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MARCH'S FAMOUS FUNNY FARCES

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The Traveling Photographer

BY KATE ALICE WHITE

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CHARACTERS

MR. HAYSEED—*Owner of the farm.*

MRS. HAYSEED—*His wife.*

PHINEAS HAYSEED—*His son.*

SALLY MERCER—*The hired girl.*

MR. BRIGHT—*The traveling photographer.*

SCENE: *As curtain rises, Mrs. Hayseed is discovered sitting in the back yard peeling potatoes. Phineas is turning the grindstone for his father.*

PHINEAS (*busily turning grindstone*): Ain't that scythe sharp yet, dad?

MR. HAYSEED (*rubbing his hand along the blade*): It seems a little rough, here. (*Holds blade on grindstone again.*)

MRS. HAYSEED (*industriously peeling potatoes*): How long before you men can be ready for dinner?

MR. HAYSEED: It won't take us long to finish off this scythe and feed the horses. Then we'll be ready.

MRS. HAYSEED (*gets up, wipes hands on her apron*): Well, I'll go right in and put the potatoes on to cook. It won't take Sally and me long to get your dinner. (*Goes off to left.*)

PHINEAS (*stops turning the grindstone and pulls out a large red handkerchief with which he mops his face*): That's hot work. That scythe must have been some dull, dad, or else you're putting on an extra fine edge.

MR. HAYSEED: What's the matter, Phineas, don't you like turning the grindstone?

PHINEAS: Can't say that I am stuck on the job.

MR. HAYSEED: (*Phineas turns the grindstone very rapidly. Mr. Hayseed takes blade off from the grindstone and then feels the edge several times.*)

It's all right now, Phineas.

SALLY (*enters right*): Oh, Mr. Hayseed, are you and Phineas up for dinner. I didn't think it was that late.

MR. HAYSEED (*draws out a huge silver watch*): It's only eleven o'clock, but we came in early for we've got to cut some fodder for the horses right after dinner, so I had to get my scythe ready. I'll go out and feed the horses, Phineas. (*Exit right.*)

SALLY (*nervously edges off toward left*): I—I must hurry in and help get dinner. Mrs. Hayseed 'll wonder what's become of me.

PHINEAS (*awkwardly shambles nearer Sally*): Don't kurry in, Sally, I—I want to talk to you.

SALLY: Don't you talk to me every day?

PHINEAS (*earnestly*): But this—this is something special, Sally. (*Attempts to put his arm around her, but Sally eludes him.*)

SALLY: Are you going to buy a new cow?

PHINEAS (*mysteriously*): It's something a heap more important than any old cow. It's something that I know you'll be glad to hear, Sally.

SALLY: You don't mean to say that there's going to be a picnic?

P. 5635
79 V. 1195

PHINEAS (*disgustedly*): No, its something nicer than a picnic.

SALLY: Well, I never was any good at riddles, so tell me what it is, for I know I never could guess.

PHINEAS (*sits down on bench and points to it as he speaks to Sally*): If you'll come over here and sit down, I'll tell you. (*Sally sits down on bench beside him, but as far away from him as she can sit.*) You know (*moves nearer to Sally*) I've always liked you, Sally, and (*moves closer*) and if—if you want to—why—why—

MR. HAYSEED (*enters hurriedly*): Say, Phineas, what did you do with that (*Phineas moves as far away from Sally as he can get*) lead strap?

PHINEAS: It's hanging up above old Joe's manger.

MR. HAYSEED: Well, I'll be swizzled. I never thought to look there. (*Mr. Hayseed goes out.*)

PHINEAS (*edging closer to Sally*): Don't you want to hear what I've got to tell you, Sally? (*Puts his hand over hers. Sally looks very self-conscious.*)

I—I—

MR. BRIGHT (*enters walking very rapidly*): Want your pictures taken?

SALLY (*blushing*): N—not now.

MR. BRIGHT (*talking rapidly*): I guarantee to please or money refunded. My camera is an excellent one. A better machine you will not find this side of Chicago. I use the new process for developing pictures. By means of this process I can secure better pictures than it would be possible to obtain elsewhere, for I am the sole owner of this special process. You will regret it all your life if you do not have your picture taken by this special method. What are a few paltry dollars compared to the satisfaction you will have when the process becomes common in a few years and you can say that you were among the first to have your pictures taken by the new process. And, better still, you will have the pictures to show to your friends. By all means have your pictures taken.

PHINEAS: But we don't want our pictures taken.

MR. BRIGHT: My dear young man, you most assuredly do want to have your picture taken. You can't afford not to have it taken.

MR. HAYSEED (*carries a large pail*): And who might you be?

MR. BRIGHT (*makes a low bow*): I, sir, am Mr. Bright, sole owner of the wonderful new method of developing pictures. Want your picture taken?

MR. HAYSEED (*slowly*): I hadn't thought about it.

MR. BRIGHT: I can assure you that I can produce better pictures by my new process than any you have ever seen. (*Mrs. Hayseed comes out.*) Madam, do you want your picture taken? I am the sole owner of the wonderful new method of developing pictures. You may consider yourselves very fortunate to have such a wonderful opportunity. Next month I expect to be in Washington and take the president's picture. You surely can't afford to miss the opportunity of having your picture taken by the same wonderful process as I am going to use in making those of the president.

MR. HAYSEED (*puts down the pail he has been holding and goes over to where the photographer is setting up his camera. Phineas also walks to where Mr. Bright is standing. Phineas and Mr. Hayseed eye Mr. Bright curiously as he sets up his camera preparatory to taking pictures*): How in tarnation can you take pictures with a thing like that?

MR. BRIGHT: It is very simple, I can assure you, my dear sir. I merely press this little bulb here and your picture is taken.

MR. HAYSEED (*earnestly*): You don't say so. And what might your charges be?

MR. BRIGHT: Only five dollars a dozen. Now isn't that remarkable? Just think, I am going to use my wonderful new method to develop them, too.

MR. HAYSEED: Do you want to have your picture taken, Susan?

MRS. HAYSEED: But five dollars is a lot of money.

MR. BRIGHT (*leaves camera and walks toward Mrs. Hayseed*): But just think, madam, my wonderful new process.

MRS. HAYSEED: Well, I'd powerful like to have my picture taken, but you'll have to wait until I dress up.

MR. HAYSEED: Hurry up then, Susan, for I'm anxious to see the thing work.

(*Exit Mrs. Hayseed.*)

PHINEAS (*examining camera*): Come here, Sally, and look at those trees. They're growing with their roots up in the air. (*Sally goes to camera and looks at the trees.*)

SALLY: Why are they upside down, Mr. Photographer?

MR. BRIGHT (*hesitatingly*): Well, er, you see, they—they take better that way.

MRS. HAYSEED: (*She has changed her dress and comes out fastening the last button.*) I hurried just as fast as I could, because I do want to have my picture taken. Are you ready for me, Mr. Pictureman?

MR. BRIGHT (*energetically*): Right this way, madam. Now how do you want them taken.

MR. HAYSEED: By your new method, the one that you are going to use when you take the president's picture, of course.

MR. BRIGHT: Oh, certainly, certainly! I'll use my own method, but do you want to have them taken standing or sitting?

SALLY (*sits down on box and tucks her skirts close to her*): Well, if I'm going to stand on my head like those trees do, I'm going to sit down.

MR. BRIGHT: But my dear madam, you are not upside down, it is merely your picture that is inverted.

MRS. HAYSEED: I'm not going to stand on my head, either, I'm going to sit down on this here box. (*Sits down with Sally.*)

MR. BRIGHT: Have you gentlemen any objection to standing? If you haven't, will you please stand back of your wives.

SALLY (*jumps to her feet and speaks loudly*): I'll give you to understand, sir, that I'm nobody's wife. I'm Miss Mercer.

MR. BRIGHT (*ingratiatingly*): I'm sorry I made the mistake, Miss Mercer, but in a very few places would the young men allow you to remain Miss Mercer this long. (*Sally sits down and assumes an attitude.*) Now, you stand here. (*Puts Mr. Hayseed back of Mrs. Hayseed and Phineas back of Sally. Goes to camera and looks through it.*) This way, please, Miss Mercer. Hold your head a little higher. (*Sally raises her head as high as possible.*) There, that's right; look here, madam. (*He holds his hand above the camera. Mrs. Hayseed holds her head on one side and looks at his hand.*) Now, you gentlemen, look straight at the camera. Steady, now, I'm going to take your picture.

PHINEAS: How long do we have to keep still?

MR. BRIGHT: Not very long. Ready? (*Presses bulb.*) There, its's done.

MR. HAYSEED; You don't mean to say that you have our pictures done?

MR. BRIGHT: Oh, of course, they have to be developed and printed. I'll be around with the pictures next week if the weather is good, so that I can develop them. (*Folds camera and tripod.*)

PHINEAS: And don't we get the pictures today?

MR. BRIGHT: Well—well, if you want me to use my new process, the one I shall use when I take the president's picture, you shall have to wait next week.



MR. HAYSEED: I'd ruther have them right when I get them, so we'd better wait.
 MR. BRIGHT: I knew that's what you'd decide, that's why I spoke as I did.
 Well, I'm a busy man, so I must be going. (*Picks up camera and starts off. Tips his hat and makes a deep bow.*) Good day, friends.

MRS. HAYSEED: It's dinner time, so I'll go in and hurry up dinner. (*Goes off.*)

MR. HAYSEED: I reckon I'd better get that bucket of water now. (*Exit.*)

PHINEAS (*sits down by Sally*): Sally, I want to tell you something.

SALLY: Well, goodness knows. Phineas, if you want to know whether I'll marry you, why don't you ask me.

PHINEAS: Will you, Sally? (*Sally nods her head. As the curtain descends Phineas puts his arm around her.*)

(*Curtain*)

MARCH'S FAMOUS FUNNY FARCES

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