

*I am a sundial, and / make a botch  
Of what is done far better by a watch.*  
Hilaire Belloc: "Collected Verse" 1910.

**I AM A SUNDIAL '**

( with no apologies to Hilaire Belloc )

I am a sundial: I determine time;  
I regulate the clocks that chime.  
When hours advance ( *You wonder why?* )  
'Tis I alone expose the lie!  
But, lest you think I only run  
According to the Apparent Sun  
Know that I may oft be seen  
To indicate the Time that's *Mean*;  
Allow for longitude at least,  
In hours or minutes, West or East,  
And pander to that crude *de'ice*,  
If needs must pay for Summers price.  
Yet can I show, for your delight,  
The Solar *azimuth* and height;  
Tell how many hours each day must run  
And give the times of rise and setting Sun.  
Dabble I might in hours of the past  
Antique, seasonal, or planetary cast  
Babylonian and Italian hours project,  
Or simply ascertain that Noons correct.  
In every shape and size I may be found  
High on a wall, or level with the ground.  
Mechanical parts and optics, if you please,  
Enable me to operate with ease;  
Small as a nut to nestle in the hand,  
Or as a giant in structure I may stand.  
When clocks and watches fail to run,  
My course continues with the Sun;  
Science and Art I both combine,  
Forever as the Sun may shine!

(Written for the occasion of the dinner of  
the Royal Astronomical Society Club, held  
at the Athenaeum, on Friday 14 February 1997.)