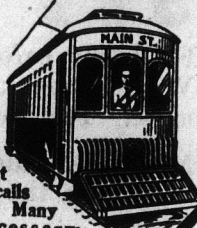


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## Singer Talks

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vous lad. So when Liza Jane begun to aise off her end of the courtship, to give Bab's Andy a chance, his shyness then overtuk him, an' his narvousness knocked him over complete. An' he come far seldomer to see her, through if his will was as sthrong as his wish he'd come coortin' seven nights in the week, not countin' Sunday.

But the followin' winter, Liza Jane, considerin' it one of the corplar works of marcy to encourage the narvous coorted him again as hard as she did a twel'-month afore; she coorted him on the rearin' of pigs, an' she coorted him on the breedin' of calves, an' on the feedin' of milch-cows, an' the nourishment of two-year-ould bullocks; she coorted him on the sowin' of corn, on the plantin' of praties, an' on the raisin' of Swede turnips; an' she coorted him on the care an' handlin' of every individual brute baste in a farmer's back yard.

An' right kindly the boy tuk to it: an' afther every fresh conversational coort with Liza Jane, Bab's Andy fell deeper an' deeper in love, till there was little more than the tips of his ears stickin' out.

The next summer Liza Jane aised off, an' Bab's Andy was overtuk by the narvousness once more.

An' this was the way that the coortship of Liza Jane an' Bab's Andy ween—barrin' that he had made up his mind to come to ax her thirty-two times, an' did come to ax her two times, come as far as the back of the house, an' then run for home like the divil.

At the tail-end of four years' coortship Liza Jane begun to be not too pleased with proceedin's. An' fair good reason, too, the poor girl had.

"Mother," says she of a night when both herself an' her mother was sittin' over the kitchen fire, "mother," says Liza Jane, says she, "to tell ye gospel-truth, myself doesn't rightly know what the blatherskite means—for a blatherskite he is, an' it's only a blatherskite would act as he's been actin'. Do ye know what Madgie Morris told me the day afore yestherday? She told me as a dead saicret—an' she herself had it from Ritchie Spiers as a dead saicret—that Bab's Andy come to ax me three times—no less—an' fetched Ritchie with him each of the times; an' every single one of the three times he tuk fright an' run for home like a longshanks. The first time he come—it was October last, was a twel'-month, Madgie sayed—he stood behind the house like a frozen wild-fowl for two mortal hours considerin' whether he'd go in or not, an' he kept poor Ritchie standin' shiverin' there all the time, an' the teeth in his head rattlin' with the cold, like a dhresser of delph; an' at the tail-end of the two hours he went home, tellin' Ritchie he just thought he'd take another night at it an' come early. An' it was May afore he made up his mind again, an' axed Ritchie to come with him. He thraveled 'round the house when he come, an' round the house ten times—just, Ritchie sayed, for all the worl' like Joshua circumventin' Jerryco; an' when he was tired of this exercise, he sayed to Ritchie that the narvousness had overtuk him, an' he'd have to take another new night at it, an' come earlier still. An' when they come again, three months later, Ritchie somehow suddenly missed Andy from his side, just as they were dhrawin' on the house, an' when he lifted his eyes, he only caught a gleel of his white moleskin trousers as he cleared the mearin'-ditch on the hill above, gallopin' for home as if the divil was at his heels. That's Bab's Andy, the blatherskite, for ye, mother—a promis-in' son-in-law!"

"The boy is narvous," says the mother, says she.

"As narvous as a cat," says the daughter, "an' likewise don't know his own mind any more than the man in the moon's. Bad scan to him, for the amadan he is!"

"Arrah, Liza Jane," says the mother, says she, "don't be sore on the poor boy."

"Mother," says Liza Jane, says she, "I have just been considerin' in my own mind, over the whole thing, an' I've come to the conclusion that I must take Bab's Andy in hands—made a spoon or spoil a horn."

"Liza Jane darlin', what do ye mean?" says the mother, says she.

"I mean what I say," says Liza Jane, says she.

"Liza Jane," says the mother, says she, lookin' her hard, "surely it isn't that you mean to ax him?"

"Mother," says she, "there's more ways of invitin' a man to sit down than lowerin' him with a blackthorn—an' you ought to be come to the time of day to know that."

"Surely, that's so," says the mother thinkin'.

"I have let Bab's Andy fool 'round me for long enough," says Liza Jane, "I mean," goes on she, "to have him, once an' for all, make up his mind on this matter whether he wants to make a wife of me or not—I mean that he'll it up, or I'll make it up for him purty quick."

"Brave woman ye are, Liza Jane," says the mother, says she.

"An' on next Sunday night, too, he'll make his decision."

"The jewel ye are, Liza Jane!"

An' when, on the next Sunday night poor Andy, poor sowl, come ploddin' to Liza Jane's it's little he suspected the thraps that was laid down for him to walk into.

There wasn't any one in the kitchen when he lifted the latch an' come into it, but Liza Jane herself. An' he was glad of this—he little suspected the mother was in the room by, with her ear to the key-hole.

"Liza Jane," says he, "how's yer four bones?"

"Bravely then, I thank you," says Liza Jane, says she, as she swep' up a place for him to sit down, an' wiped a chair with her apron, an' saited it for him. "Sit down there, Andy, an' tell me how's the worl' usin' yerself."

"I can't squeal at all, at all," says he, "as times go." Then he looks 'round the kitchen, an' says, "Is there no one here but yerself the night, Liza Jane?"

"There is," says Liza Jane, says she, dhrawin' forrid a sait for herself, forninst Andy; "there is," says she.

"Aren't you here, too?"

"Ha, ha, ha, ha!" says Bab's Andy, says he, laughin' as sthrong as himself well could. "It's you are the dhroll girl. I meant to say," says he, "that your mother an' them is gone, an' left us to ourselves."

"My mother an' them," says she, "went one road an' another, to see the neighbors, an' left me to myself."

"Which," says Bab's Andy, says he, "was noways kindly of them tor'st ye."

"Which," says Liza Jane, says she, calm, an' lookin' steady into the fire, "was very, very good of them."

"Good of them!" says Andy, says he. "Was very, very good of them," says she, "considerin' that they knew I needed a quate hour to myself to discuss in me mind a very serious matter—in fact, I may say an extrahordinary matter."

Bab's Andy he was all taken back, an' the face on him got lengthy at once, an' he says, "Oh! I beg yer pardon, Liza Jane."

"An extrahordinary serious matter, as I was sayin'," she went on, as cool an' calm, "an' one that wants a good deal of deliberation; an' one, moreover, that I'm mortal glad to have ye here, to talk it over with ye."

"Oh!" says Bab's Andy, says he, settlin' himself to hear it, an' lookin' mighty pleased that he was to be consulted.

"An' that I was hopin' in me heart all day ye'd be sure to come the night; that I might talk it over with ye."

"Thanky, thanky, Liza Jane," says he. "For," says she, "it's such a matter that there's only one man in the worl' I could talk it over with—an' that's you."

"I'm proud," says Andy, "I'm proud to know it, Liza Jane."

"A very, very serious matter, as I sayed," says she.

"Exactly," says Bab's Andy, hitchin' forrid, an' rubbin' his hands.

"An' one that'll likely affect all me life, from this time forth," says she, an' waited.

But all Andy says was, "Indeed? Indeed, Liza Jane?"

"For better, for worse," says she, playin' a thrump-card at last, "for richer, for poorer, for good or for ill."

Poor Andy, it seemed like a dhraim to him that he'd heard something like them words somewhere or other afore, but it puzzled him for a minute to mind what it was about. So he give it up,