

dirty water. The victim was blindfolded and led up to the cups to put in his finger. If he dipped his finger into the empty cup he would remain a bachelor all his days. If he were fortunate in hitting the clean water, he would marry a handsome girl and live happy ever after. But if he plunged his finger into the ink it would be his misfortune to marry a widow. Loud would be the laugh at the poor fellow who got his finger into the ink.

The test that required most nerve was that of pulling the cabbage stalks, and for this reason it was to be depended upon. Those who decided to make the trial were shown where the old stumps of cabbage stood in the garden. One was then blindfolded and sent out to grope for a stalk. The first one the hand touched must be pulled up and brought in. The size and appearance of the stalk foretold what the future husband or wife would be. A tall, straight stalk meant a handsome mate, but if it were crooked the fates decreed that the other half would be ugly. Much earth clinging to the root meant riches in marriage. If the stem were hollow or rotten, then the wife would be a cross-grained woman. This cabbage-stalk hunting was always made the occasion for a joke. A rope was stretched across the yard to give the fellow a tumble, if a man tried it; but if a girl made the trial, one of the boys was sure to be waiting in the patch to cause a scare or steal a kiss. Usually the one who made the hunt came back in a dreadful hurry, and often very pale or covered with dirt, the result of a tumble.

As the evening advanced, the fun waxed furious. To help it on, someone would propose another game, and a pan of water was brought in and set on the table. In it were floating a number of apples without stems. These had to be fished for and lifted out with the teeth. As soon as touched, they would go down in the water. One after another would try to bite and hold the bobbing apples. If the girls wished to get even with any one of the young men, as soon as he stooped to catch the apple, down his head would be pushed, souse to the bottom of the pan. This was usually the end in view when the bobbing apples were brought on.

Another amusing trick was usually played on one who had never seen it before. We called it "being mesmerized." A boy would be mesmerized to be shown the one he liked best. Two saucers were brought in, both containing clear water, but the bottom of one had been previously blackened by holding it over the candle flame. This blackened saucer was given to the willing victim, who was told to do whatever the other person did who held the second saucer, and not to look at anything but the operator's face. The operator would dip the tip of his finger into the water, rub it on the bottom of the saucer, and then draw his finger over his face. The poor victim did the same, and as the motion was repeated over and over, black lines were thickly added to his face. First a line on the nose, then a streak across the cheek, followed by a cross on the forehead and a daub on the chin. When the operator had made his victim look like a wild Indian painted for a war-dance, a "looking-glass" was brought in so that the marked man could see the picture of the one he loved best. He did not recognize it for a minute, thinking his loved one a "nigger," but he was not long in rushing to the kitchen for soap and water.

If a young woman were anxious to see the face of her future husband, she must take a candle and an apple and go into a room by herself a few minutes before the clock struck midnight. She must eat the apple in front of the glass, watching her reflection all the while. Just as the apple was about finished, the face of the man to be her fate would be seen looking over her left shoulder.

When all were tired of these games, a circle was formed about the blazing hearth to try who could tell the most weird and blood-curdling tale. One of the stories that was told repeatedly was that of the strange way in which a murderer was detected and brought to the gallows. An old man, a stranger in the village, had wandered into the graveyard, and stood watching the sexton digging a grave. Soon the digger threw up a skull and a bone of a man who had been murdered many years before, and was buried by the sexton in this part of the graveyard, without benefit of clergy. His resting-place was known only to the sexton. As some of the bones were thrown out, the stranger stooped and picked one up, and instantly it ran blood. Horrified at the appearance, the man fell on his knees and confessed that he was the murderer. He was at once imprisoned, and soon afterwards hanged, being brought to justice by the tell-tale bones running blood.

The next story was one of a woman going into decline and dying by inches. No cause could be discovered by the doctors. She seemed to be free from any known disease, yet she became gradually weaker. At length a belated laborer going home from work saw a light as he passed in the cottage of an old woman who had an unsavory reputation. Slipping quietly up and peeping in, he saw her with a red object in her hands that was shaped like a human heart. She was jabbering away, and every few moments thrusting a darning-needle into the heart. The man told what he had seen, and a watch was set. Every night the old witch went through the same performance. She was arrested and accused of causing her neighbor's sickness. Knowing that she was found out, the witch confessed that her magic was killing the woman, whom she hated. The heart was burned, and at once the sufferer began to recover, and was soon well again.

The feelings of those present had grown very intense, so, by way of change, some light amusements were introduced. The two ends of a long string were tied together and taken in the hands. It was transferred from hand to hand, assuming a different shape in each, until a see-saw was developed. On the opposite side of the hearth someone worked another string, which was put through the two holes of a large button. The button was placed in the middle, and swung loosely on the string till twisted up. Then the string was tightened and loosened in the two hands, to make the button spin and buzz like a bee.

In another part of the circle a handkerchief was produced and made up into bunches and knots to represent rabbits and babies. Another clever person would fold up pieces of newspaper into the shape of hats, caps and boats. A candle would be brought, and, by means of the hands and arms, shadows would be thrown on the wall to look like a goose, a dog, or a long-eared rabbit. Then rhymes would be started to see who could repeat them most rapidly and correctly. Here is one example:

"If Peter Piper picked some pecks of pickled pepper,
How many pecks of pickled peppers did Peter Piper pick?"

Again the weird and magical would return, for how could it be otherwise when all the sprites, elves, goblins, pixies and fairies were let loose on poor man to work their will for one night? At least so we were told, and so we believed. If one of the company would shiver from the effects of a cold draught or from the nerve-racking stories, it was a sign that a stranger was walking over that person's future grave. As if that made any difference. It scared just the same. A nighthawk was described as having been seen the day previous at high noon, flying high and crying loudly in the bright glare of the midday sun, just as it does in the twilight. This was an omen of



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