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Rural Comedy  
in One Act

**SPRIGGINS'**  
**'QUIET'**  
**AFTERNOON**

By HARRY M. DOTY

Chatham, N. Y.

*Price 15 Cents*



# Spriggins' 'Quiet' Afternoon

A Rural Play in One Act

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By H A R R Y M. D O T Y

Author of "In Old New England," "Sackett's Corner  
Folks," "The Jonesville Sewing Circle."

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AMATEUR PRODUCTION FREE.

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J. W. Darrow and H. M. Doty, Publishers  
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P R I C E 1 5 C E N T S

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**CAST OF CHARACTERS.**

**John Spriggins**, who thinks he needs a rest.

**Billy Spriggins**, John's son, who doesn't care whether Spriggins rests or not.

**Cy. Hollister**, the hired man, who hasn't time to rest.

**Sam Smalley**, who wants Spriggins to swap work.

**Glib T. Alker**, who knows how to sell books.

**Benoni Green**, with something new in lightning rods.

**Jabez Crippen**, who believes assault and battery sometimes justifiable.

**Mrs. Spriggins**, who also thinks Spriggins needs a rest.

**Lucretia Gray**, who believes the dominie needs a new buggy.

**Mary Jane Smith**, who has her troubles with new-fangled notions.

# “Spriggins’ ‘Quiet’ Afternoon”

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Scene—Sitting room in farmer Spriggin’s home. Couch, chairs, table, etc.

(Enter John Spriggins, throwing hat on table and dropping into chair.)

**Spriggins**—There, by George, harvesting is done for another year and this afternoon I’m goin’ to do what I ain’t had a minute’s chance to do for the past two months—take a rest. Gettin’ up at daylight and pegging away at top speed until nine o’clock at night day in and day out ain’t exactly what one might call a vacation.

(Enter Mrs. Spriggins.)

**Mrs. Spriggins**—Well, I declare, John, it does seem strange enough to see you sitting down in here doin’ nothin’, after the way you’ve been hustling around for the past two months.

**Spriggins**—I’ll bet it does and I made up my mind that I’m goin’ to take a rest this afternoon just to see how it seems once more. Where are them slippers of mine?

**Mrs. Spriggins**—Right here, John. I’ll get them for you. (Gets slippers from corner and brings them to Spriggins, who removes boots and puts on slippers.)

**Sprig.**—There! Now I hope I won’t be bothered for I feel clean tuckered out. (Opens paper, puts feet on a chair and begins to read.) (Knock heard outside.)

**Mrs. Sprig.**—For the lands sake! I wonder who that is.

**Sprig.**—Don’t know. Nobody that wants anything of me, I hope.

**Mrs. Sprig.**—Come in!

(Enter Sam Smalley.)

**Smalley**—Howdy Mrs. Spriggins. Hello John, playing gentleman this afternoon, eh?

**Sprig.**—Yes, thought I'd try it bein' as it's the first chance I've had in two months.

**Smalley**—I want to know. Been sort o' busy, eh?

**Sprig.**—Well some. Farmin' on a place o' this size keeps a feller on the jump pretty constant.

**Smalley**—Yaas, I suppose so, but now that the rush is over. You'll have a let up.

**Sprig.**—I kin stand it.

**Smalley**—Wish I could take a rest, too, but as soon as harvest is over it seems as if there's a hundred and one other things that needs doin' right away.

**Sprig.**—Yes, that's so, but I'm goin' to let some of 'em go for a day or two anyway.

**Smalley**—Sorry to hear you say that just now because I came over to see if you would swap work with me tomorrow.

**Sprig.**—What have you got to do?

**Smalley**—Building my part of the line fence between me and Ez. Green. It's gettin' pretty rickity and my cattle got over into his corn once this summer.

**Sprig.**—All right, Sam, I'll be over and I'll just charge that day up against you to be paid off at corn husking time.

**Small.**—All right, John. Bring your hammer and saw and your appetite. I'm goin' to assassinate a pullet or two this afternoon and the women folks baked up this morning so I guess we'll have enough to stay our stomachs. Have your wife come over with you and bring her knitting work.

**Sprig.**—I'll let ma speak for herself, but I guess likely you'll find her on hand.

**Mrs. Sprig.**—Yes, Sam, I'll be there, although I haven't been out anywhere in so long that I probably can't know how to act.

**Small.**—Much obliged to you both. I'll go back now, hook up the team and draw a load or two of posts before milking time. (Exit Smalley.)

**Sprig.**—Lucky for him he didn't want me to help him this afternoon. If he had, I'd just had to tell him no. I ain't goin' to let nothin' or nobody budge me off the place today.

**Mrs. Sprig.**—That's right, John, and I'll go out and iron a dress to wear over there tomorrow and you can read or sleep, just as you want to (Exit Mrs. Sprig.)

**Sprig.**—(Resuming paper). Haven't had a chance to read in so long that I dunno but I've forgot how. (Reads in silence.)

(Knock heard outside.)

**Sprig.**—Hello! Somebody else. Wonder what's wanted now? Come in.

(Enter Lucretia Gray.)

**Lucretia**—How de do, Mr. Spriggins.

**Sprig.**—How de do, Lucretia.

**Lucretia**—Didn't expect to find you here.

**Sprig.**—No, don't suppose you did, bein' as it's so seldom I have a chance to be here. Kinder takin' a little vacation this afternoon.

**Lucretia**—Well, I don't blame you. Ain't no sense in your working all the time. Where's Mrs. Spriggins.

**Sprig.**—Out in the kitchen, I guess. I'll call her. (Goes to door and call "Martha"!)

**Mrs. Sprig.**—(Heard outside). All right, John, be right there.

(Enter Mrs. Spriggins.)

**Lucretia**—How de do, Mrs. Spriggins.

**Mrs. Sprig.**—Why how de do, Lucretia. When did you come in? I didn't hear you.

**Lucretia**—Came a moment ago but I can't stay. Just dropped in to see if you would make a chicken pie for the supper down to the church next week.

**Mrs. Sprig.**—Yes, I'll try to if John will kill the chickens and I guess he will.

**Sprig.**—All right, ma, if you don't want it done this

afternoon. Can't let anything interfere with my vacation you know.

**Lucretia**—No, we don't want them until next week, but I am not through begging yet. We are asking the men folks for money to buy the minister a new buggy. The one he rides in now is so ramshackley that it's a disgrace to the congregation to have him use it.

**Sprig**—Yes, guess he needs it all right. Here's a dollar. Will that do? (Hands money.)

**Lucretia**—Yes, very nicely and it's a good deal more'n I got in lots of places.

**Sprig**—Think you'd have better luck if you was sellin' raffle tickets?

**Lucretia**—With some folks I would. Now I'm goin' over to Squire Dorman's and if I get anything there I'll be the most surprised woman your ever saw. The last time I asked him for money to help buy a new parlor carpet for the parsonage he said he'd give fifty cents if they'd give him the old carpet to make over into rugs for his sitting room.

**Sprig**—I want to know. The Squire ain't what you might call a parlanthropist is he?

**Lucretia**—No, not 'thout you stretched the truth all out of shape a sayin' it.

**Sprig**—Well, I allers figger to give the domonie a little lift when I think he really needs it and I guess that's most of the time.

**Lucretia**—Lots of others don't think that way. If they did we wouldn't be owin' him \$25 on last year's salary. But I must be goin', because I've got a good many to see and I'll probably have to see some of 'em several times before I get anything out of 'em. Much obliged for the dollar and the chicken. (Exit Lucretia and Mrs. Spriggins.)

**Sprig**—Ain't makin' a very good start toward a quiet



afternoon. Hope there won't be nobody else here lookin' for me. (Resumes reading.)

(Knock at door.)

**Sprig.**—Well by peppermint! Who on earth's coming now. Come in!

(Enter Cy Hollister.)

**Cy.**—Hated to disturb you, John, but I had to. Old Brindle cow's got fast in the wire fence and I've been tryin' fer half an hour to get her out, but can't do it. Every time I think I've got her most loose she begins to jump around and gets more tangled up than ever.

**Sprig.**—She's always gettin' into some such mess as that. I made up my mind that I was goin' to have a rest this afternoon and I'm goin' to do it if she stays there 'till mornin'.

**Cy.**—She's your cow. You kin leave her there if you want to but if you do we'll have a carcass to skin tomorrow.

**Sprig.**—Billy Perkins is out in the back yard chopping wood. Get him to help you.

**Cy.**—Bill Perkins! I'd as soon have an Indian cigar sign tryin' to help. I'll make another try of it alone and if I can't make it, I'll leave her.

**Sprig.**—I'll tell you how to git her loose. Go out in the barn, git them nippers layin' on the work bench and cut the wire.

**Cy.**—By jocks, that's so. Never thought of it. That'll do the business. Guess the old cow's hide won't be turned into leather for automobile seats right away after all. (Exit Cy.)

**Sprig.**—Wouldn't have let the old cow give up the ghost for want of my help but I thought Cy could get her out of the scrape alone if I done the thinkin' for him. Cy never likes to overwork that brain of hissen. (Resumes seat.) Now let's see, where was I? Ah, yes, that market report. I'll take another whack at tryin' to read it. (Reads.)

(Knock heard.)

**Sprig**—Jerusalem fishhooks! Somebody else. Guess I'd got more rest if I'd kept on working. Come in!

(Enter Mary Jane Smith.)

**Sprig**.—Well, Mary, what's the matter?

**Mary**—Lots of things is the matter. Mrs. Spriggins wanted some bakin' done and when I went to shake that new stove so's to have a good, hot fire them eut-in-two-in-the-middle grates got stuck and near dumped the whole fire. I can't turn 'em any further to save my neck.

**Sprig**.—Probably got a clinker in between 'em. Have you tried turnin' 'em backwards.

**Mary Jane**—Nope. Sposed they was only meant to go frontwards. Seems as if I was windin' the fire up every time I used 'em anyway.

**Sprig**.—Well if you don't git 'em back where they belong right away, you'll find you've wound the fire out instead of up. Give 'em one turn backwards and I guess they'll go in place.

**Mary Jane**—All right I'll try it, but when I git a man you can bet he'll buy me things there's some sense to. I'll begin to inquire what them divorces cost if he gits his mind sot on fillin' up the house with them new-fangled stoves and things what takes a machinist to run 'em.

**Sprig**.—That's right, Mary; make him toe the mark, but now go out into the kitchen and get things goin' because we don't want a cold supper.

**Mary**—I won't take none of the blame if it is cold. I didn't hire out to be an engineer. With hearth drafts, and lid drafts and top drafts and pipe drafts, and goodness only knows how many other drafts, it needs a college course to learn how to run one of them stoves. (Exit Mary Jane.)

**Sprig**.—What troubles we girls do have. Guess when Mary gets a man, the divorce hunting will be on the other side unless she softens her temper a little. A quiet after-

noon. It's been everything else so far. Well, I'll try once more to read that paper. (Reads.)

(Enter Billy Spriggins.)

**Billy**—Hello, pop, what you doin' in here? Been lookin' all over for you.

**Sprig.**—Tryin' to get a few hours rest, Billy. What do you want?

**Billy**—Want you to fix my bicycle.

**Sprig.**—Can't fix any bicycles today, Billy, this is my afternoon off.

**Billy**—Oh, come on, pop. It'll only take a minute.

**Sprig.**—No, Billy. I'm too well acquainted with those minutes of yours.

**Billy**—Come on, this job won't take more'n half a minute.

**Sprig.**—What's the matter with the bicycle.

**Billy**—Got a tack in the tire.

**Sprig.**—Why, Billy, you can fix that yourself.

**Billy**—No, I can't.

**Sprig.**—You try it. Wind some tape around the tire. That'll hold it until I can put in a plug for you.

**Billy**—All right, pop, I'll try it but I don't believe I can do it.

**Sprig.**—You'll have to. It'll hold until tomorrow.

**Billy**—If it don't, will you fix it this afternoon?

**Sprig.**—Yes, Billy, I'll agree to that.

**Billy**—I can see where you've got a job coming to you. (Exit Billy.)

**Sprig.**—Well, I declare, I wonder what the next botheration will be. It does seem that the fates are against my resting my bones for a few hours. I've tried a half dozen times to read that paper and haven't been able to do it. Mebbe if I try taking a nap it will break the spell. I'll just take a chance at it anyway. (Sits in chair, places feet on another and prepares to sleep. In a short while a knock is heard.)

**Sprig.**—(partially rises and looks toward door.) What, someone else. This certainly would exhaust the patience of Job. I believe I won't answer. I don't care who it is, I don't want to see them. (Settles back in chair. Knock is heard several times. Spriggins pays no attention to it. Knock becomes louder and louder. Finally Spriggins jumps from chair and says: "Come in.")

(Enter Glib T. Alker.)

**Glib.**—How do you do. Mr. Spriggins I believe.

**Sprig.**—Yes, what's left of me. What do you want?

**Glib.**—I understood you are not very busy this afternoon and I came to have a talk with you.

**Sprig.**—Not very busy! So far it's been the busiest afternoon I've had in years. I don't want to be sassy or impolite young man but just now the man whose conversation interests me the most is the man who don't say a word. I'm trying to get a few hours rest.

**Glib.**—You can rest and listen to what I have to say at the same time and when I've finished you will thank me for having called.

**Sprig.**—All right, fire away, but make it short.

**Glib.**—(Taking book from pocket). Mr. Spriggins, I have here one of the most valuable works ever written on—

**Sprig.**—A book agent! Save your wind young feller. I ain't in a book buying mood today. Wouldn't give you a cent a carload for 'em, no matter what they are.

**Glib.**—Let me explain. This isn't an ordinary book. We canvass for it only among the more intelligent farmers, men of good judgment who can appreciate a really valuable work. That is the reason I came here.

**Sprig.** (Pleased by the flattery)—Well, perhaps, after all it's worth looking at. What is there about it?

**Glib.**—It is entitled "The Sour Crab Apple, its Culture, Uses and Abuses."

**Sprig.**—Crab apples! Enough! Every man in this sec-

tion who owns an axe knows what to do with a sour crab-apple tree.

**Glib.**—Wrong, Mr. Spriggins. There is where they make their mistake. Properly cared for, it is a most valuable tree. Now take this chapter for instance (opening book and pointing). "How to prevent warts on the crab apple." This alone is worth the price of the book.

**Sprig.**—I'd be more interested in a chapter tellin' how to put more warts on 'em.

**Glib.**—Here's another chapter tellin' how to grow the crab apple to a size where it will do for judicious mixing with the Swaars, Greenings and Pippins the farmer sells to his city cousin.

**Sprig.**—More sense to that chapter.

**Glib.**—Yes, indeed, they are all sensible and tell how to realize a handsome profit each year from this now despised tree, the tree that grows in an out of the way place on the farm, that receives no attention, that simply needs a little encouragement to show its owner that it is capable of better things, that—

**Sprig.**—Hold on, young feller, hold on, first thing I know you'll have me believing that them ornery trees grow gold nuggets, and in that case I'd go out, pluck one crop, sell 'em, become one of them malefactors of great wealth, sit down and just rust out. Nothin' doin' in the book line here today. Go on to the next house and call on Jabez Crippin. No doubt he'll buy one.

**Glib.**—He will not buy one for he has already placed his name on my list and, Mr. Spriggins I don't know but I'll have to believe there's some truth in what he said about you.

**Sprig.**—That old scandal monger been talkin' about me! What did he say?

**Glib.**—Really, Mr. Spriggins, I don't like to repeat it and since you don't care for the book I don't see the neces-

sity of doing so. Good day. (Starts for door. Sprig. grabs him by arm and pulls him back.)

**Sprig.**—What did old Crippen say about me? You've started this thing and you might as well finish it.

**Glib.**—Well, since you insist, he said you are the closest, stingiest, most grasping man in this neighborhood and that the reason you don't buy books is because you can't read a word of more than four letters without stopping to spell it out.

**Sprig.**—(Excitedly.) What's that? Said I am stingy and can't read a word of more than four letters without stopping to spell it out? Did Jabe Crippen say that?

**Glib.**—Well, perhaps it wasn't in those exact words, but that was the sense of it.

**Sprig.**—It was, hey? Say young feller what do them books cost?

**Glib.**—In cloth binding \$1.50 each, in half morocco, \$2.50, in full morocco, \$3.50.

**Sprig.**—What sort did old Crippen buy?

**Glib.**—He bought one bound in cloth.

**Sprig.**—I thought so. Cheapest thing he could get. And him talking about me being stingy, that bow-legged, squint-eyed, bald-headed old freak of nature. Young feller, put me down for one of them books at \$3.50 and if you've got one that costs more, give me that.

**Glib.**—All right, Mr. Spriggins, thank you. I haven't anything more expensive.

**Sprig.**—I'm sorry you haven't. But, say! I'll make you an offer. If you'll agree to go back and tell that old fossil what I've bought, I'll take two of them \$3.50 books.

**Glib.**—All right, Mr. Spriggins. Would you like to pay for them now or on delivery.

**Sprig.**—You write me out a receipt and I'll pay you for 'em now. Show him the receipt too.

**Glib.**—Yes, sir, Mr. Spriggins, I'll do it. (Writes receipt, hands it to Sprig who passes over the money.)

**Glib.**—Thank you very much, Mr. Spriggins. I felt sure Mr. Crippen had misrepresented you. Good day.

**Sprig.**—Good day, and don't you forget to show him that receipt.

**Glib.**—No sir, I won't. (Aside.) I thought that would land him. More than one way to catch a fish. (Exit Glib.)

**Sprig.**—(Walking the floor.) Drat Jabe Crippen's picture. What have I ever done to him that he should talk about me like that, I wonder. By jocks, I knew it. He's hot under the collar because I beat h'm out for constable last fall. At the time he told me he didn't want it and was glad I was elected. And all the while he was madder 'n a hatter about it. I'll just go over there and have it out with him. I'll tell him a few things he won't forget in a hurry. (Puts on boots, takes hat and exits.)

(Enter Mrs. Spriggins.)

**Mrs. Sprig.**—John seems to have changed his mind all of a sudden about taking a rest. Just went hustling outdoors and didn't answer me when I asked him where he is going. I wonder what's the matter. Mebbe he's had so many interruptions this afternoon that he has made up his mind that he can't get any rest after all.

(Knock heard.)

**Mrs. Sprig.**—Come in!

(Enter Benoni Green, with suit case in hand.)

**Benoni**—How do you do, Madam. Is Mr. Spriggins' at home?

**Mrs. Sprig.**—I don't know whether he is out in the yard or not.

**Benoni**—I just saw a man hurrying 'cross lots toward the next house. Perhaps that was him.

**Mrs. Sprig.**—I think very likely it was but he will be back shortly. Won't you sit down and wait? What did you want to see him about?

**Benoni**—(Sitting). I am canvassing for one of the greatest inventions of the age, the patent double back action,

reflex, non-twistable, non-destructable lightning rod. With each rod we issue an insurance policy for an amount double the value of the building to which the rod is attached. In case the building is struck by lightning and burns, we pay the policy and furnish free rods for the building erected in its place.

**Mrs. Sprig.**—Sounds fair enough.

**Benoni**—Surely it does. And it is fair. There isn't another company making the same offer. Would you like to see this sample. (Points to case.)

**Mrs. Sprig.**—No, I guess not. I wouldn't know any more about it after I had seen it than I do now.

(Knock heard.)

**Mrs. Sprig.**—Come in.

(Enter Jabez Crippen.)

**Mrs. Sprig.**—How do you do Jabez.

**Jabez**—How do you do, Mrs. Spriggins. Where's John?

**Mrs. Sprig.**—I don't know but this young man says he saw him going cross lots over toward your house.

**Jabez**—That's where I missed him, I came around the road. What's he got again' me? I've heard he's been saying a lot of mean things about me and I've come over to see about it.

**Mrs. Sprig.**—Against you? You must be mistaken. Jabez. I never heard him say a word except in your favor.

**Jabez**—Well he has. I know it. It come straight.

**Mrs. Sprig.**—There's some mistake about this. I'll go and see if I can find him.

(Exit Mrs. Sprig.)

**Benoni**—Are you the man who owns that nice place next to this one?

**Jabez**—(Shortly) Yes. What of it?

**Benoni**—Nothing, only I admired it as I came by, and I was thinking what a shame it would be to have those handsome buildings destroyed by lightning. They ought to be equipped with lightning rods.



**Jabe.**—They've stood there for forty years and have never been destroyed yet and we've had some pretty sharp lightning during that time.

**Benoni**—True, Mr. Crippen. You've lived a good *many* years and haven't died yet but you will, some day.

**Jabez**—I suppose so but stickin' a lightnin' rod down alongside my backbone wouldn't prevent it.

**Benoni**—But putting a lightning rod on your buildings this double back action, reflex, non-twistable, non-destructa-  
this double back action, reflex, nontwistable, non-destructa-  
ble rod I'm selling. (Starts to open suit case.)

**Jabez**—Keep that satchel shut. I don't want to see no rods. So your an agent be you? Well, don't waste your time talking to me, I wouldn't buy gold dollars of you for fifty cents. I've had experiences enough with agents for one day.

**Benoni**—But, Mr. Crippen, this rod is different. And with every rod goes an insurance policy that—

**Jabe**—Shut up! I don't want to hear anything about it. I don't care what you've got. I don't want any. Is that plain?

**Benoni**—Yes, fairly so, but you'll remember what I said if your buildings are destroyed during a heavy thunder-shower.

**Jabez**—P'raps I will but I'll take the chances. You'll find the door right over there. (Points to door.)

**Benoni**—I want to know. Let me tell you Mr. Man, that I'll go through that door when I get good and ready and not before.

**Jabez**—Better hurry and get ready or I may have to help you make up your mind.

**Benoni**—Say, mister, you'd better take something for your liver. It's all out of whack.

**Jabez**—Mebbe 'tis, but there hain't nothin' the matter with this here root. (Shakes foot at Benoni and then chases him off stage.)

(Enter Spriggins.)

**Sprig.**—You here! I've a mind to order you out of the house.

**Jabez**—Well you'd better wait until you've explained what you mean by calling me a rattle-brained old idiot.

**Sprig.**—Who? Me?

**Jabez**—Yes, you. That's what you said.

**Sprig.**—Well about the same time you'd better explain what you meant by saying that I'm the stingiest man in this neighborhood and can't read a word of more than four letters without stopping to spell it out.

**Jabez**—Who? Me?

**Sprig.**—Yes, you.

**Jabez**—I never said it.

**Sprig.**—You didn't?

**Jabez**—No, I didn't?

**Sprig.**—And I didn't call you a rattle-brained old idiot.

**Jabez**—You didn't?

**Sprig.**—No, I didn't.

**Jabez**—Who said I did?

**Sprig.**—Who said I did?

**Jabez**—That book agent.

**Sprig.**—Same feller who told me what you said.

**Jabez**—John.

**Sprig.**—Yes?

**Jabez**—Two fellows have been took in. I'm one.

**Sprig.**—And I'm the other.

**Jabez**—How many books did you buy?

**Sprig.**—Two. How many did he sell you?

**Jabez**—Four.

**Sprig.**—Full morocco?

**Jabez**—Full morocco. He told me you bought three.

**Sprig.**—Pay him in advance?

**Jabez**—Yes.

**Sprig.**—So did I.

**Jabez**—John, we're a pair of old fools.

**Sprig.**—You don't need your other guess.

**Jabez**—We'll never see him nor the books.

**Sprig.**—Right again.

**Jabez**—Under some circumstances assault and battery are justifiable. Now if by an chance he should come back—

**Sprig.**—Say, if you need any help just telephone me.

**Jabez**—All right although if I'm keyed up as I am now I can do the job alone in good shape.

**Sprig.**—So could I.

**Jabez**—Put 'er there, John. (They shake hands.)

**Sprig.**—Now let's agree to set the dog on the next agent that shows his face in these parts.

**Jabez**—It's a bargain. I must be gettin' back home now 'cause it'll soon be chore time. (Exit Jabez.)

**Sprig.**—If this is a quiet afternoon, I don't want no experience with one when there is something doing. Mebbe, though, I can get a few minutes rest before milkin' time. It don't seem that any other botheration could possibly happen. (Sits and begins to read.) (Knock heard.)

**Sprig.**—Well, for the love of Moses, what next? Come in. (Enter Cy Hollister.)

**Cy**—Say, John, got to bother you once more. When I got the old cow out of the fence I found one foot cut pretty bad and the cut filled with dirt. What shall I do about it?

**Sprig**—Wash the cut with warm water and put on a bandage. Anything else the matter with her?

**Cy**—Not to amount to anything. A few little scratches.

**Sprig.**—I guess she'll come out all right.

**Cy**—Yep, I guess so. (Exit Cy.)

(Enter Billy.)

**Billy**—Say, pa, you said if I couldn't fix that bicycle tire, you'd come out and do it. I've been working at it ever since I went out and I can't make it hold wind.

**Sprig.**—Well, what next?

**Billy**—Dunno, pa, 'less perhaps the other tire 'll bust too.

**Sprig.**—I mean what will be the next botheration.

**Billy**—Pshaw, that ain't no botheration. It'll only take a minute. (Enter Mrs. Spriggins.)

**Mrs. Sprig.**—John, I wish you'd go out and kill a chicken. If we're goin' over to Sam Smalley's tomorrow, I want to leave something cooked for Cy and Billy.

**Sprig.**—For goodness sake, ain't there nobody around this place that can kill a chicken but me? Ain't I told you half a dozen times, I'm trying to take a rest this afternoon?

**Mrs. Sprig**—Yes I know you are, but Cy is busy and Billy makes such bungling work of chopping off a chicken's head.

**Sprig.**—Well, I suppose I can do it.

(Enter Mary Jane.)

**Mary Jane**—Mr. Spriggins I hold up both hands and one foot. (Holds up hands and foot.) That there stove has got me stopped.

**Sprig.**—And I presume likely you've got the stove stopped and I've got to build another fire.

**Mary Jane**—You must a went to guessin' school. You hit it first crack.

**Sprig**—Did anyone ever see anything like it?

**Mary Jane**—Nope, guess not. It's the most worthless, no-account stove I ever saw.

**Sprig.**—I ain't talkin' about the stove. I mean the way I've been bothered this afternoon when I'm trying to take a rest.

**Mary Jane**—Don't know nothin' about that. I know I ain't had no rest this afternoon and don't expect any as long as I've got to rassel with that stove. Be you a comin' out to see what's the matter with it and build a new fire?

**Sprig.**—Suppose I'll have to.

**Mary Jane**—Correct.

(Knock outside.)

Mrs. Spriggins—Come in.

(Enter Lucretia Gray.)

Lucretia—How de do once more. I came to see if I could get Mr. Spriggins to do me another favor.

Sprig.—(Aside). I expected it. The whole neighborhood will want something before night.

Mrs. Sprig.—I guess so, what is it?

Lucretia—I'm wonderin if he would hitch up a horse and go around this afternoon and collect some of the things that have been given me for the church.

Sprig.—No. Lucretia, I won't. Everyone you see standing here wants me to do something for them and wants it done right away. By the time I get through it'll be bed time I guess.

Lucretia—When I was in here before you wasn't doing anything and I thought possibly you'd just as leave hook up and drive around as not.

Sprig.—I've been tryin' to get a little rest and it's been the busiest afternoon I ever put in. If tomorrow mornin' will do for that collecting trip, I'll send Cy or Billy.

Lucretia—Yes, anytime tomorrow will do and I'm very much obliged to you.

(Enters Cy Hollister.)

Cy—Say, John, I've got that bandage on the old cow's foot and now I want you to help me—

Sprig.—Never mind what you want, I don't care what sort of a mess you're in, you must get out of it the best way you can. Was ever a man so plagued? It seems as if the whole of you had conspired to prevent me from resting my weary bones for a little while. I'll kill that chicken and start that fire but I'll do no more jobs for anyone else this afternoon. Is that plain? The next time I set out to rest I'll charter a balloon that's guaranteed to stay off the earth for at least one afternoon. (Exit Spriggins.)

Lucretia—How little it takes to upset these men folks, don't it?

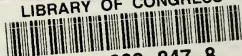
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