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1917

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A Rural Comedy Drama

in One Act

THE JONESVILLE
GRANGE INITIATION

By Harry M. Doty

Chatham, N. Y.

Price Fifteen Cents

“The Jonesville Grange Initiation”

A Rural Play in One Act by
Harry M. Doty

Author of “In Old New England” “Sacketts Corner Folks,”
“Spriggins’ ‘Quiet’ Afternoon”, “The Jonesville Sewing
Circle”, “The Jonesville Experience Meeting,”
“The Jonesville Board of Assessors.”

Amateur Production Free.

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CAST OF CHARACTERS.

Master
Secretary
Steward
Overseer
Lecturer
Chaplain



Grange Officers.

Mrs. Black
Miss Johnson
Mr. Brown
Mr. Jones



Candidates



A.O. 13

9101

“The Jonesville Grange Initiation”

It is suggested that this burlesque initiation will be more effective if those who participate are other than the regular grange officers.—Author.

This burlesque is intended to be presented in the grange meeting room rather than on a stage, although it may be presented there if desired. Comparatively little equipment is necessary. Grangers will observe that no attempt has been made to adhere to grange initiation formalities. This deviation was purpose'y made for obvious reasons.

Master—(Striking pedestal with gavel). The grange will come to order. The choir will sing the first and last stanzas of the opening ode. (The choir—a few members who volunteer—sing the ode off key and in uneven time.)

Master—The secretary will please read the minutes of the last meeting.

Secretary—(Reads). Regular meetin' of Jonesville grange was held two weeks ago tonight. Some of the members and most of the officers was here. The members as is farmers wanted the grange to arrange for co-operative buyin' so they could git a discount from the business men. All the farmers favored it. Ebenezer Hellwig, representin' the business men, said he had seen all the other business men that day and they favored the co-operative buyin' idee because it would mean spot cash fer everything the co-operators bought. Sol. Bemiss, representin' the farmers, said he hadn't understood it that way and if that was the case, he didn't know whether he wanted to be a co-operator or not. Then Ebenezer said the business men had also formed a co-operative buyin' association and was goin' to appoint one man to do the buyin' for all the stores and that every

farmer granger who got a discount on anything he bought, would also be expected to give the co-operative storekeepers a discount on everything he sells them, spot cash to be paid by both the co-operative farmers and the co-operative storekeepers wherever a deal was made. Sol Beemiss said he wan't in for no such arrangement as that and the other farmers said they wan't nuther, so it was voted to indefinitely postpone the co-operative plan. Sol said the storekeepers was a tryin' to put suthin' over on the farmers and Ebenezer said 'twant so but that what was sass for the goose was just as much sass for the gobbler.

Application of Susie Loucks fer a discount on dues because she paid in advance was referred to the committee on law and order.

Susan Brundidge, committee on visitin' the sick, reported that there wan't nothin' special exceptin' that Aunt Sally Trotter is enjoyin' her usual poor health.

Twenty-five members was reported in arrears for dues.

Usual ceremonies was gone through with and the meetin' closed as it usually does. Ephraim Kendall, Secretary.

Master—Them's the minutes of the last meetin'. If there ain't nothin' the matter with 'em, they'll stand as they be. (Pauses). Not hearin' no objection, they're ordered to stand. Unless there's some business of a pressin' nature, I'll waive the usual ceremonies, committee reports and so forth because I'n told that a party of pilgrims is out by the farm yard gate and that they want to get in. The steward will kindly go out and see if there's any truth in the story and make a report .

(Exit steward who immediately returns.)

Steward—There wan't nobody stringin' you . Four of 'em's out there, askin' admission at the barnyard gate.

Master—Farmyard gate, not barnyard.

Steward—Farmyard, yes, that's right. I beg your pardon. That's what I git by tryin' to take my part without the book.

Master—The steward will repair to the ante room, ask the usual questions and collect the fees. Impress on 'em that this

is a place where we've got to have the pay on the dot. It's spot cash, real money. No credit and no hay, potatoes or turnips in place of currency.

(Exit Steward.)

Master—Now remember, brothers and sisters, what's about to happen is goin' to be a solemn time in the lives of these candidates. No giggles and no chuckles while they're bein' put through the initiation ceremonies.

(Enter Steward.)

Steward—Worthy Master, one of them wimmen candidates won't tell her age. When I told her she couldn't join without tellin' how old she is, she put down "over twenty-one." Will that go?

Master—"Tain't jest reg'lar but as I don't remember seein' anything against it in the statoots, I guess we'll let it go. If everything's ready, the steward will conduct the candidates into the sanctum.

Steward—Your order will be obeyed, Worthy Master. (Steward exits and returns at the head of the line of candidates. The latter are blindfolded. They should be attired as grotesquely as possible in order to lend additional humor to the burlesque.)

Steward—(After candidates are arranged in line in front of the Master.) Worthy Master, here we've got four pilgrims who are groping in the darkness and who want you to show 'em the way to the fertile lands where the sun is shinnin', grain a wavin' and flowers growin'.

Master—We're always glad to show a stranger the road but before proceedin' on your way it will be necessary for you to divest yourself of all superfluities. One of the tenets of our order is that one and all, when seekin' admission to our circle, must rid himself or herself of everything artificial, therefore it's my order that whatever there is on you or about you that Nature didn't intend should be there, shall be removed and placed on this pedestal.

Mrs. Black—Well, I guess not. Of all the foolishness I ever heard of, this is the worst.

Miss Johnson—Here is where I rebel. I go no further. You would have never got me into this place if I had supposed I was goin' to be insulted this way.

Master—For your information I will say that you have started on the same path that was trod by each and every member of this grange and nothing will be required of you that was not required of them.

Mrs. Black—If that's the case, I guess I can stand it if they did.

Miss Johnson—I suppose I can, too, but I don't see what it's all fer.

Master—It is because all must enter here for exactly what they are, not for what they want folks to think they are. If any of you ain't got the spunk to go on, the steward will lead you back outside the gate and you'll never see the glorious things we've got to show you. What have you got to say?

All candidates—We wish to go on.

Master—That's the way to talk. The steward will now let you see things. (Steward removes blindfolds.)

Master—Now if any of you possess superfluities, kindly deposit them here (indicating pedestal).

Mrs. Black—Very well. Here goes (Apparently takes a set of false teeth from her mouth and places them on the pedestal) That's all I've got that ain't a part of me.

Miss Johnson—(Takes hair switch or "frizzes" from head and places on pedestal). I do this knowin' as I look around this room that plenty of other false hair has been laid on this here thing (indicating pedestal).

Jones—I'll have to have a chair before I can remove what's artificial about me. (Steward provides chair and Jones sits and grasps one foot).

Master—Mister Jones, what are you plannin' to do?

Jones—Unscrew this cork leg.

Master—Whoa! Wait a minute. Yours is rather an unusual case. (Scratches head and pauses as if to think). Mr. Brown, permit me to inquire what you're goin' to deposit if anything.

Brown—I'll have to take out my glass eye, I suppose, but I ain't goin' to take off this here wig (points to head) and catch the pneumony. I won't do that for nobody.

Master—Brothers and sisters, the conditions here this evening seem to be without precedent and so far as I know there ain't no instructions in the statoots fer dealing with incidents of this kind. It ain't possible to wait for opinions or instructions from the state or national granges, therefore I'm goin' to take on myself the responsibility of settlin' this matter. It's my order that this evening the mere admission of the existence of these superfluties will be deemed sufficient. All of you can put back on what you took off. (Candidates replace teeth, etc.) Now the steward will conduct you to the lecturer for further information.

(Steward conducts candidates to lecturer.)

Lecturer—You can't go any further until you tell us something of your past lives.

Miss Johnson—Land sakes, another insult. I guess I'm as good as anyone I see settin' around here.

Mrs. Black—Course we be. From that talk anyone would think we was highway robbers or something worse.

Brown—If we've got to make confessions, I'll own up I once stole a pumpkin when I was a kid.

Lecturer—The candidates will please restrain themselves. All these questions are necessary as will develop later. Now, Mr. Jones, when you sell a barrel of apples, do you place large ones on the top and bottom and windfalls in the middle?

Jones—No, not as a rule.

Lecturer—Mr. Brown, have you ever sold anyone any frozen turnips or potatoes?

Brown—No, leastwise not froze enough to hurt 'em any if they ain't kept too long.

Lecturer—You will now be conducted to the overseer for further investigation. (Steward conducts candidates to overseer.)

Overseer—Mr. Jones, when pressing hay do you sweep the hayseed from the barn floor and put it in the center of a few bales? Remember, now, nothing but the truth in your answers.

Jones—No sir, at any rate not in any that's goin' to be sold near home.

Overseer—Mr. Brown, do you ever hold eggs when the price is low and sell them as fresh when the price increases?

Brown—Why—well—you see—No, I don't remember but I guess not, only to them travelin' fellers what come through with wagons and is always beatin' you down on price.

Overseer—Mr. Jones, did you ever go to a store, buy tub butter, take it home, work it over, add a little of your own and sell it all as nice, fresh farmers' butter?

Jones—Now, say, that ain't a fair question.

Overseer—It's one everybody here has had to answer.

Jones—Well, no, I hain't, anyway not since I joined the meetin' house.

Overseer—Mr. Brown, did you ever sell a man, over the telephone, first-class timothy hay and then deliver to him rowan or a mixture of clover, daises and weeds?

Brown—Who told you that? I wan't to blame fer it. The hired man done it.

Overseer—No one has told me anything. That's one of the questions in the ritual.

Brown—I thought Sam Jenkins had been tellin' you somethin'.

Overseer—Did you discharge the hired man for that act of dishonesty?

Brown—No, I didn't, but I told him to try not to let it happen again.

Overseer—Mr. Jones, did you ever sell a man a load of rock oak and hickory wood and then deliver to him apple tree, pine and willow?

Jones—No, there wan't no willow in it. I ain't got none of that kind of wood on my place.

Overseer—The steward will now conduct you to the chaplain for further instruction. (Steward conducts candidates as directed.)

Chap.—Mr. Brown, have you ever worked land on shares?

Brown—Yes.

Chap.—Have you always seen to it that the other fellow received the same as you did both as to quantity and quality when the crop was divided?

Brown—Yes, he was always there when the dividin' was done.

Chap.—Mr. Jones, do you pay your bills regularly and promptly?

Jones—Tolerably so when I have the money.

Chap.—Never let your bills run with your storekeeper and then complain when some fellow don't pay what he owes you?

Jones—No, that is, I haven't made a practice of it.

Chap.—You will now proceed to the Worthy Master who also wishes information.

Mrs. Black—For mercey sakes, what is this, a six-day walking match?

(Steward conducts candidates to Worthy Master)

Master—Mrs. Black, when getting eggs ready for the market, have you ever picked out the large ones for your own use and sold the small ones?

Mrs. Black—No sir, not since we have kept one kind of hens. Their eggs are all the same size.

Master—Miss Johnson, when sellin' dressed chicken, did you ever force buckshot into their crops to increase the weight?

Miss Johnson—No sir, shot is too expensive.

Master—Mrs. Black, have you ever sold horseradish?

Mrs. Black—Yes, sir.

Master—Did you ever mix turnip with it?

Mrs. Black—Not lately. Turnips are worth more than the horse radish.

Master—Miss Johnson, have you ever been chairman of a committee to provide food for a church supper?

Miss Johnson—Yes, sir.

Master—Did you ever furnish the cheaper foods yourself and ask the others to provide the more expensive ones?

Miss Johnson—I'll bet Susie Hastings told you that.

Master—No, she did not. It is one of our regular questions.

Miss Johnson—I don't care to answer it. It's too ridiculous.

Master—Very well, we will not insist, but will draw our own conclusions. The steward will now conduct the candidates to the lecturer for further questioning.

Mrs. Black—For land sakes, have we got to turn our past lives wrong side out?

Miss Johnson—I should say so. I don't like this a bit.

Master—The candidates will please refrain from making comments.

(Steward conducts candidates to lecturer)

Lec.—My friends, it will be impossible for you to proceed further on your journey unless you are able to satisfy this grange that you are truly versed in the ways of agriculture or that you are competent housewives. Mr. Jones, have you ever grown a crop that excelled that of your neighbors.

Jones—Well, now, let me think. Yes, I believe I did, once.

Lec.—What was it?

Jones—I mixed up a little fretilizer of my own and tried it on some land where I planted watermelons. I put in the seed and the vines come up in no time. I didn't get no crop of melons but it showed me that the fertilizer, with a little toning down, was all right.

Lec.—Why didn't you get a crop of melons?

Jones—Because the vines grew so fast that they went all over the farm dragging the melons with 'em. The friction was so great that it converted the water in the melons into steam and they blew up. ..

Lec.—Nothing melon-choly about that tale, Mr. Jones. Mr. Brown, have you ever had a similar experience?

Brown—No, not exactly, but it reminds me of some pumpkins I once had.

Lec.—Tell us about it. On your experience may depend your admission to our order.

Brown—For several years I didn't get a pumpkin although I put in plenty of seed therefore the next year I made up my mind I'd try a different location so I planted 'em on the most fertile spot I had on the farm. The seed sprouted first rate and it wan't hardly no time before I saw I was goin' to have a big crop. Never saw vines grow as fast as them did. One day the hired man went down to that field with me to see 'em. He hadn't no more'n jumped down off the fence into the field before a pumpkin vine twined itself around his leg and it dragged him nearly three miles before he could git out his jack-knife and cut himself loose.

Lect.—Enough, Mr. Brown, your ability as an agriculturist is established. Mrs. Black, what have you to say as to your ability to accomplish things by improved methods?

Mrs. Black—I can't match them two experiences, but I'm doin' the washin' every Monday forenoon so easy that I don't dread it no more.

Lec.—Tell us about it.

Mrs. Black—I just took a stick, fastened one end to the

back of a rocking chair and the other end to the handle of the washing machine, set down in that chair and rock while I'm peelin' potatoes for dinner. When I git 'em peeled, the washin's done. All I've got to do is to rinse the clothes and hang 'em out to dry.

Lec.—Now Miss Johnson, what have you done for the benefit of womankind?

Miss Johnson—I've a few labor saving inventions in my kitchen, but they don't amount to much alongside o' what I've done in the garden. For several years I've noticed how much milk was used every summer when we had strawberries and cream and I made up my mind I could bring about a saving, because milk is milk nowadays. I didn't say nothin' to nobody about it, but grafted a few strawberry plants onto some milkweed and I've got a combination that grows strawberries and cream.

Lec.—You have all demonstrated your capabilities along agricultural and domestic lines and if there are no objections on the part of the members present, I will direct that you be conducted to the Worthy Master for instruction in the signs of recognition, grip, passwords, etc. (Pause.) Hearing no objections, it is so ordered.

(Steward conducts candidates to Worthy Master)

W. M.—You are well on your way to grange membership and I will now instruct you in the signs, grips, etc. When you meet another person and wish to know whether he or she is a granger, you advance with both arms extended and, in solemn tones, repeat these words: "Frost is on the fodder, pumpkin's in the shock." If the person so addressed is a granger he or she will respond by saying; "Locked in the stable with the sheep."

Jones—Suppose he or she ain't no granger, what then?

W. M.—If it's a man, he'll probably say things I wouldn't want to repeat here.

W. M.—The grip of a granger is as follows: Little fingers linked and thumb tips pressed together. If, after you have

given these tests there remains in your mind any doubt as to the person being a granger, ask that he or she give the grangers' rhyme. A real granger will answer:

Mary's little lamb's
A good thing to have around
With wool at the war-time price
Of eighty cents a pound.

The annual password, which never changes, is "Alfalfa" this word must never be spoken louder than in the key of F. The quarterly password is one of which a quarter is used every three months. This word is "Ru-ta-ba-ga"—Rutabaga.

When a grange is in session and you want to get in, go to the outside door of the ante-room. In a corner you will find a flail. With this give seven distinct raps on the floor. If the gatekeeper hears you, you will be admitted to the ante room. If he don't hear you, repeat the raps until the door is opened. Never, however, make the mistake Hen Jenks made over to Hardscrable. He went to the ante-room door, took the flail and gave the seven raps on the floor. The door didn't open and he repeated the raps thirty-seven times when he happened to think it was Tuesday night and the grange meets Mondays.

When you get in the ante room, proceed to the door of the meeting room and rap once thereon. The doorkeeper will open the door but before admission is granted, the one seeking it must, if a lady, sign one stanza of "Hark! From the tomb a doleful sound" or, if a man, he must whistle two verses of "The Old Oaken Bucket, Long May She Wave." On entering the meeting room, the member will salute the Worthy Master by clapping his or her hands four times. The Worthy Master will ascertain if the member's dues are paid for the current quarter. If so, he or she will be invited to be seated among the brethren and sisters. If not, the member will be required to stand throughout the evening.

Now, my friends, you are well along toward the end of your journey, but there is one more demonstration we must require of you. It will be necessary for you to show this grange

just how you do your work. Mr. Jones, you can saw wood, I presume.

Jones—Yes, sir.

W. M.—A demonstration, please. The steward will kindly provide the utensils.

(Steward brings sawbuck, saw and stick of wood and hands saw to Jones, who saws off the stick more or less awkwardly.)

W. M.—That will do, Mr. Jones. You have demonstrated that you know how such work is done although your manner of doing it leads me to believe that the hired man dulls more saws than you do. Mr. Brown, every good farmer knows how to whet a scythe. Is that included in your accomplishments?

Brown—It is, sir.

W. M.—Very well, a demonstration please.

(Steward removes sawbuck, etc. and brings scythe and whetstone. Brown whets scythe, makes believe pull a hair from his head and cut it in two on the edge of the scythe.)

W. M.—Enough, Mr. Brown, that is certainly some edge. Miss Johnson, can you peel potatoes?

Miss Johnson—Well, I should hope so.

W. M.—That being the case, I will ask you to give a demonstration.

(Steward brings potato and paring knife. Miss Johnson peels potato and holds it up to the view of the W. M. She has peeled so deep that there is little left of the potato.)

W. M.—You seem to have the right action, but hardly the proper technique in these times of food conservation. I suggest that hereafter you do not go so deep into your subject. Mrs. Black, can you sweep a floor?

Mrs. Black—To be sure I can.

W. M.—Kindly convince the grangers of your ability along that line.

(Steward brings broom which he hands to Mrs. Black, who sweeps vigorously.)

W. M.—Enough. It is evident there is no need of vacuum cleaners in your home. (To grange) I now declare these persons duly accredited grangers, entitled to all the rights, privileges, trials, troubles, tribulations and perquisites of this order. The steward will conduct them to seats, there to hold themselves in readiness to rise at five taps of the mallet and proclaim to the assembled grangers that they are part of our organization.

(Steward blindfolds candidates and conducts them to chairs in which sticky fly paper has been placed—candidates wearing clothes it will not harm—and, as they rise at five taps of the gavel, the audience sees printed in black letters on the reverse side of each sheet the words "I am a granger." If the use of fly paper is objectionable, the steward may attach to the clothing of each candidate, a placard bearing the words. This may be attached with a pin pushed through the placard and bent in the shape of a hook.)

(Note—If it is desired to lengthen the initiation, this may be done by requiring additional demonstrations by the candidates, for instance the ladies may be required to scrub floors, wash clothes in a tub, etc. There are comedy possibilities in requiring them to peel onions or grate horseradish. In the two latter instances there should be plenty of real or imaginary tears. The men may be required to grease a pair of boots, mend a piece of harness, shell or husk corn, etc. Many other amusing "stunts" will suggest themselves to grangers, who present this burlesque.)



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