

## The Rivals

'Twas three an' thirty year ago,  
When I wuz ruther young, you know,  
I had my last an' only fight  
About a gal one summer night.  
'Twas me an' Zekel Johnson; Zeke  
'N' me'd be'n spattin' 'bout a week;  
Each of us tryin' his best to show  
That he was Liza Joneses beau.  
We couldn't neither prove the thing,  
Fur she wuz fur too sharp to fling  
One over fur the other one  
An' by so doin' stop the fun  
That we chaps didn't hev the sense  
To see she got at our expense,  
But that's the way a feller does,  
Fur boys is fools an' allus wuz.  
An' when they's females in the game

I reckon men's about the same.  
Well, Zeke an' me went on that way  
An' fussed an' quarrelled day by day;  
While Liza, mindin' not the fuss,  
Jest kep' a-goin' with both of us,  
Tell we pore chaps, that's Zeke an' me,  
Wuz jes' plum mad with jealousy.  
Well, fur a time we kep' our places,  
An' only showed by frownin' faces  
An' looks 'at well our meanin' boded  
How full o' fight we both was loaded.  
At last it come, the thing broke out,  
An' this is how it come about.  
One night ('twas fair, you'll all agree),  
I got Eliza's company,  
An' leavin' Zekel in the lurch,  
Went trottin' off with her to church.  
An' jes' as we hed took our seat  
(Eliza lookin' fair an' sweet),

Why, I jest couldn't help but grin  
When Zekel come a-bouncin' in  
As furious as the law allows.  
He'd jest be'n up to Liza's house,  
To find her gone, then come to church  
To have this end put to his search.  
I guess I laffed that meetin' thro'  
An' not a mortal word I knew  
Of what the preacher preached or read  
Er what the choir sung er said.  
Fur every time I'd turn my head  
I couldn't skeercely help but see  
'At Zekel had his eye on me.  
An' he 'ud sort o' turn an' twist  
An' grind his teeth an' shake his fist.  
I laughed, fur la! the hull church seen us,  
An' knowed that suthin' was between us.  
Well, meetin' out, we started hum,  
I sorter feelin' what would come.

We'd jest got out, when up stepped Zeke,

An' said, "Scuse me, I'd like to speak

To you a minute." "Cert," says I—

A-nudgin' Liza on the sly

An' laughin' in my sleeve with glee,

I asked her, please, to pardon me.

We walked away a step er two,

Jest to git out o' Liza's view,

An' then Zeke said, "I want to know

Ef you think you're Eliza's beau,

An' 'at I'm goin' to let her go

Hum with sich a chap as you?"

An' I said bold, "You bet I do."

Then Zekel, sneerin', said 'at he

Didn't want to hender me.

But then he 'lowed the gal wuz his

An' 'at he guessed he knowed his biz,

An' wasn't feared o' all my kin

With all my friends an' chums throwed in.

Some other things he mentioned there

That no born man could no ways bear

Er think o' ca'mly tryin' to stan'

Ef Zeke had be'n the bigges' man

In town, an' not the leanest runt

'At time an' labor ever stunt.

An' so I let my fist go "bim,"

I thought I'd mos' nigh finished him.

But Zekel didn't take it so.

He jest ducked down an' dodged my blow

An' then come back at me so hard,

I guess I must 'a' hurt the yard,

Er spile't the grass plot where I fell,

An' sakes alive it hurt me; well

It wouldn't be'n so bad, you see,

But he jest kep' a-hittin' me.

An' I hit back an' kicked an' pawed,

But 't seemed 'twas mostly air I clawed,

While Zekel used his science well

A-makin' every motion tell.

He punched an' hit, why, goodness lands,

Seemed like he had a dozen hands.

Well, afterwhile they stopped the fuss,

An' someone kindly parted us.

All beat an' cuffed an' clawed an' scratched,

An' needin' both our faces patched,

Each started home a different way;

An' what o' Lizy, do you say,

Why, Liza—little humbug—dern her,

Why, she'd gone home with Hiram Turner.