

**MRS. JONES'S
EVENING PARTY**

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Mrs. Jones's Evening Party by Edmund Routledge

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EDMUND ROUTLEDGE

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BY

EDMUND ROUTLEDGE,
EDITOR OF "EVERY BODY'S MAGAZINE."



WITH NINE ILLUSTRATIONS.

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SYLLABUS.

THE Family Council—Miss Tozer's Letter—The Assembly—Arrival of Jack Plastic—Shakespearian Puzzles—The Bewitched Leg of Pork—The Conjuring Tricks—Nan of Horselydown—The Party at Our School—Emily Tozer's Song—The Woman without a Head—Valentine and Orson, or the Swell and the Rough—Flutter's Fanciful Roll of Riddles—Warble's Bouquet culled from the Poets—Mrs. Jones's Quaint Collection of Queer Epitaphs—The new Drawing-room Burlesque.

MRS. JONES'S EVENING PARTY.

"Now, Jones, we really must, you know—we must give a party. Why, here, haven't we been gadding about to balls and other scenes of festive light, as the poet says, ever since we've been married, and that's five years ago, and yet we have never had a party? Therefore I repeat, Jones, that we must have a party. What's more, I have made up my mind to it, and when once I take a fancy into my head, I always carry it out. You know that, don't you, Jones?"

Thus spoke Mrs. Jones to her husband, as they sat in their snug back parlour at Clapham, one evening, about eight o'clock, towards the end of November. From the foregoing speech the reader may reasonably conclude that Mrs. Jones was a lady not unaccustomed to have her own way: indeed, her husband's answer will be found to confirm that conjecture. Mr. Jones, who had been twice married, was left a widower at the age of forty, with one incumbrance or blessing on his hands in the shape of a boy nine years old. After dragging on a cheerless sort of existence for a few years, he was fortunate enough at last to gain the affections of the fascinating widow Tozer, who happened also to have an incumbrance in the form of a girl, who had arrived at the somewhat mature age, for a spinster, of twenty-five. The courtship was short, incumbrance was weighed against incumbrance, and in less than five years after the first Mrs. Jones had vacated one of the easy-chairs which stood by the parlour fire, the place was better *filled* by Mrs. Jones No. 2, who was in

all respects as different from the former sharer of her husband's affection as one woman could be from another.

The first Mrs. Jones was a very little woman; the second was five feet six, with breadth to correspond. The first Mrs. Jones was a very indifferent household manager, and, as may be surmised, both extravagant and wasteful; to the second helpmate the first line of a German song might aptly be applied,—

Thou art so near, though yet so far;

for she was one of the closest women that ever held the domestic reins, and, consequently, was what is called "a capital manager." For, sooner than have a fresh bottle of wine brought up from the cellar, she went for days without tasting that luxurious beverage, and succeeded in persuading her husband that he was better without it, although the eager manner in which she swallowed a glass at anybody else's house showed that she was not altogether averse to the juice of the grape. Then Mrs. Jones No. 1 was not what most people would call a clever woman—she was only a simple, lovable little creature, who thought her time was better employed in looking after her dear boy, than reading novels or scientific books, very little of which could she understand; whereas Mrs. Jones No. 2 was quite a glutton in her love of reading. Novels she devoured at the rate of a volume a day. Books of biography, of medicine, or treatises on abstruse sciences, all fell alike victims to her insatiate appetite. She studied "obscure diseases of the brain" till she was convinced that everybody in the world was mad but herself; and gloated over "The Origin of Species" till she was persuaded that the only difference between man and a monkey was, that the former had a *Hippocampus* in his brain, and the latter had not. In fact, she was, in the general acceptance of the word, a remarkably well-read woman, and had done all that was needful to justify her

claim to that title except writing a book. It was in consequence of "her very superior mind, her great intellect," Jones gave out, that he married her; and she took him, as she told her friends, because he was a simple, easy-going man, who wanted somebody to look after him. At the time when our chronicle opens, they had been married five years. That period had passed, on the whole, very pleasantly; the chief bickerings that occurred to mar the calmness of the domestic sky were those which took place between Mr. Harry Jones, now aged nineteen, and his stepmother; for Mr. Harry, although somewhat bashful before company (as boys of his age often are), never hesitated to correct his stepmother when she made a mistake in quoting from the poets, or when giving the company the benefit of her scientific knowledge on some occult subject, a habit in which she was often wont to indulge. There was, therefore, not much love lost between Harry and Mrs. Jones, and each disliked and rather feared the other in consequence.

"Well then, Jones, we can have a party, eh?"

Women know well enough that, when they are perfectly certain of having a wish fulfilled, their husbands are all the more pleased if they put that wish in the form of a request.

"Yes, my dear, if you very much desire it," was Jones's reply; "but you see it will lead to a great deal of expense; and although I don't grudge my money, yet I don't like to see it thrown away."

"You are quite right in saying you don't grudge your money, Mr. Jones," replied his wife, somewhat tartly; "it's my idea, and I have constantly told you so, that you do often throw it away. For instance, you are far too liberal to that son of yours;—however, that's neither here nor there. As for me, you know well enough, Jones," continued she, blandly, "that I have never been accused by anybody of extravagance."