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Uncle Peter's  
Proposal

By

W. T. NEWTON

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The Willis N. Bugbee Co.

SYRACUSE, N. Y.

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BY

W. T. NEWTON

*Author of "Uncle Eben's S'prise Party" and "Darktown Social  
Betterment S'ciety."*

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SYRACUSE, N. Y.

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# Uncle Peter's Proposal

## CHARACTERS

UNCLE PETER GREEN, *a Widower.*

AUNT POLLY PERKINS, *a Spinster.*

BOB GREEN, *a Nephew of UNCLE PETER.*

ALICE WAINWRIGHT, *a Niece of AUNT POLLY.*

PAT MURPHY, *the Hired Man.*

*This may be spoken with four characters by having PAT'S part spoken off stage.*

TIME OF PLAYING: Thirty minutes.

COSTUMES: AUNT POLLY wears ordinary house dress in ACT I; an old-fashioned silk dress in ACT II. UNCLE PETER wears his "Sunday" clothes with high collar, in which he appears to feel very uncomfortable. BOB and ALICE wear ordinary clothes. PAT wears overalls and frock.

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# Uncle Peter's Proposal

SCENE: AUNT POLLY'S *sitting room. Everything is plain but neat.*

AUNT POLLY *is discovered knitting.*

(*Enter ALICE with hat.*)

ALICE. Oh, are you here, Aunty? I want to show you my new hat. I've taken the old trimming all off and put on some new ribbon. Don't you think I am quite a milliner?

AUNT P. Yes, my child, you are quite handy with a needle and real tasty, too. I am glad to see it. So many girls nowadays are perfectly ignorant about such things.

ALICE. I wish you wouldn't call me a child, Aunty. I'm not a child any longer.

AUNT P. I know you're getting to be quite a big girl, Alice, but you're not very old yet. Let's see, you're—

ALICE. Seventeen next Tuesday.

AUNT P. Seventeen? So you are. And that makes me think—there's something I want to speak to you about.

ALICE. I know—it's about Bob. You think we're both too young. Now, isn't that it?

AUNT P. Yes, Alice, that is it. I think young ladies and gentlemen ought to wait until they're twenty anyway before they begin to keep company with each other. That's young enough in my opinion.

ALICE. But look, Aunty! You waited until you were twenty and you haven't found anyone yet and you're most sixty now.

AUNT P. Why, Alice Wainwright! Haven't I told you not to be repeatin' my age?

ALICE. I'm sorry, Aunt Polly. I didn't really mean to—it just slipped out before I could stop it.

AUNT P. I suppose you tell it to everybody. Probably the whole town knows it by this time. You'd never have known it if you hadn't found it in the family Bible.

ALICE. But I never repeat it in public—never. And really—you wouldn't want me to be an old maid, too, would you? I mean a spinster.

AUNT P. Tut, tut, my dear! You mustn't ever let anyone hear you callin' me an "old maid."

ALICE. No, Aunt, but won't you tell me really and truly if you ever had anyone keep company with you—that is, gentlemen friends?

AUNT P. What a question, Alice. Of course, I've had "gentlemen friends"—several of them.

ALICE. Then, Aunt, won't you tell me honestly and truly if you ever had a real out-and-out proposal? (AUNT P. *exclaims* "O-o-oh!") I won't tell anyone long's I live—honest I won't.

AUNT P. Why, the idee! Of course I've had proposals. Didn't John Fletcher propose to me twice an' then went west because I wouldn't have him? I didn't accept him because he used to drink hard cider. Then there was Henry Bangs—

ALICE. What? Henry Bangs over to Beanville?

AUNT P. Yes, the same one. I didn't take him because he was so proud an' stuck up when he was young—but, land sakes! I shouldn't be tellin' you all this.

ALICE. Oh, say! Is it true that Bob's Uncle Peter proposed to you once?

AUNT P. Dear me! What a question box you are today.

ALICE. But I would so like to know. You see, Bob told me about it and—

AUNT P. Did he say his uncle proposed to me?

ALICE. I don't remember whether he said he actually proposed or not, but he told me how he used to keep company with you.

AUNT P. Well, to tell you the truth, Alice, we did used to keep company together. We went to singin' school an' picnics an' dances an' sech things. I thought the world of Peter an' I guess he did of me, but that flighty Miss Ransom came with her hifalutin' ways so that put an end to it all. I guess he was sorry after he married her.

ALICE. How long has she been dead, Aunt Polly?

AUNT P. Land! She died 'most ten years ago.

ALICE. And so he's been a widower ever since hasn't he? Bob says his uncle thinks a good deal of you now.

AUNT P. Did his uncle tell him that, I wonder?

ALICE. I suppose so. (*Sound of whistling outside.*) Anyway, here comes Bob now. We might ask him.

AUNT P. Don't you dare to ask him such a question. If you do I'll—

BOB. What's all that you're going to do, Miss Perkins?

AUNT P. Nothin'. I was just talkin' to Alice. She's a regular question box today.

BOB. Well, you know, Miss Perkins, that we young folks can only obtain wisdom by asking of people older than ourselves or by delving into books. As for yourself, you have gained experience with age.

AUNT P. What's that, young man?

BOB. I beg pardon. I mean—er—that is—that you are gaining experience as you grow older same as the rest of us—in fact, same as everybody does. (*Aside, with hand on heart*) Gee!

AUNT P. That expresses it better.

ALICE. Haven't you anything to do this morning, Bob, or are you a gentleman of leisure?

BOB. Now that makes me think. Uncle sent me over to ask if you would be at home this evening, Miss Perkins. He's coming over to see about buying your white horse.

AUNT P. Of course I'll be home. Tell him I'm always home evenin's. What time will he be here, do you s'pose?

BOB. About half past seven—soon's he gets his chores done up. You see he's got to have another horse for his spring work.

(*Enter PAT.*)

PAT. Miss Perkins, would yez be tellin' me phwat to do wid the calf? It's got itsilf all tied up wid the rope an' is kickin' loike a shtame engine, so 'tis.

AUNT P. Mercy sakes! Can't you untie the rope or cut it—or something?

PAT. Yis, mum, I've been thryin' to do somethin' but the pesky thing won't be houldin' shtill long enough for that.

AUNT P. Well, I'll come an' see to it right away. (*Exit PAT.*) Dear me! I never had such a helpless man about the place before. This is the third time this mornin' I've had to go out to the barn to see to something. (*Exit.*)

ALICE. You came pretty near getting into a scrape that time, Bob.



BOB. Gee! I did put my foot into it, didn't I?

ALICE. But you managed to squeeze out of it all right.

BOB. Say, your aunt seems to have a lot of trouble with her hired man, doesn't she?

ALICE. Yes, he's a green hand right from the city and doesn't know much about a farm..

BOB. It's the same way with my uncle's housekeeper. She doesn't even know how to fry an egg decent.

ALICE. Isn't it funny? Aunty's an old—I mean spinster and your uncle's a widower, and both living side by side.

BOB. And your aunt trying to run a farm alone.

ALICE. And your uncle trying to keep house with a new housekeeper every day or two. I should think—

BOB. That's just what I should think too.

ALICE. Why, how do you know what I was thinking about?

BOB. That's easy enough to guess. It's just what your aunt has been thinking about and just what uncle has been thinking about for a long time, but you know he's so shy about such things that he doesn't dare say it.

ALICE. Perhaps if you should give him a word of encouragement, or—

BOB. Or give him a little stimulant?

ALICE. No, don't do that because if you should Aunty wouldn't have anything to do with him.

BOB. No danger of Uncle Peter's taking it, either.

ALICE. Sh—! Here comes Aunty.

AUNT P. There! I've got that calf straightened out again. I wonder what'll be next. Why, haven't you gone yet, Bobbie? Your uncle will be waiting for an answer.

BOB. Lots of time 'twixt now and night, Miss Perkins. But I guess I'd better be going after all. See you again, Alice. (*Exit.*)

AUNT P. Well, now I must get the house slicked up if Peter's comin' tonight. I hope I can get a good price for Old Dobbin, but they do say Mr. Green's a great hand to drive a bargain.

ALICE. In some ways, Aunty, but I'm not so sure about others.

AUNT P. Well, dear, do let's get to work an' get things ready.

ALICE. For Bobbie's Uncle Peter.

CURTAIN.



## ACT II.

SCENE: *Same as ACT I.*

AUNT POLLY *is discovered powdering her face before a mirror.*

AUNT P. I must hurry an' get through before Alice gets back from the store. It wouldn't do to let her see me primping myself up like this. She would mistrust something the first thing. I half believe she thinks I'm settin' my cap for Mr. Green as it is. Well, she couldn't have a better uncle than he is: I hope if he does propose that I won't get frustrated an' say "No" instead of "Yes." I've heard of young ladies doing that before now an' then bein' sorry for it afterwards. (*Looks at herself closely in glass.*) Well, I guess that's as good as I can do it. I must hustle an' put away these things. (*Places them in drawer or in box and carries off stage, returning immediately.*) Now I'll get this apron off. Dear me! This makes me think of old times—I don't dare say just how many years ago—when Peter used to come to see me. That was before he married that highty-tighty Miss Ransom. (*During this time she removes work apron and fusses about the room straightening tidies, cushions, etc.*) I don't suppose things are any too slick over to his house but sometimes men notice things you never think of. Men are real funny about that. (*Sound of ALICE singing outside.*) Well, here's Alice comin' now. I'm awful glad she didn't get here any sooner.

(*Enter ALICE with magazine.*)

ALICE. Here's the new "Ladies' Monthly," Aunt. There wasn't any other mail. (*Looking closely at AUNT P.*) My, how slick you look! You look good enough to meet the President.

AUNT P. Why shouldn't? I consider any man who behaves himself equally as good as the President.

ALICE. Why, Aunt, you look twenty years younger.

AUNT P. You're just tryin' to flatter me. I know your tricks.

ALICE. Really, I'm not. You do look so much younger. What have you been doing? Oh, now I see—it's your hair and—and really, I do believe you've been powdering, Aunt.

AUNT P. There, there, that will do. You mustn't let anyone hear you say that.

ALICE. You can trust me—I won't tell anybody—not even Bobbie.

AUNT P. Don't you dare to whisper a word about it to Bobbie—not a word.

ALICE. Of course not, Aunt. I don't tell family secrets.

But say—everything's so spick an' span here that I hope Uncle Peter will shell out good—I mean pay you a good price for Old Dobbin.

AUNT P. Really, I'd forgotten all about Dobbin.

ALICE. How funny! That's what he's coming over for, isn't it?

AUNT P. Ye—yes, that's what Bobbie said.

ALICE. It's most half past seven now. I wonder if he isn't coming soon.

AUNT P. Alice, I wish you would go into the kitchen when he comes. I think we can talk the matter over so much better alone. You always blurt things out so—things that hadn't ought to be told—that I'm afraid you might spoil the deal.

ALICE. Yes, Aunt Polly, that's my failing—and *horse* deals are such delicate affairs, too.

AUNT P. Look, Alice! Is that someone comin' up the road with a lantern?

ALICE (*gazing out of door*) It's Bobbie.

AUNT P. Land sakes! What's he comin' over again for? Is his uncle with him?

ALICE. No, I don't see him. I guess Bobbie's alone.

(*BOB is heard whistling a lively tune. Finally he enters.*)

BOB. Well, here I am again. "A bad penny always returns."

AUNT P. Where is your uncle, Bobbie?

BOB. (*Looking around*). Why, isn't he here? I thought he had come. I've been down to the barn feeding the colt and when I went to the house uncle wasn't in sight.

AUNT P. Isn't that queer? You don't suppose he's forgot about it, do you?

BOB. My Uncle Peter never forgets his appointments. Maybe he was upstairs changing his clothes.

ALICE (*looking L.*) There's somebody coming now, but I can't quite make out who it is—yes, it's your uncle. Come, Bob, let's go into the kitchen—

BOB. While Uncle Peter is buying the horse.

(*Exeunt. ALICE puts her head in at doorway.*) Be sure and make a good bargain, Aunty. (*Exit.*)

AUNT P. Dear me! What happy-go-luckies they are—just as I use to be when Peter an' I went to singin' school together. My! I'm real nervouslike. My heart goes pitty patter. (*Sound of footsteps and of PETER clearing his throat.*) Here he comes now. (*Knock.*)

(*Enter PETER GREEN.*)

AUNT P. Come right in, Peter. Let me take your hat.

PETER. Howdy do, howdy do, Polly. (*Shakes hands, then sits down.*) I declare, we live right here neighbors an' I ain't seen you in over two months. How be ye, anyway?

AUNT P. I'm feeling pretty well considerin' the hard winter we've had.

UNCLE P. I can't complain neither. I've got a good appetite, sleepin' well an' doin' my share of hard work.

AUNT P. I guess we all have plenty of that to do. I've been havin' an awful time findin' a hired man. The one I've got now ain't worth his salt.

UNCLE P. That's what Bobbie was sayin'. Funny thing too. We didn't used to have no trouble gettin' hired men years ago—first class ones at that.

AUNT P. I'm sure pa never had any such trouble when he was alive.

UNCLE P. Of course not, all of which reminds us that the times are changin'. Take the young folks for instance—they're all jest crazy to get into the city.

AUNT P. But after all they ain't no happier now'days than they were when we was young.

UNCLE P. Gosh sakes, no! Not so happy. Why, say, they don't have nothin' now'days like them old-fashioned dances we uster have. Eh, Polly?

AUNT P. My! Didn't we used to have lots of fun! He! he! he!

UNCLE P. You used to be pretty spry on your feet them days an' I callate I was too. Didn't callate any of the young fellers could beat me much.

AUNT P. I don't think they could, Peter. None of the girls thought so at the time.

UNCLE P. I guess not either. Haw! haw! haw! Say, an' how we did used to whoop it up at the singin' schools, didn't we, Polly? (*Sings.*) Do, re, me, fa, so, la, se, do. (*ALICE and BOB peep in from back of drapery. PETER hitches chair closer to POLLY.*) Don't ye wish we had them singin' schools now'days?

AUNT P. Why, I—I guess I do, Peter.

UNCLE P. Gosh, I do! I'd jine it in a minute—that, is providin' some others I know of would jine it too.

AUNT P. Then there was the quiltin' bees too. Ma allers used to go to 'em an' I went with her.

UNCLE P. An' us fellers used to fetch up 'long about supper time. Whee! but them wimmen folks know jist how to tickle a feller's appetite though. Um-m!

AUNT P. It was the real old-fashioned cookin'.

UNCLE P. You just bet it was—it was the genuine stuff. An' say, Polly—(*hitches chair*)—the best of all was the goin' home. 'Member how we used to pair off an' I 'most generally took you?

AUNT P. Y—yes, Peter, I remember it just as well as if—well, as if 'twas last night.

UNCLE P. So do I—an' say, Polly, I—I—I'd do the same thing over again if 'twas tonight.

AUNT P. Would you really, Peter?

PETER. I sartainly would. We may not be spring chickens, but we're just as young as we feel—an', d' ye know, Polly (*hitches chair and POLLY hitches hers*), I'm growin' younger every minute.

AUNT P. Yes, Peter, I begin to feel that way, too.

PETER (*hitching chair, she does same*). An' I'd be tickled to death to go to another huskin' bee, too. Eh, Polly?

AUNT P. Y—yes, Peter, I'd just love to go to one.

UNCLE P. An' I'd like to be the one to find the red ear, too. I have a sort of lingerin' suspicion as to who'd be the lucky gal.

AUNT P. (*aside*). I hope his suspicion is the same as mine. (*Aloud*.) I wonder why they don't ever have any such thing now.

UNCLE P. Gosh, I dunno. The young folks don't seem to know what fun is now'days.

AUNT P. But you—you boys didn't allers wait to find the red ears, you know.

UNCLE P. That's so, I guess we didn't. Say, Polly (*hitches chair*), I—I—h've been thinkin' of something I wanted to say to ye.

AUNT P. (*aside*). If it's only what I hope it is. (*Aloud*) Yes, Peter, go ahead.

UNCLE P. Well, you see, Polly, I—I—I've—that is—I—I—you know I've been havin' quite a little difficulty with my house-keeper for a spell back.

AUNT P. So Bobbie said. It must be awful hard doin' your farm work an' keepin' track of the house work into the bargain.

UNCLE P. You're just right it is an' so I—I—I've been thinkin'—that is—I—I—I've been thinkin' some of gettin' a more permanent housekeeper—that is—I—I—I—

AUNT P. I should think you would, Peter. (*Aside*) I wonder what he means. (*Aloud*) Have you thought of anyone yet?

UNCLE P. Wal, yes, I have. I—I—I've been thinkin' that—

that—that is—I've been thinkin' that mebbe—that mebbe—  
(*Aside*) Gosh ding it all!

AUNT P. Mebbe what, Peter?

UNCLE P. Mebbe I could get somebody like—that is—somebody like yourself. What d'ye think, Polly? (*Aside*) By hokey, I can't get it right.

AUNT P. Why, I should think you might if you went at it right. It ain't a housekeeper you need so much, Peter, as it is a helpmate.

UNCLE P. That's the idee exactly, Polly—that's what I was thinkin' of all the time. What would you—you—that is—(*they hitch chairs*)—what would you think of—of—

AUNT P. Why, I'd think quite favorable of it, of course.

UNCLE P. Would ye really? Will you really come an' be my helpmate, Polly?

AUNT P. Yes, Peter, I will. (*Aside*) There, I did say it after all.

UNCLE P. (*chairs together*). Say, Polly, that's a bargain—the best bargain I ever made an' that's sayin' a good deal. I callate it'll be a good thing for both of us.

AUNT P. Oh, Peter, this is such a joyful occasion! When shall we announce the engagement?

UNCLE P. Any time—the sooner the quicker—but we'd better tell the young uns about it fust, hadn't we?

ALICE. We know it already, Aunty.

BOBBIE. You don't need to tell us, Uncle.

UNCLE P. What's that, Bobbie? You've been spyin' on your old uncle?

AUNT P. Alice, I'm ashamed of you.

ALICE. We didn't mean any harm, Aunty. We just couldn't resist it.

BOB. And we're mighty glad of it, Uncle. But how about the horse deal?

UNCLE P. Gosh, I'd forgot all about the hoss. However, it's all in the family now—or will be soon's the knot is tied.

BOB. Well, you have our blessings, Uncle Peter and Aunt Polly. Don't they, Alice?

ALICE. Yes, and lots of them. We wish you all the joy possible.

BOB. And then some.

ALICE. This has been a regular popping bee tonight. Bobbie and I have been popping too.

AUNT P. Why, Alice Wainwright, what have you done?

UNCLE P. What's that? You hain't been rash, have ye, Bobbie?

BOB. I don't think so, Uncle. You see, we've only been popping corn.

UNCLE P. Haw! haw! That's a good one. We'll forgive ye this time. Eh, Polly?

AUNT P. We can't do anything else under the circumstances.

ALICE. We've popped a whole dishpanful of it in honor of this occasion.

BOB. In honor of Uncle Peter's proposal.

CURTAIN.



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