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BAKER'S EDITION
OF PLAYS

BREAKING THE
ENGAGEMENT

Price, 15 Cents



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BOSTON

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No. 5 Hamilton Place, Boston, Massachusetts

Breaking the Engagement

A Farce in One Act

By
W. C. PARKER
Author of "William," etc.

BOSTON
WALTER H. BAKER & CO.

1910

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- 1910

Breaking the Engagement

CHARACTERS

JOHN FIELDING.

BESSIE SMITH.

BINKS, *a bell boy.*



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Breaking the Engagement

SCENE.—*A hotel parlor. Door, R. C.; window, L. C.; table, C.; easy chairs, sofa, etc., to dress stage. Call-bell, pen, ink and note paper and envelopes on table.*

Enter BESSIE SMITH, door R. C.

BESS. (*opening a letter, reads*). “My dear Niece:—You are well aware of my desire that you shall marry my old friend, John Fielding. Upon consulting the calendar, I am reminded that, although you have been engaged for one year, yet you have never met. Fortunately, I find that he has returned from the West at this opportune moment, and have consequently arranged a meeting, at the hotel to which I have summoned you, for three P. M. to-day. I have chosen the hotel parlor in preference to my own home, as an old fellow like me would only be in the way. Remember, that once you are married to John Fielding, bachelor, I will celebrate the occasion by presenting one-half of my fortune to the happy pair.” (*Spoken.*) “Happy pair,” indeed! To think that I must tie myself up to an old “bachelor,” or be left to my own resources! (*Sits; reads.*) “I fear that John has sowed considerable ‘wild oats’ in his time, but let your marriage to him blot out the past.” (*Spoken.*) I am also expected to degenerate into a “blotter.” Well! If this isn’t the limit! Here I am, with the finest rich old uncle in the world, and now he must spoil everything by conjuring up an insane idea of marrying me off to this old fool, just because he happens to be a “friend”! I just won’t do it! That’s all! And yet, no marriage—no fortune. Let’s see. Isn’t there some other way out of this? (*Rises and paces the floor.*) Ah! Supposing the old fool should refuse to have me. Uncle couldn’t blame me! I couldn’t be expected to compel the man to marry me. Very well. I shall be here at three P. M., but I shall make myself appear so old

and so ugly and so disagreeable that this gay old "bachelor" will be only too glad to break the engagement! (*Auto horn heard outside. Goes to window.*) Mercy! There is the fellow who flirted with me at the ball last night! I wonder what brings him here?

Enter JOHN FIELDING, door R. C.

JOHN. Wheough! Dinner over, and I'm so hungry, I could eat—— (*Observes BESS.*) Hello! 'Tis she! (*Bows to BESS.*) Will you pardon me, if——

BESS. Sir! You have the advantage of me!

JOHN. I know that I must seem rather obtrusive, but have you so soon forgotten the yacht club ball?

BESS. Sir! I have forgotten nothing!

[Exit, proudly, door R. C.]

JOHN. Wow! There's a haughty female for you! But she cannot deny that she flirted with me at the ball. Neither can I deny that I fell desperately in love with her at first sight. Well, if she won't hear my declaration, there is nothing for me to do but write it. (*Sits at table and writes.*) "My dear Miss——" Miss what? That won't do. I don't know her name. (*Crumples up paper and throws it on floor. Writes.*) "Dear Friend——" No. That's altogether too presumptuous. (*Crumples up paper and throws it on floor.*) I guess I'll omit the heading. (*Writes and reads.*) "Since you will not listen to me, I am compelled to adopt this means to communicate with you. I am desperately in love with you. My intentions are strictly honorable. Will you make me the happiest man on earth, by sharing my humble lot?" Signed. "You Know Who."

(Folds and places in envelope. Rings table-bell.)

Enter BINKS, door R. C.

BINKS. Call, sir?

JOHN. Here, boy. What's your name?

BINKS. Binks, sir.

JOHN. Well, Binks, here's a quarter. (*Hands money.*) Did you perceive a young lady leaving this room a short time ago?

BINKS. Yes, sir. She went up-stairs.

JOHN. Very well, Blinks. Here's a quarter (*handing money*), and take this note to her as quickly as you can. (*Hands note.*) And, by the way, Kinks, here's a quarter. (*Hands money.*) Now, hurry!

BINKS. Thank you, sir. (*Bows and exit, door R. C.*)

JOHN. Now, if she's got any sporting blood at all, that ought to fetch an answer. (*Enter BINKS, door R. C.* JOHN, *cagerly.*) Did you find her?

BINKS. Yes, sir. Here's an answer. An' here's a letter left at the office. (*Hands letters.*)

JOHN. Very well, Winks, that is all. (*BINKS going.*) By the way, Jinks, here's a quarter. (*Hands money.*)

BINKS. Thank you, sir. (*Bows and exit, door R. C.*)

JOHN (*opening note, reads*). "Mr. 'You Know Who':—Your note received, asking me to share your 'humble lot.' I dislike the idea of camping out. Hustle around and get a comfortable house on the 'lot,' and I'll see what I can do in the way of boosting your happiness." (*Spoken.*) Ha, ha, ha! By Jove! She's a humorist! She's all right! I must get the landlord to give us a formal introduction, and the rest will be easy. (*Notices other letter.*) This must be from Smith. Probably been delayed. (*Opens letter; reads.*) "Friend John:—In writing you to meet me to-day, I resorted to a pardonable deception, which I do not doubt you will freely excuse when you ascertain my motive. You are well aware of my desire that you shall marry my niece, whom, unfortunately, you have never met. I am getting along in years and want to see this match consummated before anything happens to me. Consequently, I have arranged for her to meet you in the hotel parlor to-day at three P. M., and have also conveyed the information that my sanction of your marriage to Bessie Smith, spinster, will include a gift of one-half of my fortune. So make yourself agreeable, my boy, and my best wishes go with you." (*Spoken.*) One-half his fortune? Wheough! And he's a millionaire! This is a deuced awkward predicament. Here I've just fallen head over heels in love with a fair unknown, and now my only benefactor insists that I shall marry "Bessie Smith, spinster." That word "spinster" doesn't appeal to me. It suggests false teeth, and switches, and braids, and gingham aprons, and—I supposed he had forgotten all about this absurd engagement. Now, the question is how to break the engagement, without offending the old man. The only way I can see is to make her refuse to have me. Ah! I have it!

Me to a costumer's and a wig and whiskers for mine! (*Looks at watch.*) By Jove! It is now ten minutes of three! I must hurry! (*Rings bell.*) Heh! Dinks!

Enter BINKS, door R. C.

BINKS. Call, sir?

JOHN. See here, Hinks. My name is John Fielding. A lady is to meet me here at three P. M. When she comes, tell her I've been delayed and ask her to kindly wait for me. See?

BINKS. Yes, sir.

JOHN. And, by the way, Jinks, here's a quarter.

(Hands money and exit, hastily, door R. C.)

BINKS. Between you an' me an' de gate post, I think that feller's a little off, but 'tain't none of my funeral, so long as he keeps comin' across with the quarters. (*Enter BESS., door R. C., and sits on sofa. She has arranged her hair in an old-fashioned manner, powdered her face profusely, and wears an old bonnet, a faded shawl and old black skirt. She has also painted a number of her teeth black to make her appear nearly toothless.*) Excuse me, ma'am, but are you to meet a man named John Fielding?

BESS. Yes.

BINKS. Well, he has been delayed and wants you to wait for him. [*Exit, door R. C., laughing at BESS.'s appearance.*]

BESS. (*to BINKS.*) Very well. (*Alone.*) This is certainly disgusting. I suppose the old fool is so certain of his conquest, that he doesn't even feel obliged to keep his appointment promptly. Very well. Perhaps he won't be so cock sure at the conclusion of our little interview. (*Crosses to left of table and sits in armchair.*) I'll make him hate the very sight of me.

Enter JOHN, door R. C.

JOHN (*wearing bald gray wig and long whiskers, old-fashioned coat and slouch hat. Imitates the speech of an old man.*) Are you Miss Smith?

BESS. (*imitating speech of an old maid.*) Yes. I reckon I am. (*Aside.*) Worse than I expected. Uncle certainly had a nerve to expect me to marry an old fool like him.

JOHN (*aside*). No use. Money couldn't influence me to marry a freak like her. She looks like a dramatization of "Old Dutch Cleanser." (*To BESS.*) Ahem!

BESS. Ahem! (*Aside.*) Now for the fireworks.

JOHN. I suppose you are aware of the meaning of this—er—interview?

BESS. Yes. Fully aware, but I want you to distinctly understand that I ain't a-goin' to give up my tabby cat, nor my parrot, nor my pet pig. Where I go, they goes. By the way, ain't you pretty old to marry? (*Giggles.*) Te-he-he!

JOHN. Oh, I don't know. (*Aside.*) Age doesn't always bring wisdom.

BESS. I must also warn you that I'm a Suffragette.

JOHN (*aside*). That's pleasant.

BESS. I'm in favor of enlarging the sphere of women.

JOHN. Can't be done.

BESS. Why not?

JOHN. Because there's no way the earth can be stretched.

BESS. Oh, well! Things are not always what their names would imply.

JOHN. That's right. A poker chip, for instance, isn't necessarily a chip off a poker.

BESS. I hope you don't play cards.

JOHN. Well, I'll have to admit that fault.

BESS. Well, you'll just have to stop it. Do you smoke?

JOHN. Of course I do. I generally go to sleep with a cigar in my mouth.

BESS. Well, if you marry me, you'll have to give up smoking. Will you do it for my sake?

JOHN. Yes. If I marry you, I'll give up smoking for your sake. (*Aside.*) Thereafter, I'll smoke exclusively for my own sake.

BESS. It would hurt my feelings, if you deceived me. You know women feel where men think.

JOHN (*aside*). That must be why most married men are bald.

BESS. And, even so, women do just as much thinking as men.

JOHN. Possibly. (*Aside.*) But they spoil their thoughts by diluting them with words.

BESS. Why, I write a magazine article every week, even if they never are accepted.

JOHN. You should write something on vaccination.

BESS. Vaccination?

JOHN. Yes. It might *take*.

BESS. Just the same the "pen is mightier than the sword."

JOHN. Of course it is. We could hardly expect your uncle to sign a check with a sword.

BESS. (*aside*). Now, I'll sicken him. (*To JOHN.*) Don't you think I would be quite affectionate?

JOHN. Well, I notice you were careful to take a chair with arms to it.

BESS. (*giggling*). Te-he! Te-he! I was just thinking of the old-time sociables, when the ladies used to flirt with their fans, and —

JOHN. Flirt with their fans? What was the matter? Weren't there any men around?

BESS. I was engaged once before.

JOHN (*aside*). Long, long ago. (*To BESS.*) Why did you break your engagement?

BESS. I asked him to guess my age, and he did. (*Aside.*) That ought to settle him.

JOHN (*laughing*). Ha, ha, ha, ha! Poor fellow! And what did he say to that?

BESS. Oh, he went off and committed suicide. Say! Do you believe that suicide is a sin?

JOHN. That depends. (*Aside.*) It was certainly justifiable in her case.

BESS. Te-he! Te-he! Do you really love me an awful lot?

JOHN (*confused*). Oh, yes. Of course.

BESS. Do you love me enough to die for me?

JOHN. Well hardly. My love is of the "undying" kind.

BESS. Do you know, I sometimes think you wish our engagement had never been made?

JOHN (*aside*). She's a good guesser, all right.

BESS. Perhaps you would like to break it?

JOHN (*hesitatingly*). Well—now that you mention it—that is—if you didn't object —

BESS. I must confess I am not at all anxious to sacrifice my freedom.

JOHN. Very well—since you insist —

BESS. But my uncle—his money?

JOHN. Yes. There's the "rub."

BESS. Then it's the money you're after?

JOHN. You must admit the necessity for some incentive.

BESS. Just like a man—and rather humiliating to me—but—since it's only the money you are after, I think I can see a way out of it.

JOHN (*eagerly*). How?

BESS. Uncle insists that we must marry to get his fortune, but he says nothing about our living together.

JOHN. By Jove! That's so!

BESS. If we should divide the money, there would still be enough for each.

JOHN. You certainly are a wonder!

BESS. You could abandon me, for instance.

JOHN. And you could obtain a divorce.

BESS. You might put it in writing.

JOHN. What?

BESS. Say that you would never expect nor require me to live with you.

JOHN (*suspiciously*). Is this on the level?

BESS. It certainly is.

JOHN. By Jove! I'll do it!

(*Writes and hands paper to BESS.*)

BESS. (*reading*). "I, John Fielding, being in full possession of all my senses, do hereby agree that after my marriage to Miss Bessie Smith, I shall neither ask nor require her to live with me." Signed. "John Fielding." (*Spoken.*) Good! It's a bargain! There's my hand! (*Shakes hands with JOHN. Speaks in natural voice.*) Now that there is no further necessity for subterfuge, I may as well remove these togs.

(*Removes bonnet and shawl, and brushes black from teeth.*)

JOHN (*astonished*). Great Jehoshaphat! 'Tis she! (*Removes wig and beard. Speaks in natural voice.*) Look! Don't you know me?

BESS. (*astonished*). How dare you masquerade in that manner? (*In her excitement drops the agreement.*)

JOHN (*hastily picking up the agreement*). Why—I——

BESS. Give me that paper, please!

JOHN. Oh, no. I've changed my mind.

(*Tears up paper.*)

BESS. I think you are just hateful, and I'm never going to

speak to you again ; so there's no use of your coming into the lobby after me, because I'll be in the bay-window at the far end of the conservatory. So there, now !

JOHN (*waving his arms*). Hurray ! She's going to be mine ! Hurray ! Hurray !

[*Exit hastily, door R. C.*

[*Exit after BESS.*

QUICK CURTAIN

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A College Comedy in Four Acts

By Norman Lee Swartout

Ten males, four females. Costumes modern; scenery, two easy interiors. Plays a full evening. A first-class piece for college production by the author of "Half-Back Sandy," the story turning upon the event of the annual boat-race. All parts good; strongly recommended. Can be played only by payment of a royalty of \$10.00 to the author.

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CHARACTERS

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MR. BROOKS, <i>his father.</i>	BILL CARTER.
LORD CHILLINGWORTH.	PROFESSOR DIXON.
PETER, <i>his valet.</i>	MRS. BROOKS, <i>Henry's mother.</i>
GUY MARKS, I. D.	HELEN BALDWIN.
CALEB WESTON.	BAB.
NED ANDREWS.	AMY, <i>the Professor's daughter.</i>

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT I.—Parlor in Henry's home at Redville, on New Year's night.

ACT II.—Curiosity room in Delta Sigma Fraternity House. A morning in June.

ACT III.—Same as Act II. Afternoon.

ACT IV.—Same as Act II. Evening.

THE POETS' CLUB

By M. N. Beebe

Eleven male characters. One act. Scenery unimportant; costumes modern. Plays thirty-five minutes. A capital farce for boys, easy and effective. Characters include an Irishman, a Swede, a pugilist, a tramp, a negro, a farmer and a "willy-boy." Strongly recommended.

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Six males, three females. Costumes modern; scenery, two interiors, or can be played in one. Plays two hours and a half. A side-splitting piece, full of action and a sure success if competently acted. Tom Carter's little joke of impersonating the colored butler has unexpected consequences that give him "the time of his life." Very highly recommended for High School performance.

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MRS. BOB GREY.

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MR. PETER WYCOMBE, a "pessimist" with a digestion.

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MR. JAMES LANDON, SR., *Dorothy's father; of a peppery disposition.*

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OFFICER HOGAN, *of the Twenty-Second Street Police Station.*

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Four males, four females. Costumes modern; scene, an interior. Plays thirty minutes. A clever parlor play, similar in idea to the popular "Obstinate Family." Sure to please.

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Two males, three females. Costumes modern; scene, an interior. Plays twenty minutes. An easy piece of strong dramatic interest, originally produced in Vaudeville by Christy Clifford. Free to amateurs; royalty required for professional performance.

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Author of "Valley Farm," "Willowdale," "The Country Minister,"
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Six males, five females. Costumes modern; scenes an interior and an exterior, or can be played in two interiors. Plays two hours or more. An excellent comedy-drama, combining a strongly sympathetic dramatic interest with an unusual abundance of genuine and unforced comedy. The parts are unusually equal in point of interest and opportunity, are genuine types of rural character, truly and vigorously drawn and easily actable. No dialect parts, but plenty of variety in the comedy rôles and lots of amusing incident. An exceptionally entertaining piece, full of movement and action, and without a dull moment. Can be strongly recommended.

Price 25 cents

CHARACTERS

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JAMES B. GRAHAM, *a commercial traveller.*

REV. MR. FLICK, *the village parson.*

HOSEA CLEGG, *who belongs to the G. A. R.*

SAM ALCOTT, *who has a more than better half.*

TAD, *just a boy.*

SYLVIA LENNOX, *the village school-ma'am.*

IDA MAY ALCOTT, *who has had advantages.*

MRS. ALCOTT, *her proud mamma—somewhat forgetful.*

ELVIRA PRATT, *a dressmaker.*

POSIE, *who was born tired.*

SYNOPSIS

ACT I.—In front of the store and post-office on a morning in August.

ACT II.—Same as Act I, the middle of the same afternoon. If more convenient, these two acts may be played as an interior scene with very few changes of "business" and dialogue, the stage being set in that case as the inside of the store, with counter, post-office boxes, etc.

ACT III.—The home of the Alcotts, three days later.

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Three males, one female. Scene, an interior; costumes modern. Plays twenty minutes. A sketch of compelling dramatic interest by the author of "The Elopement of Ellen." A serious piece of high class that can be recommended.

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WARD LEIGHTON, <i>lieutenant of the 176th Regiment.</i>	BRIDGET, <i>the cook.</i>
MIKE McSHANE, <i>driver of a milk-cart.</i>	JOSIE RILEY, } <i>housemaids.</i>
JIMMY MACRAE, <i>page at Mr. Mason's.</i>	EMMA HONE, }
	MARY MACRAE, <i>Jimmy's sister.</i>
	TIMOTHY ROUKE, <i>house painter.</i>
	WILLIAM, <i>butler at Mr. Mason's.</i>

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Seventeen males. Costumes eccentric; scenery unnecessary. Plays ten minutes. A burlesque initiation in one act, especially adapted for a Grange entertainment. Very simple, very clean and wholly lacking in horse-play and acrobatics. Well suited for its purpose.

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RICHARD STANLEY, *a lawyer.*

JOSEPH PARKER, *a clerk.*

MORRIS YOUNG, *a medical student.*

STEVE, *the farm boy. Friendly, but not loquacious.*

MABEL PARKINS, *frivolous and dressy; engaged to Richard.*

ESTHER CARROLL, *botanical and birdy; engaged to Joseph.*

GRACE CHESTER, *just girl; engaged to Morris.*

MRS. DODGE, *who takes boarders.*

MAXIMILIAN HUNNEWELL GADSBY, *a butterfly.*

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Two males, four females. Costumes modern; scene, an easy interior. Plays thirty-five minutes. A clever piece of high class, admirably written and suited to the best taste. A pretty little love story, wholesome and un-sentimental in tone. Well recommended.

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Three males, one female. Costumes modern; scene, an interior. Plays twenty minutes. An easy piece of strong dramatic interest, originally produced in Vaudeville by Julius Steger. Free to amateurs; royalty required for professional performance.

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Seven males, five females. Costumes modern; scenery, three interiors. Plays two hours and a half. Written expressly for school and college performance, and strongly recommended for this purpose. Easy to stage, all the parts good, plot of strong and sympathetic interest, lots of good and characteristic incident—in short, just what is asked for for this purpose. A sure success.

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DICK ADAMS		FRANCES WING.
HENRY CARTER	} <i>Juniors.</i>	ELEANOR BRADFORD, <i>Tom's aunt.</i>
PHIL PATTEN		SALLY PRENTISS.
GEORGE ROPES		A MAID.
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A Baseball Comedy in Two Acts

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Six males, one female. Costumes modern; scenery, two interiors. Plays an hour and a quarter. Originally produced by The Mask and Bauble Society of The University of Illinois, and highly recommended for similar uses. Very easy to produce, all the parts of nearly equal opportunity, dramatic interest unusually strong; an unusually well written piece with excellent character drawing. Can be relied upon to please. Royalty of \$5.00 for each performance payable to the author.

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CHARACTERS

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SWEET LAVENDER Comedy in Three Acts. Seven males, four females. Scene, a single interior; costumes, modern. Plays a full evening.

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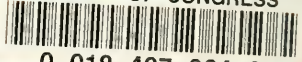
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