. Suppose the man who controls it should emulate your methods, and try to supply the earth with it with single oil cans. He'd burst in a week physically and financially."

"It sounds mighty plausible," said my visitor.

"I would be the greatest triumph of the ages, if it could be done," I answered. "You continually hear men saying they'd do this and they'd do that great thing if they only had the time. If I'd had five minutes more, I could have put that scythe through! Another hour would have given me the upper hand. If so and so had had another week, he'd have won the election. When you come right down to it it is the lack of time that is responsible for all the failures in the world. There's your chance, old man. If you will start a concern to sell time to people who need it in their business, it won't be long before you are in a position to build libraries and endow universities in every hamlet in creation. I'll be one of your regular customers to the tune of an extra month in every twelve months."

"And you think I could be floated?"

"If you get the right people to do the promoting," said I. "There's a man in Wall street who could finance a soap-bubble blown from a clay pipe to the tune of \$2,000,000 if he wanted to. Some of his corporations last as long as two years, too. I think our scheme would appeal to him, because he is frequently pressed for time to an almost perilous degree himself, and I'm inclined to believe he'd take a controlling interest in lieu of his commission, which would be a great saving."

"Well," said the old gentleman, rising. "I'm very much obliged to you for your suggestion, and I'll think it over. Meanwhile, I must be off. A new year is due next Friday, and I haven't got it more than half ready. Fact is, it's only finished up to May."

"See if you can't give us a good one this time, old man," said I. "The last has been perfectly rotten. If I could I'd cut it out of my calendar altogether. The only thing in its favor is that it hasn't in the end seemed to have lasted more than a week. We should be fifty-two weeks nearer to the millennium, but I'm bound to have lasted more than a week that much and more."

"I know," said Father Time. "I've received loads of complaints about 1903, and most of 'em have been justified. But he was a promising baby last January."

"That's the trouble," said I. "We have too many promising babies. What the world needs is an occasional fulfilling baby, and it's up to you to make 1904 a kid of that particular sort."

"I promise you that you'll find him so," said the old man. "He's an important little cuss, and he knows it. He is to bring you a President, and, take my word for it, he'll bring you a good one."

"A new one?" I asked.

"Well, he'll bring you one that has never been elected President before—that's all I promise in that regard," said the old gentleman.

"And how about my stocks?" said I. "I have a paper loss of \$9,356,338.82 on my Lumpkin Pie preferred, which I bought in 1904, if you agree to keep out of Wall street and to work hard, when 1904 is ended you will have earned twice that amount—say, nine dollars in round figures."

"With which comforting promise Father Time left me, but before his departure he placed a small package in my hand."

"Take this as an expression of my gratitude for your good advice," said he, and then he vanished.

I opened the package later, and found within two hundred and forty cheques upon the Bank of Time reading as follows:

The First National Bank of Time, New York, Jan. 1, 1904.  
Pays to the order of \_\_\_\_\_ \$100,000,000.  
Hour  
John W. Chronos.

HB 8, 1, No. 40.  
Clearly there was a gift of ten days from my visitor, and so arranged that I could call myself off as needed, but I defer any expression of gratitude.

It is not yet Jan. 1, 1904, and I have no means of finding out if the cheques will prove good, and later on many have come back to me protesting that every man who pays me what he owes me nowadays by cheque is temporarily under suspicion. Even if I try to turn out to be good, I am not going to get excited over Father Time's gift, for what can a man do with ten days when he needs fourteen a week to accomplish the work in hand?

for this is that the woman, having won the man of her choice, loves him well and is contented ever after to abide by her own decision.

There have been instances in history where women have proposed to men and have happily married them. And was there not that quaker maiden of Longfellow's who proposed and was accepted? Elizabeth Haddon did not wait for leap year, but spoke her mind, and her lover, after thinking it over for a season, came back to tell her that he would accept the offer of her hand. The house and the green field still lie there at Haddonfield, mute testimony to the fact that a couple lived happily and died leaving a great deal of worth.

**Marriages Generally Happy.**  
As a rule the leap year marriage is a happy one, so experience proves, simply for the reason that the woman feels that the marriage was of her own seeking and that she is, in a sense responsible for it. It was of her own making, and she of all others should make it come out right.

The leap year girl is a pretty girl usually, for a homely girl would never be bold enough to propose, and as a wife she has certain advantages over other girls. She is of a willing disposition. She is braver than the man she marries or she would not have proposed to him.

He was her first choice, not her last choice.

She says "I loved him best of all." She does not say "I took him as a last resort, for fear no one else would ask me."

Once married she tries to be happy, for she realizes that in case of failure the blame would come very largely upon herself. She proposed and the marriage was of her own seeking.

Should a woman propose and is the leap year girl justified in the course she takes?

That is a question which is variously answered. There are people who think her a vulgar and forward young woman. But there are others who regard her as the most womanly of women.

Should or should not a woman propose? The leap year girl says she can and should, and 1904 is the year in which she can do it. The leap year dance and the leap year party are now in style, and the leap year girl will have abundant opportunity for proposing to the man of her choice.

**Consumption is Scourging Canada.**

Year by year the White Plague steadily gains headway, and why? Because careless people let their colds run into catarrh, which in turn becomes consumption. Victims of catarrh needn't be discouraged, for fragrant healing Catarrh-cure permanently cures every type of catarrh in 100 to 150 days. Catarrh-cure immediately kills the germs that cause catarrh, and prevents them from again entering your system. Relief will be quick, cure will be certain, absolute freedom from any trace of catarrh follows the use of Catarrh-cure. It is a scientific remedy warranted to cure every form of catarrh, bronchitis and catarrh. Cure guaranteed with two months' treatment.

**Why He Did Not Get on.**

He had few friends. He did not dare to take chances. He had too many irons in the fire. He tried to give his relatives a chance.

He never was a whole man at anything. He thought a good business should run itself.

He was afraid to burn the bridges behind him.

His rude manners drove customers from the store.

He could not concentrate all his prayers on his business.

He did not know how to duplicate himself in others.

He let gruff, indifferent clerks drive away his business.

He trusted incompetent friends with responsible positions.

He did things over and over again because he lacked system.

He thought he knew all there was to know about his business.

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"Cloves," said a physician, "make an excellent and handy remedy for nausea, for the headache due to train rides and slight attacks of seasickness. I went abroad last year and on the boat the day I was to begin my trip I felt the approach of seasickness. I took a dose of cloves every hour all the rest of the day and by midnight the attack had left me and it did not return again. My wife is much given to indigestion, particularly when she has sea sickness. Experience has taught her that she may now eat pastry with impunity, provided she swallows a clove now and then for several hours after the meal."

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