

Pumpkin.

"Come ahead; I've got my eyes all open," laughed the Potato, winking in a most provoking way.

"Tut, tut, fellow-vegetables!" cried a large Red Beet, who till now had kept silent. "Why should we fight among ourselves? Let us come to a friendly understanding in this matter. I for one would enjoy a gay evening. And I'm sure the others present will agree with me that we owe Mr. Pumpkin a vote of thanks for suggesting a dance."

"Aye! aye! aye!" came from a chorus of voices, so lusty that it frightened from a preserve jar, a bright-eyed mouse who was just about to eat her luncheon. She ran into a hole in the wall, but stopped there a bit to listen to the queer vegetable voices before going on to her nest underneath the warm floor.

"Well, my dear garden-truck comrades, you must excuse me if I seem a bit hilarious and frisky," said the potato apologetically "But the truth is, as the spring advances, we potatoes become sprouty, which is to say, we are imbued with new life, and we simply have to forget our starched condition and relax in some way to give vent to our new store of youth! But since our self-appointed spokesman seems jealous of the voice of others I shall promise to hold my tongue till he has finished stating his plans for a hop. But I would suggest that he get a move on himself, for young spuds like myself, become impatient."

Mr. Pumpkin bowed his pardon to the potato, but his air was one of great dignity. Then turning to the other vegetables he said: "Those present have heard my ideas on the subject of a party. I shall, therefore, be brief in my remarks. Suppose we turn this evening into a time of dancing and merrymaking, for who can tell what the morrow has in store for us? If any vegetable present has anything to say on the subject let him speak up."

"I would suggest that we get a move on ourselves," came in a deep voice from the potato. Mr. Pumpkin turned from the speaker with a look of contempt and addressed Mrs. Cabbage, who seemed on the point of speaking:

"Have you any suggestions to offer, Madam Cabbage?"

"I'm wondering where the music is to come from," Mrs. Cabbage answered in a crisp voice that sounded like the popping of a frozen leaf.

"There's a cricket comes at night and sits beside the pork barrel," spoke up a huge red-faced beet. "He has a fine voice and sings me to sleep often. Maybe he could be induced to furnish the music."

"A very good suggestion," remarked a parsnip, not knowing what else to say and wishing to be heard.

As Mrs. Mouse heard this talk about the cricket she stuck her head from her hiding place and made bold to speak, for the cricket was her friend and often came to spend the evening at her little house, where he would chirp for the amusement of her children.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Pumpkin," squeaked Mrs. Mouse, turning her bright eyes on that huge yellow fellow, "but may I be heard?"

"Certainly," said Mr. Pumpkin with some surprise.

"Well, I'm the grey mouse that lives beneath the floor—right under the pork barrel—and Mr. Cricket of whom you have been speaking, is a most intimate friend of mine. If you desire his presence—and his music—here this evening I shall be delighted to carry your invitation to him. I left him playing with my children when I came here half an hour ago."

"Fry, bake or boil me!" exclaimed the potato. "If that isn't the little animal who tried to nibble off my new growth of sprouts the other day. But I had my eyes on her and that frightened her away."

"Come forth, Mrs. Mouse," invited Mr. Pumpkin, ignoring the potato's remarks. "I rather like your friendly disposition and accommodating manner. You are just the person to arrange with Mr. Cricket about furnishing the music for our dance this evening."

Mrs. Mouse ventured into the center of the cellar, bowing right and left to the smiling vegetables on every side. "At your service, good vegetables," she said.

"Wait upon Mr. Cricket at once and ascertain if he can come this evening and sing dance music for us," instructed Mr. Pumpkin. "And, by the way, Mrs. Mouse, we shall all be pleased to have you return and stay for the party."

"If my children may be included in the invitation I shall enjoy coming very much," smiled Mrs. Mouse.

"Certainly, come and bring your family," urged Mr. Pumpkin.

"Sure," cried the potato. "And stand not upon the order of going, but be off! Get a move on yourself, my dear mouse."

Laughing, Mrs. Mouse whirled and was off like a flash.

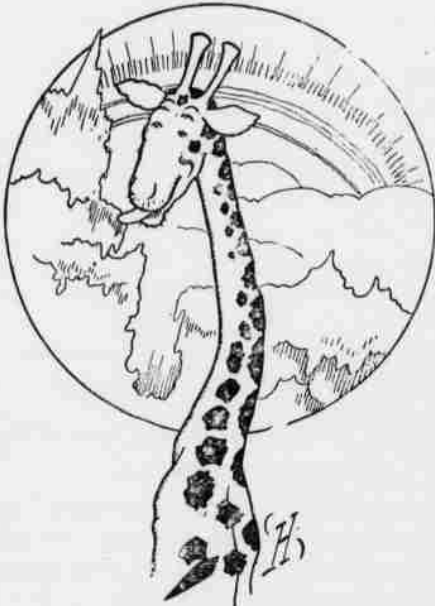
"You see, friends, how I expedite matters!" exclaimed the potato.

"We see how you thrust yourself in where you are not wanted," replied Mr. Pumpkin sarcastically.

"That comes of his being born and bred underground," sneered Mrs. Cabbage, in an aside to Mr. Pumpkin. "And he is of Irish origin, which explains his disposition to play the smart Alec."

"Pretty well said for the mother of saurkraut," lustily laughed the potato, whose keen ears had overheard the cabbage's remarks. "But the Dutch never

(Concluded on page eleven.)



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