

**CURFEW BELLS.**

Many have heard of the 'curfew bell,' but not all know its origin. Its history in England runs back to the time of William the Conqueror, who ordered a bell to be rung about sundown in summer and at eight o'clock in the evening in winter, at which time fire and lights were to be put out and the people to remain within doors, and penalties were imposed upon those who neglected or refused to comply with the law. This was called the "curfew," a word derived from the French, *cours feu*—cover fire, and so the appropriateness of the name is readily seen.

The old king has been generally charged with instituting this custom in order to impress upon his subjects a sense of their subject condition; but, since the "curfew bell" was rung in France long before William's time, as a safeguard against fires, it is not improbable that he brought the custom with him into England from the Continent, and that he has been slandered as to his motives. At any rate, he has sins enough to answer for without this. In the sixteenth century "bellmen" were added to the nightwatch in London. They went through the streets ringing their bells and crying,

"Take care of fire and candle; be kind to the poor, and pray for the dead." It was the bellman's duty, also, to bless the sleepers as he passed their doors. In "Il Penseroso," Milton refers to this custom:

"The bellman's drowsy charm  
To bless the doors from nightly harm."  
Poets have often referred to the curfew, or cover-fire bell. Gray begins his beautiful "Elegy" with

"The curfew tolls the knell of parting day."  
Longfellow, too, has a pretty little poem, telling the story of this bell with charming simplicity:

"Solemnly, modestly,  
Dealing its dole,  
The curfew bell  
Is beginning to toll.

Cover the embers,  
Put out the light;  
Toll comes with the morning,  
And rest with the night.

Dark grow the windows,  
And quenched is the fire;  
Sound issues into silence—  
All footsteps retire.

No voice in the chambers,  
No sound in the hall;  
Sleep and oblivion  
Reign over all."

King William died, and the original obligations of the curfew were at last removed, about the time of Henry I, in 1100; but the custom of ringing an evening bell is still kept up in England, with variations as to the hour. The "nine o'clock bell," familiar to most New England people—which sends so many young people home and to bed, and which in the early history of our country was almost as rigidly obeyed by all, both old and young, as the old curfew, traces its origin directly to the cover-fire bell.

In Longfellow's "Evangeline" the custom is well described:

"Anon the bell from the belfry  
Rang out the hour of midnight—the curfew—  
and straightway  
Rose the guests and departed; and silence  
reigned in the household."

But now the customs have changed; and though the bell still rings out on the evening air, in country village and street, it has lost its power, save as a tell-tale of passing time.

Let the old bells ring on; we love their soothing sound; or in the words of Moore—

"Those evening bells! those evening bells!  
How many a tale their music tells,  
Of youth and home; and that sweet time  
When I last heard their soothing chime!"

—Our Boys and Girls.

**DAYS WITHOUT NIGHTS.**—Nothing strikes a stranger more forcibly, if he visits Sweden at the season of the year when the days are longest, than the absence of the night. Dr. Baird related some interesting facts. He arrived at Stockholm from Gothenburg, 400 miles distant, in the morning; in the afternoon went to see some friends. He returned about midnight, when it was as light as it is in England half an hour before sundown. You could see distinctly, but all was quiet in the street; it seemed as if the inhabitants had gone away, or were dead. The sun in June goes down in Stockholm a little before ten o'clock. There is a great illumination all night, as the sun passes around the earth towards the north pole, and the refraction of its rays is such that you can see to read at midnight without any artificial light. The first morning Dr. Baird awoke in Stockholm he was surprised to see the sun shining in his room. He looked at his watch and found it was only three o'clock. The next time he awoke it was five o'clock, but there was no person in the streets. The Swedes in the cities are not very industrious. There is a mountain at the head of the Gulf of Bothnia, where on the 21st of June, the sun does not appear to go down at all. A steamboat goes up from Stockholm for the purpose of conveying those who are curious to witness the phenomenon. It occurs only one night. The sun reaches the horizon, you can see the whole face of it, and in five minutes more it begins to rise. At the North Cape, latitude 72 degrees, the sun does not go down for several weeks. In June it would be about 23 degrees above the horizon at midnight. In the winter time the sun disappears and is not seen for weeks; then it comes and remains ten, fifteen or twenty minutes, after which it descends, and finally does not set at all, but makes almost a circle around the heavens. Dr. Baird was asked how they managed in those latitudes with regard to hired persons, and what they considered a day. He replied that they worked by the hour, and twelve hours would be considered a day's work. Birds and animals take their accustomed rest at the usual hour, whether the sun goes down or not.

A citizen of Brunswick, Me., has within three years taken \$900 worth of squashes from a little more than an acre of land.

A mother trying to get her little daughter of three years old to sleep, one night said to her:

"Anna, why don't you try and go to sleep?"

"I am trying," she replied.

"But you haven't shut your eyes."

"Well, can't help it, eyes comes unbuttoned."

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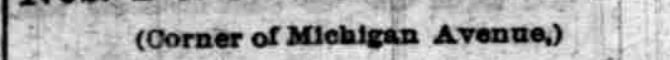
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