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The Peregrinations of Polly



DICK & FITZGERALD, Publishers,
NEW YORK.

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DICK & FITZGERALD, Publishers, 18 Ann Street, N. Y.

THE PEREGRINATIONS OF POLLY

A Comedy in One Act for Female Characters

By HELEN P. KANE

AUTHOR OF A BUNDLE OF MATCHES, THE WHITE DOVE OF ONEIDA
THE UPSETTING OF JABEZ STRONG, THE FUTURE LADY
HOLLAND, ETC., ETC.

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NEW YORK
DICK & FITZGERALD
18 ANN STREET

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NOTE.—The professional acting rights of this play are expressly reserved by the Publishers, to whom theatrical managers who wish to produce it should apply. Amateur representation may be made without such application and without charge.

THE PEREGRINATIONS OF POLLY.

CHARACTERS.

POLLY STIRLING.....*A Bachelor Maid*
MARGARET ASHE, *her friend*.....*Another Bachelor Maid*
SIVA.....*Their Servant*

TIME OF PERFORMANCE.—About forty-five minutes.

LOCALITY.—New York City. TIME.—The present.

COSTUMES.

Modern and up-to-date.

INCIDENTAL PROPERTIES.

Several letters and notes, newspapers, messenger book and two rings.

STAGE DIRECTIONS.

As seen by performer on the stage facing the audience. R. means right hand. C., centre. L., left hand. D. L., door in left flat. D. C., door in rear flat. D. R., door in right flat. UP, means up stage towards rear. DOWN, down stage towards footlights.

THE PEREGRINATIONS OF POLLY.

SCENE.—*A room modernly and prettily furnished. Couch down L., piano R. C., two or three chairs, a low seat, pile of cushions on floor, table C. set for dinner, screen up L. with small gas stove behind it. Doors C. of rear flat also R. and L. DISCOVERED MARGARET looking in oven of gas-stove.*

MARGARET (*calling*). Oh, Polly!

POLLY (*off stage*). Hullo!

MARG. It's 'most done.

POLLY. Want me to set the table?

MARG. That's done. (*Taking dish from oven and carrying to table*)

ENTER POLLY D. L.

POLLY. You are the most expeditious young woman, Peggy. I hadn't half finished.

MARG. (*setting things on table*). When I'm "Margaret," I do things with due deliberation, and a regard to the station in life whereunto I was born. When I'm "Peggy" I *hustle* as do most of the people in the station in life whereunto I am called *not* born!

POLLY (*laughing*). Dirck ought to see the "Stately Margaret" when she condescends to get our dinner. Has he written you any sonnets since yesterday?

MARG. Ne'er a wan! I think his devotion is cooling.

POLLY. If he had been a clairvoyant it would have frozen long ago.

MARG. (*laughing*). He is, in some things, but he is stone blind in this. I have a great liking, theoretically, and at this distance, for little Queen Wilhelmina, but her subject is another matter.

POLLY. Just wait till my great painting is hung on the line; and all the critics are dumb with admiration before it. I'll take you over to Holland then, for a go-as-you-please

The Peregrinations of Polly.

time among the dykes and dunes of the Zuyder Zee, that is, provided Dirck doesn't pre-empt my claim.

MARG. You may as well stake your claim. Dirck doesn't appeal to me.

POLLY. Peggy! He has been appealing to you for the last six months!

ENTER SIVA D. C.

SIVA (*presenting note in the corner of her apron*). A note for Mees Marg'ret. Dhe messenger waitin', you answer?

MARG. (*taking note*). No, no answer, Siva. (*Lays note beside her on the table. SIVA goes lingeringly*)

SIVA (*at door*). He say dhe gent'man tell heem wait.

MARG. (*quietly*). Tell him I'll ring up the office if I want him. [EXIT SIVA D. C.]

POLLY (*looking at note, and laughing*). He is insistent. Read it, Peggy.

MARG. (*opening note—sings with comic pathos*)

Still sounds the song;

The same old song!

(*Air "Old Lang Syne."*)

POLLY. If it's not a breach of confidence?

MARG. (*with dignity*). Oh, not at all, you stand in the position of Father Confessor, or Mother Superior, I don't know which. Really, Polly, you are the most self-possessed, and unknowing of Know-it-alls. Never a quiver of the eyelashes. You are the safest kind of a depository.

POLLY. I'm waiting impatiently—

MARG. (*reads*). "Oh, fair, pale Margaret!

Oh, stately Margaret—"

He's been reading up on Tennyson!

POLLY. He ought to see your pallor just now.

MARG. (*severely*). Comments from the audience interrupt the scene.

POLLY. You give the cue, and I'll start the claquers.

MARG. (*reads*). "One weary day is as a thousand years."

POLLY. That's Scripture; but he got it mixed.

MARG. (*resignedly*). I don't know how I'm to do justice to it if you interrupt.

POLLY (*laughing*). Let me read.

MARG. (*laughing*). Couldn't. He asked me one day if anyone else ever saw his letters; and I could truthfully answer "no."

POLLY (*tragically*). "Oh fickle, false, and fair!

With golden-gleaming hair!

Forever singing by the sounding sea."

There you are, Lorelei and poor Dirck, on the billows, drifting ever nearer and nearer the rocks, where you wait to gobble him up. Or was that Circe or the Sirens? I'm getting mixed.

MARG. (*laughing*). Oh, Polly, what next?

POLLY (*with injured gravity*). You do not take me seriously, Margaret! some day I shall take the world by storm.

MARG. (*laughing*). And meantime you are coloring photographs at ten cents apiece, and I am doing scrub work for the newspapers.

POLLY. You're not very polite when you call the society column, "Scrub work." And moreover than that, you don't look like a "Scrub-Lady" when you start out for it.

MARG. Well; there are ways and ways to earn your bread and butter. I certainly never would have chosen this way.

POLLY (*laughing, and beginning to clear the table*). Listen to dear old Dinah. "If you can't have what you like, it's better to like what you have." Besides that's how Mynheer Dirck Van Lentze found you.

MARG. (*putting things away, and re-setting the table with books, etc.*). I haven't sung "We praise Thee, O Lord," for that yet.

POLLY. You might try, "Now dismiss us with Thy blessing," but I haven't heard the end of it.

MARG. (*folding note, and laying on desk*). Oh, it's like all the rest.

POLLY. Why did he insist on waiting for an answer, then?

MARG. (*laughing, but a little confused*). That was the postscript; and I shall have to ring him up. He wants me to attend the symphony concert to-night.

POLLY. Peggy, you lucky girl. (*Coming to her coaxingly*) Don't you need a chaperon?

MARG. (*hesitates*). I am not sure that I shall go.

POLLY. Things getting too pressing?

MARG. Oh, it seems mean to let him give me a pleasure, and then put it into the "Letter from Olivia." (*Hesitates, then laughs*) In a way, it is letting him contribute to my support. It isn't as if I were just a girl, and he won't treat me as a reporter. (*Sits suddenly in arm-chair, absently folding note. POLLY comes over, and sits on the arm of MARGARET'S chair, and puts her hands on her shoulders*)

POLLY. Peggy.

MARG. (*looking up, then dropping her eyes*). Yes?

POLLY. You went with Ray Tryon last week.

MARG. (*slightly embarrassed*). I know it.

POLLY. You weren't a bit sensitive about that; and Ray has been making love to you, with varying degrees of intensity, for two years. What's the difference?

MARG. (*laughing*). Oh, Ray's easily handled.

POLLY. And the Dutchman isn't?

MARG. Polly, he's *in-sistent*, and *con-sistent*, and *re-sistent*, and *per-sistent*, and every other kind of a "sistant" except *de-sistent*. And I—

POLLY. And you remember his forbears in the Thirty Years' war.

MARG. (*laughs slightly*). It just amounts to this, I must keep him or let him go. (*Hesitates*)

POLLY. Well, I suggested dismissing him with your blessing. Where's the difficulty?

MARG. (*laughing*). If I dismissed him with my blessing, he'd come back again.

POLLY. And a lady can't do the other thing, except on the stage. Peggy.

MARG. Well?

POLLY. I am not of a suspicious nature, Peggy; but the circumstantial evidence seems to me to point toward Holland as your future residence.

MARG. (*laughing*). Not suspicious. You're a veritable Sherlock Holmes, or a Thinking Machine. I believe that's the latest genius in that line. I wouldn't trust the most duplicitous person alive, before those gray eyes of yours, Polly.

POLLY. Didn't know I *was* so clever. But, *why* don't you dismiss Dirck and be done with it?

MARG. (*quickly*). *Why* don't you dismiss Ned, and be done with it?

POLLY (*jumping up*). Now that's what I call a back-handed thrust. I wouldn't have thought that of you, Peggy.

MARG. (*laughing*). I asked you a question.

POLLY (*with sudden dignity*). It is a different case, *entirely*.

MARG. (*demurely*). I am not clever like you. Kindly state the difference.

POLLY (*a little confused*). Why, Ned is an old friend, and Dirck is a new one.

MARG. (*mischievously*). Proceed.

POLLY (*hesitating*). And Ned knows when I say a thing, I mean it, and Dirck has no previous experience—apparently.

MARG. (*quickly*). And both insist upon “yes;” and neither will listen to “no.” It is a different case—*entirely!* (*Knock at door*) Come.

ENTER SIVA D. C. *with handful of letters. After POLLY takes them, she stands waiting.*

POLLY (*takes letters, and speaking quickly*). I thought I heard the postman. (*Distributes letters. Sings*)

Two for you, and three for you,
“And never, oh, never a one for me.”

(*Chancellor's song, “Iolanthe”*)

MARG. (*laughing*). You're not “giving agreeable girls away;” but you're giving away the perquisite of an agreeable girl. (*Gives back letter*)

POLLY (*putting letter in her belt with apparent indifference*). Oh, I didn't see that.

MARG. I did, I knew it was his day and his envelope. (*Teasing*) What does he say, Polly?

POLLY. Oh, it will keep. There's never any hurry about his letters. (*Sees SIVA*) Were you waiting for something, Siva?

SIVA. I like speak Mees Marg'et.

MARG. (*turning, and speaking kindly*). Yes, Siva, anything I can do for you?

SIVA (*twisting the corner of her apron, and beaming*). 'Tis one gent'man, Mees Marg'et, ver' gran' gent'man. He talk so I un'stan' like heym-spraak, he come down stairs, he not ask see Mees Marg'et, but he say, tell her he have auto at door at eight 'clock. Dhat all. (*Beams*)

MARG. That's all. You're sure you had the message right, Siva?

SIVA (*earnestly, but still beaming*). Oh, I cannot meestak, Mees Marg'et, he talk like he yust come from Amsterdam, I cannot meestak.

MARG. Very well. Thank you, Siva. (*MARGARET sinks into a chair with an air of comic despair*) I have no choice, it seems, this time. [EXIT SIVA D. C. *still beaming.*

POLLY (*mockingly*). There's nothing the aboriginal woman understands so well as mastery, mastery, in large Roman text, and I have noticed we're most of us aborigines

to a certain extent. (*Laughs heartily*) He won Siva, *sure*. He has an ally in the camp, Peggy. (*MARGARET looks at her dubiously, and POLLY laughs again*) My congratulations, my dear, that you are forced to enjoy some music, whether, or no, or not, as our old Letty used to say. And my respectful hopes that you may enjoy the escort, too, to a certain extent, my Lady. (*Courtesies deeply*)

MARG. (*reflecting soberly*). I really don't see any way, but to put on my "glad rags" and go.

POLLY (*still mockingly*). You *might* take advantage of the opportunity to give him that dismissal, and so avoid such come-up-ances in future.

MARG. (*vehemently*). Polly. That would be dastardly.

POLLY (*mekky*). That's what one gets for trying to be helpful. Have you noticed the clock lately?

MARG. (*jumping up and looking at clock*). No. Time I had. [EXIT D. R.]

POLLY (*calling after her*). Can I help?

MARG. (*outside*). No, thank you. Plenty of time.

POLLY (*sitting in arm-chair*). All right; I'm here, if you want me. (*Picks up paper from table, and glances over it. Suddenly stops, takes letter from belt, and inspects post-mark*) What?

MARG. (*off stage*). Did you call me?

POLLY. No. (*Studying letter*) He is—oh, dear!

MARG. You seem to be having an interesting conversation.

POLLY. It's *not* interesting.

MARG. What's the matter?

POLLY. Oh, nothing!

MARG. Emphatic—for "nothing!"

POLLY (*absently opening letter*). I found some news in the paper, that's all.

MARG. Anything touching my line?

POLLY (*reading letter and frowning*). Quite the reverse. Well, yes, perhaps it is. (*Provoked*) Oh, I don't know. (*Exasperated*) Don't ask me!

MARG. (*laughing off stage*). Is he so uncomfortable as that?

POLLY. Oh, do pay some 'tention to your dressing, Peggy. I'm busy. (*Knock D. C.*) Come.

ENTER SIVA D. C.

SIVA (*presenting note and messenger's book*). A note for Mees Pollee.

POLLY (*signing book*). All right, Siva.

SIVA (*hesitating*). Dhe messenger say, any answer?

POLLY (*laying note on the table*). No, no, I'm busy now. Tell him no answer, Siva. [EXIT SIVA D. C.]

POLLY. Oh, it's such *nonsense*, and I'm *not* ready to "call it off." (*Puts down letter irritably, and sees note on table, takes it up and opens absently*) Another. (*Reads, and as she goes on, smiles whimsically and ends by laughing heartily*)

ENTER MARGARET D. R. *in evening dress.*

MARG. You might let me share the fun.

POLLY (*laughing almost hysterically*). It is the joke of the season. Listen to this, Peggy. (*Reads*) "Polly dear—"

MARG. (*musingly*). Dirck has never reached *that* point—

POLLY (*energetically*). Margaret Ashe, I cannot tolerate such invidious distinctions. Ned has known me since we both were pinafores, and paddled in the brook together. (*Stopping suddenly*) Do you know that is the loveliest brook that runs at the foot of our garden. Peggy, you will never know what a brook *can* be, till you see those that race through Renfrew, straight from the heart of old Greylock. The way they go dashing and foaming and tumbling over the rocks, (*Very animated*) leaping out into the sunshine, and swirling in the deep shadow and never ceasing their bright mad dance down into the valley. It takes my breath away just to think of it. And then the silent majesty of beautiful old Greylock, lording it over all the land. (*Gaily*) Peggy, some day I'm going to paint old Greylock against the evening sky, the sky after the sun has set, all soft rose, with little clear green lakes in it, and just a touch of the rose tinging the bold gray summit, and the lower forests all in deep shadow.

MARG. Good, I can see it!

POLLY (*enthusiastically*). You *shall* see it.

MARG. That is the one to be hung on the line. But to resume—Polly dear, I haven't yet heard the joke of the season.

POLLY (*laughing*). Well. (*Picks up letter which she has dropped, then stops suddenly*) Peggy, would you call me a failure?

MARG. (*warmly*). Failure.

POLLY. Well, Ned does, he says he gave me three years to make a success, and the three years haven't "*panned out,*" and I'd better "call it off." (*Smiles dubiously*)

MARG. He gave you three years.

POLLY (*laughing*). Well, you see, in the beginning, Ned was very, *very* much set against my career. He talked to me, and when he found that did no good, he talked to father and mother.

MARG. (*laughing*). Which did less good, as far as you were concerned.

POLLY. Exactly. (*Also laughing*) I told him it was unwarrantable interference.

MARG. Naturally, and then you came away.

POLLY (*hesitating*). Yes, only first he talked to aunt Chloe.

MARG. More interference.

POLLY. Yes. (*Dubiously*) But you see aunt Chloe is different. Father and mother said: "Polly must choose for herself," and used a few well-worn proverbs, like—"When a woman wills" etc.—

MARG. And "Lying in the bed you make." (*Sympathetically*) I know that sort of wisdom; it was all invented to give people a chance to say: "I told you so."

POLLY. Well, aunt Chloe said nothing of the sort. I wish you could see aunt Chloe. She's a little Dresden-china bit of a woman, dainty and exquisite in everything she does and wears; but it's the iron hand in the velvet glove. That clear voice of hers, with its quaint inflections, comes from Quaker folk, and she is apt to use their speech. Her "yea" is "yea," and her "nay" is "nay," and there's no appeal.

MARG. And she said?

POLLY (*smiling dubiously*). "Thee may give her three years, Edward." Not a word more or less. It was final.

MARG. (*laughing*). Well?

POLLY. Well, Ned stopped teasing for promises, and just said; "Polly, I'm going to write to you, whether you write to me or not."

MARG. He has, I'll bear witness to that.

POLLY. "And in three years I shall come to take you home."

MARG. (*musingly*). Polly—somewhere, in the background of my mind there is something about "Mastery" and the "Aboriginal Woman."

POLLY (*with dignity*). That argument applied to another case.

MARG. (*mischievously*). And an entirely different one. When are the three years up?

POLLY (*hesitating*). Why, that's what the letter is about.

MARG. (*significantly*). Oh——!

POLLY. And his first letter came from the Hoffmann House, instead of Renfrew.

MARG. Oh——!

POLLY. There's a certain monotony in your remarks, Peggy.

MARG. Perhaps, there's none in yours. So there was a second letter; where did that come from?

POLLY. From the club. (*She smiles mischievously*) It's a sort of replica of another. (*Reads*) "While waiting for an answer to my first letter, I picked up the paper; and I see that the symphony concert is on for to-night. I know you would rather listen to it than to me, so if you have no previous engagement, I will have an auto at the door at 8.15. Send word by messenger, if you cannot go. Hastily." (*Both laugh heartily*) You see. (*Laughs again*)

MARG. I see, you didn't send word. Time you got into your festive apparel.

POLLY (*musings*). Hm; yes; Peggy—(*Pauses*)

MARG. I'm waiting——

POLLY. I was thinking—(*Pauses again*)

MARG. You seem to have "fallen upon thought."

POLLY. I think—Peggy—I am tempted to take a base advantage of circumstances, and incidentally of two young men.

MARG. Oh!

POLLY. This is the third time you have said that!

MARG. You mean?

POLLY. There will be one auto at the door at eight, and one at 8.15. Peggy. (*Pauses*) Suppose we exchange escorts?

MARG. (*springs up and stands facing POLLY*). Polly! You mean it.

POLLY (*looking up at her and laughing*). Hm—hm. I mean it. How does it strike you?

MARG. (*suddenly dropping on the floor*). All of a heap.

POLLY (*laughing*). Apparently. But beyond that?

MARG. (*keenly*). So you want to put off the evil day?

POLLY (*ignoring her question, and talking very fast*). It wouldn't do one bit of harm, and we *could* do it. We're about the same height and it's not very well lighted just here. We need not say much, and could be non-committal,

and those too insistent young men need not know till we're in the lobby.

MARG. And then?

POLLY (*laughing*). Then I suppose we shall have our hands full. But they can scarcely refuse to take us into the house. (MARGARET *considers*) Will you?

MARG. I don't know Ned. How would he take it? (*Dubiously*) And *me*?

POLLY (*lightly*). Oh, he's a gentleman; and he *couldn't* mistake you.

MARG. (*considering*). I *might* say you were to be at the same concert, and as I knew he must have tickets, I thought it only kind to go with him, and look you up. (*Hesitates*) It's a little out of the usual.

POLLY. Ye-es, a little out of the usual, but it will do. You might strengthen the position a little. I shall have to invent something for Dirck—

MARG. *Shall* have to. I haven't yet said I will.

POLLY (*jumping up*). But you meant it. (*Laughing*) You're not an ideal friend, Peggy. You don't even meet one-half way. But I haven't time to score you on that; I must hustle, if I am to be ready for Mynheer Dirck at eight. [EXIT D. L.

CURTAIN.

SCENE.—*The same. Time midnight. Low light. ENTER*

POLLY D. C. *cautiously. She draws off her gloves and throws her cloak on chair, stands a moment as if undecided, then moves toward, D. R.*

POLLY. It's a shame to disturb her first sleep, but I don't want to wait until morning. (*Stands at D. R. and speaks softly*) Peggy! (*A little louder*) Peggy! (*Waits a moment then turns back into room*) She sleeps unusually well. I wonder if that is due to the concert or Dirck? (*Hesitates then laughs*) No help for it, Peggy dear, I have to unburden my soul. (*Goes into room R. and returns almost immediately laughing, and throws herself into armchair*) Not in yet, and all my caution wasted. (*Springs up quickly catching*

up coat, gloves, etc.) What a chance I was in before twelve, five minutes before twelve. (*Runs off D. L., laughing. Off stage singing*) "As we sat in the low-backed car." (*Air. "A low-backed car." Hums the rest of the phrase, then laughs*) There is a streak of the Green Isle somewhere in you, Polly. The lilt o' the Irish song's in your blood. (*Hums another phrase of the song then comes in, in long kimona, looks about quickly, piles up the pillows and throws herself on the couch*) I've been asleep for hours. Peggy will hardly be able to wake me. (*Laughs*) Such luck, to be home first, after *such* a ride! (*Muses*) I never knew Central Park *could* be so beautiful. Ned said so too, after he finished storming about the concert and the "other fellow." (*Laughs*) But I made it up to him. I wonder how Peggy made *her* amends (*Laughs again, then sits up suddenly, listens, and throws herself on the pillows as if asleep. After a pause, ENTER MARGARET D. C. cautiously. Is about to go into her room, when she sees POLLY; stops, and looks at her smiling as she throws off cloak, and throws gloves down on table*)

MARG. Too bad to wake her. But then she didn't mean to sleep here all night; and I *must* talk. Dirck didn't give me a chance for a word, after he got the one word. But then he had provocation. And he had to be polite to Polly all through the concert, while Ned was being polite to me. Wonder what *he* said after we exchanged? (*Laughs softly. POLLY stirs slightly, throwing her arm above her head, and turning her face from MARGARET*) She must have come in early. (*Puts her hand softly on POLLY'S forehead*) Polly dear!

POLLY (*stirring sleepily, and partly opening her eyes*). 'Most breakfast time?

MARG. 'Most. Thought I'd like an early morning talk. (*POLLY'S head has dropped, and she has nestled down as if asleep again*) Oh, Polly, *don't* go to sleep again. I shall never have the conscience to waken you a second time.

POLLY (*rousing*). Why—where—oh, I remember, I didn't go to bed; I was waiting for you, and I must have gone to sleep. (*Sleepily*) What time is it, Peggy? (*Yawns and stretches*)

MARG. Oh, not very late.

POLLY (*looking at her sleepily*). No—you haven't undressed yet.

MARG. No, I've just come in.

POLLY (*looking sleepily at clock, then starting up*). Peggy, what scandalous hours. *Look at that clock.*

MARG. (*sweetly*). Social duties, Polly; think of the letter; "Olivia" will be \$10.00 in, from the symphony concert.

POLLY (*severely*). Peggy, I suspect you of duplicity. The last number ended at quarter before eleven; where has "Olivia" been since? Getting up an article on "New York at Midnight?"

MARG. My articles were not what I waked you for. I want to know—

POLLY (*interrupting*). So do I— (*Sitting up suddenly, she thrusts her feet out from under her robe, and clasps her hands on her knees, MARGARET sees her slippers, and interrupts in her turn quickly*)

MARG. What time you got in? You still have on your festive slippers, oh, Polly, Polly! Talk of *my* duplicity.

POLLY (*laughing*). I hadn't time to change them.

MARG. (*severely*). And then to reprimand me. Where have you been since 10.45?

POLLY (*meeekly*). Seeing I'm found out, I'll turn state's evidence, and confess. In Central Park. Now it's your turn.

MARG. (*laughing*). Up Riverside Drive. We couldn't get back *very* early, you see.

POLLY. "We" never went off on a midnight drive before.

MARG. (*hesitating*). No-o. The circumstances were a little peculiar, you know.

POLLY. Ye-es? *He* said that.

MARG. (*laughing*). He did. And what else? That is precisely what I waked you for.

POLLY (*musings*). Well, it was a good deal on the "Aboriginal" line.

MARG. Polly. You don't mean that he was autocratic with you.

POLLY (*briefly*). Very.

MARG. (*slowly*). I don't think that was quite nice under the circumstances.

POLLY (*laughing*). I excused it, under the circumstances.

MARG. What did he do when you first got in?

POLLY. You really want to know? (*MARGARET nods*) Well (*Pauses, then laughs a little*) he just put out that strong right arm of his; and drew me close to him, and said, "To have and to hold, for better and worse."

MARG. (*interrupting in a shocked tone*). Polly, he *didn't*. You are fooling.

POLLY (*seriously*). He *did*, and I can't see anything so shocking in it under the circumstances.

MARG. (*passionately*). You may excuse it if you like, I will *never* excuse it. Oh, why *did* I let him? Why did I let him? Oh, Polly, how *could* you?

POLLY (*looking at her wonderingly*). Why Margaret, what is the matter with you? (*Rising and taking her hands*) Child, you are actually trembling; and your hands are cold as ice. I don't see anything so very dreadful in it!

MARG. (*snatching her hands away angrily, and drawing ring from her finger, and throwing it from her*). I *never, never* will believe in a man again.

POLLY (*a light breaking on her*). Oh. (*Suddenly changing her tone*) All the same, I've promised to marry him.

MARG. (*coldly turning from her*). As you please, so did I, and I never will forgive myself for it, as long as I live.

POLLY (*throwing herself into armchair, her face full of fun, but speaking quietly*). We can't both, you know.

MARG. (*coldly*). You may count me out of the running, if you please.

POLLY (*demurely*). Why, yes, I'd rather, so far as Ned is concerned.

MARG. (*turning swiftly*). Ned!

POLLY (*demurely*). You didn't think I had any interest in any other "strong right arm," did you? Peggy, I have actually succumbed, buried the Articles of War; and signed a Treaty of Domestic Peace. (MARGARET suddenly goes down on the floor, groping and searching where she has thrown the ring, POLLY, sitting in the armchair, with her arms thrown up over her head, is smiling to herself, and doesn't see what she is doing. Pause) Well, haven't you a word to say to this very important change in my scheme of existence? (*Looks around, and sees MARGARET on floor*) Peggy, what are you doing there?

MARG. (*searching*). Oh, what *did* I do it for? I can't find it at all.

POLLY (*coming over*). What is it?

MARG. My ring, I can't find it.

POLLY. Did you drop it? (*Getting down to look*)

MARG. (*sitting upon her knees*). No, in a fit of temper, I *threw* it as far as I could, because I thought that was

Dirck's "strong right arm" (*Laughs, half crying*) I've thrown it away, and I can't find it. (*Searches again*)

POLLY (*finding ring, and hiding it in her hand*). What was it, a solitaire?

MARG. Yes, I think so, I don't know, I didn't look at it.

POLLY. Oh, well, then any other will do; I'll lend you a solitaire I have, to wear till you find it.

MARG. (*distressed*). But *he* will know. It was his mother's betrothal ring, and his grandmother's (*Half laughing and half crying*) and for aught I know, his great-great-great-grand-mother's, and I've thrown it away.

POLLY (*rising and laughing*). Oh, well, if they've had it as long as that, "any old thing" will do. How about this? (*Shows ring on her left hand. She has slipped the other on her right hand, with the stone inside*)

MARG. (*troubled, touching the ring*). No, it didn't feel like that. (*Examines ring*) I never saw you wear that ring before. It is a beautiful stone; what is it?

POLLY (*smiling mischievously*). I haven't had it very long. It is a tourmaline. I always said I would have a tourmaline for my engagement ring, and Ned remembered. (*Dolorously*) He has a *dreadful* memory!

MARG. (*penitently*). Polly—what a selfish beast I am. You *did* say something about "burying the hatchet," and I didn't say a word. (*Takes POLLY'S face between her hands and kisses her*)

POLLY (*laughing*). It wasn't the "hatchet;" but that will do just as well. (*Shows other ring*) This is an old family ring, do you think this might do?

MARG. (*looking at it and hesitating*). I don't know.

POLLY (*slipping it on her finger*). Suppose you try if he will know the difference.

MARG. (*turning it on her finger, then stopping suddenly and laughing*). Polly, you wretch. That is the one. (*Puts her hands on her shoulders and shakes her*)

POLLY (*demurely*). I know it; but you were so slow about congratulating me, I thought you wouldn't mind a little delay. (*Courtesies deeply, laughing*) A long life, and a happy one, my lady!

MARG. (*catching her about the waist, and kissing her again, laughing*). Polly, Polly, how I shall miss you.

POLLY (*meditatively*). Lucky I didn't "stake my claim." 'Twould have been a bit previous.

MARG. (*laughing*). Besides, Ned might have objected to two of us!

POLLY (*meditatively*). He didn't suggest Salt Lake; but after this evening, I am not sure. The Aborigine might shoulder her pack, and walk meekly after if he led.

MARG. (*laughing*). Is the change so radical? It hasn't worked out yet. (*Hesitates*) Polly, one reason why I just had to wake you to-night—

POLLY (*interrupting*). This morning, you mean!

MARG. (*seriously*). Was a very serious one. (*Pauses*)

POLLY. I thought so.

MARG. But you don't know it all yet. (*Hesitates again*) There are important family matters which call Dirck home, very soon. In fact he is obliged to sail on the Friesland. (*Hesitates again*) Saturday.

POLLY (*interrupting*). And he will take passage for Mynheer Van Lentze and "My Lady," oh, Peggy. I never thought you could be so headstrong!

MARG. It is, atrocious haste, Polly, but a cousin has died; and he goes home to large responsibilities.

POLLY (*commiseratingly*). Too heavy to carry all by his lonesome. He is very frail. His six feet and his broad shoulders are just a bluff.

MARG. (*laughing*). But it does seem mean to leave you here, all by your lonesome!

POLLY (*tragically*). Peggy, I never could bear it, never! (*Sings with exaggerated sentiment*)

Like the last rose of summer

Left blooming alone.

(*Air "Last Rose of Summer"*)

MARG. (*laughing*). You need a head gardener to scatter your leaves.

POLLY (*demurely*). I had already anticipated that, or rather Ned had, and—

MARG. (*interrupting*). Oh, Polly, Polly, you don't mean to say his cousin has died; and he must sail on Saturday?

POLLY (*laughing heartily*). N—no, not exactly, but he says he had promised aunt Chloe to have me there for her birthday fete; and the invitations are all out for a lawn party to meet me. He gave me one and I haven't looked at it yet. (*Takes it from her dress and gives to MARGARET*)

MARG. (*reading and laughing*). Polly, who got this up?

POLLY (*looking over her shoulder and reading*). "To pre-

vent future peregrinations on the part of Polly," sounds very like Ned.

MARG. (*reading*). "We propose a Perpetual Prohibition, pronounced by the Right Reverend Dr. Hollis, Polly.

POLLY (*laughing*). Oh, that's Ned. Only wait until I get at him. But there's no help for it, Peggy. I've promised to go, and be "Prohibited." You know I told you aunt Chloe's "yea" was "YEA."

QUICK CURTAIN.

Plays for Female Characters

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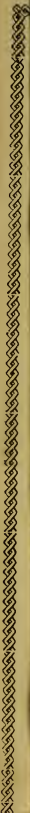
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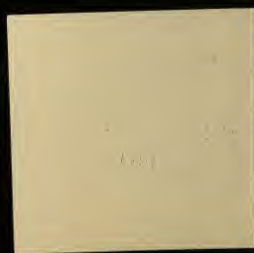
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