Newton and the Apple

by H. L. Hargrove

Sir Isaac Newton was a great thinker. No other man of his time knew so much about the laws of nature; no other man understood the reasons of things so well as he. He learned by looking closely at things and by hard study. He was always thinking, always working.

Although he was one of the wisest men that ever lived, yet he felt that he knew but very little. The more he learned, the better he saw how much there was still to be learnt.

When he was a very old man, he once said: "I seem to have been only as a boy playing on the seashore. I have seen myself by now and then finding a smooth pebble or a pretty shell, but the great ocean of truth lies still before me unknown and unexplored."

It is only the very ignorant who think themselves very wise.

In fact, as long as we can learn or do anything else, there is always something more to learn or to do.

Sir Isaac Newton was a thoughtful man. He knew that there were many things that he did not understand. He wanted to find out about them. He worked hard to learn more about them. He was always thinking about them. He was always trying to find out more about them. He was always working on them.

One day in autumn, Sir Isaac was lying on the grass under an apple tree, thinking. Suddenly an apple fell from the tree and hit him on the head. He looked up and saw that the apple had fallen from the tree.

"What made that apple fall?" he asked himself.

"It fell because its stem was no longer held to its branch," was his first thought.

But Sir Isaac was not satisfied with this answer. "Why did it fall toward the ground? Why should it fall any other way as well?" he asked.

"All heavy things fall to the ground — but why do they? Because they are heavy. This is not a good reason. For then why do we ask why they fall? Why is one thing heavier than another?"

One day, a boy was playing with a ball. The ball rolled off the edge of the window. The boy was surprised. Why did the ball roll off the edge of the window?

"Because gravity pulls things to the ground," he thought.

But Sir Isaac Newton was not satisfied with this answer. "Why does gravity pull things to the ground? Why does it pull some things and not others?"

He wanted to know the answer to these questions. He wanted to find out more about gravity.

"Gravity is a force that pulls things to the ground," he thought.

"But gravity is not the only force that pulls things. There are other forces, too."

He wanted to find out about all the forces that pull things.

"Why do some things move and others stay still? Why do some things go fast and others go slow? Why do some things go straight and others curve?"

He wanted to find out about all the forces that pull things and cause them to move or stay still, to go fast or slow, to go straight or curve.

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