Why did the young girl miss the train?

Punctuality is a necessary habit in all public affairs in civilized society.

Without it, nothing could ever be brought to a conclusion; everything would be in a state of chaos.

Only in a sparsely populated rural community is it possible to disregard it.

In ordinary living, there can be some tolerance of unpunctuality.

The intellectual, who is working on some abstruse problem, has everything coordinated and organized for the matter in hand.

He is therefore forgiven if late for a dinner party.

But people are often reproached for unpunctuality when their only fault is cutting things fine.

It is hard for energetic, quick-minded people to waste time, so they are often tempted to finish a job before setting out to keep an appointment.

If no accidents occur on the way, like punctured tyres, diversions of traffic, or sudden descent of fog, they will be on time.

They are often more industrious, useful citizens than those who are never late.

The over-punctual can be as much a trial to others as the unpunctual.

The guest who arrives half an hour too soon is the greatest nuisance.

Some friends of my family had this irritating habit.

The only thing to do was to ask them to come half an hour later than the other guests.

Then they arrived just when we wanted them.

If you are catching a train, it is always better to be comfortably early than even a fraction of a minute too late.

Although being early may mean wasting a little time, this will be less than if you miss the train and have to wait an hour or more for the next one; and you avoid the frustration of arriving at the very moment when the train is drawing out of the station and being unable to get on it.

An even harder situation is to be on the platform in good time for a train and still to see it go off without you.

Such an experience befell a certain young girl the first time she was travelling alone.

She entered the station twenty minutes before the train was due, since her parents had impressed upon her that it would be unforgivable to miss it and cause the friends with whom she was going to stay to make two journeys to meet her.

She gave her luggage to a porter and showed him her ticket.

To her horror, he said that she was two hours too soon.

She felt in her handbag for the piece of paper on which her father had written down all the details of the journey, and gave it to the porter.

He agreed that a train did come into the station at the time on the paper and that it did stop, but only to take on mail, not passengers.

The girl asked to see a timetable, feeling sure that her father could not have made such a mistake.

The porter went to fetch one and arrived back with the station master, who produced it with a flourish and pointed out a microscopic 'o' beside the time of the arrival of the train at his station; this little 'o' indicated that the train only stopped for mail.

Just at that moment, the train came into the station.

The girl, tears streaming down her face, begged to be allowed to slip into the guard's van.

But the station master was adamant: rules could not be broken.

And she had to watch that train disappear towards her destination while she was left behind.

The girl entered the railway station twenty minutes early, but the porter said she was two hours too soon.

When she showed him the details of the journey, he agreed it was correct, but said it was a mail train, not a passenger train.

When she demanded to see a timetable, the station master came and pointed out that the train only stopped for mail.

The train came in, but the girl was still not allowed to get on.

A piece of paper was blowing in the wind.

When I saw it, I was sitting in the park eating my sandwiches.

It was floating across the surface of the park lake, not large, about half the size of a postcard, and I wondered when it would drop into the water.

But it didn't.

As it got near to the surface, it rose again and the wind took it over the bank towards some trees.

Even then, I thought that it looked very light-perhaps tissue paper or toilet paper, maybe-because it almost fluttered, like a butterfly.

But then again, perhaps it wasn't.

Perhaps it was just ordinary paper that had gotten a bit wet.

I finished my sandwiches, threw my waste paper into the bin nearby, and set off back towards the trees and my office.

I was not looking forward to the afternoon.

As I walked round the edge of the lake, the piece of paper flew up again in front of me.

It began to annoy me, and intrigue me-because when it flew up, I noticed that it was pink with some writing on it.

It flew away and I chased it.

It dropped down and I had nearly reached it when the wind took it again.

I ran after it once more and it landed again some metres in front of me.

I finally caught up with it and put my foot on it to stop it flying away again.

This time, I held it firmly with my foot until I could lean down and pick it up.

I looked at it and realized what it was: a lottery ticket-a little wet, and one corner was torn, but it was a lottery ticket.

I could see that the date on it was about six weeks before.

It was probably worth nothing, but I decided to take it home and dry it.

It was worth something!

When I checked the numbers with the winning numbers six weeks before, I had 4 of the same.

The 'piece of paper' was worth £50!

The only people who can afford to neglect the exercise of punctuality are people who live in remote places where there are few people.

People who cut things fine are usually energetic, quick-minded people.

The girl was very upset when the train came into the station because the station master insisted that passengers were not allowed onto it.

Without it, it would be impossible ever to bring anything to a conclusion.

And she had to watch that train disappear towards her destination, leaving her behind.

The over-punctual can be just as trying to others as the unpunctual.

At that very moment, the train came into the station.