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# A Surprise Party at Brinkley's



Ward Macauley

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# A Surprise Party at Brinkley's

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An Entertainment in One Act

BY

WARD MACAULEY

Author of "EXAMINATION DAY AT WOOD HILL  
SCHOOL," "BACK TO THE COUNTRY STORE,"  
"OLD HOME DAY AT PLUNKET," etc.



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# A Surprise Party at Brinkley's

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## CHARACTERS

JOE ARMSTRONG	}	. . . . .	<i>Ancient rivals.</i>
TOM MUSSELL			
MARY BRINKLEY	.	.	<i>The cause of the rivalry.</i>
"PA" BRINKLEY	.	.	<i>An incurable optimist.</i>
SARAH BRINKLEY	.	.	<i>His helpmate.</i>
SAM SWAYNE	}	. . . . .	<i>Two hearts that beat as one.</i>
JENNIE LOVETT			
ALLEN FENBY	.	.	<i>Who has made good in the city.</i>
JOEL KETCHALL	.	.	<i>Aid-de-camp to Grocer Hornbucket.</i>
ELMER BLOSSOM	}	. . . . .	<i>Visitors at the surprise party.</i>
BEATRICE JONES			
DOLLY LAFFERTY			
MOLLY SALLING			
SALLY LONG			

TIME OF PLAYING :—One hour.

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## STORY OF THE ENTERTAINMENT

Mary Brinkley has graduated from college, and after a few weeks at home is going away for a visit. The villagers have planned a surprise party for her birthday. Among the guests are Tom Mussell and Joe Armstrong, rivals for Mary's regard, who have fought numerous battles to determine which is the best man; and another is Allen Fenby, who has been away to the city and who has made good. He has long loved Mary. Mary's college life has made Tom and Joe distasteful to her, but they do not realize this. The guests enjoy themselves at games, jokes, etc., and much amusement is

furnished by the engaged couple, who constantly try to find a convenient sequestered nook. Allen succeeds in taking Mary aside and telling her that he has been offered a fine position in a far-away city, contingent upon his immediate acceptance.

“We can be married next week.” “Next week! Young man, do you realize the importance of a woman’s trousseau?” “Would you be willing if I gave you six months?” “Yes, I suppose I should.” “Then we won’t let a trousseau stand in the way.”

Pa Brinkley, an incurable optimist, and his sharp-spoken but kind-hearted wife, are won over. Tom and Joe decide to fight for the right to speak to Mary first, only to learn, as Tom expresses it, that “there has been a surprise party at Brinkley’s.”

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## DIRECTIONS

“A Surprise Party at Brinkley’s” is extremely easy to present. The essential thing is to choose people well suited to the various characters, and to put plenty of vim into the business, the entertainment features, etc. Additional entertainment features may easily be included.

“Pa” Brinkley should be played by a large man with a very kindly, jovial face. He should practice gentleness of voice and manner. If well handled, his part may be very effective. Joe and Tom should be muscular fellows of about the same build. Both should be uncouth in manner and somewhat overdressed in appearance. Mary must be played by a pretty, attractive girl of twenty-two or three. Allen is a neat, businesslike young city man. Sam and Jennie are foolishly romantic. Joel is a grocer’s boy who thinks he has a wise head.

The characters—except Allen—should all appear in country best. Molly must be a good singer, Sally a pianist.

The more attention paid to effective setting, to convey the idea of a village sitting-room, the better for the performance.

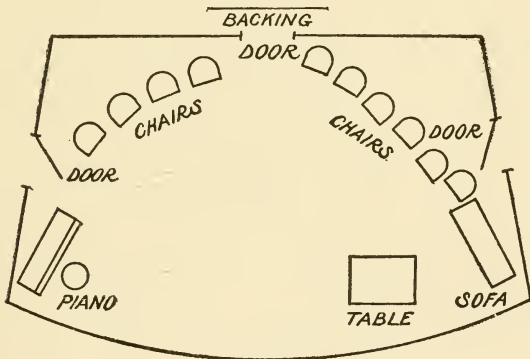
Faithful following of the above suggestions, together with careful study of each character’s peculiarities, will ensure a satisfying production.

## PROPERTIES

For Mary, suit-case, and clothing and books to pack in it; post-card. For Pa Brinkley, an old purse, two hats, plate of ice-cream and spoon. For Mrs. Brinkley, a newspaper twisted into a "fool's cap." For Elmer, card and handkerchief. For Allen, letter. For all guests, packages and baskets, and for all characters, pencils, slips of paper, handkerchiefs.

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## SCENE PLOT



SCENE.—Room at Brinkley's. Entrances R., L. and C. Piano down R. Table and sofa down L. Furnishings in accordance with a country sitting-room.





## A Surprise Party at Brinkley's

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SCENE.—*The sitting-room at Brinkley's. The curtain discovers MARY BRINKLEY, C., placing articles in a suitcase and humming quietly to herself.*

(*Enter PA BRINKLEY, C.*)

PA B. Well, daughter, you don't much more'n get here than off you trot, do you?

MARY (*looking up from her packing*). Why, father, you know I've been here three whole weeks, and ——

PA B. "Father"? Y' always used to call me pa, same as everybody else that's known me more'n a couple o' weeks.

MARY (*continuing packing*). Pa, then. You know I'm going to have a lot of fun with Cousin Anna, and it's only a few days.

PA B. I suppose I had ought to be thankful we've had you here at all, and I am—thankful's can be. Why, every day's Thanksgiving Day with me—wish't 'twas, too, s'fur as turkey is concerned. I'm thankful we've kept you so long as we have. I'm expecting to lose you 'most any minute.

MARY (*pausing in her packing*). Lose me?

(*Takes some articles of clothing out and begins to replace them in an effort to make more room.*)

PA B. Yes, some discriminating sort o' chap whose eyes was given him to look out of is just as likely as not to come and ask pa's consent 'most any time. Ginger, ef I was a young feller, I'd be making you say yes or no b'fore the grass had need of another cuttin'. Y'look now, Mary, just like your ma did the day she owned up that she wouldn't do anything to hinder the minister earnin' a bit of a fee.

MARY (*laughing and putting a book in suit-case*). I guess there's no danger of your losing me that way, father—not right away.

PA B. What did I tell you about calling me father? Pa's the only name I answer to. Some day you'll say, "Father, pass the potatoes," and you'll have to reach for 'em yourself. But I can't see that Tom and Joe are any less int'rested than they were before you went off to college.

MARY (*putting book in suit-case*). They have been around pretty often.

PA B. Not only that, but they've had two stand-up fights about you since you came home.

MARY (*disgusted*). They have? I wonder if they think that is the way the matter is to be settled.

PA B. It don't settle a thing, for every time they both claim they got the better of it.

MARY (*rearranging articles*). Then I guess neither one of them gets hurt much. They better ask me. I'll settle them.

PA B. Mary, do you know college hasn't spoiled you a bit? Folks said you'd have all the niceness edjicated out o' you. Here I've been talking to you and you didn't use a single word too long for me to get the meaning of. As I look at it, and I'm not blind by a good ways, you're sweeter every year, as well as knowin' more.

MARY (*taking book out of suit-case and putting in another*). I'm afraid you're prejudiced, fath—pa.

PA B. Prejudiced? I can't see why. Just b'cause I'm your pa? Anyway, I'm glad we've had you here s'long as we have, and I hope you have the best time you ever did down to Anna's.

(*Enter MRS. BRINKLEY, C.*)

MRS. B. For land's sake, haven't you got that suit-case packed yet?

MARY (*hastily cramming the contents in*). Yes, I've got everything packed up at last.

(*Vainly endeavors to close and lock the suit-case.*)

MRS. B. Help her, there, pa, can't you? Don't sit still like a mummy. (PA B. *bends over and tries to close the*

*suit-case. He wipes the perspiration from his forehead and puffs audibly, but cannot hold the suit-case together.)* Well, if you don't beat all. Helpless as a babe in arms. Let me do it.

(MRS. B. *puts PA B. and MARY aside, and closes the suit-case without difficulty.*)

PA B. It takes ma to do things, I tell you.

MRS. B. It's lucky I'm around, seein' there's no real man in the house.

MARY. Why, mother!

PA B. Unsay them cruel words, mother. (*Grins.*)

MRS. B. (*picking up the book on the table*). Why, Mary, I thought you was going to take this book along for some post-graduate work.

MARY. But, mother, the novel's so much more interesting.

MRS. B. That may be, but you've got your livin' to earn. (PA B. *laughs uproariously.*) Whatever is the matter, pa?

PA B. Nothing.

MRS. B. Now don't sit there and tell me that. A man doesn't laugh so's he's going to choke unless something's the matter. Now out with it.

PA B. Nothing. Only I was thinkin' there's considerable comp'tition already between the men folks to pervide Mary with three square meals a day.

MRS. B. Pshaw, pa, stop putting such nonsense into her head.

MARY. Well, I have a letter to write before I go, and I might as well do it now. You know how I love to write letters.

PA B. I didn't notice 'em running any special trains to bring us your corr'spondence when you was to college.

MRS. B. Another thing. You write your pa or me just as soon as ever you get to Anna's. I'm nervous about journeys ever since that train wreck last fall, and I might 'a' been in it if Sarah had lived in Fallsport instead of Oakville.

MARY (*at door c*). I'll write the post-card now and mail it when I get there.

(*Exit, c.*)

PA B. My, isn't Mary just about the sweetest girl you ever saw or heard tell of?

MRS. B. If she weren't so sweet, pa, perhaps we'd have a better chance to keep her.

PA B. That remark has got a certain amount of truth in it, ma, but if she wasn't so sweet we wouldn't want to keep her so much. Guess it'll be pretty hard keeping her home the way Joe and Tom are buzzin' around.

MRS. B. Those two boys had their first fist fight over Mary when they was six years old, and they've had 'em off and on ever since.

PA B. More on than off, if I've noticed c'rectly. I guess they mean business now. Wonder is they haven't asked her a'ready.

MRS. B. (*low voice*). I think they've got their minds made up to ask her t'-night.

PA B. Both of 'em?

MRS. B. Sure. What one does, the other does.

PA B. D'you think Mary knows?

MRS. B. Knows they're going to ask her?

PA B. No; that there's to be a surprise party for her.

MRS. B. I don't think she's dreamt it for a moment.

PA B. It'll please her, I guess.

MRS. B. Tom and Joe asking her?

PA B. Why, no; the folks surprisin' her, o' course. But say, mother, whilst we're on the subject so to speak, what d'you think Mary'll say to 'em?

MRS. B. I'm not sure, but I think, for one, they'd each have a better chance if Mary hadn't ever gone away to college.

PA B. It hasn't made her a bit stuck up.

MRS. B. Course not, but she's seen a bit o' society; and Tom and Joe, their best friends couldn't call them society. Another thing, you've heard Allen Fenby's home?

PA B. I guess I hear most o' the news one way or t'other—from women folks mostly.

MRS. B. Well, Allen's been sweet on Mary, too. And they do say that he's made a big hit in the city.

PA B. What is he—a ball-player?

MRS. B. A ball-player? How ridiculous! Whatever made you say that?

PA B. You said he made a hit.

MRS. B. Never mind gettin' funny, pa, and I hope to

goodness you don't start folks talking about your bein' odd. No, Allen's in an architect's office, and from what I hear he must be pretty near one of the head men.

PA B. Allen's a good boy, all right, but I guess if Tom or Joe ever gave him a real good larrup, the doctor'd get a good fee. (*Enter MARY, C. PA B., surprised.*) Finished your letter a'ready?

MARY. No, but I thought I'd show you this postal to see if it's all right.

PA B. Anything you do's all right.

MRS. B. Stop putting such foolishness into her head, Pa Brinkley.

MARY (*reading*). "Dear father and mother——"

PA B. Better make that pa.

MARY. Father sounds better on a post-card that everybody in the post-office is going to read. Now, pa, don't interrupt me again. "Dear father and mother—I arrived safely and in good health. Cousin Anna and the rest of the family are all well. The weather is pleasant and I don't feel a bit tired from the journey. Lovingly, Mary." There, pa, does that meet with your august approval?

PA B. August or September, s'far as that goes. But hadn't you ought to wait for it to happen?

MRS. B. (*disgustedly*). You're just as bad as your pa, Mary. I was just saying that I hope he doesn't make a spectacle of himself to-night.

MARY. To-night? Why, who's——

MRS. B. (*hurriedly*). Nothing—no one. I only meant as you was going away I didn't want your last idea to be that your pa was nothin' but a clown.

PA B. Clowns make money.

MRS. B. Not your kind.

PA B. Mary, your ma and I was just remarking that Allen Fenby's in town. You remember Allen, don't you?

MARY. Remember Allen? Why, I should say—well, I mean of course I do.

MRS. B. Probably you knew he was coming.

MARY. Of course I did.

PA B. Ha, ha, of course. Who told you, Mary? Come, now, confess the worst to your pa.

MARY. I had a postal from him this afternoon.

PA B. Postal? Well, you just inform your young men

friends emphatic not to write postals. Don't they care two cents about you?

MARY. Two cents? What for?

PA B. Why, for the postage stamp, o' course. Anyway, you tell him to write letters and stick 'em with this—what d'you call this funny stuff?

MRS. B. Sealing-wax, pa. Don't be an ignoramus.

PA B. Your kindly suggestion shall be an inspiration to me, ma. Sealing-wax is the stuff, and an extra big dose on all incoming mail for Elmhurst. The postmaster's O. K., but I wouldn't trust his family around the corner of a hitching-post, so far as reading mail matter goes. Fact, I b'lieve they've got an X-ray up there.

MRS. B. Mary, Allen's doing fine in the city.

MARY. Of course he—I mean I've heard that he was getting along quite well.

PA B. You and Allen were kind o' friendly, if I remember — (*Loud noises are heard outside.*) Why, whatever can that racket be?

MRS. B. (*pretending fear*). Better go and see, pa. There's so many burglars nowadays.

PA B. But burglars don't make a noise like bedlam let loose. (*The noise redoubles.*) It's a wonder folks can't let a man enjoy himself in the bosom of his family without disturbing the peace.

(*Loud knocks and shouts are heard, R. PA B. goes to the exit, R., and returns quickly followed by the guests of the surprise party, all laughing and shouting. All carry packages.*)

JOEL KETCHALL. Surprise! Surprise!

ALL (*in chorus*). Surprise! Surprise!

(*MARY is confused but happy.*)

MARY. Indeed it is a surprise.

MRS. B. She never even dreamt of it.

(*TOM MUSSELL and JOE ARMSTRONG are close together.*)

JOE (*angrily*). Who're you shovin'?

TOM. You'll find out who I'm shovin'.

JOE. I can shove as well as the next one.

TOM. Any time you want to try it!

(JOE and TOM continue to mutter and glower at each other.)

JENNIE LOVETT. I do so love a surprise party. They're so romantic.

MARY (to SAM SWAYNE). I don't believe I have congratulated you yet, have I?

(SAM blushes and seems unaware of the proper disposition of his hands.)

SAM. I don't know as you have, Mary, not exactly, but I knew you thought it, anyway.

JENNIE (sentimentally). You know all the world loves a lover.

PA B. Then I should think you'd be jealous of all the world, Jennie.

MRS. B. You know what I told you, pa. Now, folks, I'll relieve you of your packages. Pa, make yourself useful, seeing you can't be ornamental.

(Together PA B. and MRS. B. take the packages and exit c. The company take seats but find there are not enough chairs.)

TOM. I'll bring in some chairs, Mary.

JOE. So'll I.

MARY. You'll find some in the kitchen.

(TOM and JOE have another encounter at the door, in which TOM bumps JOE against the wall. JOE gives him a belligerent look. Knock is heard at door R. MARY looks up greatly interested, but PA B. answers the knock.)

(Enter ALLEN FENBY, R.)

PA B. Hello, here's Allen. You're a sight for sore eyes, boy.

(ALLEN acknowledges the greeting and goes to MARY.)

MARY. I'm so glad you came before I went away, Allen.

ALLEN. I thought I'd better run down and help at the surprise party.

MARY. It seems good to see you again.

JOE. She didn't say that to us.



TOM. She'd said it to me, if you wasn't around.

(During this conversation and at its close, TOM and JOE bring in chairs, bumping each other at the door c., and the guests have been taking seats. SAM and JENNIE place chairs very close to each other, and when they think they are unobserved, hold hands momentarily. MRS. B. and PA B., having disposed of the packages, reënter c.)

PA B. Just as sure as a perch is full o' bones, I haven't set my eyes on such a good-looking assortment of young folks since the last time —

MRS. B. Now, you remember what I told you —

PA B. Can't possibly do it, ma.

MRS. B. (*sharply*). You can't? Why not?

PA B. Haven't got a big enough thinkery to remember all you told me. Now as I was a-saying when I was interrupted (*serio-comic glance of rebuke at MRS. B.*), when I see such a beauteous galaxy of femininity, it reminds me of the time I was —

MRS. B. Never mind.

PA B. (*unheeding*). — of the time I was the only man at a summer resort.

MRS. B. When was that, pa? Own up, now.

PA B. Back in '79. I was summer-engaged that year.

ALL (*in concert*). Summer-engaged!

MRS. B. Pa, how you do go on. I never knew you was engaged till you met me.

PA B. Oh, summer-engaged don't mean anything. I met the lady on the street the next winter and she didn't seem to remember me.

MRS. B. Well, pa, the folks didn't all come up here to hear you confess your sins.

PA B. No, they'd have to come up several nights.

MRS. B. They could live right here.

TOM (*to JOE*). Get off my foot.

JOE. I'll get off when I get ready.

TOM. You'll get off now.

JOE. Well, I'm ready now.

MRS. B. What do you say to playing some games?

JOEL. Games for mine.

MARY. It'll seem good to play the old games again.

ALLEN. It will be old times.



PA B. Oh, to be a child at mother's knee.

MRS. B. (*scathingly*). Never mind ancient history, pa.

JENNIE. Let's not play any kissing games.

JOEL. Oh, why not?

MRS. B. No, we won't; not a one. D' you suppose I'm going to allow that old rascal to kiss all the pretty girls in this room? First thing I'd know, he'd pack his satchel and off he'd go.

PA B. You do me a base injustice, ma.

MRS. B. Mebbe; but I'm on the safe side. Any man who'd confess to being summer-engaged, I won't trust him too far.

PA B. Strange; that's just what old Hornbucket said.

(*All laugh.*)

MRS. B. (*reddening*). Said what?

PA B. Said he wouldn't trust me too far—one week's groceries was the best he could do.

MRS. B. You'll have the whole town thinking we're hard up.

PA B. (*taking out an old purse and holding it upside down to show that it is empty*). We hadn't ought to be ashamed of the truth, ma.

MARY. Father, stop teasing mother.

PA B. Who stop teasing who?

MARY. Pa, stop teasing ma.

PA B. That's better. You are an obedient daughter. Now, folks, what'll we play?

SAM. Let's play conversation.

ALLEN. What's that?

SAM. We choose up by twos and talk to each other.

PA B. Not to-night, Sam. You'd fix it so Jennie'd be your partner. You played "conversation" up to her house till half-past nine last night, and to-night you've got to give the rest of us a chance.

JOEL. Funny thing.

ALL. What's a funny thing?

JOEL. Why, before a fellow's married he's always making excuses to see his girl; after he gets her he makes excuses to get away.

ALL. Nonsense.

JOEL (*stoutly*). Course it's nonsense.

JENNIE. It's the exception that proves the rule. When you are in love, really, truly in love, you suffice for each other.

PA B. Two souls with but a single thought, two hearts that beat as one.

JENNIE (*ecstatically*). Beautiful, wondrous, poetic!

SAM. Very well put.

MRS. B. Now, pa, I want to know where you heard that.

VARIOUS VOICES. Yes, pa, reveal the worst.

MRS. B. Have you been seein' any of these play-actors?

PA B. (*apologetic*). It was a long time ago, and it was a good deal like Shakespeare, anyway, all full of high language and gestures —

JOEL. If I had it to do over, I'd be on the stage —

MRS. B. Why, Joel, does your mother know about this?

JOEL. Ma says it's better than eight dollars a week down to Hornbucket's.

MRS. B. I'll tell your ma when I see her.

JOEL. Don't worry her. I gave it all up. I'm going to stick to commerce.

JENNIE. Noble sacrifice! It's so sentimental to self-sacrifice.

PA B. Would you give Sam up to another girl?

JENNIE. I referred to noble self-sacrifice, Pa Brinkley.

MRS. B. Yes, you'd better stick to Hornbucket. Most of his clerks do. They say there never was one quit, and only one ever got fired.

JOEL. Oh, I'll buy him out one of these days.

All. Buy him out?

JOEL. Sure. I'm saving, and as I ain't goin' to get married, I guess I'll have enough.

JENNIE. You'd ought to be ashamed o' yourself.

JOEL. I'd ought to be, but I ain't.

PA B. Now, folks, no doubt this is all very edifyin', but it isn't games. Let's play cornucopia.

All. Cornucopia?

PA B. Yes, everybody plays it.

MRS. B. You mean everybody did a generation ago when you took three years to work up enough courage to pop the question.

PA B. I got summer-engaged in five minutes.

JOEL. Engaged's all right, but married—no.

PA B. You're a misanthropist, Joel.

JOEL. I would be if I had money.

MRS. B. Nobody nowadays knows how to play cornucopia, or Fool's Cap, as I called it.

ALL. Let's play it.

PA B. I'll explain it. One person goes out of the room. Then he comes in. No, let me see —

MRS. B. You don't know what you're talking about, pa. One person stands in the center, and asks any question he likes. If the person he asks uses the word I in the answer, he has the fool's cap put on his head.

PA B. That's it. That's it.

ALL. You stand in the center, pa.

MRS. B. I'll make the fool's cap.

(Exit, c.)

(PA B. rises and stands in the center. The chairs are drawn around him except at front of stage.)

PA B. Remember, no matter what I say don't say I. (Looks around meditatively. Enter MRS. B., c., with fool's cap made of a newspaper.) Who was the oldest man in the world?

JOEL. Pa Brinkley.

PA B. Wrong. Who do you say, Mary?

MARY. I don't know.

ALL. Fool's cap!

(MARY puts on the fool's cap and changes places with PA B.)

MARY (looking around the circle and addressing SAM). Who loves Jennie?

SAM. Sam Swayne.

MARY. Who is he?

SAM. Me.

MARY. Who's me?

SAM. Sam Swayne.

MARY (turning on JOE suddenly). Who can whip Tom Mussell?

JOE. I can.

ALL. Fool's cap!

TOM. You can't, either.

JOE. I can, too.

TOM. I'll destroy what little beauty you've got.

JOE. I'll polish you off after the party.

(*Both glower on each other. MARY puts the fool's cap on JOE.*)

TOM. Fool, fool! Joe, with the fool's cap! Just right for you to wear.

JOE (*sullen*). I ain't a-goin' to play this silly game.

PA B. It is a fool game. Let's try something else.

MRS. B. We'll play cross questions and crooked answers.

PA B. I get plenty of cross questions at home, ma.

MRS. B. (*sharply*). I get just as many crooked answers.

(*All laugh.*) All the ladies sit on this side (*indicating R.*) and all the gentlemen over here. (*Indicates L.*)

JOE. 'Then where'll Tom sit?

MARY. Right next to you, Joe.

(*JOE mumbles to himself while TOM makes threatening gestures. SAM and JENNIE are loath to be separated and give each other affectionate glances of farewell.*)

PA B. It'll be only a little while, Sam.

(*All laugh. After all are arranged, ladies opposite the gentlemen, as indicated by questions and answers below, MRS. B. passes paper and pencil to each.*)

MRS. B. Now all the ladies are to write questions and all the gentlemen are to write answers.

JOEL. Answers to what?

MRS. B. Anything at all.

JENNIE. Do you mean sentimental questions?

MRS. B. Any kind at all.

JOEL. Well, I won't write anything that'd be evidence in a breach o' promise suit.

MRS. B. No one would sue you for breach of promise, Joel.

JOEL (*sceptically*). I had a friend who it was done to. I'm not taking chances.

ALLEN. This is a leap year game, isn't it?

MRS. B. How d'you make that out?

ALLEN. Ladies asking the question.

JOEL. I got to go down to the store quick. Where's my hat?

PA B. Down to the store? What made you make up your mind so sudden?

JOEL. If there's any leap year business going on, I'm going to hide behind a case o' corn.

MARY. I'll protect you, Joel.

PA B. Women ask questions every year.

MRS. B. You men folk had better write some good, sensible answers.

JOEL. Then I'll write NO in big capitals.

PA B. Jimmy Smith talked the same way, but he's got a wife and a tolerable good-sized family over in Seecut.

*(During the above the guests have been writing.)*

MRS. B. Everybody ready? Pa, get a couple o' hats. (PA B. *exits c. and reappears with a hat in each hand.*) Now collect the questions in one and the answers in the other, and mind you don't get mixed up. (PA B. *follows instructions.*) Now shake 'em up—shake 'em lively and let each lady take out a question and each gentleman an answer.

JENNIE. I'm sure this is going to be romantic.

PA B. It'll be rheumatic if this weather keeps up.

MRS. B. (*scathingly*). She said romantic, pa.

PA B. Excuse me, excuse me. You will pardon me, won't you, Jennie? (*Mock humility.*)

MRS. B. Don't disgrace yourself, pa. Now you pass those hats as I told you. (*The ladies each take a question and the gentlemen an answer.*) Now read 'em off.

DOLLY LAFFERTY. Is there any truth in the rumor that Pa Brinkley wears a wig?

*(PA B. feels his head meditatively.)*

PA B. I protest.

MRS. B. The question goes, and it's lucky I don't answer it. Joel, read your answer.

JOEL. It cost him four dollars.

MRS. B. And he told me three dollars and ninety-eight cents.

PA B. I object to this levity and lack of decorum. Any further remarks? If not, we will proceed to the next question.

MARY. What is the most intelligent animal?

ELMER BLOSSOM. Some say Sam Swayne.

*(Uproarious applause. SAM is confused.)*

PA B. I wonder what kind of an animal Sam is.

TOM. I heard Jennie call him a little dear.

JENNIE. Well, I didn't say anything untruthful, so there now, Tom Mussell.

PA B. I suppose we're all animals, as you might say.

MRS. B. Yes, and some more than others.

ELMER. Question, question, who's got the question?

MOLLY SALLING. What does love do?

JENNIE. Tee-hee-hee —

JOEL. Love upsets you and gets your mind off business. That's what old Hornbucket said when he fired the pretty cashier, 'cause us fellers got too much int'rested in the financial department. Now he's got a cash register, and no one's fell in love with that.

PA B. Young man, d'you realize you're interfering with the progress of this important edjicational institution, viz., cross questions and crooked answers? Molly, you will please repeat the question.

MOLLY. What does love do?

PA B. The answer, Joe?

JOE. Crops are pretty poor this year.

JOEL. If it means crops of lovers, glad to hear it. I —

MRS. B. I suppose you were disappointed when Hornbucket let Minnie go and put in a cash register?

JOEL. I should say not. You ain't in danger of taking a cash register out on moonlight nights and talking foolish, and mebbe getting married —

MRS. B. Pshaw, Minnie wouldn't look twice at you.

JOEL. I don't want to take no chances. Women are unreliable, I've heard.

PA B. Oh, wise young man!

MRS. B. You'd ought to know better than to encourage such disrespect, pa.

PA B. Crops are pretty poor this year in the love line. How about it, Sam and Jennie?

SAM. But we was engaged last year.

JENNIE. Well, not exactly, Sam, dear.

SAM. Just as good as.

JOEL. Just as bad as, you mean.

MRS. B. I don't know as crops are so bad. They tell me that (*name some good-looking fellow well known to the audience*) is getting attentive to the pretty girls.

PA B. Yes, but why say getting? Question, please.

JENNIE. Here is mine, and I hope the answer is just horrid, the way you've been teasing me.

PA B. Everybody hold his chair hard and hope for a horrid answer.

JENNIE. Who is the homeliest girl in Elmhurst?

ALLEN. The mirror will tell you the secret.

PA B. Horrid answer, horrid answer.

JENNIE (*indignantly*). I don't believe that is the answer. You just made that up. Let me see the paper.

(*All laugh except JENNIE, who is almost weeping, and SAM, who is tenderly sympathetic.*)

SAM. Never mind, dear, never mind.

ALLEN. You don't think I would cheat, do you, Jennie? Read it yourself. (*Passes the slip.*)

JENNIE (*reading, but only half-convinced*). I don't care. It's a put up job, and I don't think it's one bit fair.

PA B. No, boys, and girls, too, it isn't nice to tease. I hope you won't do it again. Question, who will pop the question? Your turn, Sam? Oh, no, excuse me, you have popped the question. It's your turn to read one, Sally; speak up.

SALLY LONG. Should an engagement be long or short?

PA B. Answer up, Sam; you're being spoken at, and you're an authority on that subject.

SAM. The least said soonest mended. But I don't care about this rubbish, cross answers and crooked questions, or whatever it is. I say get engaged just as quick as your girl'll say yes, and stay engaged until you get enough money to settle down——

PA B. Or settle up. Come, folks, applaud that oratorical effort.

(*Enthusiastic hand-clapping and waving of handkerchiefs except by TOM.*)

JENNIE (*to MARY*). Wasn't that the cutest speech you ever heard?

MARY. Now, Jennie, if I said yes, you'd be jealous.

PA B. Boys and girls, I want to tell you a secret. Don't tell anybody, but I've a suspicion that Sam writes the "Advice to Girls" column of the "Ladies' Home Companion."

MRS. B. Now, pa —

PA B. (*hastily*). Question!

BEATRICE JONES. Who is the better man, Tom or Joe?

TOM. I am.

JOE. Not!

ELMER (*reading*). Generally speaking, yes.

PA B. That's right, I guess. Well, I can't help admiring anybody who won't ever give up.

MRS. B. Speaking about giving up, let's have some riddles.

PA B. Not until Molly has favored us with a brief selection.

(*Applause and cries of "Yes, Molly."*)

MOLLY. Oh, no, not to-night.

PA B. I must insist, kindly but firmly, to-night.

MOLLY. I have a very sore throat. (*Pretends to cough.*)

PA B. My, my, I'm afraid I'll have to pack you off home. Too bad, folks, you'll have to excuse Molly; she has a terrible cold. Come on, Molly, we'll get your wraps —

MOLLY. I'm not so sick as all that —

PA B. Oh, you'll sing, then?

MOLLY. Oh, I can't sing.

SEVERAL VOICES. You can, too; you sing just dear.

MOLLY (*smiling*). Oh, do you really think so?

PA B. Now, you've got what you wanted, give us what we want.

MOLLY. Oh, I don't want to.

PA B. (*coaxing and urging her from her chair*). Oh, come on, and do as pa wants you to.

MOLLY. What shall I sing, then?

(*SAM and JENNIE have taken the opportunity to resume seats next to each other.*)

JENNIE. Sing us something sad.

PA B. Yes, by all means, a love song.

JENNIE. A love song isn't necessarily sad.

PA B. Not necessarily—customarily.



MARY. I'm ashamed of you, fath—pa.

ELMER. D'you know the "Old Oaken Bucket"?

JOEL. Or "Ben Bolt"?

PA B. Keep still, boys. Molly's going to sing something classical like.

MOLLY. No, indeed, I sing only the latest songs. I just received one from New York—the ink is hardly dry yet, but they tell me it will be immensely popular. We tried it to-day, and I think it's just grand. Play for me, Sally.

(MOLLY *should sing some very new, catchy song. Great applause at the conclusion.*)

PA B. I call to mind when I was a youngster, we all used to gather round the piano and sing "Old Black Joe" and a lot of tunes like that.

TOM. Old Black Joe. That's where you come in.

(*Slaps JOE roughly on the back.*)

JOE. No worse'n Uncle Tom's Cabin.

PA B. Come on, boys, stand up and sing with the rest of us. (*All gather around the piano. SAM and JENNIE stand close, and perceived by the audience hold hands momentarily. TOM and JOE shove each other aside in order to get close to MARY. Unobtrusively, she moves toward ALLEN.*) Play for us, will you, Sally?

SALLY. I'll play if you'll all sing.

PA B. Sure we'll all sing.

JOE. If Tom doesn't sing I'll make him yell.

TOM. When you sing, they won't know whether it's singing or yelling.

(*Led by any of the men who may be capable, all join lustily in singing "Old Black Joe." PA B. is somewhat short on accuracy, but strong on effort. Then follows a more modern piece suggested by ALLEN.*)

PA B. (*panting*). There, that's enough. My bellows need a rest.

MRS. B. You'd be better off if you'd bellow less and sing more.

PA B. Ma, way off in Massachusetts, where I was oncet, I remember goin' through a cemetery and seein' on a tomb-

stone this here epitaph: "Here lies John Jones. He done his best," and those words apply with partic'lar force to my singin'.

MRS. B. Well, singin' ain't your forty.

PA B. No, nor my fifty. You know what's Sally's forty?

SEVERAL. No. What?

PA B. The piano-forty.

SEVERAL. Shame on you, pa.

*(During the above, all have resumed their seats, and talk in pantomime.)*

ALLEN *(to MARY)*. I love to hear you sing.

MARY. Oh, I can't sing a little bit.

ALLEN. You know I'd give anything, Mary, if evenings like this —

MARY. Do you mean surprise parties? Goodness, how many birthdays do you want me to have?

ALLEN *(low voice)*. No, not surprise parties, just you and I. You remember what I told you a year ago. You said you must complete your education —

TOM *(loudly)*. I don't care if I did insult you —

JOE. You'll care before you get through with me.

PA B. Now, boys, please declare an armistice.

JOE. Arm is tice?

PA B. Yes, stop fightin'. What d'you say to some co-nundrums?

TOM. D'you mean riddles?

PA B. Sure. I'll start it going. If two lovers were musical, what two notes would they prefer? Jennie, can't you answer this one?

MRS. B. Pa, stop getting personal.

*(No one answers.)*

PA B. Does everybody give up?

*(All nod affirmatively.)*

TOM. D'you give up, Joe?

JOE. Uh-uh.

TOM. There, I got you. I told you I could make you give up.

PA B. Silence, boys, and considerable of it. This co-

nundrum here is serious business. What musical notes do lovers—say Sam and Jennie—prefer?

ALL. I don't know.

PA B. (*pointing to the sofa and laughing heartily*). So-fa. Every Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday p. m. ; eh, Sammy?

(*All laugh heartily.*)

JENNIE. I wish you'd call him Samuel; it's more fitting.

PA B. Then he'd ought to get an appropriate coat.

JENNIE. Appropriate coat?

PA B. Yes, one that would be more fitting.

MRS. B. Pa, you disgrace the family.

JENNIE. And I don't think gentlemen's clothes ought to be discussed so public, either.

SAM. I got more dignified since I was engaged, and I stand straighter.

PA B. I accept your apology, my boy. Besides, I was only joking. Gracious, them that live in glass houses mustn't hurl any baseballs. Look at me. (*Struts around in comic attitude, glancing at his coat-tail.*) Very ante-bellum—very much so.

ELMER. I should say so.

PA B. Say what?

ELMER. I should say they are what you said they was.

PA B. (*severely*). Young man, d'you know what you're talking about?

ELMER (*sheepishly*). No, sir.

PA B. I thought not. No wonder you're a grocer's clerk. Ante-bellum means before the war. Now, Allen, do your turn. Get busy and give these wiseacres something to think about.

ALLEN. Why is a bridegroom worth more than a bride?

JENNIE. Why he isn't, no such thing; is he, Samuel?

SAM. They ought to be about equal.

JENNIE. They'd ought to be everything to each other.

PA B. It's a sorry world, Jennie; but few of us do as we had ought to.

MRS. B. Don't include yourself, pa.

PA B. (*addressing himself*). Sir, your name is stricken from the list.

ALLEN. That doesn't answer my conundrum. Why is

a bridegroom worth more than a bride? (*All are silent.*)  
A bride is given away, while a bridegroom is often sold.

(*All laugh except JENNIE and SAM. JOEL goes off into a veritable paroxysm of laughter, fairly choking. PA B. pats him on the back and finally he is able to speak.*)

JOEL. Ho, ho, ho—that's better'n a raise in salary. Hit the nail on the head that time, Allen.

PA B. I'll tell Hornbucket to tell you a joke next time you ask for an addition to your stipend.

JOEL. I'd ruther hear a joke than what he usually flings at me.

PA B. You want to make note of that riddle, Sam. It may come in handy.

JENNIE. Such nonsense is better forgot.

MRS. B. Let's have another riddle. Who's got one?

TOM. Me. Why is a ship like Mr. Blank's (*use the name of some gentleman known to be in the audience*) diamond stud?

JOE. 'Cause it costs money.

TOM. That ain't right.

PA B. I guess we'll have to give that up, Tom. Why is it?

TOM. 'Cause it rests on the bosom of a swell.

(*All laugh.*)

JOE. That was a pretty poor riddle, Tom. If I couldn't think of a better one, I'd keep still.

TOM. Give us a better one, then, smarty. Come on now. I'll make you prove up.

ALL. Yes, give us a conundrum, Joe.

JOE. It ain't as though I couldn't do it. Here's one you can't answer. How can you make your dog larger or smaller, as you want to?

PA B. Feed him on mush and milk to make him larger. Send him over here to make him smaller.

MRS. B. Pa, you talk as though we're starved to death.

PA B. I am getting thin, but if I had my choice I'd rather die from overeating than vicy versy. Is that answer right, Joe?

JOE. No, you're miles off. Why don't you show off your brains, Tom?

TOM. You can make a dog larger by leaving him grow, but I don't see's any one can make him smaller 'less'n it's one of them magician chaps. I saw one of them make a rabbit so small that it disappeared.

MRS. B. Does your ma know that you attend theatrical performances, Thomas?

TOM. It weren't a theatrical performance, not exactly. It was a side-show down to the county fair. I went to see one of those fellows that looks at your hand and tells your fortune. He looks mine over hard and then he says, says he, "You're a hard worker," and I guess he could tell that by looking at my hand, all right. Then he says, "You was holding a pretty girl's hand last night" (*looking slyly at MARY*), but how he found out I don't know, 'cause that don't leave any mark's I know of.

ALLEN. Is that all he told you?

TOM. No. He says, says he, "You're brave, noble, industrious and fond of the ladies—one in particular. You'll be rich and successful. You've got a mortal enemy, and I see a combat between you very soon, and I see that you'll be the victor." It all came true, too, at least that last part.

JOE. Was it Professor Balladius? And did you give him a quarter?

TOM. Yep, that was the chap. But I gave him a half dollar. Such news as that was worth five dollars of any man's money.

JOE. Well, he told me exactly the same thing, and only charged me a quarter.

PA B. (*laughing*). He had you boys sized up all right, but let's get back to the riddle. How can you make your dog larger and smaller?

JOE. By letting him out at night and taking him in in the morning.

(*All laugh.*)

MARY. Here's one you can never guess. What state has the most people?

PA B. That's not a riddle. That's geography.

MRS. B. Mary must be practicing so she can teach.

JOE. Aw, Mary's not goin' to teach. She's goin' to get married.

PA B. Even if she does, she'll teach just the same—teach her husband manners.

MRS. B. I've been doing that to pa for nearly thirty years.

PA B. And look at him now. Is it poor pupil or poor teacher?

MARY. You haven't answered my riddle. Which state has the most people?

ELMER. New York State.

(MARY *shakes her head.*)

JENNIE (*timidly*). I think I know.

SEVERAL. Well, what is it?

JENNIE. Is it—is it the state of matrimony?

(*Applause.*)

MARY. That's right.

PA B. We might know Jennie could tell us. Now here's one. What is the largest estate in the world? (*Looks around for an answer.*) Why, real estate, of course.

MRS. B. You made that up.

PA B. (*confused*). Well, what if I did?

MRS. B. It sounds sort o' home-made. Now, here's a good one. When will the alphabet have only twenty-five letters?

PA B. I heard that when I was a boy, but I forgot the answer.

MRS. B. Does everybody give up? (*Silence.*) Why, when U and I are one.

ALLEN. Sam ought to have asked that one.

SAM. How about yourself?

JOE. Or me either, for that matter.

TOM. Well, I'm in on that, too.

PA B. I guess most any of the boys could o' asked that riddle, and most o' the girls.

ELMER. I know a game I wish we could play.

PA B. Let's play it. I'll get brain fever trying to guess these conundrums.

ELMER. It's to see how near a fellow can point to a mark on the wall when he's blindfolded. Here, Tom, you do it.

TOM. I guess I can point as close as anybody.

ELMER. Now, look. You are to point as near as you can to this card that I pin up here. (*Pins card at back c., near door. Puts a handkerchief around TOM's eyes and whirls him around three times.*) Now, point at it.

(TOM stretches out a finger and points, walking toward the wall. The different characters call, "Over here," "You're way off," etc. Finally as TOM proceeds with his outstretched finger, ELMER walks toward him and bites it.)

TOM. Oh, oh, oh, oh! (*Jerks handkerchief from his eyes and puts his finger in his mouth to relieve it. Everybody is laughing. TOM is angry and discomfited. TOM to JOE.*) You did that; you did that; and I won't forget it as long as I live.

JOE. I didn't do it, either.

TOM. You did, too, and I don't think it's respectable to play such rough games, either.

MRS. B. I know a better game, boys and girls, one that doesn't hurt anybody. Every one of you sit down. Now, I will tell each one of you the name of an animal. When I say ready, you are to imitate it just as loud as ever you can. They call the game Barnyard. (*MRS. B. goes from one to the other, whispering to each.*) All ready, now.

(PA B. makes a loud noise in imitation of a cat. All the others remain silent.)

PA B. Why didn't the rest—oh, I see, the joke's on me. I'm thankful you didn't tell me to imitate a donkey.

MRS. B. That would be easy for you, pa.

ELMER. Isn't it about time to be thinking about getting some grub?

SALLY. I'm ready any time.

MRS. B. Any time you say, folks. I'm glad you brought plenty, for pa was like to eat us out of house and home.

PA B. I told you we were short in the com'sary department, and now she admits it herself.

MRS. B. We'd have to buy wholesale to keep you supplied, pa. Come, Mary.

(MARY and MRS. B. *exeunt* c.)

JOE. And I want to tell you straight that I'm the best man; get that?

TOM. You may be the best man, but by ginger, Joe, I'll be the bridegroom.

JOE. Not 'nless I should be suddenly took off.



PA B. (*confidentially*). Now, folks, you all know's well as I do that Mrs. B., with all her good points—and she's got more of them than a porcupine—is kind o' set against anything theatrical, so I waited for just this here opportunity before bringing in the best thing of the whole evening. Joel here is to appear in an amateur minstrel show over to Squchet next week, and I got him to promise to do a little bit of a stunt here. (*Applause.*) Of course, you all want to imagine he's all blacked up.

(*JOEL rises and stands in the middle of the circle, but faces the audience.*)

JOEL. Ah suttinly am de saddest coon dat ever jest missed bein' at a watermelon jubilee. De sun don't shine fo' me no mo'. Any time, mos', Ah goes out, Ah carries a umberell. It always looks alike rain to me. Sure, suttinly, things seem purty dark to me—not 'cause Ah'm a darky neither. De hope tank's all done gone busted and wasted itself all over de ground. De worsted worst has come mah way—come mah way and stopped right at mah house. Don't know when it's goin' away. It's jes' prezackly like your mother-in-law—good for a long stay. What's all about? Dat's it. I'se got de melancholy. I'se got blues so blue that bluin' looks like skim-milk longside of it. Ah'm in de dumps, de bottom of de heap. All for the love of a girrul. She trun me down. Took me up to de pinnacle of delight and den threw me down—down—down—to de ground. Mah bones is broke—mah heart is broke and Ah'm broke. I took dat 'ere girrul to sixty shows and give her a bunch of the luscioussest dinners—de most delicioussest you ever did see—(*smacking lips*) chicken and watermelon and ham and chicken and lobster and canned goods and chicken an' pie and ice-cream an' cake—and chicken. Ah tells you, a girrul does most suttinly clean up in any kind o' a rassel with a feller's bank account—don't you never back no bank account to lick a girrul in a good stand-up scrap. Why, when dat delicious assemblage of femininity gets through with that 'ere bank-book, it'll be completely knocked out o' reco'nition. Jes' like de fog when de sun comes up—it won't be dere. Dat's what Ah went and done, traded mah bank 'count for dinners and theayters, and what 'ave Ah got? Nuffin' but a broken heart. Ef you ever think you're a expert wif de ladies, jes' change you mind and t'ink of de



sad case of Jephthah Jehosophat Jones—dat's me. An' now for a song—a sad song to comfort mah fractured heart.

(Sings "Every Morn I Bring Her Chicken," or some other appropriate negro dialect piece. Great applause, with encore if called for. At the conclusion, MRS. B. comes in unexpectedly.)

MRS. B. For the land's sake, Pa Brinkley, what's been going on in here—everybody clapping like it was a show—and laughing and singing like to raise the roof.

PA B. Joel has been telling us some of his sad experiences with the ladies, and he finally consented to sing a song.

MRS. B. (*with a sigh of relief*). Well, I'm thankful it wasn't anything theatrical. Now, folks, come on out to the dining-room and we'll have some of the good things you brought.

(*All exeunt except JENNIE and SAM, who hang back.*)

SAM. To ourselves once more.

JENNIE. Are we alone, dear? Be careful or some one will hear us.

SAM. We can have a nice quiet little talk together for a couple of minutes before they start eating.

JENNIE. Sam, dear (*they take seats upon a sofa*), there's something been worrying me.

SAM (*with concern*). What has been disturbing your little heart, honey?

JENNIE. It seems foolish, I know.

SAM. Not to me, love.

JENNIE. Well, I read the other day that "love is of man's life a thing apart, 'tis woman's whole existence." (*Tearfully.*) Love's your whole existence, too, isn't it, dear?

SAM. It's both of us's whole existence, sure.

JENNIE. I'm so glad, Samuel, to hear those consoling words. I shall never forget what you have said, never.

SAM. Won't it be nice when we have our own nice little home together?

JENNIE. It will be just lovely. It will be ideal; so poetic, so romantic.

SAM. I can hardly wait for the time to come.

JENNIE (*cooly*). Perhaps we could make it just a little sooner, Sam, dear.

SAM. Just as soon as I get a hundred dollars saved up. I've got sixty-one dollars and twenty-five cents now and I ain't spending a cent that ain't abs'lutely necessary.

JENNIE. And think of our honeymoon. Maybe we can go over to Squawket and visit the folks.

SAM. I guess I can get three days off.

PA B. (*appearing unexpectedly at door*). Aren't you folks coming out to eat some ice-cream and cake with the rest of us? (*He has a dish of ice-cream and is eating voraciously.*) I'm going to get a second dish before anybody else.

JENNIE. We'll —

PA B. Mebbe you'd ruther I'd bring it in here.

JENNIE. No, indeed, we'll come right out.

SAM. We had something important come up.

PA B. (*doubtfully*). Nothing is so important as ice-cream, 'specially when ma makes it. She got it all made and packed without Mary having the slightest idea.

VOICES FROM OUTSIDE. Aren't you folks coming soon?

PA B. In three winks of an eyelash. Come, Sam; come, Jennie.

SAM. Can't we slip in quietly, so that they won't know we're here?

PA B. Oh, they know, my boy, they know. You can always be sure your sin will find you out.

JENNIE. I don't think you ought to speak that way, Mr. Brinkley.

PA B. Mister Brinkley! Little Miss Dignity—way up on her high horse. Now you can go right through there, if you want to (*pointing off L.*), but don't figure you can fool that smart bunch in there.

(SAM and JENNIE *exeunt L., hand in hand*. PA B. *looks at them with a gesture as of a blessing, and then follows.*)

(*Enter ALLEN and MARY, C.*)

ALLEN. Eating ice-cream so fast is bad for the digestion, and leaving your company is bad manners—especially at a surprise party.

MARY. You shouldn't have asked me to do it, then.

ALLEN. I didn't ask you to do it then. I asked you to do it now.

MARY. Brilliance, thy name is Allen Fenby.

ALLEN. Besides, I have something particular to say to you.

MARY. Particular?

ALLEN. Yes, particular; in fact the most particular thing there is to say, though it isn't anything new. You've known it for a long time. I love you, Mary. I've worked hard so that I could take care of you. The time has come when I can. Will you let me?

MARY (*delighted*). Why, Allen!

ALLEN. Yes, look here. (*Takes letter from pocket and opens it for her to read.*) You see, they offer me a hundred and fifty a month, and I must give them my answer right away.

MARY (*reading the letter closely*). And you must be there by the first of the month.

ALLEN (*cheerfully*). I guess I can make it. Can you?

MARY. Make it?

ALLEN. Pretty close connections, I know, but we can be married next week —

MARY. Next week, young man? Do you realize the importance of a girl's trousseau? Jennie's been sewing a year now, and they haven't issued the invitations yet.

ALLEN. Should you be willing if I gave you six months to get ready?

MARY. Why, I —

ALLEN (*insistent*). Would you?

MARY. Yes, I suppose I should.

ALLEN (*cheerfully*). Then you won't let a little thing like a trousseau stand in the way. What day shall we make it—next Thursday? (*Puts his arm around MARY.*)

(*Enter MRS. B., c.*)

MRS. B. I've been looking for you everywhere. Why, what does this mean?

ALLEN (*rising*). You know what it generally means.

MRS. B. I know what it ought to mean.

ALLEN. That's what it does mean, doesn't it, Mary?

(*MARY nods demurely.*)

MRS. B. Have you asked her pa?

ALLEN. Not yet.

MRS. B. Well, of course, he's the head of the family. I'll send him out now and I'll try to keep the rest of the folks from getting too inquisitive.

ALLEN. Thank you, mother.

MARY. You lose no time, Allen.

MRS. B. If her father does consent, you'll find I'm the kind of mother-in-law you read about in joke-books.

(*Exit, c.*)

ALLEN. Just think of it, Mary. Next week, Thursday.

MARY. Don't be so sure, young man. You haven't seen father, and I don't remember agreeing to Thursday myself.

(*ALLEN steps to door c.*)

ALLEN. He's coming now. Mary, dear—you notice that last. So you slip out here (*indicating L.*) and I'll beard the lion in his den.

MARY. Don't you dare to refer to pa as a lion.

ALLEN. Hurry along now. He's right here.

(*Exit MARY, L.*)

(*Enter PA B., c.*)

PA B. Hello, Allen; ma says to come out here. She didn't say what for, but I'm used to obeying orders.

ALLEN. Why, yes, Mr. Brinkley, I —

PA B. Call me pa.

ALLEN. That's just what I want to do. Mary's willing.

PA B. Ho, ho, so that's it, eh?

ALLEN. Yes, sir.

PA B. (*meditatively*). Doin' pretty well, Allen?

ALLEN. I just received a real good offer. (*Opens letter and hands to PA B.*) They're reliable people.

(*PA B. reads letter carefully.*)

PA B. You've got to be there by the first of the month, eh? When do you expect to come back for Mary?

ALLEN. Why, I—that is, we thought we could be married next week—say Thursday.

PA B. Pretty sudden like, isn't it? Was Mary agreeable?

ALLEN. Yes, sir.

PA B. Well, she's always had her own way. I can't find the heart to deny her a thing, and—it might be worse.

ALLEN (*laughing*). Thank you, sir.

PA B. So fur as Thursday goes, I guess it's all right. I haven't got any other engagement that I know of. So if her ma says all right, why, I won't interpose no objections.

ALLEN. I'll take good care of her, sir.

PA B. Call me pa. Now, I guess we'd better be gettin' back. Keep your eye on Tom and Joe. They're apt to feel pretty much cut up about this.

(*Exeunt PA B. and ALLEN, L.*)

(*Enter TOM and JOE, C.*)

TOM. We got to settle this now—to-night.

JOE. You're right there, Tom. One of us has got to ask Mary to-night. Let the best man have the first chance.

TOM. After I get through with you, you'll be ready for a short cut home.

JOE. Well, you won't look so awful purty to ask a girl to marry you.

TOM. Well, come on, let's quit talking. We'll go out behind the barn and settle things once for all.

JOE. All right; but I warned you, so if you get hurt, it ain't my doing.

(*Enter a number of the guests, C.*)

ELMER. Fight, fight!

(*Others come in rapidly, L. and C.*)

PA B. Dear me, what is the matter?

(*TOM and JOE are sullen.*)

MRS. B. Come, boys, speak up. What's going on?

JOE } (*sullen*). Nothin'!  
TOM }

PA B. Well, there must 'a' been a good deal of it.

JOEL. They was going to have a scrap.

ELMER. Let me be the referee.

PA B. There's no scrap to-night, boys.

TOM }  
JOE } There is, too.

PA B. Oh, you two boys are going to fight, eh? Well, what are you going to fight about? (*Both are silent and sullen.*) Come, boys, what's it about?

TOM. We got to settle matters between us, that's all, man to man.

PA B. Matters—eh?

JOE. Yes, guess you all know, anyway. It's to settle who's to speak to Mary.

PA B. Oh, that's it, eh, boys? Fight's going to settle it, eh?

JOE. Only way there is to settle it.

PA B. Well, you're just a bit late, boys.

TOM. } Late?  
JOE. }

PA B. Sure. Mary and Allen are to be married next week. What night is it—Mary?

MARY (*subdued tone*). Thursday night.

(JOE and TOM groan.)

JOEL. Thursday's an unlucky night to get married.

JENNIE. Thursday unlucky? Sam and I was thinking of Thursday.

JOEL. So are Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

JENNIE. Shame on you.

JOE. Honest, pa, do you mean it? Is Mary going to get married, and not to Tom or me?

PA B. She even said it herself. Shake hands with him, boys.

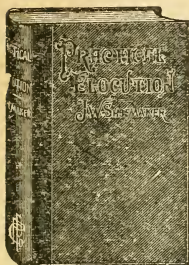
(TOM and JOE are sullen, but the others laugh at them, and they finally laugh and shake hands with ALLEN.)

JOE. Well, this is certainly one on Tom and me. I never thought when I came here that there was going to be such a—such a —

TOM. Such a surprise party at Brinkley's!

CURTAIN

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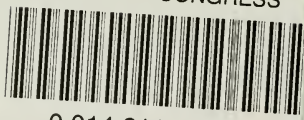
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