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1897







“Not Worth a Continental.”

A COMEDY OF THE REVOLUTION,

In Two Acts.

BY

ALICE WIGHT ALDEN.

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## “NOT WORTH A CONTINENTAL.”

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PLACE: A country house near New York.

TIME: The Autumn of 1776.

### CHARACTERS.

MISTRESS UNDERWOOD.

DOLLY, *her daughter.*

KITTY FORSYTH, *Dolly's friend.*

TEMPERANCE, *an old family servant.*

FRANCIS PENNINGTON, *a Continental officer, engaged to Dolly.*

HENRY WYNN, *a young patriot, in love with Kitty.*

MR. FARQUHAR, *a Tory, travelling upon secret business.*

SCENE: A sitting-room with Colonial furniture, tall clock, old china and family portraits. Doors right and left, window and door at back, fireplace with mirror over mantel right, sofa near centre back, table, chairs, spinning-wheel or embroidery frame.

*Time of representation, fifty minutes.*

# “NOT WORTH A CONTINENTAL.”

## ACT I.

TEMPERANCE. (*Enters B. with brush and duster, and with many groans gets down on her knees to brush the hearth.*) I never thought it would come to my old bones to get down on the hearth. Oh, that saucy chit Sally! I would have made her ears tingle had not Mistress been there! She to say that her mother would not allow her to stay in a disaffected household in these troublous times! (*Gets up.*) They would sing another tune, I warrant me, if the red-coats were to march away. Then they would be glad enough to creep back under our roof, and shout, “Hurrah for the Continental Congress!”—before our soldiers come back with Mr. Francis Pennington at the head of his company. (*Rubbing table vigorously.*) Look at that scratch on Mistress’s fine card-table that came from England! Don’t I know how it came there! I mind well the day when that rantipole Colonel called me to bring him some mulled ale, and I saw him with his spurred heels upon the table. ’Twas in my heart to throw the can of ale at his head, but that Mistress had bidden me be civil to the red-coats. (*As she is dusting she drops a little mirror on the floor and groans dismally.*)

DOLLY. (*Enters B. with her hands full of autumn leaves and flowers.*) What’s the matter, Tempy?

TEMPY. It’s no laughing matter, Mistress Dolly—here is your little mirror in pieces. That means bad luck before midnight this day.

DOLLY. (*Laughing.*) Or before midnight some other day. I have little faith in your omens, Tempy. (*Arranges flowers in vase.*)

TEMPY. (*Earnestly.*) Indeed and indeed, Mistress Dolly, you should not scoff at the signs. Mind you not how I stumbled with my left foot last Wednesday sennight, and that very day ’Squire Martin’s barn burned to the ground, and—

DOLLY. Yes ; but, Tempy, I thought that sign meant bad luck to the one who makes it. Now how could the burning of 'Squire Martin's barn do aught of harm to you ?

TEMPY. Harm to me, Mistress Dolly ! Why plain enough. Did not the men with the fire-buckets run by the house making a great shout, and did not I run out to see the cause of the stir, and did not my spice-cake burn in my oven, and did not I try to save it and scorch a great hole in my new print apron ? I tell you, Mistress Dolly, it is not safe to fly in the face of Providence !

DOLLY. I am afraid you are upset because Sally left us this morning.

TEMPY. The little hussy ! I know what she is doing this minute, chattering nonsense over the fence with those worthless red-coats. Don't I wish she may get one for a husband !

DOLLY. (*Laughing.*) That would indeed be a punishment. (*Puts vase on mantel and begins to dust.*) Let me help you.

TEMPY. Now, Mistress Dolly, you let that alone. I am not yet so old and feeble that you need to take my work out of my hands. If I do it not to your liking, you can send me away.

DOLLY. Well, well, Tempy, be not cross with me. You know well we could not live in comfort without you. (*Tempy, pacified, places wheel for her.*) Indeed, it seems almost wrong that we should live in so much comfort when our Army suffers such privations. But what can we do ?

TEMPY. Sure, Mistress Dolly, we keep scarce a thing to eat in the house when it is possible to send it to our men, and you and Mistress are ever busy with your spinning and knitting.

DOLLY. 'Tis the least we women can do when our brave soldiers are fighting for our country. (*Spins.*)

TEMPY. (*Brushes up pieces of glass, shaking her head and muttering.*) 'Tis a bad sign, a very bad sign. Some misfortune is sure coming upon us.

DOLLY. Sometimes your signs fail, Tempy. Do you remember last spring when you said your right hand itched and that meant company ? Well, the guests came not, neither that day nor the next, nor the next, nor for many days.

TEMPY. (*Looks puzzled and goes to work again vigorously, suddenly her face brightens.*) But when they did come, Mistress Dolly, what guests they were ! A lot of swearing, drinking, gobbling red-coats, tracking dirt over my clean floors, and leaving their rubbish all about the house, and driving our own men away from our own stable. No sign could be bad enough for them !



DOLLY. (*Sighing.*) Truly, Tempy, they were unwelcome guests. (*Pause.*) But another time you put on your mantle wrong side out, when you were getting ready for church, and would not change it for fear of changing good luck into bad. Do you not remember how the small boys jeered at you for the yellow patches in the green lining, and how you fled from them in such haste that you fell down the steps and tore your gown and hurt yourself? Would it not have been better to have changed your mantle?

TEMPY. (*Very earnestly.*) Mistress Dolly, if I had changed that mantle to the right side out I would have broken all my bones when I fell.

DOLLY. (*Laughing.*) I see you are hopeless, Tempy.

TEMPY. Don't you laugh at me until the day is over, Mistress Dolly. Remember, this is your mirror. (*Holding up pieces.*)

DOLLY. You must not be gloomy to-day, for I am too happy. What do you think is coming to pass this evening?

TEMPY. (*Dolefully.*) Goodness only knows, Mistress Dolly.

DOLLY. Nonsense, Tempy! Be cheerful. I have a secret to tell you, but I care not to tell my good news to such a dismal face. What would you say to seeing Mr. Pennington here?

TEMPY. Mr. Francis coming! Ah, it is not for nothing that I heard the cock crow on the doorstep this morning, and have dropped my dish-cloth so many times to-day! (*Coming closer and whispering.*) Scorn not the signs, Mistress Dolly, remember that was *your* mirror.

(*The door opens B. and Kitty runs in waving a letter, Dolly rises; Tempy moves wheel and goes out B.*)

KITTY. Such news, Dolly dear! Here is a letter from Henry Wynn, and he says he will be here to-night.

DOLLY. Henry Wynn coming here! I thought him shut up in prison by the British on suspicion of treasonable practices. Did you not tell me so?

KITTY. 'Twas so he wrote me not long since, but now it seems that they have released him.

DOLLY. (*Laughing.*) Truly I think his last journey hither could not do serious harm to the King's cause, for you, Kitty, seem not a very dangerous foe to the British.

KITTY. 'Tis not for want of will, Dolly. But listen to his letter. (*Reads.*)

"Sweet Mistress Kitty, this hurried scrawl is to inform you that I expect to be in your neighborhood right soon, and shall take what opportunity offers to see you. So be warned, let me not find you trifling with fresh adorers, for the new loves must be off when the old one returns"—

Vastly pretty, upon my word? Ah, Master Henry, you shall pay for this!—"I leave town disguised as a loyal servant of King George, secretary to a Tory gentleman travelling secretly upon the King's business. We lie Friday night at Mistress Underwood's, and I depend upon Mistress Dolly to get me speech with you. Thine more truly than mine own, Henry Wynn."

DOLLY. Friday! Does he say Friday?

KITTY. Yes, to-night. The letter has been long in the road.

DOLLY. Oh, Kitty, what shall I do? Francis is coming here to see me to-night.

KITTY. Captain Pennington here! A Continental officer within the lines of the enemy!

DOLLY. (*Sitting at table.*) But we have not seen each other for so long!

KITTY. Nearly five months! And this is love! It makes five months seem an eternity and induces a man to risk his life! Deliver me from love!

DOLLY. Kitty, you pretend to be hardhearted, but you are not, really. Suppose Henry's life were in danger?

KITTY. Mr. Wynn's heart will never lead him out of the safe and comfortable path of flirting with the nearest pretty maid.

DOLLY. You do him injustice. Francis has a high opinion of him.

KITTY. Oh, he has his virtues. But tell me, Dolly, how comes Captain Pennington here? Has he not been in Philadelphia in attendance upon the Congress?

DOLLY. He is sent upon business of importance to the camp across the river. I had this billet yesterday by the hand of an old fisherman. The neighborhood being quiet, he writes he will venture upon a visit.

KITTY. True, the soldiers are not very near, and seldom come on this side the village.

DOLLY. But to-night there will be an enemy in the house.

KITTY. You must send at once to warn Captain Pennington.

DOLLY. I know not the road he will come, and 'twould but increase the risk of betrayal to make an unwonted stir about the place.

KITTY. Then what can we do?

DOLLY. Francis will not come to the house until after dark. If these men from New York have not arrived he will be warned in time, and can return with all speed.

KITTY. But if they are in the house when he comes?

DOLLY. Some one must watch at the pasture gate and prevent his entrance. He will come that way.

KITTY. You will see him, Dolly?

DOLLY. Yes, I will see him—I must see him. (*Mrs. Underwood enters R. with a letter in her hand. Dolly aside to Kitty.*) Not a word of this to my mother.

MISTRESS UNDERWOOD. Good evening, Kitty dear. (*Kitty curtsies, Dolly places chair.*) Dolly, hear this letter which I have just received by the hand of a British soldier.

DOLLY. (*Starting.*) A soldier? Oh, Kitty!

MRS. UNDERWOOD. (*Reads.*) “Mistress Underwood, I and my secretary, with two servants, will do you the honor of lodging with you this night, the inn in your village being occupied by our troops to such an extent that a gentleman can not obtain entertainment therein. I purpose arriving about seven of the clock, and beg that you will make your preparations accordingly. G. Farquhar.”

KITTY. Dear Mistress Underwood, why have they chosen you to be thus afflicted?

MRS. UNDERWOOD. Once last spring the Colonel and other officers of one of the neighboring regiments lodged with us when the inn was full. They forced their company upon us; we desired it not.

KITTY. They paid for it, did they not?

MISTRESS UNDERWOOD. Paid for it! Yes, they made promises of a sufficient sum, but on their departure withheld it, in payment for a horse which they left on our hands. It was sick forsooth, it had been over-fed with our oats.

KITTY. Mistress Underwood, here is a letter I have received from Mr. Henry Wynn. (*Giving letter.*) I pray you excuse the personal matters therein—he is but a foolish youth.

(*While Mistress Underwood reads, the girls speak apart.*)

DOLLY. Tarry with me to-night, will you not, Kitty? Two heads are better than one in this strait.

KITTY. Gladly, dearest Dolly—to confess the truth I came with that intent, and have left my small belongings in your room.

DOLLY. 'Tis for pure friendship, is it not, Kitty? And has nothing to do with Mr. Henry Wynn's presence in the house? (*Tempy enters hurriedly L.*)

TEMPY. Please you, Mistress, there be two gentlemen dismounting at the door.

MRS. UNDERWOOD. They are on the King's business, Temperance, and will lodge with us to-night. Make ready the guest-room for the older gentleman, and put his secretary in the little chamber above stairs. (*Gives her a bunch of keys.*)

DOLLY. Be civil to their servants, Tempy, and keep them in a pleasant humour. Fly not at them with your rolling-pin to keep them out of your kitchen, as you served the Colonel's man.

KITTY. And, dear Tempy, if you imagine one of these King's gentlemen to be Mr. Henry Wynn, say nothing if you love me.

TEMPY. (*Goes out L. muttering.*) I like not these King's men, whether they wear red coats or black coats.

MISTRESS UNDERWOOD. It is scarcely necessary to say to patriotic gentlewomen that this person is to be treated with distant courtesy while under our roof. Kitty, try to remember that an enemy is not a suitable subject upon whom to practice your facinations.

(*Tempy enters L. ushering in Farquhar, followed by Henry. Mrs. Underwood and the girls curtsy, the gentlemen bow low, Farquhar in such an exaggerated way that Henry has time to kiss his hand to Kitty before Farquhar raises his head.*)

FARQUHAR. Mistress Underwood, and you, fair Mistress Dolly, I have heard to-day from my friend Colonel Jenkins of your hospitality, and I am pleased to have the opportunity of enjoying its benefits in my own person.

MRS. UNDERWOOD. We crave not your company, sir, but since you are here, you shall have of our best.

FARQUHAR. Let me hope, Madam, that that "best" includes the best of all, the company of yourself (*bows*), and of your fair daughter (*bows*), and of her sprightly friend (*turning to bow to Kitty, catches her kissing her hand to Henry*).

MRS. UNDERWOOD. Sir, it is not yet necessary for us to break bread with the oppressors of our country. You shall be served when you so desire, but in your own apartment.

FARQUHAR. You are cruel, Madam. In the presence of Beauty, War and Politics are forgot. Let me hope that when I have removed the stains of travel and am suitably apparelled, I may have the honor I covet. (*Bows to each and leaves the room L. followed by Tempy, who during the preceding dialogue has shown her dislike by face and gesture. Dolly gives her arm to her mother and they go out B. Henry and Kitty left alone, run toward each other, but before they meet, Farquhar reappears at the door L.*)

FARQUHAR. Mr. Brown, I have need of your services. Pray attend me. (*Henry L. and Kitty B. go out and bang the doors. Farquhar remains.*)

FARQUHAR. (*Alone, looking about the room.*) Truly this is better than the village inn, where I should have poorly

cooked food and an indifferent bed ; and for company this evening the society of two or three of our officers who have served so long on this side the ocean that their manners are become almost provincial. What associates for one who has his coats and his conversation from London, although having the misfortune to be born in the Colonies ! (*Looks at portraits.*) Evidently a genteel family, although the present representatives are somewhat rustic. What a diversion the society of a man of fashion will be to them !

(*Enter Tempy L. She watches Farquhar closely as he examines ornaments, etc., and she puts a number of small articles in her pocket. He turns and sees her.*)

FARQUHAR. I need nothing at present. You may serve supper as soon as it is prepared. (*Turns away.*)

TEMPY. This is my Mistress's room.

FARQUHAR. Indeed ! You may serve my supper at this table. (*Sitting at table.*)

TEMPY. Not one bite of supper do you get in this room ! It is bad enough for my poor Mistress to have you in the house, let alone having you all over it. Your supper will be served in half an hour in that room. (*Points off stage, L.*)

FARQUHAR. (*Rising slowly.*) On second thoughts, 'twill be more convenient to eat within my own apartment. (*Goes out L. with dignity, while Tempy shakes her fist behind him. Left alone, she puts the room in order, replacing the things she had taken, scolding vehemently to herself and occasionally saying aloud such words as* — Impudence ! — Wretch ! — Miserable spy ! — *me to serve his supper ! — hope it may choke him ! —* (*pushes her spectacles up on her forehead in her excitement and after awhile begins to look for them. Dolly enters B. when she is looking under the sofa.*)

DOLLY. Tempy—why Tempy, what are you doing ?

TEMPY. (*On her knees.*) Looking for my spectacles.

DOLLY. Why, there they are.

TEMPY. (*Rising stiffly.*) Mistress Dolly, I am that upset by all this worry that I am like to lose my head. (*Groans.*) What did I tell you about misfortune ?

DOLLY. Never mind that now. We have enough to think about. I want you to find Mr. Wynn and tell him privately to come in here.

TEMPY. He is in there with that dressed-up monkey.

DOLLY. You can tell him when you go in to lay the table.

TEMPY. *Me* wait on them ?

DOLLY. There is no one else who can speak to Mr. Wynn, and we must see him to tell him about Captain Pennington.

TEMPY. Very well, Mistress Dolly, I will tell him Mistress Kitty Forsyth wants to speak with him. (*Goes out L.*)

DOLLY. Be careful, Tempy. Now 'tis my first watch. (*Goes out R.*) (*Enter Kitty B., who goes to mirror, takes off bonnet, etc. Henry enters, L. and Kitty kisses her hand to him in the mirror.*)

HENRY. At last, dearest Kitty, I have escaped the exactions of that popinjay, and can follow whither my heart has long since flown. (*Kisses her hand.*)

KITTY. (*Withdrawing her hand.*) Popinjay, indeed! I consider Mr. Farquhar a very personable man.

HENRY. Now Kitty, do you think it fair, when I have carried your image in my heart for all these months, for your first words to me to be a compliment to some other man?

KITTY. My image! I am afraid your heart is like a mirror, and reflects the image of the nearest.

HENRY. I swear to you, Kitty, by your own bright eyes and rosy lips, that no other—

KITTY. Aha, Master Henry, that "bright eyes and rosy lips" comes too trippingly from your tongue to be the inspiration of the moment! Confess now, you have practised that pretty speech upon the susceptible maidens of New York?

HENRY. (*Looks guilty.*) And you, Kitty, upon what wretched swains have you practised your tortures, to keep your tongue whetted to such a point for me?

KITTY. I would have you know, Mr. Wynn, that I have met several very agreeable gentlemen in the past few months, and I have heard no such words as "tortures" and "sharp tongues." (*Sits.*)

HENRY. I will warrant me you have not! But they will come in time, when your agreeable friends know you as well as I do. But come, Kitty, a truce to this skirmishing. Think you that my time is short and my absence long, and say you are a little glad to see me.

KITTY. (*Turning away.*) A good patriot is ever a welcome sight in these evil days, although travelling in bad company.

HENRY. So the personable Mr. Farquhar is bad company! I thank you, Kitty! Had you not my letter about this journey?

KITTY. I had—and that reminds me that I must tell you about dear Dolly and Mr. Pennington.

(*Henry takes a chair near her, she moves away and then to sofa.*)

HENRY. Kitty, I positively will not be able to hear one word if you sit so far away from me.

KITTY. Very well then! Sit where you please, if you will conduct yourself in a seemly manner. (*Henry sits on extreme end of sofa.*)

KITTY. Henry, you know Mr. Pennington is betrothed to Dolly, and he is coming here to-night to see her.

HENRY. Coming here to-night! What rashness!

KITTY. But they have not seen each other for a long time, nearly five months.

HENRY. Would you think that a long time if you were engaged to a man?

KITTY. I might—if he were very agreeable. But no one would run that risk to see me.

HENRY. Kitty, you know well there is one who would do anything for your favor.

KITTY. I know one who talks of my sharp tongue—

HENRY. It could be sweet if it chose.

KITTY. And other people's rosy lips—

*(By this time Henry is not at the end of the sofa, but as the obvious reply to this last remark occurs to him, the doors open and Farquhar L. and Tempy R. enter from different sides.)*

CURTAIN.

## ACT II.

(*Same scene, two hours later. Enter Mrs. Underwood and Dolly.*)

DOLLY. Such presumption! Does this man think himself irresistible—does he not see how distasteful are his compliments and attentions? I could scarce keep my temper at his insolence.

MRS. UNDERWOOD. (*Sitting and taking her knitting.*) You show your feeling too plainly, my daughter. Some courtesy is surely due to one under our roof, although an unbidden guest and an enemy.

DOLLY. (*At her wheel.*) But such an enemy! I could easier suffer one come out from England, who thinks he does but his duty to his King in obeying the orders of the tyrant. But one of these Tories! Who desert the cause of Liberty and kiss the hand that oppresses them, who betray their brethren and do in secret work which can not bear the light! Mother, do not ask my complaisance for such a man!

MRS. UNDERWOOD. You are too severe, Dolly. May it not be that some have an honest difference of opinion, and truly believe that England is within her rights?

DOLLY. Mother! You would not excuse a traitor to our country?

MRS. UNDERWOOD. Surely not, my daughter, but I would rather believe in honest mistakes than that all on the other side is black wickedness.

(*Enter Tempy L.*)

TEMPY. Please, Mistress, Mr. Farquhar presents his most respectful compliments and says would the ladies be pleased to accord him the honor of an audience?

DOLLY. (*Rising.*) Tell him, *no!*

MRS. UNDERWOOD. Dolly! (*To Tempy.*) Tell Mr. Farquhar—

DOLLY. (*Kneeling by her mother's side.*) But, dear Mother, I must tell you—I did not tell you before lest you should be anxious—Francis is coming across the river to see me tonight. He knows not of our guest nor have I had opportunity to warn him.

MRS. UNDERWOOD. (*Much agitated.*) Oh Dolly, how imprudent! He must not enter the house now—what shall we do?



TEMPY. Never fear, Mistress—Mr. Wynn and Mistress Kitty are down by the hedge where he will see them soon as ever he leaves the wood. (*Aside.*) I doubt me much whether they see him until he speaks.

DOLLY. Yes, Mother, Kitty and Henry are watching now, and soon I will go out and wait for him. 'Tis not likely he will come before dark. (*Rising.*)

MRS. UNDERWOOD. Where are the man's servants?

TEMPY. They have put up the horses and are safe in the kitchen. They will not stir while they have something to eat and drink.

DOLLY. And their master is safe in his room.

TEMPY. Not so safe, Mistress Dolly. I heard him say that if the ladies were indisposed to receive him he would take a stroll about the place.

DOLLY. That must not be—he must be kept within doors at any cost. Temy, do you watch for Captain Pennington, and keep him hid until you can let me know. I must stay here with my mother and receive this most intrusive guest.

MRS. UNDERWOOD. Yes, surely, we must see him. Temperance, say to Mr. Farquhar that the ladies will be pleased to receive him. (*Temy curtsies and goes out L.*)

DOLLY. (*Going to the window.*) Pleased to receive him, when Francis is on the way and I should be waiting for him!  
(*Enter Farquhar L. with a low bow to each. The ladies rise and curtsy.*)

FARQUHAR. 'Tis most charitable in you, ladies, to take compassion on me in my exile and allow me to bask in the sunshine of your smiles.  
(*Dolly turns away from him.*)

MRS. UNDERWOOD. (*Gravely.*) We should scarcely have chosen this time, sir, to receive guests, but since your business brings you here we have no choice—nor perhaps have you.

FARQUHAR. (*Seating himself at his ease.*) You appreciate the situation, madam. Certainly it is not inclination on my part that induces me to leave the city just now, when society is recovering the tone which we have sadly missed during the late unpleasant—ahem—circumstances.

DOLLY. (*Quickly.*) Truly 'twas no time for routs and dances when the American army held the city.

FARQUHAR. (*Turning to her.*) Truly, as you say, Mistress Dolly, the persons who have just been forced to leave the city were scarcely of a nature to appreciate the amenities of polite society.

DOLLY. They had other and more serious business in assembling there, sir.

FARQUHAR. Pardon me, ladies. 'Tis contrary to all the laws of gallantry that I should allude to public matters. To a young lady the serious affairs of life should be the choosing of a gown, the vows of a lover, the latest tea-drinking, the next dance, the talked-of-water-party, the fashions from over-seas. Affairs of State, War, Politics! They do not exist for you, fair Mistress.

(*Dolly rises hastily and seems about to speak.*)

MRS. UNDERWOOD. (*Hastily.*) I agree with you, sir, that such questions are unsuited to our conversation. Dolly, I will have my scarf. (*Dolly gets the scarf while Mrs. Underwood goes on speaking.*) Do you not find the country about here very pretty, Mr. Farquhar? The view from the hill is much admired.

FARQUHAR. To confess the truth, madam, I have but little taste for the beauties of Nature—that is to say, of landscape, though I flatter myself that I have due appreciation of beauties of another kind. (*Bows to Dolly.*) Should you ask my opinion of a handsome gown, or a new style of dressing the hair, or of a well-turned song, 'twould be of some value.

MRS. UNDERWOOD. You have a taste for music?

FARQUHAR. Why, not exactly for music, but for her sister muse, poetry. I have had the honor of celebrating many of our reigning beauties in my poor verse. May I hope? (*Looking toward Dolly.*)

MRS. UNDERWOOD. (*Gravely.*) You will see no one here, Mr. Farquhar, to whom your muse would be aught but unwelcome. (*Farquhar bows and shrugs his shoulders.*)

DOLLY. Have all the gentlemen of New York your exquisite taste in these important matters of ladies' dress, and poetic compliment?

FARQUHAR. I am sorry to say, Mistress Dolly, that there are many gentlemen in society whose ignorance of the refinements of life is truly distressing. Even among those who pretend an acquaintance with these gentle arts there are not many whose taste and knowledge equal that of—of—

DOLLY. Of the accomplished Mr. Farquhar.

FARQUHAR. (*Bowing.*) If it pleases you to say so, fair mistress, I will do violence to my modesty and accept the compliment.

DOLLY. Truly, sir, I think your modesty is sufficiently protected by your other qualities to withstand many such blows.

MRS. UNDERWOOD. (*Rising.*) My daughter, will you attend me to my room—I feel quite unwell. (*Dolly supports her.*) Mr. Farquhar will excuse us. May I beg, sir, that you will remain in this apartment, and consider it as your own?

FARQUHAR. You are most kind, madam, and I deplore your indisposition. (*Bows as they go out R.*) (*Alone.*) Indisposition, truly, but perhaps more of temper than of body. 'Tis curious how these women carry on the war in their very drawing rooms, and repel a pretty speech as if 'twere a barbed arrow! (*Seats himself at his ease by the fire and takes snuff.*) Were I not under a promise to make all due haste in this matter I would gladly linger in this idyllic spot. Faith! I have seldom eaten a better supper than that cooked to perfection and served with such a bad grace by you ill-favored woman. True, my hostess is not disposed to look upon me with any favor, but I could easily dispense with her society could I have that of the charming Dolly. My secretary has evidently found favor in the eyes of Mistress Kitty and that right soon. Ah! This coyness is but to enhance their value and well the pretty creatures know it! If such as he can conquer so rapidly how much more I (*rising and looking in mirror.*) 'Tis not often these pretty rustics have the attentions of a town gallant, and I doubt not that if I chose to give myself the trouble Mistress Dolly would appreciate me. One evening is but little time to fascinate a fair one, but I have done it in less. (*Tempy enters B., carrying teapot, etc., on tray; Farquhar lifts lid of teapot.*)

FARQUHAR. Aha! The rebels are drinking tea again! What becomes of all those fine patriotic sentiments with which you vowed abstinence from the cheering cup, and which converted the harbor of Boston into an extremely disagreeable dish of tea? Truly, the jewel consistency abides not in this land!

TEMPY. (*Putting down tray and facing Farquhar with arms akimbo.*) Tea it may be and tea it is, Master Farquhar, but none of your English stuff which King George would cram down our throats whether we liked it or not! This is good honest Holland tea, imported direct for my Mistress, and we have had the chest in the house these many months. Think you we are such poor-spirited folk as would live from hand to mouth and would go humbly to the King's agent with a few shillings in our hands, and say, "If you please, kind sir, would you be so very kind and condescending as to let us have a small packet of the King's most excellent tea, for which we will gladly pay three times what it is worth?" No, sir! We drink Holland tea, and when we can not get that we drink good American sassafras leaves. Your English tea would stick in the throat of a true patriot! (*Picks up tray and goes off R. leaving Farquhar in speechless surprise at her violence.*)

FARQUHAR. (*Recovering.*) A most extraordinary female! Let the rebels but place a brigade of such in the forefront of their Army and our men will run from their tongues. Liberty! Is this their boasted liberty! To drink a vile concoction of weeds, and to be forced to entertain an enemy in their house? To suffer from cold and hunger in their camps, and to ruin the prosperity of their cities? And for what? The phantom Liberty! Pooh! Let them but submit to us and we will give them liberty—liberty to eat and drink and be merry, liberty to live well and enjoy life, and what is life worth without pleasure? But to this end we must beat some sense into their heads, and my share in this not over-pleasant task will take me from hence betimes in the morning. Let me see (*feeling in his pockets*), where is my sketch map? I must look over my journey for to-morrow. (*While he is talking Pennington opens door at back cautiously and peeps in, shuts it hastily on seeing Farquhar.*) I have it not, it must be in my riding-coat. I omitted to remove my papers when changing my coat in fair Mistress Dolly's honor. To what carelessness in business will not the desire to please the fair sex lead us. (*Goes out L.*)

(*Pennington peeps in again and seeing the room empty comes in cautiously B. Tempy enters R. singing, carrying dish of apples; seeing Pennington drops apples and opens her mouth to scream; he catches her and puts his hand on her mouth.*)

PENNINGTON. Now, Tempy, don't yell, there's a good soul. Here! sit down and collect your ideas. (*Lets her down into a chair and picks up apples.*) What is that strange man doing in the house?

TEMPY. (*Gasping.*) La! Mr. Francis, you gave me such a turn! We did not expect you for hours yet, and I was to watch at the gate to warn you off.

PENNINGTON. Warn me off! Where is the danger? The neighborhood seems quiet enough.

TEMPY. Why, there's one of the King's agents in the house, with two impudent servants and Mr. Henry Wynn disguised as a sekertary or something.

PENNINGTON. What is he doing here?

TEMPY. They say he is travelling on business with Mr. Henry pretending to act as guide, but I think Mr. Henry came here to make love to Mistress Kitty Forsyth, and this fine Mr. Farquhar would like to do the same to Mistress Dolly.

PENNINGTON. This Tory villain make love to Dolly! I think it quite time I came. (*Enter Dolly R.*) My dearest Dolly! (*Rushing towards her, she runs to window and draws curtain.*) You do not seem glad to see me. Tempy tells me I have come too soon.

DOLLY. (*Looking about in alarm.*) Oh, Francis! I am in fear for you! Has not Tempy told you of our enforced guest?

PENNINGTON. Yes! And I have also seen him.

DOLLY. (*In great alarm.*) Seen him? When?

PENNINGTON. Just now, seated in this room, when I looked in to see if the coast was clear.

DOLLY. He did not see you?

PENNINGTON. No.

DOLLY. Then we must hide you before he returns. Tempy, think of some safe place.

PENNINGTON. And I am to be stowed away in some closet while that lace-ruffled dandy makes love to you! Tempy has told me of his pretensions.

DOLLY. He leaves in the morning, and it will not be difficult to avoid him these few hours. Surely, Francis, you know that I find his attentions most distasteful.

PENNINGTON. I know I can trust you, my Dolly! But I would I could protect you also.

(*The door opens and Farquhar enters slowly L., reading papers which he carries in his hand. Tempy draws Pennington back and Dolly advances to meet Farquhar with assumed vivacity.*)

DOLLY. Your business must be of a most engrossing nature, Mr. Farquhar, and accords not with your promise that War and Politics should be buried in oblivion.

FARQUHAR. (*Bows.*) Fair Mistress Dolly, that promise was conditional upon your presence. Removed from the sunshine of your eyes I must beguile the tedium of my exile as best I may. (*Puts up papers.*)

DOLLY. (*Sitting in front of stage.*) Your affairs are doubtless of great importance, sir?

FARQUHAR. (*Bowing.*) No affair is of more importance than that of finding favor in the eyes of a lady. (*Takes a seat near Dolly.*) (*Tempy is trying to hide Pennington in impossible places.*)

DOLLY. After the gaieties of the city we must appear very rustic to a gentlemen of your fashion?

FARQUHAR. A certain amount of rusticity, madam, like the bloom upon the peach, but enhances its beauty, I assure you.

(*Tempy sneezes. Farquhar starts and Dolly drops her fan. While he is picking it up she rises and motions to Tempy to take Pennington out. Farquhar returns the fan with a low bow, and as they are about to sit down again Pennington stumbles over a stool. Farquhar half turn.*)

DOLLY. (*Hurriedly.*) Tell me, Mr. Farquhar, are the ladies of New York really fairer than any in the country?

FARQUHAR. (*Bowing.*) Most charming Dolly, I assure you the beauty I see before me far outshines any it has been my good fortune to behold.

DOLLY. (*Casting down her eyes.*) Ah! sir, I fear me these are the insincere flatteries of town society, of which I have heard.

FARQUHAR. It may be the nature of some to flatter, but believe me, I am all sincerity.

(*Kisses her hand, Pennington goes down stage and makes threatening gestures. Dolly motions him to go and Tempy pushes him toward door.*)

FARQUHAR. I grieve to see, Mistress Dolly, that your mother has not that liberality of spirit which is so desirable in your sex. She goes so far as to call me an enemy.

(*Pennington goes out B.*)

DOLLY. (*Rising abruptly as Pennington disappears.*) And she is quite right, sir, you are our enemy!

(*She turns to go out, but seeing Pennington's hat on the sofa, she hesitates and finally sits, covering it with her skirt. Farquhar follows her.*)

FARQUHAR. Have I said aught to offend you, Mistress Dolly? Methinks my sincere compliments to yourself might outweigh any slight criticism of your mother.

DOLLY. (*Smiling.*) I pray you pardon my heat, Mr. Farquhar. 'Twas but a protest of my conscience upon my finding the conversation of an enemy of my country so agreeable.

(*Rises and extends her hand. As Farquhar bends to kiss it she tosses Pennington's hat over his head to Tempy, who hides it under her apron and goes out B. Farquhar tries to kiss Dolly, who boxes his ears and runs out of room B.*)

FARQUHAR. (*Alone.*) The women in this wretched land are as variable as the climate! What means this little rebel? All complaisance one moment and all thorns the next! 'Tis well there are no witnesses to my discomfiture, as I should be the jest of the town. (*Goes out L. Henry B. and Kitty R. come in different doors and run against each other.*)

HENRY. Whither away in such haste, Kitty?

KITTY. I was trying to find you.

HENRY. Find me again in the same way, will you not? (*Holds out his arms.*)

KITTY. Please talk seriously for five minutes. Francis Pennington is in the house!

HENRY. Francis is here now! Where is he?

KITTY. Tempy is hiding him somewhere. I heard her trying to persuade him to get into the large soap kettle in the shed.

HENRY. And he naturally objected. I should in his place.

KITTY. We want you to watch Mr. Farquhar. Make some pretense of business with him so that we can get Mr. Pennington safely away.

HENRY. I will go to his room at once. But first—the five minutes is up, and do you not think I deserve some reward if I sit the evening with him instead of with you?

*(Kitty evidently thinks he does, but before she can give him the reward Farquhar enters L. in great excitement.)*

FARQUHAR. Make haste, Mr. Brown, order the horses and make ready your luggage! One of the men reports that he has seen a regiment of Continentals coming through the wood.

HENRY. *(Affecting fear.)* Can it be a surprise? Have they heard of your despatches?

FARQUHAR. It is possible; but even if they are not in pursuit of us we cannot afford to be questioned now.

HENRY. Assuredly not, with those compromising despatches in your possession. Why! They would hang us, without trial, to the nearest tree!

FARQUHAR. *(In an agony of fear.)* Make haste, make haste, Mr. Brown! We must depart at once. *(Rushes out of room L., Henry follows, laughing. Kitty goes to window. Mrs. Underwood and Dolly enter R.)*

KITTY. Have you heard the news? Mr. Farquhar's man saw a regiment of our men in the woods!

MRS. UNDERWOOD. *(Sitting.)* Impossible!

DOLLY. There are no troops this side the river—he must have seen a detachment of the British

KITTY. No, indeed. He said a regiment of Continentals. Mr. Farquhar just came running in here in great fright and told Henry that they must be off at once, in fear of their lives.

MRS. UNDERWOOD. May we be spared from a battle here! *(Noise outside. The girls rush to the window.)*

KITTY. There is a great commotion in the stable yard—there are the men bringing the horses to the door.

DOLLY. Henry is holding a lantern—Mr. Farquhar is mounting—there go the servants in a hurry, the cowards! Why, Henry is coming back!

KITTY. There is his horse, he will mount in a moment—no, he is sending it away. Oh, there they go, galloping down the hill and without Henry—Oh, joy!

MRS. UNDERWOOD. Have they really gone?

DOLLY. Yes, Mother, all but Henry. We can see them in the moonlight at the foot of the hill.

MRS. UNDERWOOD. Truly a blessed relief! Dolly, it will be safe to call Francis from his concealment now. (*Dolly goes out.*) Perhaps he can explain the unexpected presence of this body of our troops. (*Enter Henry L. laughing.*) Is all safe, Mr. Wynn? Have you sent them away and can you remain with us?

HENRY. All is well, Madam. They are so thoroughly alarmed that they will not draw rein these ten miles. Mr. Farquhar would not even wait for his faithful secretary. When I said I had forgot something of importance—"Then you must overtake us," said he, "and if you linger 'twill be at your own risk."

(*Takes Kitty's hand.*)

MRS. UNDERWOOD. But what is this regiment of our troops. Is it some secret expedition?

HENRY. 'Tis indeed a secret expedition, Madam, but one scarce intended to have such a terrible effect as Mr. Farquhar seemed to fear.

(*Enter Dolly, Pennington and Tempy B.*)

MRS. UNDERWOOD. (*Holding out her hand to Pennington.*) Ah, Francis, at last we are relieved of our anxiety on your account.

HENRY. (*Shaking hands.*) And *this* is the regiment of Continentals that put our gallant enemy to flight!

MRS. UNDERWOOD. (*Amid exclamations from all.*) And is there no regiment?

HENRY. Not a corporal's guard! One of the servants saw Francis coming through the wood, and fear did the rest.

PENNINGTON. (*Laughing.*) I little thought my first service in this campaign would be to rout a detachment of the enemy single-handed.

TEMPY. (*Snatching off her cap and waving it.*) Hurrah for Lexington and Bunker Hill! One Continental is worth a regiment of Britishers any day!

*Henry, Kitty, Mrs. Underwood, Tempy, Dolly, Pennington.*

CURTAIN.



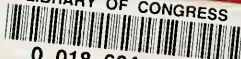




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