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St. Peter at the Gate

(By Bert Smiley.)

St. Peter stood guard at the Golden Gate,
With a solemn mien and air sedate,
When up to the top of the golden stair
A man and a woman ascended there,
Applied for admission. They came and stood
Before St. Peter, so great and good,
In hope the City of Peace to win,
And asked St. Peter to let them in.

The woman was tall and lank and thin,
With a scraggy beardlet upon her chin;
The man was short and thick and stout,
His stomach was built so it rounded out;
His face was pleasant and all the while
He wore a kindly and genial smile.
The choirs in the distance the echoes woke,
And the man kept still while the woman spoke.

"Oh, thou who guardest the gate," said she,
"We two come hither beseeching thee
To let us enter the heavenly land,
And play our harps with the heavenly band;
Of me, St. Peter, there is no doubt,
There's nothing from heaven to bar me out.
I've been to meeting three times a week,
And almost always I'd rise and speak;

I've told the sinners about the day
When they'd repent of their evil way;
I've told my neighbors—I've told them all
'Bout Adam and Eve, and the Primal Fall;
I've shown them what they'd have to do
If they'd pass in with the chosen few.
I've marked their path of duty clear,—
Laid out the plan for their whole career;
I've talked and talked to them loud and long,
For my lungs are good and my voice is strong;
So, good St. Peter, you will surely see
The gate of heaven is open to me.
But my old man, I regret to say,
Hasn't walked in exactly the narrow way;

He smokes and he swears and grave faults he's got,
And I don't know whether he'll pass or not.
He never would pray with earnest vim,
Or go to revival, or join a hymn;
So I have to leave him in sorrow there
While I, with the chosen, unite in prayer.
He ate what the pantry chanced to afford,

While I, in my purity, sang to the Lord;
And if cucumbers were all he got
It's a chance if he merited them or not,—
But, Oh, St. Peter, I love him so,
To the pleasures of heaven please let him go.

"I've done enough,—a saint I've been—
Won't that atone? Can't you let him in?
By grim gospel, I know 'tis so
That the unrepentant must fry below,
But isn't there some way that you can see
That he may enter who's dear to me?
It's a narrow gospel which I pray,
But the chosen expect to find some way
Of coaxing or fooling or bribing you,
So that their relations can amble through.
And say, St. Peter, it seems to me
That gate isn't kept as it ought to be;
You ought to stand right by the opening there
And never sit down in that easy chair;
And say, St. Peter, my sight is dimmed,
But I don't like the way your whiskers are trimmed;
They're cut too wide, and outward toss;
They'd look much better, cut straight across.
Well, we must be going our crowns to win,
So open, St. Peter, and we'll pass in."

St. Peter sat quiet and stroked his staff,
But, in spite of his office, he had to laugh;
Then said, with a fiery gleam in his eye:
"Who's tending this gate,—you or I?"
And then he arose in his stature tall,
And pressed a button upon the wall,
And said to the imp that answered the bell:
"Escort this female around to hell."
The man stood still as a piece of stone—
Stood sadly, gloomy, there alone,—
A life long settled idea he had
That his wife was good and he was bad;

He thought that if the woman went down below
That he would certainly have to go—
That if she went to the region dim
There wasn't a ghost of a show for him.
Slowly he turned, by habit bent,
To follow wherever the woman went;
St. Peter, standing on duty there,
Observed that the top of his head was bare;
He called the gentleman back and said:
"Friend, how long have you been wed?"
"Thirty years," (with a weary sigh)—

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