







The Twist-Mouth Family

A Massachusetts Tall Tale

A while back there was a family I know of— a mother, a father, and several children. Four of them had mouths that were twisted into strange shapes. The mother’s mouth twisted up while the father’s mouth twisted down. The sister’s mouth twisted left while the younger brother’s mouth twisted right. The eldest son John’s mouth was perfectly normal.

When John grew up, his parents sent him to college. He was the first person in his family to get a college education, and everyone was eager to hear what he had to say when he came home from his first vacation. Everyone sat up late talking. When it came time to go to bed, the Mother said: “Papa, I cannot find the candle snuffer. Will you blow out the candle in the sitting room?”

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When John grew up, his parents sent him to college. He was the first person in his family to get a college education, and everyone was eager to hear what he had to say when he came home from his first vacation. Everyone sat up late talking. When it came time to go to bed, the Mother said: “Papa, I cannot find the candle snuffer. Will you blow out the candle in the sitting room?”

“Yes I will,” said the Father. He blew as hard as he could. But his mouth was twisted down so that when he blew, the air tickled his chin.

“Well now, Mama, I think you should blow out the candle,” said he.

“Yes I will,” said she. She blew as hard as she could. But

her mouth was twisted up so that when she blew, the air made her hair stand on end.

“You know, Mary,” she said to her daughter, “ I think perhaps you should blow out the candle.”

“Yes I will,” said Mary. She blew as hard as she could. But her mouth twisted to the left, so that when she blew all the air rushed over her cheek.

“Dick, I think tonight you should blow out the candle,” said Mary to her younger brother.

“Yes I will,” said Dick. He took a deep breath and blew as hard as he could. But his mouth was twisted to the right, so that when he blew all the air went into his right ear.

Then Dick said, “John, maybe you should blow out the candle.”

“Yes I will,” said John. He blew as hard as he could. And since his mouth was straight, the candle went right out.

They all cheered. Patting John on the shoulder, the father said to his two younger children: “Well now, I hope you both learned how important it is to get a college education.”