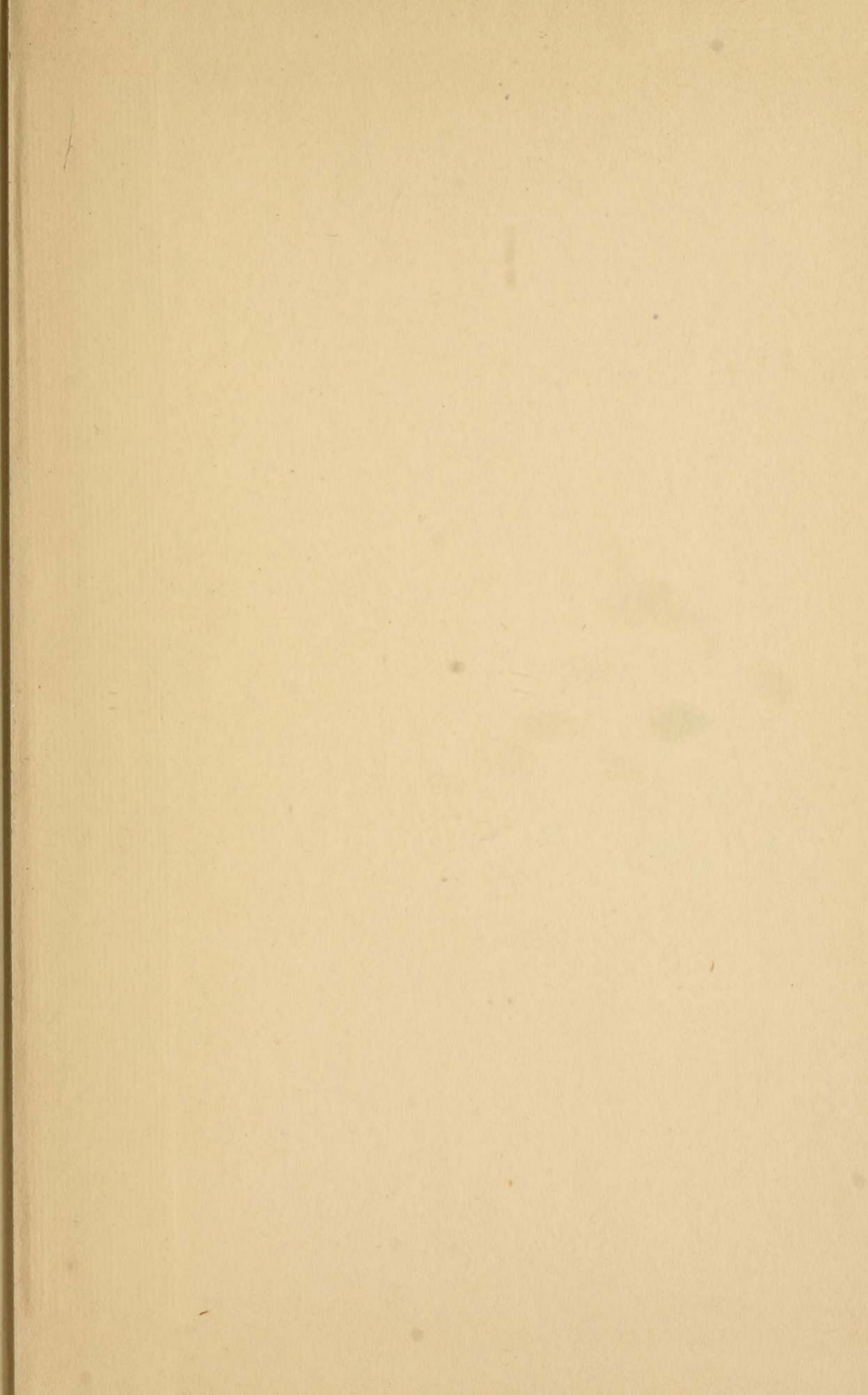




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At the Junction

A Farce in One Act

By
CHARLES S. BIRD
Author of "Elmwood Folks"



BOSTON
WALTER H. BAKER & CO.

1910

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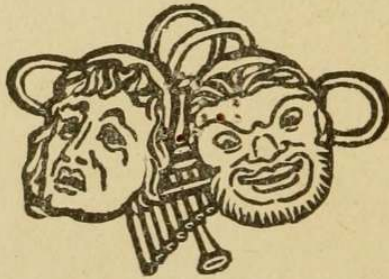
At the Junction

CHARACTERS

JACK SHARP, *a prospective heir.*
PERCY KEEN, *his friend.*
JOTHAM SPOTTS, *station agent at the Junction.*
FANNIE QUICK, *a prospective heiress.*
CLARA CUTE, *her friend.*

COSTUMES

SPOTTS.—Cap and coat, regulation railroad uniform under overalls ; grizzled gray wig, and stubby chin beard.
All other costumes modern.



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At the Junction

SCENE.—*A station at the Junction of the Air line and O. M. Y. R. R.'s. At back, R., a ticket office with usual opening in front; telegraph key supposed to be in back; telephone handy. Lunch counter back L., with food displayed—pies, doughnuts, cakes, etc., and three bottles of pop. Small round table, L. C., and duplicate off R., to be brought in when required. Plain chairs and settees around stage; time tables, etc., on walls. JOTHAM SPOTTS discovered back of ticket window at rise.*

JOTH. (*yawning noisily*). Ah—a—yum! (*Looks at time table.*) Time for number twenty-six air line. (*Whistle heard.*) Ye-a, there she comes now.

(*Goes L.; whistle and bell heard off L.; commotion and voices.*)

FANNIE QUICK (*outside*). Well, here we are, Clara. I suppose this is the Junction,—wonder how long we will have to wait here?

CLARA CUTE (*outside*). I'm sure I don't know; where do you suppose the waiting-room is? And where is the porter to assist us with our luggage?

JOTH. (*mimicking*). "Where is the porter"? Some more o' these women from the east—can't move without a "porter." Everybody 'round a railroad station is a porter to them,—huh.

[*Exit, L.*

CLARA. Oh, here he is,—here, porter, take these things and show us into the waiting-room.

JOTH. Did you think this was the Grand Central? The porters are all takin' their afternoon tea, but come on in.

Enter L., FAN., CLARA and JOTH.; he is loaded down with suit cases, wraps, etc.

FAN. How long did the conductor of our train say we would have to wait here for the O. M. Y. local?

CLARA. I think he said fifteen minutes.

JOTH. (*dropping load*). Did he? Well, he's got another guess a-comin' to him. Them main line jays think they know a whole lot, 'specially the one you come down with. You'll find it a long fifteen minutes afore your train pulls in, that is, if it's the O. M. Y. local you was allowin' t' take.

FAN. Why, I thought —

(*Bell and whistle of departing train heard.*)

JOTH. So'd your conductor, but I tell ye the short line won't be here mebby for an hour or more. She's run into a washout, down below somewhere, an' it's no tellin' when she *will* git here—they say a good hour late anyway. (*Goes back to ticket office.*) Yah! Main line conductors! What do they know about railroadin', anyhow?

FAN. Dear me, how provoking.

CLARA. And such a stupid place to wait! Why, it's the deadest looking place we have struck yet.

JOTH. (*aside*). Huh! Wonder if they thought the Junction was goin' t' be a sort of a world's fair or a automobill show?

FAN. And we have had no lunch, either. I am so hungry I believe I could eat anything.

CLARA. So am I, Fan; you don't think we could —

JOTH. (*coming forward briskly*). Ahem,—did I hear you gals say you was a-wantin' suthin' t' eat?

FAN. Why, yes, I think so, don't we, Clara? It will help pass away the time; and they say you can get things real nice at these country stations sometimes.

CLARA. Can you? That will be jolly; let's see what they have.

JOTH. Come on over here, then, t' this table; ye've hit th' right place for a good, plain feed. (*With a flourish.*) Se' down, gals. (*They go to sit down. JOTH. pulls chairs away.*) Hold on a minutt, I forgot,—one dollar apiece in advance.

FAN. (*amazed*). One dollar?

JOTH. Yep.

CLARA. In advance?

JOTH. Ye, ah, rules o' th' road.

FAN. Did you *ever*?

(Hands JOTH. two silver dollars. Note.—All of JOTH.'s fees should be paid in silver dollars.)

CLARA. Ha, ha! Seems like the dear old east, don't it?

(They sit.)

JOTH. Now, then, what'll ye have? We've got ——

FAN. Oh, I think we will look over the card.

JOTH. (*puzzled*). The card?

FAN. Certainly; I suppose you have one?

JOTH. (*scratching head*). No, I ain't; the fact is I don't have t' b'long t' th' union.

CLARA (*laughing*). She refers to the menu card.

JOTH. Oh, I see. Well, the "Main U" don't go through here (*going and getting time table*), but here's the time table of th' O. M. Y. short line; mebby that's what you're lookin' for.

(The ladies laugh aside.)

FAN. Well, never mind now; do you have any hot fried, or cold boiled chicken, with mashed potatoes and ——

JOTH. Nope, we *ain't*, the chickens hev all flew th' coop, but we've got ——

CLARA. Any lobsters—oysters ——

JOTH. Nope, no "lobstersoysters," either,—ye see the lobsters-oysters got into a scrap this mornin' afore I was up, and there wa'n't nuthin' left wuth eatin'; but we've got ——

FAN. (*desperately*). Well, what have you ——

JOTH. Now see here, be you women a-wantin' vittles or not? I ain't got any such fancy stuff as you're talkin' about, but if you want suthin' fillin', an' will give a feller a chance, I'll tell ye what there is on hands.

CLARA. Oh, well, tell us, then.

JOTH. (*going and looking over stock*). Um-m, there's pie, —apple pie—an' ——

FAN. (*aside to CLARA*). Horrors! Apple pie!

JOTH. Squash pie—an' ——

CLARA (*aside to FAN*). Squash pie! Mercy!

JOTH. Doughnuts, an' ——

FAN. } Doughnuts—what next?

CLARA. }

JOTH. Nothin' next, that's about all; no, here's a bottle o' ketchup, like t' overlooked that.

FAN. Shades of Delmonico! What do you think of that

for a dainty little lunch, Clara? (*To JOTH.*) Please bring us what you have, and call us when it is ready.

(*They rise and come down.*)

JOTH. (*aside*). They seem a leetle hard t' suit, but I'll give 'em a plenty, anyway.

(*He sets table with plates, knives, forks, red napkins, etc., and puts on the whole stock of food, the ladies conversing meanwhile.*)

FAN. I don't see why Mr. Brief insisted on my coming way out here just to hear uncle's will read, when he had written me all about it.

CLARA. I don't see either, dear; but did you ever hear anything so perfectly absurd in all your life as the will was anyway?

FAN. No, I am sure I never did, nor any one else either, for that matter. He always was considered eccentric, and this surely bears it out; I hardly know what to do about it.

CLARA (*laughing*). Oh, I guess it will be matrimony for you, Fannie.

FAN. (*stamping her foot*). But I am not at all anxious to be married.

CLARA. But think of that million; if it was me,—well, I'd land some one, even if I had to take advantage of its being leap year.

FAN. Yes, I think you would, dear.

CLARA (*annoyed*). What do you mean?

FAN. Oh, nothing; this will is so much on my mind that I am hardly responsible for anything.

CLARA. What were the exact provisions of the thing anyway?

FAN. It amounted to this—he said he had always been a believer in early marriage, so he had decided to leave all his estate—a million or more—to his beloved niece, Fannie Quick, provided she married before her cousin, Jack Sharp; but if his beloved nephew, Jack Sharp, married first, then the entire estate was to go to him.

CLARA. How ridiculous.

FAN. And in the event of neither of them marrying within six months from the date of his death, it was all to go to found an old man's home. Now I have not the least desire in the world to marry —

CLARA. Of course not, dear.

FAN. What do you mean to insinuate?

CLARA. Nothing at all, only what ——

FAN. Your tone seemed to imply that ——

CLARA. How sensitive you are.

FAN. Well, I am so anxious when I think about this cousin of mine. I do not know him, have never even seen him; he is somewhere out on the coast, I believe. How do I know but what he may take it into his head to marry an Indian squaw or a Mexican or something, and come on and claim the estate before I have decided what to do.

CLARA. Well, it's no use your getting nervous over it.

FAN. I guess you'd be nervous. A million dollars is too much for any one to have slip through their fingers ——

JOTH. (*banging on empty pan, and imitating locomotive whistle*). Ro-o-p—Ro-o-p! Now then, all ready in the dining car.

(*Ladies startled.*)

CLARA (*aside*). What a singular man he is.

(*They sit at table.*)

JOTH. (*jingling money, goes back to ticket office; aside*). It's dollars to doughnuts they can't eat the money's wuth.

CLARA. How awfully dry this stuff is; we forgot about the coffee—where's the bell? (*Does not see any; rattles knife on plate. JOTH. comes over.*) Ah, Mr. ——

JOTH. Spotts is my name—Jotham Spotts.

FAN. What an odd name.

JOTH. Nothing odd about it when you know the circumstances. Ye see, my mother didn't give me my second name until after I'd had the measles—and ——

FAN. Oh!

JOTH. Yes; that accounts for th' spots, see? My last name was Steel, but after my father was—(*expressive gesture*) for bein' too free with another man's horse, in the good old days out here, I dropped th' last name.

FAN. Well, Mr. Spotts, we would like a pot of coffee.

JOTH. Quite likely, s'posin' ye could git it.

FAN. What do you mean?

JOTH. No coffee served at the Junction. The management says there ain't any good coffee no more, an' they don't want no "grounds" for complaint, so ——

CLARA. No coffee! How strange! Well, have you *any* thing to drink?

JOTH. (*reaching for hip pocket*). Well, now, just to be sociable (*producing flask*), I don't mind standin' a small round.

CLARA (*shocked*). Oh, no, we did not mean ——

JOTH. Oh, you want sumthin' a leetle milder. (*Brings 'two bottles of pop.*) Here ye be,—pop.

CLARA. Pop?

JOTH. Pop.

FAN. Pop?

JOTH. (*loudly*). Yes, pop. (*Aside.*) Consarn it, I never see sich critters.

FAN. How do you drink it?

(*JOTH., disgusted, pulls tops off of bottles.*)

CLARA. But we can't drink from the bottles.

JOTH. (*sarcastic*). Well, pour it on your pie. I don't care *how* ye take it.

CLARA (*aside to FAN.*). Did you ever see such service?

(*Whistle heard; exit JOTH., L. I E.*)

FAN. Never. Why, that must be our train. (*Starts up.*) Let's go and see.

(*Whistle and bell.*)

CLARA. It can't be; you know he said it would be an hour ——

FAN. I know, but do come and make sure.

(*They run off L. I E.*)

Enter JOTH., L. U. E., loaded with suit cases, etc., followed by JACK SHARP and PERCY KEEN.

JACK (*looking around*). Wonder how long we have to wait in this joint.

PERCY. Looks like a good place for a barn dance, eh, Jack?

JACK. Say, my friend, what time does the O. M. Y. local get under way?

JOTH. She's over due now—it'll be three-quarters of an hour afore she pulls in.

PERCY. What's the trouble?

JOTH. Washout.

PERCY. Ha, ha! Why don't they take it in?

JOTH. (*looking blank*). Take what in?

PERCY. Why, the wash, of course. Ha, ha, ha!

JOTH. (*aside*). Huh! Wonder where they blew in from. What do they know about railroadin'?

(*Retires to ticket office.*)

PERCY (*looking after him*). Whew, Jack. Just think of anybody falling for an old gag like that,—I suppose any of the "original seven" would be new in a place of this sort.

(*Bell and whistle heard.*)

JACK. There goes the Overland, and here we are, marooned for three-quarters of an hour. (*Yawns.*) Ah—yum—don't see what old Brief meant by insisting on my coming down here to hear that confounded will read. Knew all about it, in fact the old boy wrote me at the time it was drawn up; guess he thought it might make me settle down. Ha, ha! But, Percy, my boy, I had no notion of committing any such foolishness at my tender age, and I supposed he would live for years; but his gout got the best of him, and now it seems it's up to me—Jack Sharp—to do the marrying act, inside of six months—perhaps sooner—or stand to lose a cool million. What do you think of that for a "cold proposition," Percy, anyway? I tell you a "million" is too much for any man to let slip through his fingers.

PERCY. Right you are, Jack. Say, what about this cousin? What is her name, anyway?

JACK. Fannie Quick.

PERCY. Quick, eh? Ha, ha! By Jove, Jack, suppose this Miss Quick should take a notion to do something sudden?

JACK. Whew! Ease up, will you? You make me nervous.

(*Walks around uneasily.*)

PERCY. You know her?

JACK. No, never saw her; she may be a Hottentot for all I know. Old Brief said she was a hustler, though that might be a heavy idea he had of trying to be witty at my expense; but all the same I hurried down, and towed you along thinking you might be useful in a pinch.

PERCY. Oh, give me a chance, and there'll be something

doing. I'll be right in the push; you can gamble on that. But say, Jack, I wonder if we couldn't rustle a little in the grub line at this caravansary. I'm as empty as ——— (*Looks around.*) Ye gods and little fishes! pipe the lay out, Jack. (*Goes to table L.*) Oh, ho, here's the trap already set and baited to catch the unwary wayfarer. Come on, old chap; we might as well eat while we are waiting—pie—sinkers—pie—ketchup—pie—pop. Ha, ha! Ho for the feast!

JACK. Yes, but who will "dig" for the doctor afterward? Well, come on, it's better than the desert air we've been taking in all the morning anyway.

(*They sit.*)

JOTH. (*coming over*). Say, you fellers, that lay out is for two ———

JACK. Quite correct, and there's two at the banquet, my friend. (*They eat.*) Ha, ha! Say, Percy, now if that million dollars would only work out as slick as this remark of our friend's here—it would be all to the easy.

PERCY. Logic, Jack, logic.

JOTH. (*loudly*). I said two ———

JACK. Oh, yes, two, I'm on; that's one apiece; here you go. (*Tosses two dollars to JOTH.*) Now run along and play.

JOTH. But I mean ———

PERCY. So do we, old sport; we mean to stay our stomachs 'til they get that wash taken in. Ha, ha!

(*They laugh and eat. JOTH. throws up hands and exit, R.*)

JACK. Say, old "Rip Van Winkle" seemed to have something on his mind.

PERCY. Or on his stomach—maybe 'twas one of these doughnuts. (*Holds one up.*) Say, Jack, how would one of these do for a wedding ring for the future Mrs. Jack Sharp?

JACK. Oh, fine—fine. Ha, ha! Come on, Percy. (*Takes bottle of pop, hands PERCY the other one.*) Come on, let us drink a toast to her in a draught of sparkling pop.

PERCY. Hip! Hip! All up!

(*They stand.*)

JACK. Here's to a girl I do not know, wherever she may be, through whom kind fate will soon bestow, a million "bones" on me.

(*They laugh, and drink from bottles.*)

Enter FAN. and CLARA, L. I E. Discovering JACK and PERCY, they cross to R.

FAN. (*aside to CLARA*). Why, the idea!

CLARA. Did you ever see such impudence?

FAN. Where is Mr. Spotts?

(*They go to ticket window.*)

JACK (*aside*). Gad, Percy, here's two fairies down here in the wilderness. Wonder where they dropped from?

PERCY. Search me—must have come by wireless.

(*They proceed with lunch, but are much interested in the ladies.*)

Enter JOTH., R.

FAN. Here he is now. Mr. Spotts, what is the meaning of this?

JOTH. (*pretending not to understand*). Meaning? Why—oh, I had to go and see about some freight. Did you get lonesome without your Spotty, eh?

CLARA. No evasion, sir; we want to know what this means. We go out on the platform for a few moments, and when we return we find these two—(*glancing toward table*) these two—ah—persons consuming ——

FAN. Devouring ——

CLARA. Annihilating our lunch. It's going ——

JOTH. (*scratching head*). Going, gone, as the auctioneer says.

FAN. } (*stamping feet*). Explain, sir!

CLARA }

JOTH. Oh, certainly—it's this way. (*Aside.*) What'll I tell 'em? Oh, I have it. (*To ladies.*) The fact o' th' matter is, girls, these two chaps are directors on the board of the O. M. Y. R. R.—came down on the Overland while you were out lookin' at the scenery. They'd got to wait for the local ——

FAN. (*startled; looking over*). The local?

JOTH. That's what they said,—and they saw your vittles on the table, said they were wantin' nourishment, an' took possession in the name of the commonwealth.

CLARA. Of the what?

JOTH. (*confused*). No, I mean common stockholders. So

what could I do? A feller don't want to git too gay with his superiors, 'specially when there's two agin one; that is, not if he ain't sick of his job.

FAN. The beasts!

JOTH. Second the motion. Now, I tell ye what I'll do. I'll fix you up a table right here, and—well, wait a jiffy. (*Runs off R.; returns with table, which he places R. F.*) Here ye be. Now hold yer horses a second. (*Goes to counter, but finds nothing there; scratches head again; goes and leans over JACK; in a loud aside.*) Say, if you gents'll excuse me—here's two young women just fell off th' Limited. They got t' wait here fer th' O. M. Y. local —

JACK. What! The O. M. Y. local?

JOTH. That's what they said. Now, these two women is hungry—starvin',—an' you fellers has got all the grub there is in th' hotel on your table. What I was wantin' t' ask is, would you be willin' to loosen your hold on a few o' these viands to keep these two sufferin' females from perishin' on my hands?

JACK. Sure; here, take what you want.

PERCY. No, Jack, let him have it all.

JACK. Yes, sweep the festive board. (*They both steal glances at the ladies.*) By Jove, Percy, here's an adventure; here's where we succor two lovely damsels in distress.

FAN. They are positively staring at us!

CLARA. I like their impudence!

(*They turn their backs.*)

JOTH. (*who is working rapidly, takes pie in hand, piles doughnuts on top, takes bottle of ketchup in other hand and goes over and puts them on table R.*) I guess this'll do for a starter. There ye be, folks. (*Brings two chairs. As ladies attempt to sit down, he holds chairs away.*) Dollar apiece in advance, please.

CLARA (*indignant*). But we paid you before.

JOTH. This is a fresh meal, served to order.

FAN. This is extortion.

JOTH. Not at all; pie'n doughnuts—rules o' th' road—dollar apiece in advance. If you don't believe it, ask the board o' directors over at th' other table.

FAN. (*paying*). The idea! (*They sit at table.*) We positively must have something to drink with this dry stuff. (JOTH.

brings plates, knives, forks, etc. He should move quickly.)
Please bring us a pot of black tea.

JOTH. Th' black tea is all out. There'll be some down on th' next coal train. How'll a nice bottle o' pop do, now?

FAN. (*aside*). There he goes popping again. (*To JOTH.*) Well, let us have it.

(*He brings bottle from counter.*)

JOTH. Only one left. (*Starts back.*)

CLARA. But—oh, waiter!

JOTH. (*returning*). What? I ain't no waiter.

CLARA. Oh, pardon me; what are you?

JOTH. I'm th' station agent.

CLARA. Oh, that's it?

JOTH. Well, that's part of it. I'm also ticket agent —

CLARA. Anything else?

JOTH. Yes, baggage agent—freight agent—telegraph agent—lunch agent—insurance agent—justice o' th' peace, an' notaray-ry public fer this here county. In short, I'm a gent —

CLARA. Well, Mr. Spotts, acting in your capacity as lunch agent, would you kindly bring us two straws to assist us in absorbing this enticing beverage?

JOTH. Straws? Do you take this for a livery stable? (*Brings one tumbler.*) Guess ye'll have to make this do.

(*Retires up.*)

FAN. Ha, ha! What a specimen.

(*They eat.*)

CLARA. I wonder if there are many more like him out here, Fannie.

(*JACK and PERCY are lunching and smoking during the foregoing.*)

JACK (*aside to PERCY; starting*). Fannie! Did you hear that?

PERCY. Gad, Jack, you don't think it's possible —?

JACK. Whew! What if it should be — Ahem! (*Beckons to JOTH., who comes over.*) Say, my friend, could you find out the name of the lady in black for me?

JOTH. Don't see how I could.

JACK (*handing him tip*). Well, try it, anyway.

(JOTH. goes to telegraph key; comes out with telegram; goes R.)

JOTH. Here's a message for Miss—er—Miss ——

FAN. Oh, it must be for me; I was looking for one.

JOTH. What was the name?

FAN. Miss Fannie Quick.

JACK. Jerusalem, Percy, it is she!

JOTH. Well, this message happens to be fer Miss Mollie

Garrity. (To CLARA.) Now, your name wouldn't be ——

CLARA. No, it would not. The idea!

(Ring at telephone; JOTH. goes over.)

JOTH. Hello.....Yes.....Junction.....Dunno; there's two gents waitin' here fer th' local.....I'll ask 'em; hold her a minit. Say, either you gents named Sharp—Ja ——

JACK (*rattling knife and fork*). Sh-h! man, not so loud.

FAN. (*starting*). Clara, did you hear?

CLARA. Be quiet, dear, they'll notice you.

JOTH. What kind of a lookin' feller is he?.....Um—yes.....Tall, dark hair, long neck, short chap with him—not overly good-lookin'.....Um—yes.

JACK. Confound the man! Here, let me take it.

(Goes over.)

FAN. Oh, it must be he. He's on his way down, and—and you know Mr. Brief wrote me that he was sure to get ahead of me if I did not hustle. Do tell me what to do.

(They confer.)

JACK. Hello.....Yes.....Is that so?.....Um, yes.....I guess it will be up to me.....Oh, I think so.....Good-bye. (*Goes back; aside to PERCY.*) It was Brief, the lawyer; there's no mistake; he said she was coming on the Limited, said she was a hustler, and I'd have to get up a full head of steam if I wanted to make good. What's to be done, eh?

PERCY. Don't get excited, old man; just let your friend Percy cogitate over the situation for a brief space of time. (*Comes down front.*) Um-m—here is a situation, and one that plainly needs some one with a large brain capacity to grasp it. Let me see, if Jack wants this money—and there's no doubt about that—he will have to marry within six months to get it. That's plain as an old maid's face. Um—so far so

good. And if this designing cousin of his wants it, why ditto and the same. This means there's going to be a matrimonial race from now on. He'll marry at the first opportunity; so will she. Um-m. (*Sudden thought.*) Ah, what? Suppose—just suppose she should throw out a hook in this direction. Whew! what a bait. Jack is a good fellow; 'twould be too bad to be the instrument of his undoing, but hang it all, he has all the money he needs now, and a million is too much for any one to let slip through their fingers. But what can I—Ah, I have it. (*Returns to table.*) Say, Jack, I've an idea.

JACK. Good! What is it?

PERCY (*mysteriously*). Wait.

(*Whistles to JOTH.; goes down front.*)

JOTH. (*imitating dog*). Bow-wow, wow-wow!

(*Runs to PERCY.*)

PERCY (*aside*). Is the man crazy, or has he got the hydrophobia? Say, what's the matter with you, anyway?

JOTH. Didn't you whistle?

PERCY. Well, what of it?

JOTH. I thought you wanted me to play I was a dog.

PERCY. Nonsense,—here. (*Passes fee and whispers in his ear.*) You understand?

(*JOTH. nods and exits L.*)

JACK. Well?

PERCY (*returning; mysteriously*). Sh-h! Wait.

(*They confer.*)

CLARA (*aside to FAN.*). Now, dear, you just keep cool; we'll find a way.

FAN. Yes, but it won't do to wait. Didn't I tell you that the lawyer said he was a very determined man, and that I would have to be looking around if I wanted to get ahead of him. Oh, Clara, what can I do?

CLARA. Wait, dear, let me think it over. (*Comes front; aside.*) This is a problem. (*Knits her brows; glances at JACK.*) He does look like a man who would marry the first woman he saw, rather than lose the money, and what a lot it is. I wish I had as much,—if he should marry first, some girl will be in luck. (*Looks covertly at FAN.*) Of course, I

wouldn't think of such a thing as to try to take advantage of my dear Fannie in any way, and I know I'll not have any such opportunity, although they do say opportunity knocks once at every one's door. Well, if it should knock at mine in a case like this, I am afraid I would find it hard work to be—"not at home," for a million is too much for any one to let slip through their fingers.

Enter JOTH., L.

JOTH. (*loudly*). O. M. Y. local, on track number one, leaves in —

(*All grab luggage and hustle off* L. PERCY, *in the rear, stops and laughs, dropping suit case in passageway.*)

PERCY. Ha, ha! Bully for the agent; now I'll await developments; perhaps something may happen to give me an excuse for addressing Miss Fannie Quick, and if it should, trust me for the rest. (*Strolls back.*)

Enter FAN., L., *puzzled.*

FAN. What could he have meant? There was no train in sight, and — (*Falls over PERCY'S suit case.*) Oh-h!

(*Screams.*)

PERCY (*saving her from falling; half supports her to chair*). I beg ten thousand pardons, madam; I am to blame for this.

FAN. (*recovering*). You, sir, how?

PERCY. I very thoughtlessly left my grip in the passageway, and you fell over it. I hope you are not injured. I should never forgive myself if —

FAN. Thank you. Oh, no, I—I think not. Just a little shaken up.

PERCY. Dear me, what can I do, or—or say?

FAN. Oh, nothing, sir; I am sure it is nothing serious, and you were hardly to blame.

PERCY. It is extremely good of you to say so.

FAN. Thank you again, but if you will excuse me, I think I will go and look for my friend.

PERCY (*gently detaining her as she attempts to arise*). Oh, no, I fear you are not equal to the exertion; pray allow me to call her.

FAN. If you will be so kind.

PERCY. Only too glad to be of service. I'll bring her here in a moment. (*Aside.*) Perhaps. [*Exit, L.*

FAN. I wonder where Clara can be; it is funny she has not returned. (*Reënter PERCY.*) Did you not find her?

PERCY. Ahem! I saw her.

FAN. Saw her?

PERCY. Ah—yes, she was talking with my friend, Mr. Sharp.

FAN. (*startled*). Talking with him? Oh, are you sure?

PERCY. I'll look again. (*Goes L., and looks off.*) Hullo, that's queer—deuced queer.

FAN. What is queer? (*Crosses and looks.*) Why, she is walking with him. (*Agitated.*) What does it mean?

PERCY. You can search—pardon me, I mean I cannot say what it means—unless —

(*Returns to R. ; seems thoughtful.*)

FAN. (*following*). Unless what? Do go on.

(*Falls into chair.*)

PERCY (*also sitting down*). Why, it's so absurd; hardly worth mentioning, in fact.

FAN. Oh, can't you say what you mean?

PERCY. Well, to tell the truth, I am somewhat alarmed about poor Jack; not that I think it anything serious, you know, but he seems all of a sudden to have developed a kind of a monomania on the subject of matrimony.

FAN. (*nervously ; half rising*). Matrimony?

PERCY. Fact; he told me a while ago that he might take a notion to marry at any moment—said something about its being money in his pocket for him to do so. He seems obsessed with the idea that every nice young girl he sees would be glad to have him if he only said the word.

FAN. (*slight scream*). Oh!

PERCY (*pretending alarm*). What is it?

FAN. (*faintly*). Oh—nothing. (*Rises ; walks about.*)

PERCY (*laughing ; aside*). Of course, it's only a vagary of his.

FAN. Of course, I see. (*Aside.*) Oh, if he should—if she should — Is it possible that, knowing all, she has deliberately thrown herself in his way? If I thought she had, I'd —

PERCY. Only this morning he said to me, "Percy, my dear boy ——"

FAN. Percy? Percy what?

PERCY. Percy Keen, at your service. (*Rises; bows.*)

FAN. Percy Keen? Did you have a sister at Brown's college named Dorothy Keen?

PERCY. Did I? Why, of course I did; did you know Dorothy?

FAN. Yes; how strange to meet her brother way out here. She was my roommate. Did you never hear her speak of her friend, Fannie Quick?

PERCY. Often. (*Aside.*) Hope I'll be forgiven for that one. (*Takes her hand.*) I am delighted to meet you, Miss Quick, delighted.

FAN. The pleasure is mutual, I am sure, Mr. Keen. (*Aside.*) He seems like an excellent young man, and I know he is from a fine family. I wonder if it would be possible —— (*Steals a look at PERCY.*) Why not? I am desperate with this dangerous flirtation going on between his friend and Clara Cute—the artful minx. I have always been suspicious of her. I'll do it. Perhaps she will find me as cute as she is. From the way Mr. Keen acts, I think he will not need much encouragement. (*Turns to PERCY.*) It is very warm in here, don't you think so?

PERCY. Insufferable. Can we not stroll outside until the train comes?

FAN. That would be very nice—and I have so many things to ask about dear Dorothy.

PERCY (*aside*). I think the scheme is working, and with a little diplomacy on my part—well, we'll see.

(*They stroll off R.*)

Enter JOTH., L.

JOTH. (*jingling silver*). If that O. M. V. local will only hold off a while longer, I'll have enough of this to buy a new uniform. (*Retires up.*)

Enter JACK and CLARA, L.

JACK (*looking around*). I wonder where my friend Percy went to?

CLARA. And my friend, Fannie Quick. (*Knowing look.*)

JACK (*suspiciously*). Hey? By Jove, that's so; both

gone. H'm—that's queer. (*Alarmed.*) Percy wouldn't ———
 (*To JOTH.*) Hey! Seen anything of my friend—and—and
 the other young lady?

JOTH. Just went out together in that direction, as I was
 comin' in.

JACK. } Together?
 CLARA. }

JACK (*aside*). Say, I don't like the looks of this. Con-
 found it, what a fool I am. He knows all about this will
 business—suppose he should try to steal a march on me. He's
 none too good for it, and he likes money as well as the next
 one. It looks deuced suspicious, but I'll find out.

(*Starts to go R.*)

CLARA (*near table, L.*). Ahem!

JACK (*stopping; looking back*). Eh? Oh, yes; excuse me
 a moment, Miss Cute; I must see my friend ——— (*Shakes
 fist; aside.*) Friend! (*Starts R. again.*)

CLARA. Ahem! (*He stops again; very nervous.*) I am
 afraid you are not as keen as your friend is, Mr. Sharp.
 (*Laughs.*) Didn't you ever hear that two might be company
 —while three would be something else?

(*With elbows on table she watches JACK with amusement.*)

JACK. What? You surely don't mean ———?

CLARA (*still laughing*). How can any one be so stupid as
 not to see anything as plain as this is? If you will come back
 and be seated a moment I will explain. (*JACK returns; they
 sit at table, L. Exit JOTH., L.*) My friend, Fannie Quick,
 you must know, is just the nicest girl in the world, and it would
 not be in her nature to do anything which would have the least
 appearance of impropriety, but—confidentially—something has
 happened recently that—ah—that ———

JACK (*nervously*). Yes—er—what?

CLARA. That I am not at liberty to state; but by reason
 of this matter of which I speak, my dear Fannie has recently
 developed a sudden and most unaccountable inclination toward
 matrimony, and ———

JACK (*jumping up; walking around; CLARA laughs aside*).
 The deuce she has?

CLARA. Please be seated, Mr. Sharp. (*He complies.*) Yes,
 and of course this friend of yours—this Mr. Keen, is all right,

is he not? Good family and all that sort of thing? I'd be very sorry if Fannie —

JACK (*hopping up again*). Oh, yes, that's all right. Percy is a fine fellow. (*Goes R.; looks off; aside.*) Blast him! I'd like to twist his neck. Suppose he should get the start of me and marry this nice girl—my cousin, Miss Fannie Quick. But he shan't. I'll find some way to prevent it, if I have to marry the first available — (*Sudden thought; glances at CLARA.*) By Jove! Why not? Wonder I hadn't thought of it before. She must be a girl of the right sort. I'll do it. (*Shakes fist off R.*) Aha, my dear Percy, you'll find I'm as Sharp as you are Keen. (*Returns to CLARA, who has been watching him closely.*) Ah, my dear Miss—er —

CLARA. Cute—Miss Clara Cute.

JACK. Oh, yes, Miss Cute. As I was about to say, my dear Miss Cute,—ah—you may perhaps think it a very odd question, but I would like to ask you if you would not consider it a cause for satisfaction if a nice young lady—ah—I might venture to say a very nice looking young lady—should suddenly discover that she had been the innocent cause of arousing, at first sight, the tender but all-absorbing sentiment of love in the breast of a—er—a most noble and worthy young man?

CLARA (*coily*). What a strange question, Mr. Sharp. I—why, my answer might depend on whether your question was a hypothetical one or not.

JACK. Nothing of the sort, believe me.

CLARA. Well, then, if you mean that this explains why your friend Mr. Keen and my dear Fannie have been so suddenly attracted to one another, then I might say —

(*JACK starts up; recollects; sits down.*)

JACK. Oh, no; I was not thinking of them at all, but of yourself—myself—ourselves. I—er —

CLARA (*assuming surprise*). Why, Mr. Sharp, what can you possibly mean?

JACK (*effusively; throwing himself at her feet*). I mean that I have suddenly discovered that I love you—I adore you,—madly—devotedly—that without you my life would be like an alkali plain. (*Enter PERCY and FAN., R.; they stop and witness the scene with alarm, but are not observed by the other two.*) I have learned to love you so in the last half hour that I would not lose you now—no, not for a million dollars! (*Percy and FAN., startled.*) Er—will you marry me?

CLARA. Why, I must say you surprise me, Mr. Sharp. This is very, very sudden.

JACK. Call me Jack. Say yes.

CLARA (*yielding*). Well—er—Jack, I suppose since you are so insistent, it must be as you wish.

(*They both rise. He embraces her rapturously.*)

JACK. Hurrah! Come, let's walk outside. I have something further to say.

(*They stroll off L.*)

PERCY. What do you suppose this means? Looks as though he was in earnest about marrying, don't it?

FAN. (*nervously*). It surely does. (*Aside.*) Who would have thought that of Clara Cute? What if they should go somewhere and be married right away? Something must be done, and at once.

PERCY (*aside*). Gad, Jack's losing no time, is he? Guess this is going to be a tight race for the matrimonial stakes.

FAN. What do you think of this?

PERCY. Well, it was certainly a very interesting little scene, wasn't it?

FAN. Oh, very.

PERCY. But, of course, now that we are engaged ourselves, it is a great pleasure to see our friends happy also. Ha, ha!

FAN. Very interesting, no doubt, but I fail to see anything so dreadfully amusing in the situation.

PERCY. Pray pardon me. I was thinking of Jack's mania, and how funny it would be if he should take a notion to hunt up a parson and have the knot tied right away; and so—

FAN. And so what? What are you talking about?

PERCY (*with a side glance*). And so? Oh, yes, and so miss the O. M. Y. local. Ha, ha!

FAN. (*forcing a laugh*). It would be too funny for words. (*Aside.*) And it would cost me a million. (*To PERCY.*) But it's ridiculous; we should try to prevent any such rash move on their part. Can't you do something?

Enter JOTH., L.

PERCY. Wait—I'll see. Ahem! Mr. Spotts, does there happen to be a—er—minister anywhere around here?

JOTH. Meanin' a preacher?

PERCY. Yes, a parson.

JOTH. Yes; there generally happens t' be two or three over to th' village. Why?

PERCY. Um-m—how long does it take to walk over there?

JOTH. About ten minutes. But you won't find any preacher there to-day; there's a church picnic over to th' pond, and everybody's out there, preachers an' all. (*Aside.*) Say, this looks like a weddin'—a elopement, or suthin' o' that kind. Wonder if a feller couldn't git an honest dollar or two outer this. (*Takes PERCY aside.*) Say, young feller, you'n her ain't thinkin' o' gittin' married or anything, be ye?

PERCY. Why, as to that —

JOTH. 'Cause if ye be, there ain't no need o' your gallivantin' all over th' country for a preacher. I'm a justice o' th' peace and a notaray-ry public inter th' bargain, an' I can do th' job as good as any preacher; yes, an' a darn sight better'n some I've heard. Here's my commission. (*Shows paper.*) See?

PERCY (*aside*). By Jupiter! The very thing. If she will consent, it will clinch the matter, and we'll win hands down. (*To JOTH.*) Ahem! Wait a bit—I'll consult the lady.

(*Goes over to FAN.*)

FAN. What did he say?

PERCY. He said there were plenty of preachers over at the village.

FAN. He did? Is it very far?

PERCY. Oh, no—just a little walk. (*Looks at watch.*) They could go over there and be made one and be back here in time for the local, all right.

FAN. But we must stop them! Don't you see we must?

PERCY. Why, no, can't say I do; they are free agents—both of age—don't see how we can interfere. It will be a good joke on us though.

FAN. Joke!

PERCY. Yes, of course; but I know a better one—though, of course, it is out of the question; only it would enable us to turn the tables on them in rather a neat way. Wouldn't it be rich, though? Ha, ha, ha!

FAN. Do tell me. If it's anything I can do, say so; only do be quick about it.

PERCY. It is simple enough—we might be married first.

(*Significantly.*)

FAN. (*startled*). First! When—how?

PERCY. Here—now. We are engaged. Mr. Spotts, here, is a justice of the peace, and——

FAN. Why, Mr. Keen, I could never think of such a thing.

(*Walks aside, thinking.*)

PERCY. Of course you couldn't. I was only thinking of putting one over on old Jack. (*Yawns.*) O-a-yum—suppose they'll soon be back as Mr. and Mrs. Jack Sharp.

(*Laughs, aside.*)

FAN. (*suppressing scream*). Oh! Wait—wait! (*Aside.*) I don't know, though it's an awful thing to do. But suppose I consent; it would settle the whole difficulty at once, and the money would be mine beyond the shadow of a doubt. (*To PERCY.*) What would you think of me if I entered into this—ah—this joke you propose?

PERCY (*whistling; aside*). Think of you? I'd think you were a trump.

FAN. Very well, then, I agree. It's perfectly absurd, I know, but it will be such a good joke on Clara that I really can't resist.

PERCY. Why, it will be the richest joke of the season. Here, Mr. Spotts, it's a go. Can you perform the ceremony at once?

JOTH. You're right I can. I——

FAN. Oh, do hurry, then.

JOTH. (*going back while talking and coming out with a big book*). Hurry—well, I guess we'll all have to hurry some if we want to git this job done afore the O. M. Y. local pulls in; she's about due now. Just left the station below. (*Puts book on table.*) Now then, you folks stan' right here (*placing them R., facing C.*), hold hands—no, wait a minit (*consulting book; coming back*), hold up your right hands—that's it—you do solemnly——

PERCY. Say, is that right?

JOTH. Hold on till I see. (*Puts on specs; consults book.*) No, that's an affidavit. Take 'em down agin. (*Turns page.*) Here she is—hold hands agin. Now, do you—— Oh, I forgot to ask how many times you folks had been married afore?

FAN. (*indignantly*). Sir?

PERCY (*amused*). This is the first time, Mr. Spotts.

JOTH. How many?

PERCY. } Never!
FAN. }

JOTH. All right—all right; no offense. Then it'll be a dollar apiece, in advance. (PERCY *pays*.) Don't you go to gittin' nervous, young woman; it'll all be over in two minutes an' a half.

Enter JACK and CLARA, L.

JACK (*aside*). Hullo! what's this? What's up here?

(*They look at group; then at one another, suspicious.*)

PERCY } (*excited; seeing them*). Oh, do go on, Mr. Spotts!
FAN. }

JACK. Hey? No, you don't, not if I know it. What does this mean, eh? Looks like a wedding. (*Angry.*)

PERCY (*also angry*). It is a wedding; go on, Mr. Spotts.

JACK. And I say—come off, Mr. Spotts. What kind of fool play is this anyway? What authority have you to marry people?

JOTH. (*wrathy*). Authority? I'd have ye know I have authority from the governor of this here commonwealth. (*Shakes paper in JACK's face.*) An' there's my commission as justice o' th' peace an' notaray-ry public.

(*JACK examines document.*)

JACK (*reluctantly*). Um-m—yes, that looks O. K.

JOTH. Oh, it does, does it? Well then, you an' th' little gal run away an' play now. I'm busy.

(*PERCY and FAN. laugh. Jack whispers to CLARA who nods assent.*)

JACK (*to PERCY*). Well, this is a game that two can play at, you'll find. (*To JOTH.*) I demand that you marry this lady and myself.

JOTH. (*scratching his head*). Well, I guess that's all right. A dollar apiece, in advance, please. (*JACK pays.*)

PERCY. But you can't do this; you have ——

JOTH. Oh, yes, I can, after I've tended to your case; first come, first served, ye know.

(*Consults book.*)

PERCY. Aha—good; we are ready; go ahead.

JACK (*puzzled; takes CLARA aside*). By Gad! Miss Cute, what can we do now?

CLARA. Do you really mean this, Mr. Sharp?

JACK. Do I? Didn't I tell you all about the ——

CLARA. Then listen. (*Whispers.*)

JOTH. (*returning*). Now for the next chapter.

JACK. Just the thing—come on.

(*They range up before JOTH. also.*)

PERCY	} (<i>all very much excited</i>).	} { Oh, I say —— What does this mean? Go on, Mr. Spotts, go on. Yes, go on; we are ready.
FAN.		
JACK		
CLARA		

JOTH. (*scratching head again*). Oh, all right; all aboard—
one dollar apiece—no, I mean do you take this woman t'
be ——

JACK	} (<i>loudly</i>).	} I do!
PERCY		

JOTH. (*bewildered*). Oh, ye do—do ye? (*Consults book.*)
An' do you take this man t' be ——

FAN.	} (<i>screaming</i>).	} I do!
CLARA		

JOTH. (*aside*). Whew! These are th' most willin' people
I ever see. (*To the group.*) Well, then, all hands appearin'
t' be satisfied, I pronounce ye to be married as tite as a fiddle;
an' it will cost ye a dollar all round t' have it recorded.

(*Collects the money; telephone rings.*)

JACK. Yes, but who was married first?

(*Glances at PERCY.*)

PERCY (*glancing at JACK*). Yes, who was married first?

(*FAN. and CLARA look daggers at each other.*)

JOTH. (*confused*). Fust? Why—er—looks t' me as if there wasn't any fust about it; ye didn't never hear o' there bein' any fust at a double weddin', did ye?

(*Telephone rings loud.*)

PERCY. } Double wedding?
FAN. }

JOTH. Sure. (*Goes to 'phone.*) If that wasn't a double weddin', I never see one.

PERCY (*angrily to JACK*). I suppose you call yourself Sharp?

JACK (*laughing*). And you no doubt consider yourself Keen?

PERCY. Bah!

JACK. Bah!!

FAN. Some folks think they're Cute, don't they?

CLARA (*laughing*). Yes, they do; and some other folks call themselves Quick, but they are not always as quick as they think they are.

FAN. Pooh!

CLARA. Pooh yourself.

JOTH. (*at 'phone*). Somebody here wants Mr. Jack Sharp, right away quick.

JACK (*taking 'phone*). Well, what is it?.....Yes, Sharp..... Ha, ha! you bet.....Sharp as tacks. (*Looks at PERCY.*) What?.....No.....Another? You don't mean it... ..Huh—two.....Is that so? (*Dances.*) Hurray!!

(*He grabs JOTH., dances him around stage, the rest looking on in amazement. Whistle heard. JOTH. breaks away and hurries off L.*)

PERCY. What is it?

CLARA. Oh, what have you heard?

FAN. Is he crazy?

JACK. Hurray! It was young Sam Perkins, old Brief's partner. He says a new will has been found in which the property is divided equally between my Cousin Fannie Quick and myself, and they also find that the old gentleman left two millions instead of one.

PERCY. Hurray! Glorious!

(*JACK and PERCY shake hands.*)

FAN. }
CLARA. } How perfectly lovely! (*They embrace.*)
JACK. Whoop!

(*Seizes FAN. and dances around stage. PERCY and CLARA the same. Whistle and bell heard, very loud.*)

Enter JOTH, L.

JOTH. (*bawling*). All aboard for the O. M. Y. local, track number one. All aboard. (*Dances too.*)

(*The others seize their luggage and rush off L. Music. JOTH. dances toward ticket office.*)

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