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No Plays Exchanged

AKER'S EDITION
OF PLAYS

Polly Wants a Cracker

Price, 25 Cents



ER COMPANY

Plays for Colleges and High Schools

	Males	Females	Time	Price	Royalty
The Air Spy	12	4	1½ hrs.	35c	\$10.00
Bachelor Hall	8	4	2 "	35c	\$5.00
The College Chap	11	7	2½ "	35c	Free
The Colonel's Maid	6	3	2 "	35c	"
Daddy	4	4	1½ "	35c	"
The Deacon's Second Wife	6	6	2½ "	35c	"
The District Attorney	10	6	2 "	35c	"
The Dutch Detective	5	5	2 "	35c	"
At the Sign of the Shooting Star	10	10	2 "	35c	"
The Elopement of Ellen	4	3	2 "	35c	"
Engaged by Wednesday	5	11	1½ "	35c	"
The Chuzzlewitts, or Tom Pinch	15	6	2¼ "	35c	"
For One Night Only	5	4	2 "	25c	"
Hamilton	11	5	2 "	60c	\$25.00
Constantine Pueblo Jones	10	4	2¼ "	35c	Free
Excuse Me	4	6	1¼ "	35c	"
The Hoodoo	6	12	2 "	35c	"
The Hurdy Gurdy Girl	9	9	2 "	35c	"
Katy Did	4	8	1½ "	35c	"
Let's Get Married	3	5	2 "	60c	\$10.00
London Assurance	10	3	2 "	25c	Free
Lost a Chaperon	6	9	2 "	35c	"
A Foul Tip	7	3	2 "	35c	"
The Man Who Went	7	3	2½ "	35c	\$10.00
The Man Without a Country	46	5	1½ "	25c	Free
Master Pierre Pateuil	4	1	1½ "	60c	"
How Jim Made Good	7	3	2 "	25c	"
Just Plain Mary	7	13	2 "	35c	"
Line Busy	5	19	1½ "	35c	"
Mr. Bob	3	4	1½ "	25c	"
Mrs. Briggs of the Poultry Yard	4	7	2 "	35c	"
Nathan Hale	15	4	2½ "	60c	\$10.00
Patty Makes Things Hum	4	6	2 "	35c	Free
Professor Pepp	8	8	2½ "	35c	"
A Regiment of Two	6	4	2 "	35c	"
The Private Tutor	5	3	2 "	35c	"
The Rivals	9	5	2½ "	25c	"
Silas Marner	19	4	1½ "	25c	"
When a Feller Needs a Friend	5	5	2¼ "	35c	\$5
Sally Lunn	3	4	1½ "	25c	"
The School for Scandal	12	4	2½ "	25c	"
She Stoops to Conquer	15	4	2½ "	"	"
Step Lively	4	10	2 "	"	"
The Submarine Shell	7	4	2 "	"	"
The Thirteenth Star	"	9	1½ "	"	"
The Time of His Life	6	3	2½ "	"	"
Tommy's Wife	3	5	1½ "	"	"
The Twig of Thorn	6	7	"	"	"
The Amazons	7	"	"	"	"
The Conjurer	"	"	"	"	"

BAKER, H.

Plays for Junior High Schools

	Males	Females	Time	Price
Sally Lunn	3	4	1 1/2 hrs.	25c
Mr. Bob	3	4	1 1/2 "	25c
The Man from Brandoo	3	4	1/2 "	25c
A Box of Monkeys	2	3	1 1/4 "	25c
A Rice Pudding	2	3	1 1/4 "	25c
Class Day	4	3	3/4 "	25c
Chums	3	2	3/4 "	25c
An Easy Mark	5	2	1/2 "	25c
Pa's New Housekeeper	3	2	1 "	25c
Not On the Program	3	3	3/4 "	25c
The Cool Collegians	3	4	1 1/2 "	25c
The Elopement of Ellen	4	3	2 "	35c
Tommy's Wife	3	5	1 1/2 "	35c
Johnny's New Suit	2	5	3/4 "	25c
Thirty Minutes for Refreshments	4	3	1/2 "	25c
West of Omaha	4	3	3/4 "	25c
The Flying Wedge	3	5	3/4 "	25c
My Brother's Keeper	5	3	1 1/2 "	25c
The Private Tutor	5	3	2 "	35c
Me an' Otis	5	4	2 "	25c
Up to Freddie	3	6	1 1/4 "	25c
My Cousin Timmy	2	8	1 "	25c
Aunt Abigail and the Boys	9	2	1 "	25c
Caught Out	9	2	1 1/2 "	25c
Constantine Pueblo Jones	10	4	2 "	35c
The Cricket On the Hearth	6	7	1 1/2 "	25c
The Deacon's Second Wife	6	6	2 "	35c
Five Feet of Love	5	6	1 1/2 "	25c
The Hurdy Gurdy Girl	9	9	2 "	35c
Camp Fidelity Girls	1	11	2 "	35c
Carrotty Neil		15	1 "	25c
A Case for Sherlock Holmes		10	1 1/2 "	35c
The Ciancey Kids		14	1 "	25c
The Happy Day		7	1/2 "	25c
I Grant You Three Wishes		14	1/2 "	25c
Just a Little Mistake	8	5	3/4 "	25c
The Land of Night		18	1 1/4 "	25c
Local and Long Distance	8	6	1/2 "	25c
The Original Two Bits		7	1/2 "	25c
An Outsider		7	1/2 "	25c
Oysters		6	1/2 "	25c
A Pan of Fudge		6	1/2 "	25c
A Peck of Trouble		5	1/2 "	25c
A Precious Pickie		7	1/2 "	25c
The First National Boot	7	2	1 "	25c
His Father's Son	14		1 3/4 "	35c
The Turn in the Road	9		1 1/2 "	25c
A Half Back's Interference	10		3/4 "	25c
The Revolving Wedge	5	3	1 "	25c
Mose	11	10	1 1/2 "	25c

BAKER, Hamilton Place, Boston, Mass.

Plays and Novelties That Have Been "Winners"

	Males	Females	Time	Price	Royalty
Camp Fidelity Girls		11	2½ hrs.	35c	None
Anita's Trial		11	2 "	35c	"
The Farmerette		7	2 "	35c	"
Behind the Scenes		12	1½ "	35c	"
The Camp Fire Girls		15	2 "	35c	"
A Case for Sherlock Holmes		10	1½ "	35c	"
The House in Laurel Lane		6	1½ "	25c	"
Her First Assignment		10	1 "	25c	"
I Grant You Three Wishes		14	½ "	25c	"
Joint Owners in Spain		4	½ "	35c	\$5.00
Marrying Money		4	½ "	25c	None
The Original Two Bits		7	½ "	25c	"
The Over-Alls Club		10	½ "	25c	"
Leave it to Poily		11	1½ "	35c	"
The Rev. Peter Brice, Bachelor		7	½ "	25c	"
Miss Fearless & Co.		10	2 "	35c	"
A Modern Cinderella		16	1½ "	35c	"
Theodore, Jr.		7	½ "	25c	"
Rebecca's Triumph		16	2 "	35c	"
Aboard a Slow Train in Missouri	8	14	2½ "	35c	"
Twelve Old Maids		15	1 "	25c	"
An Awkward Squad	8		¼ "	25c	"
The Blow-Up of Aigernon Blow	8		½ "	25c	"
The Boy Scouts	20		2 "	35c	"
A Close Shave	6		½ "	25c	"
The First National Boot	7	2	1 "	25c	"
A Half-Back's Interference	10		¾ "	25c	"
His Father's Son	14		1¾ "	35c	"
The Man With the Nose	8		¾ "	25c	"
On the Quiet	12		1½ "	35c	"
The People's Money	11		1¾ "	25c	"
A Regular Rah! Rah! Boy	14		1¾ "	35c	"
A Regular Scream	11		1¾ "	35c	"
Schmerccase in School	9		1 "	25c	"
The Scoutmaster	10		2 "	35c	"
The Tramps' Convention	17		1½ "	25c	"
The Turn in the Road	9		1½ "	25c	"
Wanted—a Pitcher	11		½ "	25c	"
What They Did for Jenkins	14		2 "	25c	"
Aunt Jerusha's Quilting Party	4	12	1¼ "	25c	"
The District School at Blueberry Corners	12	17	1 "	25c	"
The Emigrants' Party	24	10	1 "	25c	"
Miss Prim's Kindergarten	10	11	1½ "	25c	"
A Pageant of History	Any number		2 "	35c	"
The Revel of the Year	"	"	¾ "	25c	"
Scenes in the Union Depot	"	"	1 "	25c	"
Taking the Census in Bingville	14	8	1½ "	25c	"
The Village Post-Office	22	20	2 "	35c	"
O'Keefe's Circuit	12	8	1½ "	35c	"

BAKER, Hamilton Place, Boston, Mass.

Polly Wants a Cracker

A Comedy in Two Acts

By

GLADYS RUTH BRIDGHAM

Author of "The Hurdy-Gurdy Girl," "Step Lively," "The Thirteenth Star," "Captain Cranberry," "Behind the Scenes," "At the Sign of the Shooting Star," "The Girl from Upper 7 Ranch," "Leave it to Polly," "A Regular Scream," "Not on the Programme," "A Modern Cinderella," "On the Quiet," "A Regular Rah! Rah! Boy," "Sally Lunn," "Six Times Nine," "Cupid's Partner," "Her First Assignment," "A Case for Sherlock Holmes," "Ring-Around-a-Rosie," "Three of a Kind," "The Turn in the Road," "The Queen of Hearts," etc.

NOTE

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BOSTON
WALTER H. BAKER COMPANY

1921

PS 3503
R53 P65
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Polly Wants a Cracker

CHARACTERS

JEFFREY WAYNE.
THOMAS LIVINGSTONE PRATT.
INSPECTOR DORAN.
MARIE PRATT-WAYNE.
MARY WAYNE.
LUCERNE NEVILLE.
NORA.

SCENE.—A living-room in Jeffrey Wayne's home.

ACT I.—An afternoon in October.

ACT II.—The same—fifteen minutes later.



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STORY OF THE PLAY

Jeffrey Wayne, a widower of sixty, marries Marie Pratt, a widow of forty. Wayne has a daughter, Mary, who is in a private school, and Marie has a son, Tom, who is in college. Neither dares to tell the other.

Mary and Tom are in love. Mary agrees to become engaged if Tom can prove his ability to earn a living. Not knowing that Wayne is his mother's husband, Tom applies to him for a position and is engaged. On the same day Mary, who has a desire to see her stepmother, comes home in the make-up for a part that she is to take in a school play.

Lucerne Neville, an old friend of Marie's, calls unexpectedly. While they are all together in the living-room, the light is suddenly turned out and a valuable necklace disappears. Wayne calls a police inspector and suspicion is directed in turn towards Tom, Mary, Miss Neville and Nora, the housekeeper. In seeking the guilty party the identity of the young people becomes known and Marie and Wayne decide it is tit-for-tat. The older couple find themselves in a position where they are obliged to look kindly upon the love affair of the young people. The necklace is found and all ends happily.

CHARACTERS

JEFFREY WAYNE—sixty-two; well built, fine-looking man; iron gray hair; nervous wreck; irritable to every one but Marie; wears business suit; change to evening clothes.

THOMAS PRATT—nineteen; college boy; most extreme up-to-date clothes; loud tie and stockings.

INSPECTOR DORAN—thirty; keen, energetic young man who never lets any one put anything over; blue suit.

MRS. WAYNE—beautiful young woman of forty; silk negligee; change to evening dress.

MARY WAYNE—eighteen; red wig; an old blue serge skirt, white middie, red tie, tam.

LUCERNE NEVILLE—thirty-eight; an actress; afternoon dress, rather showy.

NORA—fifty; stout; black dress, white apron.

Polly Wants a Cracker

ACT I

SCENE.—*Living-room in JEFFREY WAYNE'S home. Time, late afternoon. Double doors c. leading to hall; at L. of doors a stairway leading from room; at L. of stairway a door; at L. front French window; at R. a fireplace; at R. front a door. A seat in front of fireplace; tea table with silver service R. C.; chairs by table; armchair down R., facing up stage; divan L. C. front; small table with reading lamp back of divan; small desk with telephone in space between double doors and stairway.*

(At curtain MARIE sits on divan; wears silk negligee; a book in her lap. She is looking out through the French windows, which are slightly open, with a far-away, dreamy look. NORA enters, R. F.)

NORA. Shall I be afther lighting up fer yez, Mrs. Wayne?

MARIE *(turns with a start)*. Oh, yes—yes, you may, Nora. *(Suddenly rising.)* It must be nearly time for Mr. Wayne.

(Hastily places her book on table and starts towards stairs. NORA goes up stage to hall door; steps outside and switches on the lights; reënters.)

NORA. Will you serve his tea?

MARIE *(from stairs)*. Certainly.

NORA. It's too bad we're short o' help.

MARIE (*as she exits*). Yes, it's a pity.

NORA (*looking after her*). Divil a bit you care!

(*Crosses to table and lights reading-lamp; starts to exit, R. MARY WAYNE enters by French window; looks cautiously about.*)

MARY. Nora!

NORA (*turning; surprised*). Saints presarve us! And who are you to be calling me Nora?

MARY (*coming forward*). Can't you guess?

NORA. I don't intind to try. This is me busy day.

MARY (*laughing and giving NORA a hug*). It's Mary!

NORA. Holy Saint Catherine! And what are yez up to now, Miss Mary? (*Holds her off and looks at her.*) Why, yer own father wouldn't rickognize ye.

MARY. Fine! That's just what I want. Nora, I'm going to stay here over night. You'll help me do it, won't you?

NORA. Ye mean like yez are? Not lit iny wan know?

MARY. Yes.

NORA. Hivin be koind! What for?

MARY. My father has returned from his honeymoon?

NORA. Shure, he has that. Three days ago.

MARY. I want to see the new Mrs. Wayne. See her in all her glory without her knowing who I am.

NORA (*putting her arm around MARY*). Miss Mary, you poor darlin'—

MARY (*turning away*). Don't you dare to pity me! I've made up my mind that I won't pity myself, and I won't let any one else do it. And I tell you this,—if I don't like the new Mrs. Wayne, my father will never see me in this house again.

NORA. And what'll ye do? Where'll yez go?

MARY. I have it all planned. If I decide against Mrs. Wayne, I'm going to leave school and go into the movies.

NORA. Now, Miss Mary, darlin'—

MARY. You can't wheedle me, Nora. My mind is made up.

NORA. Well, now maybe yez won't find the missus so bad. She seems ter mean well.

MARY. I'll decide that for myself. Of course, every one knows father has been taken in. Look at his age and hers! And look at his disposition!

NORA. Shure, the young woman hez a good stidy nerve. I admire her grit.

MARY. Of course the designing creature can't flatter herself that any one will believe she wanted anything but the money. Goodness! My father must be out of his head.

NORA (*soothingly*). Well, now, darlint, don't be afther gittin' all upset about it. Shure yer father wuz most likely thinkin' he'd git a mother fer yez.

MARY. Well, if that has ever been in his mind, he has certainly taken his time about it. No, thank you! I've never known what it was to have a mother; I'll decide for myself about having one now.

NORA. But, listen, darlint, it won't be for long. You're away at school the most o' the toime and whin yez gits through school it won't be iny toime before yez'll be afther gittin' married yersilf.

MARY. I'm not in any hurry about that, thank you. No, my mind is made up, and when a Wayne once comes to a decision no arguments will prevail.

NORA. Roight yez are! I wouldn't waste me breath, but if I might be afther askin' a quistion or two—what makes yez think yez can act?

MARY. Look at me now!

NORA. Shure, that's what I'm doin'.

MARY. This costume is for a part in a play.

NORA. Is it now?

MARY. I guess if I can make up so even my own father won't know me —

NORA (*cautiously*). Yez haven't got that far yit!

MARY (*airily*). Why, I'm some artist!

NORA. Where'll yez git the money to go with?

MARY (*grandly*). I'm not worrying about that. I'll steal it from Dad if I have to.

NORA. Shure, yez out o' yer hid!

MARY. Oh, I'd just as soon! If I find he has taken my home away from me, I should worry about taking a few dollars away from him. Come on, Nora. (*Pulls NORA to door, R.*) You give me some dinner in the kitchen and I'll plan a way to get a view of Mrs. Wayne. I can watch her through a crack in the door when she has dinner or something like that.

NORA. But suppose they sees yez?

MARY. I'm safe. Father won't know me, and I can make up some kind of a story to get by if I have to.

NORA. Shure, it's hopeless yez are, and always wuz; and I'm jist putty in yer hands.

MARY. Dear old Nora!

NORA. Shure, yez can blarney me all yez loikes, but it's no good'll come o' this foolishness, mark me words! (*Bell rings.*) There's the bell! Go along down with yez if yer goin', while I answers the door. (*Starts c.*)

MARY. You'll stand by me, Nora?

NORA (*looks back*). Shure yez know I will with the lasht breath in me body! (*MARY exits, R. F., throwing NORA a kiss as she goes. NORA looks after her for a second in despair, then exits, c.; slight pause; reënters, followed by LUCERNE NEVILLE.*) Roight in this way, ma'am. I'll speak to Mrs. Wayne.

LUCERNE. Thank you.

(*NORA exits by stairs. LUCERNE looks about the room with interest. MARIE enters by stairs, dressed for dinner.*)

MARIE. Lucerne, my dear girl!

(*Hurries to her and kisses her.*)

LUC. Oh, Marie, forgive me for breaking into your honeymoon, but I'm in trouble way over my head, and I just had to come to see you! You're always so sensible and can give such excellent advice!

MARIE. Let me have your coat, dear.

(*NORA comes down-stairs.*)

LUC. Oh, no, I mustn't stay!

MARIE. Oh, yes, you must!

LUC. But it's really an intrusion.

MARIE (*helping her off with her coat*). Nonsense! Nora, take Miss Neville's coat, please, and bring the tea. (*NORA takes coat and exits, c. MARIE leads LUCERNE to divan.*) Remember, this isn't a first honeymoon for either of us! That makes a difference.

LUC. You are happy, Marie?

MARIE. That doesn't express it! But we are going to talk about you. How do you happen to be out here?

LUC. Came out to see Flossie Herrick. She told me you were just around the corner. My dear, she never finished whatever it was she was saying. I had my coat on and was down the steps before she knew what was happening.

MARIE. The situation must be desperate.

LUC. Desperate? Wait until you hear! Marie, I never should have gone on the stage.

MARIE. Well, of course — (*Stops.*)

LUC. Oh, go on and say it! I don't mind. Every one told me not to do it and now they are privileged to say, "I told you so!"

MARIE. But I thought we had made the mistake—that you were a success.

LUC. I? A success? I should say I was. Why, I'm a regular knock-out wherever I go. Why, in that stock company out in Grand Rapids the leading lady was so jealous she was going to leave if the manager didn't discharge me. She had all her worry for nothing. Every one had to leave. Oh, I'm a success, just as I knew I was going to be!

MARIE. Then what is the difficulty?

LUC. Money! No one should think of going on the stage unless they have saved up a million dollars. Then perhaps they could afford to make the try.

MARIE. That doesn't seem like a very hopeful outlook for our future aspiring stars.

LUC. Oh, there's plenty of outlook. I don't believe

there ever was a business with quite so much outlook, and it's always hopeful; but you can't eat and buy costumes on outlook. I have been on the stage less than a year and I have been stranded five times!

MARIE. That doesn't seem like very good luck.

LUC. Oh, that's lucky compared with some of the people I know. And now I've got the most wonderful offer, the best I've had, and I've got to have four new costumes, strictly up to date—silk negligee, riding clothes, tailored suit and an evening gown without any back at all, and where or how am I going to get them? Isn't it a crime?

MARIE. I could lend you some things ——

LUC. (*interrupting*). Marie, talk sense, love! Lend me some things! What do you think would be left of them? No, we have got to think of a way. I have just one chance, and it is so faint I hardly dare call it a chance, and isn't it just my luck and a perfect crime? You remember that frightfully old Egyptian necklace and charm of mine?

MARIE. Yes!

LUC. Well, I raised a little money on that some time ago, and since then I have found that the charm is priceless. There are only two or three of them left in all the world. Of course I hurried to the old duffer who loaned me the money with all kinds of visions in my head of all the costumes I needed. And what do you suppose the old criminal had done? Sold it!

MARIE. But he hadn't any right!

LUC. He just got by. The interest was a few days overdue and he claimed he supposed I wasn't ever coming for it.

MARIE. Of course you have taken it up.

LUC. Oh, yes! I went to a lawyer and he is working to trace it. It seems some one, somewhere, has an agent trying to buy those charms and cheating people as to their real value. Now can you beat that? I had something in my possession that was priceless and I let it go for about fifty dollars.

(NORA enters, c., with tray, which she carries to tea table.)

MARIE. Well, it is possible that you will get it back.

LUC. Yes, possible! (*Meaningly.*) Believe me, if I could once lay my eyes on that charm I'd get it back in about two seconds.

MARIE (*warningly as she discovers NORA*). You are talking wild, Lucerne. You don't mean what you say.

LUC. (*discovers NORA*). No, of course not. Let's change the subject. How is your son?

(NORA drops a plate of tea cakes.)

MARIE. } (*together*). Nora! Good gracious!

LUC. }

NORA (*starting to pick up the cakes*). I beg yez pardon, ma'am. I heard something that shtartled me.

LUC. That's odd. I didn't hear a thing. Did you, Marie?

MARIE (*impatiently, as she picks up some of the cakes*). Yes, I certainly did. (*Takes plate from NORA.*) All right, Nora. (*NORA exits. MARIE turns to LUCERNE.*) Lucerne, that was the most unfortunate remark. What ever possessed you to mention Tom?

LUC. Why shouldn't I? Haven't I always been interested in the dear little fellow?

MARIE (*with a groan*). You certainly have. Do you realize how old the dear little fellow is?

LUC. Well—er—it's all of twelve years since I saw him, and he must have been six or seven at the time and—good heaven, now he must be ——

MARIE. Nineteen!

LUC. Impossible!

MARIE. You would say quite possible if you should see him.

LUC. (*regarding MARIE curiously*). And—er—how does Mr. Wayne regard his stepson?

MARIE. He hasn't seen him. In fact he has never heard of him.

LUC. Marie!

MARIE. Oh, I know what you think! I despise myself.

LUC. But, Marie, surely in the end you will have to — (*Hesitates.*)

MARIE. Yes, yes, of course. Of course I intended to all the time, but this has meant so much to me and I couldn't let anything stand in the way. You know how I have struggled to keep things going and to educate Tommy—to give him what other boys had—and—and I know Mr. Wayne will mean so much to Tommy if I can only manage things right.

LUC. But, my dear, wouldn't it have been better in the beginning —

MARIE (*interrupting*). No, no! You don't understand. I wanted to, but I didn't dare. Mr. Wayne thinks he doesn't care for boys. I must have a little time to bring things about. Mr. Wayne is wonderful to me and I'm trying to be happy, but I am worried.

LUC. I'm so sorry I spoke. You don't suppose the maid —

MARIE. I don't know. She isn't the maid. She is the housekeeper—has been here since the days of the first Mrs. Wayne.

LUC. I'm desperately sorry, Marie. Bring my troubles to you, and then make trouble for you in the bargain.

MARIE. We won't call it trouble until we have to. Nora seems like a good soul. I'll see what I can do.

JEFFREY WAYNE (*speaking in the hall*). Marie, my dear!

MARIE (*warningly*). Mr. Wayne!

WAYNE (*coming to door, c.*). Are you here?

MARIE (*going towards door*). Yes, Jeffrey.

(WAYNE enters.)

WAYNE. Good-evening, my dear. (*Kisses her.*) And how have you been to-day? Lonesome? Just a little bit lonesome? Admit you have!

MARIE. Well, a little, until an old friend arrived unexpectedly. (*Turns and calls LUCERNE.*) Lucerne!

(LUCERNE *joins them.*) Miss Neville, this is my husband.

WAYNE (*shaking hands with LUCERNE*). Miss Neville—delighted, I'm sure!

LUC. And I can't tell you how glad I am to meet you, Mr. Wayne.

MARIE. I have known Miss Neville since we were girls, and we worked together at Reynard's until she left to go on the stage.

WAYNE. The stage? Indeed? Most interesting.

MARIE. Come up-stairs with me, Lucerne, and take off your hat.

LUC. No, no, I couldn't think of such a thing.

MARIE. Of course you are going to have dinner with us? Isn't she, Jeffrey?

WAYNE. Most assuredly, most assuredly! Wouldn't listen to anything else!

LUC. But I'm sure it's intruding—just at this time.

WAYNE. Nonsense. It will be a great pleasure for us.

LUC. Well, if you insist, I'm sure it will be delightful.

(*Goes towards stairs.*)

WAYNE (*quickly, to MARIE*). Hated like the mischief to say that—spoil our evening; but have to be polite, I suppose.

MARIE. I will be right down and give you your tea.

WAYNE. That's right, most radiant of all the stars!

MARIE (*protesting*). Jeffrey!

(*Follows LUCERNE to stairs; they exeunt. WAYNE stands watching her, smiling; suddenly grows serious; rings bell. Walks forward; takes a small jewel box from pocket; opens it, and stands looking at it with much satisfaction. NORA enters.*)

NORA. Did you ring, sir?

WAYNE (*quickly closes box, and returns it to pocket*). Yes, I did, and you are the one I want to see, Nora.

(*Glances towards the stairs.*) Er—Nora — (Draws close to NORA.) I had a letter this morning from Mary.

NORA. Did yez, sir? I hope she's well.

WAYNE. Oh, yes, she's well—very well—very well indeed. Er—Nora, I meant to have said something about this before. You haven't by any chance spoken of Mary to Mrs. Wayne?

NORA. I hev not.

WAYNE. Good! And, Nora, don't say anything about her just at present.

NORA (*belligerently*). May I ask, sir, if it's how Mrs. Wayne don't approve of Miss Mary?

WAYNE. God bless my soul, no! What foolishness! She's never heard of Mary. She'll approve all right when she does hear about her.

NORA. Thin why not till her?

WAYNE (*beginning to grow irritable*). Not yet! Not yet! Nora, I've been a lonely man for years, especially these years Mary has been away at school, and I'm not a well man either. I saw a chance for happiness. I wouldn't allow anything to stand in the way of that chance. Everything will work out all right later, and Mrs. Wayne will mean a great deal to Mary.

NORA. I'm sure I hope so; an' I dare say Mrs. Wayne hez somethin' she's kapin' from you.

WAYNE. What in the devil do you mean?

NORA. What I says. Ain't she loikely to hev skilions in her closet as well as yersilf?

WAYNE. Do you dare to refer to my daughter as a skeleton in a closet?

NORA. Ain't that what yez makin' of her?

WAYNE. How dare you? You've been in my house so long you think you're privileged to say anything! Well, you're not! You understand? You're not!

NORA (*stiffly*). Shure, I understand. I'm intilligint at toimes.

WAYNE. There, Nora, I didn't mean to hurt you. You've served me faithfully and I appreciate it. You know I do. (*Slips a bill into her hand.*)

NORA. Thank ye, sir. Long life to yez!

WAYNE. I understand my own business. I know what I'm doing.

NORA. Yis, sir, the Waynes always do.

WAYNE. And I can depend upon you, Nora, to say nothing until I am ready?

NORA. You kin that. I'd be the lasht to be afther makin' trouble fer yez.

WAYNE. Yes, yes, of course. (*Suddenly and explosively.*) Trouble? What are you talking about? There wouldn't be any trouble. It's just that—that—it's best to wait a little. Confound it! Can't you understand?

NORA (*solemnly*). Yis, sor. I understhand perfectly.

(*Bell rings.*)

WAYNE (*exasperated*). There! For heaven's sake, answer the bell! You remind me of the black flag on a pirate ship!

(*NORA exits, c. WAYNE walks up and down the room several times trying to pull himself together. NORA reënters.*)

NORA. A young man to see yez, sir.

WAYNE. Young man? Who is it?

NORA. He says his name is Livingstone.

WAYNE. Don't know any such person. Another reporter, probably. I'm not in.

NORA (*calmly*). I told him ye wuz.

WAYNE. Well, don't you know any better than that? Good Lord! After the years you've worked for me, can't you —

NORA. He says he wuz sint out from the city—something about working fer yez.

WAYNE. Well, why didn't you say so in the first place? What are you standing there for? Why don't you show him in?

(*NORA exits; ushers THOMAS PRATT in; withdraws.*)

WAYNE is standing back to door. TOM carries a brief case.)

TOM (*stepping forward*). Mr. Wayne?

WAYNE (*turns and gives TOM one look*). Oh, my God!

TOM (*completely upset*). Are you ill, sir?

(*Drops case in chair by table.*)

WAYNE (*dropping on divan*). Passing out, I think. (*TOM rushes to tea table and tries to find something for WAYNE to take.*) Don't do that! (*TOM hurries to WAYNE and fans him with his hat.*) Don't do that! (*TOM hurries to telephone.*) Don't do that! Sit down! (*TOM drops into chair by telephone.*) Not there! You're on my hat! (*TOM leaps to his feet.*) Don't sit down! Stand up! Did they send you out from Lannon's?

TOM (*with a gasp*). Y-Y-Yes, sir.

WAYNE. Didn't they know any better? I said a man! How old are you?

TOM. Nineteen.

WAYNE. I knew it! I knew it! The most obnoxious age in the entire span of our years! And your name, I suppose, is Roderick or Clarence or —

TOM (*eagerly*). No, sir, it's Thomas Livingstone.

WAYNE (*hopefully*). People call you Tom?

TOM. Yes, sir!

WAYNE. H'm! One thing in your favor.

(*TOM takes up brief case.*)

TOM (*eagerly and rapidly*). And I've begun your work, sir. Mr. Lannon said he was sure I was going to be most satisfactory. (*Opens brief case.*) Just have a look, will you, sir? If you'll just leave it to me, I'll simply walk away with this job, and —

WAYNE (*rising and walking towards TOM*). Stop! Stop it! Don't jabber at me that way. Talk slowly and distinctly. God bless my soul! What ails young people nowadays? (*TOM nervously takes a cake from plate on table and turns it over and over in his hands.*) Well, what are you doing now?

TOM (*helplessly*). I beg your pardon, sir. I didn't realize what I was doing.

(TOM *is undecided what to do with the cake.*)

WAYNE. Put it down! (TOM *starts to eat the cake.*) Not down your throat! Down on the table. (TOM *drops cake on table.* WAYNE *takes up a teacup which he waves at TOM while he talks.*) You should know what you are doing. You should keep your wits about you. The idea of having something in your hand and not knowing it. (*Drops cup.*) There! Now you see what you've done?

TOM. I, sir?

WAYNE. Yes, you! You've got me all nerved up! Young people always do! Get away from the table! Sit down! (TOM *starts to sit down.*) Stand up! (TOM *leaps to his feet.*) Sit down! Not there! Stand up! (TOM *tries to follow directions.*) What are you doing? Don't you know whether you want to sit down or stand up? I never saw anything like you.

TOM (*weakly*). Maybe I'd better go, sir.

WAYNE. Go? What are you talking about? Didn't you say you had started my work?

TOM. Y-Y-Yes, sir.

WAYNE (*sits L. of tea table*). Well, how much time do you think I've got to waste? I've been away two weeks, and my secretary ill all that time, and all this mess of work piling up and nobody in the office touched it! And what do you think they gave as a reason? Said they didn't *dare* to. What do you think of that?

TOM. I'm not a bit surprised!

WAYNE. What do you mean?

TOM. I mean—that is—I should have said—if you had been in my place—or I'd been in yours, or they'd been in ours, or we'd been in theirs, or—or—or ——

WAYNE. Didn't I tell you not to jabber at me! Show me the work you have started.

TOM. Yes, sir. (*Tiptoes across to WAYNE.*)

WAYNE. What are you walking like a cat for? I don't want any one pussy-footing around me! Always

feel as if they were going to stick a knife in me when I'm not looking! (TOM *takes some papers from case and hands them to WAYNE.*) You're handing them to me upside down! (TOM *hastily turns them.*) Lannon's right. This is good work. You must know something even if you don't look it. Where's page 8?

TOM (*finds it for him*). Here, sir. (WAYNE *loses his hold on papers and they fly in every direction.*) Merry Christmas!

WAYNE (*springing to his feet*). Now look what you've done! (*At the top of his voice.*) Listen, young man! There's the study! (*Points L.*) Go in there and get to work—by yourself! Don't speak to me unless you have to. You may be able to do the work, but I never saw anything like you. You'd have me in bed with a trained nurse within twenty-four hours!

TOM. Yes, sir, I would, sir. I mean I will, sir—I mean —

WAYNE. Stop it! Work! but for the love of heaven, don't talk!

(*Exit by stairs. TOM draws a long breath.*)

TOM. Holy smoke!

(*Gathers up papers from floor. Exits, L., leaving brief case on chair. MARIE enters by stairs; she carries a little silk vanity bag. She rings; slight pause. NORA enters, R.*)

NORA. Did yez want me, ma'am?

MARIE. Yes. I have a little bag here. I'm not going to use it any more. I thought you might like it.

(*Hands it to her.*)

NORA (*delighted*). Sure, ma'am. That's kind of yez. Long loife to yez and may yez always hev plinty.

MARIE. I'm very happy here, Nora. You think Mr. Wayne is happy, too?

NORA. Shure, he is that, ma'am. It ain't well he is

at all, at all. It's his nerves (MARIE *nods.*), and it do be wonderful how yez gits along with him.

MARIE. You wouldn't do anything to disturb his happiness?

NORA. Not I, ma'am.

MARIE (*meaningly*). Then of course you wouldn't repeat any little thing you happen to hear?

NORA. I would not! If I does say it as shouldn't, I'm foine at minding me own business and lettin' other pable's alone.

MARIE. Good! I don't know a better quality to possess. I think we understand each other, Nora. I'm quite sure we'll be good friends.

NORA. Shure, I hope so, ma'am. I'll do me bist.

MARIE. So will I. I realize it isn't the easiest thing in the world for you to have me come in here.

NORA. Shure, an' yez hasn't done inything to make it hard yit.

MARIE. That's good. I'll try to keep up my record.

NORA. Is that all, ma'am?

MARIE. Yes, thank you.

(NORA *exits*, R. F. MARIE *turns to tea table*. TOM *enters*, L., *after the brief case.*)

TOM. I beg your pardon, I forgot —

MARIE (*turns; with a cry*). Thomas Livingstone Pratt, what are you doing here?

TOM (*equally astonished*). Mother!

MARIE (*looking towards stairs*). For heaven's sake, hush!

TOM. What's the matter? Are you trying to lift the tea service?

MARIE. What are you doing in this house?

TOM (*slowly*). We-ell—I suppose I may as well tell you. I'm working for Mr. Wayne.

MARIE. Working?

TOM. Of course you are surprised.

MARIE. Am I to understand you have left college?

TOM. Temporarily, so to speak.

MARIE. Expelled?

TOM. Not exactly.

MARIE. I'll have the truth, if you please.

TOM. Not this time.

MARIE. This and every other time!

TOM. Every other time, but this isn't one of the others!

MARIE. Do you think you are bright?

TOM. I don't think, I know! I'm the original Lincoln penny!

MARIE. That's just about enough, young man.

TOM (*uneasily*). How long are you going to be visiting here?

MARIE. Visiting here? This is my home.

TOM. This? Your home? You—you don't mean that old powder keg is the man you've married?

MARIE. Are you referring to Mr. Wayne?

TOM. You bet your sweet life I am! Tell me, for heaven's sake! Don't keep me in suspense!

MARIE (*with dignity*). Mr. Wayne is my husband!

TOM. Oh, mama! Sweet papa! Feed the hungry! Help the fallen! Save the ——

MARIE (*warningly*). Thomas ——

TOM. What ever made you do it?

MARIE. I love Mr. Wayne and ——

TOM. Oh, hel ——

MARIE (*with a gasp*). Thomas Pratt!

TOM (*continuing*). —elp me stand up under the blow! For heaven's sake, mother ——

MARIE. *Hush!*

TOM. Why so much lullaby music? (*Suddenly as the truth dawns on him.*) Sa-ay—doesn't my revered stepfather know about me?

MARIE. Not yet!

TOM. But soon!

MARIE. Well, I don't know how soon. You see, Mr. Wayne doesn't care for boys, and ——

TOM. I surmised as much!

MARIE. It will be all right later. Mr. Wayne is going to mean a great deal to you!

TOM. He does already!

MARIE. But you must go right away! I can't tell him about you now.

TOM. You needn't tell him if you don't want to! I'm not fussy about that; but, fond parent, here I stay!

MARIE. Tom!

TOM. No use! You've walked out and done as you pleased without consulting me. Now I claim the same privilege. Please remember that I'm not five years old any longer!

MARIE. I wish you were! There'd be something doing around here for the next few minutes!

TOM. I don't doubt that in the least!

MARIE. As it is, you are only nineteen, and I'm paying for your education and I rather guess you'll do as I say for a while longer!

TOM. I'm willing to, as a general thing! I appreciate fully what you do for me, but I can't allow you to interfere in this affair.

MARIE. That is a nice way for you to speak to me! I assure you I am very proud of you.

TOM. But you don't understand. I was sent here. There's a special reason for my being in this house.

MARIE. What on earth do you mean?

TOM. That I can't tell you.

MARIE. You will tell me, or you'll walk out that door!

TOM. In the past when you've talked like that, little Tom has shrivelled and obeyed; but this time little Tommy has a come-back! If you make me walk out that door, I'll tell Mr. Wayne who I am before I walk out!

MARIE. Tom!

TOM. I know it sounds awful, but you are forcing me to it! I'm sorry. For heaven's sake, forgive me. You would, if you understood. (*Walks up and down room.*) Ye gods! I have to remain in this house! I have to! (*WAYNE enters by stairs.*) That's all there is about it. I have to!

WAYNE (*coming down the stairs.*) Have to what?

(*TOM and MARIE turn with a start.*)

TOM. Have to—have to—*walk!* Walk up and down the room when I'm working on anything important.

WAYNE. Well, do your walking in the study. What are you in here for?

TOM (*picking up case*). The brief case.

WAYNE. I believe you said your name was Livingstone?

TOM. Yes, sir—Livingstone.

WAYNE. Mr. Livingstone—Mrs. Wayne.

TOM (*making MARIE a low bow*). I'm pleased to meet you.

WAYNE. Or perhaps you have already been getting acquainted?

MARIE (*faintly*). Yes, we have—been trying to.

TOM. Yes, yes indeed. We already seem like *old* friends!

WAYNE. H'm! I judge it wouldn't take you long to arrive at that point. And now if you have all you need to work with, we can get along nicely without your society.

TOM. Yes, sir—certainly, sir. (*Starts to exit L.*)

WAYNE (*as TOM is about to exit, turns to MARIE*). Well, fairest rose in the garden— (*TOM in the doorway chokes violently.*) Well, what is the matter with you?

TOM. I—I swallowed my Adam's apple. [*Exit.*]

WAYNE (*looking after him*). I don't know how they ever made such a mistake as to send that out here to work for me. Can you imagine having him under foot all the time?

MARIE (*pours tea*). I suppose it might be trying, but I rather like young people—especially boys.

WAYNE. Every one for their fancy, of course, but if I had to have either around, I'd say let it be a girl!

MARIE. But, don't you think a boy can be so helpful?

WAYNE. Can be, but isn't; and a girl is usually amusing or attractive to look at.

MARIE. Yes, but still I think I'm stronger for boys.

WAYNE. With all due regard for your judgment, my dear, I still prefer girls.

MARIE (*handing him a cup*). Just as you like it, I believe.

WAYNE. And from the fairest hand in the world!

MARIE. You spoil me completely.

WAYNE. Impossible. Couldn't be done. My heaven, (*Looking about.*) I didn't suppose there was any such joy left for me in this world!

MARIE. And you wouldn't let anything—any little thing spoil our happiness?

WAYNE. Certainly not! Now, don't look like that!

MARIE. No, no, I won't; but, Jeffrey, I've been through so much ever since I was sixteen, and this seems almost too wonderful to be true.

WAYNE. Nothing is going to be too wonderful for you, Marie! You have taken a chance at living with the worst disposition on earth and——

MARIE. Don't say that. The more you say it, the nearer you come to making it true.

WAYNE. All right, then. I'm the sweetest tempered being on earth. (*Rises, takes jewel box from pocket; goes to door; looks out; returns.*) Marie, see what I have picked up for you. (*Opens box.*)

MARIE (*goes to WAYNE; gives a cry as she looks at box*). Jeffrey! Where did you get that?

WAYNE. Odd you should ask me that, for I can't tell you. In fact it's rather dangerous to have it just now. You will have to wait a little about wearing it. There are only two or three of them in the world. (*Takes necklace from box and puts it around her neck.*) Probably some Oriental princess has worn this in the past, but none fairer than my princess!

(MARIE *quickly takes it off.*)

MARIE. Oh, Jeffrey, it's wonderful; but it makes me nervous. I can't bear the feel of the thing!

(*Places it in box which WAYNE puts upon tea table.*)

WAYNE (*puts an arm about her, and leads her towards*

fireplace). There, my dear; I didn't intend to make you nervous. Come over here by the fire. (*Leads her to divan.*) I didn't know you could be nervous.

(*Suddenly the lights go out; the firelight is dim and only WAYNE and MARIE can be seen; there is a scream from some one near the stairs.*)

NORA (*is heard*). Holy Saint Catherine! Who are yez? Git away from me.

WAYNE. What the devil has happened? Who turned off the lights?

TOM (*is heard*). Where the deuce is that reading light?

(*A scream from some one near the table.*)

MARIE. I've got some one!

MARY (*is heard*). Let me go!

TOM. At last! (*Switches on reading lamp.*) I thought I'd never find it!

(*TOM is revealed standing by reading light; LUCERNE at foot of stairs; NORA just inside door, c.; MARY near tea table struggling to get away from MARIE.*)

WAYNE (*is half-way to door, c.*). What in heaven's name —— (*Suddenly.*) Marie! The necklace!

MARIE (*looking at tea table*). It's gone!

WAYNE. So that's it! Who's that girl?

MARIE. I don't know. I never saw her before!

NORA. Shure, she's jist a new maid I'm afther hiring.

WAYNE. Is that so? Who gave you authority to hire help in my house?

MARIE. Strange you didn't say anything about it!

NORA. Shure, I didn't shuppose it was nicissary at all, at all. Youse know we nade hilp bad enough.

MARIE. That's perfectly true.

WAYNE. Where did you find the girl?

NORA. She is the laundress' niece—she come over wid some shirtwaists and I hired her.

WAYNE. H'm! I don't like the looks of her at all. (To MARY.) What's your name? Well, are you dumb?

MARY. No, sir. I'm Polly O'Toole.

WAYNE. Well, Polly O'Toole, what were you doing in this room and so close to that tea table?

MARY (*uses slight brogue*). I didn't know any wan was in here and—I was hungry—and—oh, honest ter Gawd, Mr. Wayne, I didn't want nothin' but a cracker!

WAYNE. And the rest of you were hungry also? The room seemed quite fully occupied all of a sudden!

LUC. (*with dignity*). I just came down to dinner.

WAYNE. Was it you that screamed?

LUC. Yes. The lights went out, and some one grabbed me by the arm and I was startled.

WAYNE. Grabbed you by the arm? Then what?

LUC. They passed me—I should think they might have gone out the window.

WAYNE. Nora, whom were you talking to?

NORA. How could I tell? It was black as a pocket. All I know—they had me by the arm and I thought I was bein' kidnapped.

WAYNE (*thoughtfully*). H'm. The same one.

NORA. Shure, that couldn't be. They came at me from this room and wint out the front door.

WAYNE. Out the front door?

NORA. Shure! Didn't you hear it slam?

WAYNE. No!

TOM. I did!

WAYNE. Oh, you did? What were you doing in this room?

TOM (*glances at LUCERNE; she gives him a startled look*). I don't like to say.

WAYNE. Oh, you don't?

MARIE. I don't see why you don't talk to this girl! She was right here by the tea table, and could have taken the box and handed it to an accomplice very easily.

WAYNE. How do I know Livingstone isn't the accomplice?

MARY. Does he call himself Livingstone?

WAYNE. Isn't that his name?

MARY. It is not.

TOM. Don't listen to her, Mr. Wayne. I never saw the girl before in my life.

WAYNE (*to MARY*). Do you know this young man?

MARY. Shure, I do. He's Tommy Pratt! (*MARIE and TOM give a gasp.*) He's going wid a chum of mine and he parks in her front parlor four nights out the seven every week of his life.

(*MARIE is appalled and TOM looks at MARY with his mouth open.*)

TOM (*struggling to speak*). I—I—she—she—it's an outrage!

WAYNE. That's enough!

MARIE. Why don't you search the girl and the boy?

WAYNE. I haven't any authority to search any one. I'll leave that for the police.

LUC. Police!

WAYNE. Certainly. We'll have an inspector here at once.

LUC. I'll just step up to my room, if you don't mind.

NORA. And I'll be seeing afther the dinner.

TOM. And I'll go back to work.

WAYNE. Not so fast!

(*Goes to telephone table; opens drawer, and takes out revolver.*)

MARIE. Jeffrey! What are you going to do?

WAYNE. No one stirs one step out of this room until the inspector arrives! (*NORA crosses herself, LUCERNE sinks down on the stairs, TOM goes limp, and MARY begins to cry. WAYNE at telephone.*) Give me Broxton 190!

CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE.—*Same as in ACT I.*

(*At curtain, WAYNE stands by C. door; MARIE in arm-chair down R.; LUCERNE on divan. MARY sits at R. of tea table, NORA at L. TOM stands down L., his hands in his pockets; he studies his shoes with a thoughtful air; the ladies are all decidedly nervous.*)

LUC. Really, my dear Mr. Wayne, it seems as if you are making a great deal out of a very ordinary occurrence.

WAYNE. I don't call it ordinary.

LUC. Well, of course, there are some things that do seem unusual.

TOM (*looking up*). I'll say they do!

WAYNE (*to TOM*). I don't know as any one is particularly interested in what you say.

NORA. Shure, an' I don't see why we has ter sit here like dummies wid the roast spilin' in the ovin, whin any wan wid half an eye could see it wuz wan o' thim fellers that got away, that sthole the necklace.

WAYNE. Perhaps half an eye would have done if the lights had been on; but two eyes wide open didn't count in the dark.

NORA. It's insulted I am! I—that's afther workin' fer yez twinty years!

WAYNE. Did I say you stole the necklace?

NORA. Yez did not! I'm afther thinkin' yez ain't got the nerve.

WAYNE (*getting excited*). Is that so? My heaven, Nora, you are getting to a point where ——

MARIE (*interrupting, gently*). Jeffrey, it will be so much better if you don't get excited.

WAYNE. Excited? My dear, who's excited? I'm not! I'm calm as a clock.

MARY. What koind? An alarm clock?

(TOM *laughs.*)

WAYNE. Young man, you may laugh out the other side of your mouth when the officer arrives.

TOM. Maybe, but—(*Glances around the room.*) I bet I won't lack for company.

NORA. What does yer mean by that, you fresh young—— (*Bell rings.*)

MARIE (*relieved*). There's the officer!

(WAYNE *exits, c.* NORA *crosses herself.*)

LUC. (*with a shiver*). Isn't this awful?

MARIE (*anxiously*). It certainly is. (*Looks from LUCERNE to TOM.*) If—if any one of you did take the necklace, it would be so much better to say so and—and—explain how you happened to do it.

MARY. Don't all sphake at once!

NORA (*uneasily*). What are they doin' in the hall? Why don't they come in?

TOM. Don't ask embarrassing questions.

NORA. Shure, I ain't askin' the likes o' you iny questions at all, at all.

TOM. Aw—Nora, don't you like me a little bit?

NORA (*half laughing*). That's jist what I likes yez—a little bit.

(WAYNE *enters, followed by INSPECTOR DORAN.*)

WAYNE (*indicating the different ones*). My wife—Miss Neville—the housekeeper—Mr. Livingstone—the laundress's niece.

DORAN (*looks quickly from one to the other*). You will all stand just where you were when the light was turned on.

TOM (*quickly stepping to the table back of divan*). Right here.

LUC. (*crossing to stairs*). And I was here.

(The others take their places without speaking.)

DORAN. Do these people realize how serious this is, Mr. Wayne? Do you realize it yourself?

WAYNE *(cautiously)*. Why—er—I realize the necklace was valuable ——

DORAN *(interrupting)*. I see you don't know. There are only four of those necklaces in existence. They are the property of the Principality of Graunauf. They were stolen from the Royal Palace and disposed of in this country. They are of historical value to Graunauf, so they set secret agents to work and two of the necklaces have been recovered. If any one can prove that they came into possession of one of them in an honest way, the Graunauf government is ready to pay a very large sum to get them back. On the other hand, if any one is convicted of stealing one, the penalty is very severe.

NORA *(crossing herself)*. Saint Patrick be koind!

TOM. Oh, mother, help your erring child!

(MARIE gives him a startled look, but TOM is looking at DORAN with a broad grin.)

LUC. Well, isn't that a crime!

DORAN. Comes pretty near being!

WAYNE. Well, get to work.

DORAN *(nods; goes to telephone)*. Broxton 190. *(Pause.)* Hello! This is Doran. Send me three men—Jeffrey Wayne's home. Tell them to watch house from outside. Front door, back door and French window on west side! *(Turns to TOM.)* Now, I understand that you refuse to say what you were doing in this room.

TOM. I was merely standing in the room.

DORAN. You refuse to tell why you came in?

TOM. Yes, sir—just at present, anyway.

DORAN *(turns to MARY)*. And do you still insist that you wanted a cracker?

MARY. Yes, sir.

DORAN. Why particularly a cracker?

TOM. Ever see a Polly who didn't want a cracker?

DORAN (*sharply; turning to TOM*). That will do! I'm not talking to you. (*Turns to MARY.*) Well?

MARY. I jist happened to see the cracker jar, an' I didn't see inything ilse to eat.

DORAN. And you didn't know any one was in the room?

MARY. No, sir. I thought they had gone out.

DORAN. Who?

MARY. Mr. and Mrs. Wayne.

DORAN. Then you knew they had been in here? How did you know?

NORA. I told her.

DORAN (*turning on NORA*). That will do! You talk when you are spoken to.

NORA. Shure, this is a free country, and I'll be afther talking whin I plase.

DORAN. I'll have you down at forty-nine Main Street in about two seconds if I hear another yip out of you.

MARIE (*kindly*). Really, Nora, you will be of more service to us here than in jail.

DORAN (*turning to MARY*). Now, then, how did you know Mr. and Mrs. Wayne were in here?

MARY. Nora told me.

DORAN. Of course I expected you to say that. Now, if she told you they were in here, why did you think they had gone out? Come now. Answer. You were outside some of the doors and heard them or saw them.

MARY. Shupposin' I was? Where's the harm?

DORAN. That's just what we are trying to find out! Now, what were you doing outside the door, and which door was it? Come on! Out with it!

MARY. The center door, and I was afther tryin' to get a look at Mrs. Wayne.

DORAN. What for?

MARY. I'd been afther hearin' a lot about her and her clothes and I jist wanted to see her.

NORA. And that's the honist truth, if I was to die this minit.

MARIE. I almost believe it is.

DORAN. It isn't what we believe; it's what we prove that counts.

MARIE (*placing her hand on MARY'S shoulder*). But it seems as if this little girl is rather young to be mixed up in a serious theft, and she looks innocent.

(MARY and NORA give MARIE a grateful look.)

WAYNE. Glad you think so. I don't like the girl's looks at all, and haven't from the beginning.

DORAN (*to MARY*). And you are the laundress's niece?

MARY. Yes, sir.

DORAN. And your name?

MARY. Polly O'Toole.

DORAN. Is your aunt's name O'Toole?

MARY (*hesitating*). Er—er —

NORA. It's Flannigan.

DORAN (*wrathfully; to NORA*). Did I speak to you? (*Turns quickly to MARY.*) Do you live with your aunt?

MARY. Yes—(NORA, *behind DORAN, shakes her head.*) er—no—that is—part of the time!

DORAN. Where does she live?

(*All are looking at MARY and NORA, unnoticed, spells the word on her fingers.*)

MARY (*catching NORA'S signs*). Dale Street.

DORAN. What number?

(NORA quickly holds up five fingers, then two.)

MARY. Fifty-two.

DORAN. H'm. Mr. Wayne says you seem to know this young man. (*Turns to TOM.*)

MARY. Yes, sir. He's Tommy Pratt.

DORAN. Where did you meet him?

TOM. She never saw me before in her life!

MARY (*with a toss of her head*). I saw him at Agnes Creighton's.

TOM. My word! What were you doing at Miss Creighton's? Delivering laundry?

MARY. I was not!

DORAN (to TOM). You know Miss Creighton?

TOM. Yes, sir. I've met her.

MARY. Ha!

TOM. She is Judge Creighton's daughter.

WAYNE (scornfully). And that girl claims to be a friend of hers!

DORAN. On, we'll settle that. (*Goes to telephone.*)

WAYNE. Wait! I don't want Judge Creighton's daughter drawn into anything unpleasant.

DORAN. Oh, I'll be careful. (*Looks up number in book.*) Broxton 271 J.

TOM. Oh, if you're going to do that, why—it's true, my name is Pratt and I go to the Creightons' very often. Though how she (*With a look at MARY.*) knows it is beyond me.

DORAN. Now you're talking. (*Pause.*) Hello! Miss Agnes Creighton at home? If you please. (*Pause.*) Miss Creighton? I want to locate Miss Polly O'Toole. Will you tell me where I can find her? No, it's not a joke. What's that? A reporter? Well, supposing I am a reporter? Isn't it all right that a reporter should interview Miss O'Toole? She will be at your house to-morrow evening? What time? All right for me to call there? Thank you. Good-bye. (*Turns to MARY with a puzzled look.*) Do you work for Miss Creighton?

MARY. I does not.

DORAN. Why would a reporter have any possible reason for wanting to interview you?

MARY. Shure you can foind out for yoursilf, you're so smart! I ain't handlin' this case!

DORAN. Oh, I'll find out all right. Don't let that worry you! You're trying to put something over, girlie, and this dame (*Turns to NORA.*) is helping you; but I warn you, you won't get away with it.

WAYNE. Nora had nothing to do with the theft, no matter what her connection with this girl. She has worked faithfully for me for twenty years.

DORAN. She might work faithfully a lifetime, and

then side step. I'm going to trace that necklace, Mr. Wayne, even if I prove your wife stole it.

WAYNE. How dare you? You idiot! Do you——

MARIE. Jeffrey! He's quite right.

WAYNE. Right? To suggest you might have taken what I had just given you?

DORAN. Of course I haven't the least idea that your wife is guilty, but I don't know what motive any one in this room might have, and you should have learned by this time that the law is no respecter of persons. Now we'll have a little searching party. You will each go to the next room with me one at a time. Who would like to go first?

TOM	} (together).	No time like the present.
LUC.		I'm ready.
NORA		Shure, I will.
MARY		I just as soon.

DORAN. That's all right. We'll call off the party. I didn't think any one of you really had it on your person. (*Turns to LUCERNE.*) Miss—er—Neville? (*LUCERNE nods.*) Could it have been (*Gives TOM a sarcastic glance.*) Mr. Livingstone-Pratt who had you by the arm?

LUC. It most certainly could—(*Suddenly stops.*) not!

DORAN. Oh, is that so? And why the *not*?

LUC. I think the one who was standing by me was much taller than I am. That was my impression.

DORAN (*to NORA*). And how about the one you encountered?

NORA. A little feller.

DORAN. Might have been our young friend over here? I mean—for size?

NORA. Shure it might; but he——

DORAN. Was down by that table while the other went out the door. H'm. Nora, where were you standing when the light was turned out? Inside or outside the door?

NORA. Inside, o' course. If I'd been outside wouldn't I o' been afther seein' who turned the lights out?

DORAN. I was thinking you would. Now tell me. Did you see this girl (*Indicates MARY.*) in this room? Come now. Tell the truth!

NORA. Shure, and shame the divil. Well, thin, I didn't see her at all, at all.

DORAN. Did you see any one in this room other than Mr. and Mrs. Wayne?

NORA. Not jist in the room.

WAYNE (*impatently*). Talk sense, Nora.

NORA. Shure, I'm tryin' to, but it sames hard in this company.

DORAN. Go on. Tell us what you saw.

NORA. Jist as the light wint out, I saw thot lady— (*Looks at LUCERNE.*) open the study door.

WAYNE } (*together in surprise*). The study door!
MARIE }

DORAN (*to LUCERNE*). I thought you said you had just come down-stairs?

LUC. I had!

DORAN. How do you account for Nora's story?

LUC. I don't account for it. She is simply mistaken.

DORAN (*to TOM*). You were working in that study?

TOM. Yes, sir.

DORAN. Was Miss Neville in there with you?

TOM. She was not.

DORAN. Did you leave the study?

TOM. Er—yes—once. I went out on the veranda. There's a French window like this one leading onto this same veranda.

DORAN. Why did you go out?

TOM. It was hot in the study. I wanted some air.

DORAN. Could Miss Neville have been in the study while you were out?

TOM (*hesitates a second*). I suppose it's possible.

DORAN. Could you see into this room from the veranda?

TOM. Yes, sir.

DORAN. What was going on in here?

TOM. Mr. Wayne put a chain with a charm around

his wife's neck. She took it off, and handed it to him and he put the box on the tea table and they went over by the fire.

DORAN. Young man, you are getting yourself in bad. That's damaging evidence.

TOM. I know that, but if we're going to shame the devil, we might as well do a good job.

DORAN. Then when the light went out, you came into this room from the window?

TOM. Yes, sir.

DORAN. And you knew exactly where the necklace was?

TOM. I did.

DORAN. Did you see that girl (*Indicates MARY.*) or Miss Neville in here?

TOM. I haven't anything more to say.

DORAN. Oh, yes, you have. Come now! Out with it!

TOM. Nothing doing.

DORAN. We'll see about that.

(*Grabs TOM by the neck. MARY and MARIE scream.*)

WAYNE. There, there, Doran! You can't choke it out of him.

DORAN (*with a snarl*). Yes, I can.

MARY (*rushing towards DORAN*). Let him alone!

MARIE. Jeffrey!

WAYNE (*sharply, pulling TOM away from DORAN*). Let up!

DORAN (*suddenly changing*). Oh, well, if we're going to get—some—(*With a keen glance at MARIE and MARY.*) of the ladies so worked up, we'll wait until later. You may all go now.

WAYNE (*astonished*). You're going to let them go?

DORAN. To any part of the house they choose. They can't leave. My men are outside.

WAYNE (*nervously taking a pillow from divan and squeezing it*). Good Lord! This is a lovely predicament. House surrounded by police!

DORAN. I don't think it will be for so very long.

WAYNE. You mean ——

DORAN. I have a clue. Come, let's make a wager, Mr. Wayne. A box of cigars that I have the guilty person within half an hour.

WAYNE (*coming forward*). Good gracious! You don't mean it? I'll take you up. I'll make it two boxes. Let's see. It's now—(*Takes out his watch; holds it in his right hand.*) five-forty-five. (*DORAN takes out his watch and shows it to WAYNE. WAYNE takes DORAN'S watch in his left hand.*) Yes, we agree.

(*Puts DORAN'S watch in his pocket.*)

DORAN. Think my watch keeps better time than yours?

WAYNE. Eh? (*Suddenly discovers what he has done.*) I beg your pardon, I'm sure.

(*Returns DORAN'S watch.*)

DORAN. I gave you people permission to leave the room. As you are not inclined to go, I will make that an order. I wish you to leave the room. Immediately, please!

(*They go reluctantly; TOM, L., LUCERNE up the stairs and MARY and NORA, C.*)

MARIE. You wish us to go too?

DORAN. Certainly not.

WAYNE. Well, I'm greatly relieved that you are on the track of the guilty party so quickly. I hate to think that it is any of these people ——

DORAN (*interrupting*). Don't let that worry you. It may not be.

WAYNE. But you suspect ——

DORAN. No one at all. I haven't the least idea in the world who has your necklace!

WAYNE. But you said ——

DORAN. I just wanted to get them nerved up to see what the result would be.

MARIE. That is decidedly disappointing, Mr. Doran.

WAYNE (*impatiently*). I'll say it is! (DORAN *begins to search room.*) What are you doing now?

DORAN (*disgusted*). Playing tag with myself!

MARIE. Surely you don't expect to find the necklace in this room?

DORAN. If it isn't in this room, it was handed to an accomplice. That's sure!

WAYNE. That's right! That's right! Here! Let me help! You hunt, too, Marie.

(WAYNE *goes to tea table and begins to take up the different things.*)

MARIE. Oh, I think maybe, Jeffrey, we had better leave it to Mr. Doran.

DORAN. That's a good suggestion, madame. If he should pick it up, he wouldn't know he had it in his hand.

WAYNE. Oh, is that so? Is that so? Think I'm a lunatic, do you?

MARIE. Jeffrey! Please!

(MARIE *takes up a tray of silver spoons and lets the spoons fall to the floor.*)

WAYNE. There! Now look what you've done! My dear, that would have been a nice mess if it had been anything but silver. Glass, you know, or something like that.

MARIE. But it isn't glass, dear, so we won't worry about it. (*Starts to pick the spoons up.*)

WAYNE (*helping her*). Allow me! Allow me, my dear!

(*While they are picking up the spoons DORAN goes to stairs and looks about; shakes out the portières; suddenly picks up the jewel box; turns with it in his hand and glances towards WAYNE and MARIE; finds they are not observing his movements; slips box into his pocket; suddenly goes to c. door and looks out.*)

DORAN. Well, what are *you* looking for? Come in here!

NORA (*coming to c. door*). Who are yez talkin' to?

MARIE. } Nora!

WAYNE. }

WAYNE. Now see here, Nora —

NORA. Shure, I'm afther seeing enough in this house! I'll be afther doin' me sight seein' in some other place whin the (*With a glance at DORAN.*) Lord Mayor calls off the guard.

DORAN. I admire your impudence!

NORA. Shure, I admire your noive.

WAYNE. Were you looking for something in the hall?

NORA. I was.

WAYNE (*excited and unconsciously imitating her*). You was?

NORA. Well, who are yez mocking?

WAYNE. Mocking?

NORA. Yis, mocking!

WAYNE. I?

NORA. Yis—you!

WAYNE. Mocking?

NORA. Yis—mocking!

WAYNE (*waving his hands in the air*). What are you talking about? Are you crazy?

DORAN. For the love of Pete, cut it out! (*To NORA.*) What were you looking for?

NORA. Shure, I dhropped a foot step an'—

DORAN. That's enough! I'm going to take you down to the station.

NORA. Iny toime at all.

MARIE. Really, Nora, if you could help us!

NORA (*to DORAN*). Young man, youse go out in the hall and hev a hunt fer yersilf. If youse foind somethin' yez don't exppect to foind, youse'll know it wuz what I *did* exppect to foind. [*Exit, c.*]

DORAN (*exasperated, looking after her*). Can you beat that! (*Turns away disgusted; suddenly looks towards door, R.*) Sh! (*Goes carefully to door, R.; opens*

it suddenly. MARY *stumbles into room.*) Don't wait to knock! Come in!

WAYNE. She was listening!

MARY (*with a glance at WAYNE*). Gee! But youse quick at catching an idea!

DORAN. Now don't you get fresh, girlie. We've had just about enough and it doesn't pay in the end. What did you want in here? More crackers?

MARY. I haven't had one yit.

DORAN (*pointing to tea table*). Help yourself! Mr. Wayne, will you and your wife accompany me to some room where we shall not be disturbed? There are some questions I would like to ask you.

WAYNE. Certainly, if you think -

(*Glances at MARY.*)

DORAN. Oh, that will be all right. Let her have her lunch in peace.

MARY (*to DORAN as he follows MARIE and WAYNE out, c.*). Hope youse choke!

DORAN. Look out you don't do that yourself on a cracker!

(MARY *goes to door, c., and looks after them.* TOM *enters, l.* MARY, *not noticing TOM, goes quickly to tea table; takes a glass bowl and starts to tiptoe towards door, r.*)

TOM. And why the bowl? There aren't any crackers in that?

MARY (*turns with a start*). Oh, forgit it!

TOM (*crossing quickly to her*). You better let me have that.

MARY. No! (TOM *catches her by the arm and holds her.*) Plase! I got to hide it!

TOM. Hide it? That bowl? Will mysteries never cease! Here, let me see it!

MARY (*trying to get away from him*). No! Oh, all roight thin! (*As he gets it away from her.*) Take it!

TOM (*examines the bowl*). I fail to see why —

(Holds it up and looks at the bottom of it. DORAN enters, c.)

DORAN. And what's this little side show if I may inquire?

TOM *(still holding the bowl overhead)*. Oh—er—I—why, I belong to a fraternity that is going to give a Greek play and I'm going to do a little dance—the dance of the Grecian bowl. I was practicing.

(Does some fancy steps, still holding the bowl aloft while MARY doubles up with laughter.)

DORAN. You don't mean it? Well, take it from me, Mr. Livingstone-Pratt, you are going to be a knock-out! Let me relieve you. I'll take charge of all exhibits.

(Takes the bowl from TOM.)

TOM. Oh, certainly—certainly—delighted!

DORAN. Don't let me interrupt the rehearsal. Go right on. Polly will lend you the cracker jar.

[Exits, c., with bowl.]

MARY. What's he mean?

TOM. Guess he thinks we're working together. First the necklace—then the cut glass. Too bad you won't get a chance to hide it. I was interested in that idea.

MARY. Oh, it's all right now. I don't want to hide it afther youse handled it.

TOM. You don't—after I—wait—wait. *(Holds his head.)* This is where I get off.

MARY *(drawing near to TOM and speaking softly)*. That bowl wuz the nearest thing on the tea table to the jewel case and it had my finger marks on it. Now it's got a lot o' yours.

TOM. Oh, my word, Polly O'Toole! This has gone to your head!

MARY. It wuz koind of yez to hilp me out! Why did yez?

TOM. I don't know. You don't deserve it! You got me in Dutch all right. How do you know Agnes Creighton?

MARY (*with a laugh*). Don't yez wish yez knew?

TOM (*exasperated*). Darn it! There's something familiar about you. (*Suddenly seizes her by the arms.*) Look here!

MARY (*struggles to get away, and holds her head away from him*). Let me go!

TOM. I'm going to have a good look at you! (*Holds both her hands in one of his; puts the other hand under her chin and turns her face towards him.*) Mary! As I live! Mary!

(*Lets her go and looks at her in astonishment.*)

MARY. Sh! Tom! Don't give me away!

TOM. But what in heaven's name are you doing here?

MARY. What are you doing here?

TOM. I'm working for Mr. Wayne—and (*Slowly and pointedly.*) you—know—why!

MARY. But, Tom, to think it should be this house! That you are here!

TOM. Why not here? It looks like a good job; and, although the old man is certainly the limit, I guess I can worry through.

MARY. The old man happens to be Mary's father!

TOM (*aghast*). Mary! Oh, my word! My middle name is mess!

MARY. Oh, don't apologize! All you've seen of him is his temper, and that certainly is the limit!

TOM. But why in the name of common sense are you masquerading like this in your father's house?

MARY. I don't know as I want to tell you now, but there's a reason.

TOM. I should hope so!

(*LUCERNE enters by stairs; speaks cautiously as she comes down the stairs.*)

LUC. Mr. Livingstone, I want to speak to you—alone.

MARY. Shure! I'll be going. [*Exit, R.*]

LUC. I think we had better have an understanding.

(Goes to door, c., and looks out; comes back.)

TOM. Good idea! Miss Neville, I saw you —

(Hesitates.)

LUC. (*nods*). In the study! I felt quite sure you did. You were outside?

TOM. Yes. On the veranda. I saw you standing by this door. You had it slightly open and you were listening.

LUC. Well?

TOM. Well!

LUC. Why didn't you tell Doran?

TOM. I didn't like to. You have been a friend of my—er—of Mrs. Wayne's for years.

LUC. How do you know that?

TOM. Why—why—some one mentioned it.

LUC. Oh, did they? (*MARIE enters, c., hurriedly.*) Marie, is this Tommy?

MARIE. Why, I believe he said his name was Tom. (*To TOM.*) Didn't you?

LUC. Is this your son?

MARIE. Lucerne, for mercy's sake!

LUC. Oh, we'll have to stop this hush business and get at facts!

MARIE. But this is no time for explanations to Mr. Wayne.

TOM. I'll say it isn't.

MARIE. Lucerne, have you —

LUC. No, I haven't the necklace, if that's what you mean! I tried to take it, I'll admit.

MARIE. Lucerne!

LUC. Oh, I didn't intend to steal it! I just had a wild idea for a minute to see if it was mine. If it wasn't, I was going to put it back. If it was mine I was going to tell you and Mr. Wayne, of course. After things happened, I realized that story wouldn't go with Doran.

TOM. What do you mean by saying you tried to take it?

LUC. I got the case, but the necklace wasn't in it.

MARIE (*astonished*). It wasn't?

TOM. Some one had beaten you to it?

LUC. Yes!

MARIE. Where's the case?

LUC. I slipped it into this curtain (*Goes to stairs.*) when I was sitting on the stairs. (*Shakes out the curtain.*) It's gone!

TOM. Doran, of course!

MARIE. Yes, he searched this room!

(WAYNE enters, c., followed by DORAN.)

DORAN (*in the door*). Yes, come in here!

NORA (*comes to door, c.*). And what does yez want now?

DORAN. We're going to have a show-down, and we want you in at the finish! (*MARY softly opens door, R.; steps into room; quickly starts to withdraw.*) Oh, hello, girlie! Hungry again? Here! Take the jar! (*Hands her the cracker jar from table; she takes it; turns up her nose at DORAN and deliberately takes out a cracker and eats it.*) And stay right here! The party isn't complete without you. Now, Mr. Wayne, I'll let you have what I have been able to gather from what facts we have. Whether his name is Livingstone or Pratt, this young man (*Turns to TOM.*) had nothing to do with the theft. He told a straight story about how he came into this room. He shielded Miss Neville because she is a friend of Mrs. Wayne's, and there is something between him and your wife.

WAYNE (*at the top of his voice*). What?

DORAN. Hold on! There is also something between him and this girl. (*Indicates MARY.*) You remember they were the only ones who objected to my choking him? He saw Miss Neville in the study. (*Turns to LUCERNE.*) You came down the other stairway and through the study when you came down to dinner?

LUC. Yes.

DORAN. Intentionally or accidentally?

LUC. Accidentally!

DORAN. You stole the jewel case from the table and found it was empty.

WAYNE. Empty?

DORAN. Better make a clean breast of it, hadn't you?

LUC. I owned one of those necklaces. I lost it in an unusual way, a few days ago. I merely intended to see if this was my necklace.

MARIE. That's true, Jeffrey! I'm sure it is. She told me about it before you came home.

WAYNE (*confused*). But the necklace was gone! See here, Doran! You haven't done a thing about those men that got away. I can't understand——

DORAN. There weren't any men. This young man had Miss Neville by the arm. She knew it and wouldn't say so because he was shielding her. No one had Nora by the arm. She was bluffing!

WAYNE. But why—and the lights!

DORAN. Nora turned the lights out because she didn't want that girl (*Turns to MARY.*) caught in here, and then she lied about some one going out the door to turn suspicion from her!

NORA (*who has been regarding DORAN open mouthed, crosses herself*). Holy Saint Patrick!

DORAN (*suddenly goes to MARY and removes her wig; MARY gives a scream*). Ever see this girl before?

WAYNE. Mary!

DORAN. Know her?

WAYNE. Know her? She's my daughter!

MARIE (*with a cry*). Jeffrey!

WAYNE (*suddenly remembering*). Marie, my dear, what can I say?

MARIE. Don't say a word, Jeffrey! (*Goes to TOM and puts her hand on his shoulder.*) This is my son!

WAYNE (*completely staggered*). My God!

DORAN (*to MARY*). What's the meaning of your performance?

MARY. I wanted to see Mrs. Wayne.

MARIE (*goes to MARY and puts her arm around her*). My dear, I can understand.

DORAN. Miss Creighton knew about the Polly O'Toole business?

MARY. Yes, it's a part I'm going to play.

WAYNE (*regarding DORAN wonderingly*). Doran, you beat anything I ever heard of. I apologize to you. I thought you weren't doing anything.

DORAN. This was all easy enough. The point is—where is the necklace? I haven't done anything if I don't locate that. It isn't likely your daughter has it and——

TOM (*suddenly stepping forward*). I bet I know! Er—ahem—my dear father, what did you do with it?

WAYNE. God bless my soul, is he talking to me? What do you mean?

DORAN. By Jove, I never thought of that! Yes, Mr. Wayne, where did you put it when Mrs. Wayne took it off?

WAYNE. In the case, of course! Are you trying to make me out a lunatic?

DORAN. Certainly not, but every one in this room can testify that you don't know what you are doing with your hands. Now you thought you put it in the case—but you didn't. You dropped it somewhere. Think!

WAYNE (*helplessly, beginning to search in his pockets*). Why—I—I—never heard such foolishness—never in my life——

MARY (*who has been calmly eating crackers, suddenly gives a cry*). In the cracker jar!

(*Takes it from jar and holds it up.*)

ALL. What? As I live! It is!

DORAN (*taking it*). Mr. Pratt, I take off my hat to you. Miss Neville, can you identify this?

LUC. (*looks at it*). Yes! It is mine! My initials! There!

DORAN. Get ready to come down to the station with me at once. And you also, Mr. Wayne. You will have to tell how you came into possession of it.

WAYNE. Certainly—certainly—anything you say—

God bless my soul! What am I ever going to do to make up for all the fuss I've caused over nothing?

DORAN. Miss Neville won't say anything when she finds what the Graunauf government is willing to pay for the return of that necklace.

LUC. It's too good to be true! I'll be ready in a minute, Mr. Doran. (*Hurries up the stairs.*)

DORAN. As for me, Mr. Wayne, I can never thank you enough for calling me on this. I tell you it means something to locate one of these trinkets.

(*Holds up the necklace.*)

NORA. Well, I'd loike to ask if iny wan in this house is goin' ter eat iny dinner this noight?

MARIE. Yes, all of us! Jeffrey, you and Lucerne bring Mr. Doran back with you.

DORAN. Why, thank you, Mrs. Wayne. It will give me the greatest pleasure. [*Exit, c.*]

MARIE (*turns to TOM*). And now it is your turn to explain your presence in this house.

TOM. Certainly. I love Mary.

WAYNE (*at the top of his voice*). What?

TOM. She promised to become engaged to me if I could prove there was any man in me. She didn't believe I would ever be willing to get a job and go to work. Now I have proved that I can, she will probably be willing that I should finish my college course.

WAYNE (*with a gasp*). What? Mary! You children—God bless my soul——

MARY (*warningly*). Father, there isn't a single come-back from you.

TOM. How about it, mother?

MARIE. I fail to see, Jeffrey, how we can have anything to say about this.

WAYNE. I guess you're right, my dear. I guess you're right. (*As she leads him out, c.*) But those—two children! What in heaven's name is the world coming to?

TOM (*joyfully*). My word, Mary! Hearts are trumps!

MARY. Tom Pratt, how did you dare to tell everything like that without asking me? I am never going to speak to you again. (*Walks to stairs and starts up.*)

TOM (*quickly takes a cracker from the jar and starts after her*). Polly!

(*Grabs her; she makes a misstep and falls back into his arms.*)

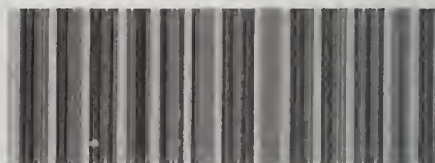
MARY. Tom! Let me go! (*Struggles for a second.*)

TOM (*holding her around the waist with his left arm, holds the cracker up in front of her*). Want it?

MARY (*suddenly laughs*). H'm! Maybe!

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