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A Monologue for a Lady

A PASSING CLOUD

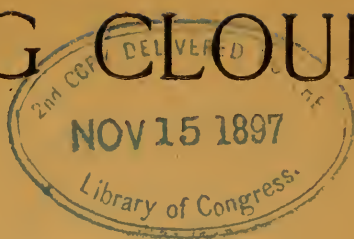


BY
MARSDEN BROWN

CHICAGO
THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY

BRADLEY DES.

A PASSING CLOUD



A MONOLOGUE

BY ✓

MARSDEN BROWN

AUTHOR OF "A BOLD STRATAGEM"



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CHICAGO
THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY

1897
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CHARACTER.

MRS. GRACE HAYWARD—A bride of one month.

Plays fifteen to twenty minutes.

Costume.—Handsome evening dress.

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A PASSING CLOUD.

SCENE.—*A small drawing-room prettily furnished. A door at back of the stage. To the right a mantelpiece with a clock upon it. To the left a writing-table with notepaper, pens, and an ink bottle. At the rise of the curtain, Grace, in a well made evening-dress, is seen walking up and down. She stops suddenly and looks at the clock.*]

Grace. Six o'clock! No! nine minutes past six! [*Sits down. Emphasises the words.*] I'll wait another moment more! [*Gets up quickly.*] 'Tis he! [*After listening at the door.*] No! 'Tis not he! 'Tis the wind! [*Looks at the clock.*] And it's quite ten minutes past six! I declare it's eleven minutes past! [*Sighs.*] How slowly the time passes! [*Listens.*] Hush! [*With irritation.*] It's the wind again! I must have a portiere put over the front door to keep out the wind. [*After a time.*] A quarter past six! He's just a quarter of an hour too late—a century it seems when one is waiting! [*Turns towards the door and speaks in a supplicating voice.*] Do—do make haste and come, Harry! [*Turns to audience.*] His name is Harry! [*After a moment.*] My Harry! Whom else could I be waiting and longing for like this? [*Looks at the clock.*] Seventeen minutes past six! [*To the audience.*] You don't know him? Very well, then. Do you know a man named Apollo? Of course you do. Very well, then; Harry is just exactly like him! He has a charm, besides, which is all his own. [*Looks at the clock.*] Twenty-two minutes past six! [*To the audience.*] It was I who discovered Harry; all by myself! Mamma and I were spending a few weeks at the sea shore. I went to the beach one afternoon to try and find some shells for the little children at home. I was kneeling on the sand—I had dug my hand right down into the sand. [*Shows her right hand.*] This one, you see. All of a moment I felt

something taking hold of my fingers. [*Looks at the clock.*] Twenty-five minutes past six! [*To the audience.*] Thinking it was a crab, I screamed and jumped up. A man, quite a young one, was standing there. He was blushing horribly—so was I. The sky was looking so blue and the sea so green. Ah! there are certain moments in one's life one cannot forget! [*Her voice changes.*] A voice broke the silence—his voice. "I beg ten thousands pardons—I mistook your fingers for, I cannot say what! Pink coral, perhaps." He was crimson with blushes. "And I took yours," replied I, stammering a good deal, "for a crab! And my name is Grace." "Mine is Harold," he replied, stammering in his turn. "An only daughter," I added, not knowing what to say. "An only son," he murmured. "Ah! thanks!" So we bowed, and each went our way. We were both as pale as pale could be. [*Looking at clock.*] Half-past six! You guess the rest? Later we met at a ball—quite by chance. It was my first ball, and grand-mamma was very cross about my going at all, because I wasn't really quite eighteen. Well, he was introduced to me by Mrs. Alistair. And the end of it all was, that only a month ago we were married. Such a lovely wedding! Such pretty dresses! As I came down the aisle, everybody said "How sweet!" I was glad of that, for Harry's sake, you know! My cheeks were whiter than my dress. *The longest train you ever saw, and embroidered all over with pearls.* I felt very odd, but very happy. Harry's tooth was aching. I must say it over again: there are moments in one's life one can't forget! [*Looks at the clock. In a meditative tone.*] Only married a month! And— [*Adds quickly.*] But we shall always love one another. He's so good and kind, there is no doubt about it! Always so gentle! [*Confidentially.*] When we're alone I call him "Dearest!" and he calls me "Darling." [*With sudden agitation.*] How strange he hasn't returned! This is the first time since our marriage he has been late in coming home. Usually at six o'clock punctually—not a minute later—I hear him put his key in the lock, and then I am in his arms, or he in mine. It doesn't matter which—it just depends. How is it that to-day—? [*Walking up and down.*] O dear! how dreadfully worried I am! [*To the audience.*] What? Detained? How? By whom? Not by his business, because I have just remembered that he is going to the country to-day. By some one else, then. Who could it be? [*After a moment.*] Ah! you see, I can find no excuse for him; that's the worst of it! [*To herself.*] If I had not told him we were to dine with mamma to-night. I

might have thought—but he knows as well as I do! He knows I had this new dress made on purpose! So. [*Her voice falters.*] It does suit me well, doesn't it. A little large around the waist, perhaps. He ought to know how impatient I should be! I will have it taken in at least two inches. He ought—[*Looks at the clock.*] O dear! The time! I feel inclined to turn back the hand; but that's no use! [*She thinks she hears a sound, runs to the window.*] Here he is! No! It's a cart! A cart! Perhaps he has been run over. [*Covers her face.*] Faint, crushed, mangled! with a broken leg, an arm broken. [*Runs to the window again and looks out.*] Stop, stop! [*This to a passing coachman.*] Dear me! I must be mad! Nothing has happened after all. [*To the audience.*] He has met a friend, perhaps. Perhaps—No! Not that or—[*Dismisses the thought.*] No! Not likely at all! In fact, it's not this, not this, not that, not a cart, not a broken arm, nor any thing I can think of, unless it be the terrible truth, which I had better realize at once, that he is beginning to love me less. [*She brushes away a tear.*] Yes! now I know he has had enough of me, of our little home, of our happiness, of my love for him! A month—that's a long time for man—and then! Oh! how wretched I am. [*Knocks her foot impatiently on the floor.*] Idiot! [*Listens.*] That's he!—No! not yet. [*Turns to the door.*] When you come in I shall just shew what a bad time I can give you. You shall see what I can say, and do, when it comes to the point. [*To the audience.*] The first real fight between us—oh, there are moments in one's life very, very terrible to bear! But only let me be calm, sensible, dignified. What attitude, now, should I really take? How speak? How look? It's very difficult to know. But, then, it's my first attempt. If my mother were here she would tell me exactly how to manage it all, Why, she thinks nothing of three scenes a day with father! [*Smiles.*] Poor man! [*Her voice changes.*] Let me see. [*After a moment.*] No!—yes! That's it! When he comes in I'll look very grave—majestic; my face shall be as rigid as marble. He, longing to make friends, will say, "Excuse me, darling, for being so late, but—" Then I shall interrupt him, and say [*very coldly*], "You are at liberty to come at whatever time you choose!" He will say, "I must tell you what kept me," and I will answer, "I do not even care to know." Then he will ask, "Is Darling vexed with her Dearest?" and I will answer [*again very coldly*], "I am not your Darling, and you are not my Dearest." He will try to give me a kiss, but with an imperious gesture I shall wave him aside. After that

he might laugh, and I am afraid I might too. Somehow I can't help laughing whenever he does. [*Laughs irresistibly to herself.*] Though it's awfully silly. [*After a pause.*] Perhaps a sad and resigned air would have the greatest effect. A lamb led to the slaughter like this—"Yes, dear, you are free, quite free. I don't reproach you," and so on, and so on. Seeing me take the whole thing so sadly and so gently, I daresay he will try to comfort me, but I won't let him. But now, supposing I were to see, on the other hand, what personal violence might do. If I were to accost him—[*Draws herself up, and raises her arm.*] "You wretch! I shall show you I am not the simple-hearted child you think me." [*Lets her arm fall.*] But no! He wouldn't let me do it! And perhaps he might return the blow. One can never be sure of a man! Let me think of something else. [*To the audience.*] What do you say to my having hysterics? [*Points to a spot on the floor.*] There, on the floor, with my hair falling over my shoulders, my eyes rolling, my teeth gnashing, sighing, sobbing, screaming, foaming at the mouth. Mamma, I knew, was very fond of trying hysterics a few years ago, although she has given them up since, for they tired her so much, and papa said he had got used to them. [*Looks at the clock.*] Twenty minutes to seven—[*resolutely.*] I shall decide upon hysterics. [*Puts her hand as if to take down her hair.*] But no; I should have to do up my hair all over again, and in rolling on the floor I might spoil my dress. Besides, sobbing and crying, I might get my eyes red for dinner. A simple faint ought to be enough at any rate for the first time. [*Throws herself into an arm-chair.*] There! that's better! Here I shall remain cold, pale, languid, dying, dead. He will come in, rush up to me, ask me a thousand questions, and he'll find me lifeless. Then he'll be beside himself, call aloud for the servants, go down on his knees before me, dash cold water on my marble-white forehead. [*Gets up quickly.*] But, then, my poor, unfortunate dress! What a pity that dinner stands in the way! [*After a moment.*] Suppose I pretend to be mad! They say nothing is so much like madness as perfect sanity. Only Harry might take advantage of me by sending for a doctor—a specialist. A man who doesn't love his wife is capable of all that's bad. It isn't only that he doesn't love me. I wouldn't mind that—but I believe he positively dislikes me—detests me! I'm certain of it. I have proof, [*In a tragic voice.*] I must resign myself to my fate. Nothing remains to me but to bear the misery he brings upon me. No! I won't bear it! I'll go home. [*Thinks for awhile.*] I know

what I will do. I will send for mamma, and let her make a terrible scene. Then, when he is quite annihilated, she shall take me away with her—far, far away from this sad home, where I have suffered so terribly and borne so much. [*Changes her tone.*] I will write. [*Sits at writing-table.*] “My own dearest mother.” [*Looks at the clock.*] Ten minutes to seven. “It will soon be four days.” I’ll put a week—[*writes.*] “It is just a week since Harry left home, and he has not yet returned.” [*Leaves off writing and listens.*] Hush! Listen! [*With a cry of pleasure.*] It’s he! it really is he! [*Puts her hand to her heart.*] Oh! There are moments in one’s life which make up for all. But what shall I do? [*Tears up letter.*] First I must tear up this letter. [*Hesitates.*] Shall I faint? Perhaps not. No! I’ll just run and give him a kiss, and faint another time! [*Runs quickly out at the door.*]

CURTAIN.

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