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THE VISITING SMITHS

—BY—

DELIA HEYWOOD



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The Visiting Smiths



A FARCE IN THREE ACTS



By
DELIA HEYWOOD



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The Visiting Smiths

ACT I.

(Mr. and Mrs. Charles Smith seated at a library table, reading.)

Mr. Smith—(laying aside his paper) I met a man on the street today, who reminded me of one of the numerous relatives that used to live in our old town at Smith's Corners. A queer-looking individual with a pompous air, though one could see he was fresh from the country. I must confess that our branch of the family contains more odd specimens of humanity than could be gathered together anywhere else than at Smith's Corners. By the way, that is why Father moved to this city. We are two hundred miles from our old home, and as Smith's Corner people seldom travel farther than the nearest village, we have been free from the invasion of second and third cousins—and cousins-in-law, who devoured our substance, and made no end of work and worry for poor Mother. But I've been uneasy in my mind since I met that swagging rustic. It is barely possible that he is one of our Smiths and that he may ferret us out.

*Mrs. S.—*Oh—well—never mind. We must be hospitable. I'd really enjoy meeting one of those odd characters.

(The bell rings. Enter Mr. Jeremiah Smith, ushered in by the maid. He advances toward Mr. C. Smith, and grasps his hand, which he continues to shake, while making himself known.)

*J. Smith—*Heow dyc dew, Charlie? I'm awful glad I found ye out.

C. Smith--But--excuse me--I don't remember having met you before, my friend.

J. Smith--No, I s'pose ye don't. I'm yer cousin, Jeremiah Smith. Your pa an' mine was second cousins; so that makes us--le's see--third or fourth---I dun' know which, but that don't make no difference. I don't egg-sackly recollect yeou, seein' we was both little fellers when your folks moved away; but I've heerd so much talk about Uncle Joe's family that I feel purty well acquainted. I knowed I'd be sure of a welcome. There ain't no freer-hearted folks in the world than the Smiths. I guess the Smith's Corner folks never would a-knowed where to find ye if Squire Rice's son hadn't come to the city this summer. Yeou'll be apt to see some of 'em before long. They git eout from home more'n they use tew.

Mrs. Smith--You have already had supper, I suppose?

J. Smith--No, I hain't. Fact is, 'twas ruther late when I got in on the train, and I sez to myself, sez I, "Cousin Charlie'll take it as an insult if I should go to the hotel for supper." I'm here on a little business that'll take me several days to transack an' we'll have a chance to git better acquainted before I leave.

Mrs. S.—(taps bell. *The maid enters.*)

Mrs. S.—Bridget, you must prepare supper for this gentleman

Jeremiah—Now, don't go to no great trouble. I ain't one of the pertickler kind.

(*The doorbell rings violently. Enter Miss Tabitha Smith, a maiden lady attired in a very old-fashioned costume. She carries an umbrella and has several packages in her arms.*)

Miss T. Smith—(with a jerky bow) Heow dye dew, nephew, heow dye dew, niece? I see ye don't know who I am, an' 'tain't no wonder, seein' as Charles, here, was only a year-old baby when I left Smith's Corner to work in the fact'ry down to Lowell. I'm yeour Aunt Tabithy, Charles, that is, I'm an own sister to yer ma's uncle's

wife. Well, there! I didn't pay the hackman—couldn't make out the change. Yeou wouldn't mind settlin' the bill, would ye, nephew? An' please bring in my bunnit, an' my canary cage, an' my travelin' bag. (*Exit Mr. S.*)

(*The doorbell rings again. Mr. Peleg Smith enters, followed by his wife and six children. He grasps Jeremiah by the hand, exclaiming in a deep bass voice.*)

Peleg—Heow are ye, Charlie?

Jeremiah—Yeou've got the better o' me. I'm Jeremiah Smith, of the Corners—

Peleg—(*turning to Chas. Smith.*) I might ha' knowed this is Charlie—got the same kind o' roguish look he allus had. (*Grasps Mr. Smith by the shoulder as he enters, carrying Tabitha's belongings, causing him to drop the bonnet box.*)

Tabitha—Nephew, you're dretful careless, seems to me. That's ma's best bunnit spilt out on the floor. She's had it fifteen year, an' I brought it deown ter hev it made over. Wal, 'tain't hurt, I guess.

Charles—(*to Peleg, who still retains his grasp on his shoulder*) Really, I am at a loss—

Peleg—S'pose ye be! S'pose ye be! I'm Peleg Smith, junior—yer Aunt Samanthy's oldest son—yer Uncle Jotham is dead, yer know. (*Turns to Mrs. C. Smith.*) This is Mis' Charlie Smith, I guess. Heow dye dew, marm? I hope to see ye well.

(*Mrs. Peleg Smith and children are brought forward by the husband and father.*)

Peleg—Let me make ye 'quainted with my wife, Cousin Charlie—my wife, Mis' Smith. An' here's our young ones. Hezekiah, he's the oldest, goin' on fifteen; an' here's Hannah an' Jerushy an' Henry Clay. All got good, old-fashioned names.

(*The bell rings again. Adoniram Smith, a very flashily-dressed young man, with a rather rowdyish air, is ushered into the room by Mrs. C. Smith.*)

Adoniram—Good evenin' all! I called to see my cousin, Charlie Smith, but I'll be blamed if I know which is which.

Charles—I am Charles Smith, and you are my cousin—who?

Adoniram—I reckon yeou never heerd of me, an', considerin' that I'm your Uncle William Henry's youngest boy, and that he moved to Indiana before I was born, you couldn't be expected to. I 'lowed to come north an' take a squirt at the sights—see the elephant, ye know—an' git acquainted with some of our folks in York State. We heard from Uncle Zimri Smith, that your dad made quite a little fortune before he died, an' that he set you up in business. Got my pockets picked on the train, an' so I ain't quite so flush as I was when I started, but I reckon you'll lend me a little of the needful until I can hear from home. My old man's doin' well—got a right smart chance o' land on Goose Creek Holler—mighty tight-fisted, but he'll sure hev to pan out a little of his dough to yours truly. Mebby you could git me inter some payin' business. I don't propose to drudge on no old farm as my dad does, now, I tell you.

Tabitha—(*who has been rocking violently in a big chair.*) Niece, I'm feelin' kinder faint in my stomach. I s'pose you've ben to supper, but mebby the hired girl could make me a cup o' tea, an' set out a little somethin' to eat.

Mrs. C. Smith—Pardon me—I will have tea made directly—in fact Bridget is already preparing supper for Mr.—Mr.—this gentleman. (*Points to Jeremiah.*) And, perhaps there are others who would like supper.

Adoniram—Fact is, I'm as hungry as a bear. Seein' some rascal stole my pocket book, I couldn't take supper in the dinin' car.

Peleg—My woman brought a lunch from home, but the youngsters got away with it all in no time. Yes, we can all do justice to a square meal.

Henry Clay—(a six-year-old urchin) Goody! Goody! Ma said we'd git lots of nice things to eat down to Cousin Charlie's.

Mrs. C. Smith—(taps bell. Enter Bridget) Please set the table for eleven. Charles, run out to the bakery and get some bread and cake—and stop at the grocery for some canned salmon. Our family is small, you know, Mrs. Smith, (turning to Mrs. Peleg) and sometimes the larder runs low.

Mrs. Peleg—Well, I guess I know how that is. My young ones and Peleg himself, are dretful hearty eaters.

Tabitha—I dunno's I spoke of it, but I can't bear Javy tea. I hope you've got that blended kind.

Charles S.—Well, no—but I'll send for some tomorrow. (Exit Charles Smith.)

Mrs. C. Smith—(rising) Please let me escort you all to the dining room. Charles will be back in a few minutes. I know you are very hungry.

CURTAIN.



ACT II.

(Scene—Same as Act I.)

Mrs. Smith—O, I'm so tired! I wonder how long this visitation will last.

Charles—(gloomily) I've no idea.

Mrs. Smith—And, Charlie! Just think! Those stylish cousins of mine, Janet and Julia, will be here tomorrow. And our pink tea—I've invited guests already for Tuesday evening. Whatever shall I do? (She raises her handkerchief to her eyes.)

Bridget—Well, mum, I've got 'em all off illegantly to bed. The ould maid—it's beggin' yer pardon, I am, mum, for spakin' so disrespectfully of yer relation, the maiden leddy—she grumbled a dale about her room. It wasn't

the nice one she expected, not much finer than Squair Somebody's folks had down to Smith's Corner. An' the bye with the cross eye—bad luck to him—has destroyed the rug in the East room completely in the act of spillin' a bottle of castor ile on it. An' two of the byes got into a fight and in throwin' yer purty little statocs at each other, hit yer illegant mirror an it's cracked from top to bottom. Misther Peleg Smith's that handy at spittin', mum, that he's likely to decorate yer furniture in a foine fashion. They just nately fill the beds, mum, an' it's mesilf that'll slape on the hearth-rug the night. I've made you an illegant bed in the bath tub with the sofa cushion for a pillow, an' there's a blanket left for Misther Smith.

Mr. Smith—(rising and pacing the floor) This invasion is enough to drive a man mad. Probably another horde of Smiths will swoop down upon us before the week is out. I'll not stand it. I'll have my name changed. I'll — *(telephone rings. Mr. S. goes to phone.)* Yes, this is Charles Smith's residence.—Cousin Zephaniah and wife?—I've no cousin by that name, that I know—No, I can't accommodate you with sleeping quarters. Better go to the hotel—Never mind—I've no time to listen to you.—Good-bye. *(Turning to wife)* It never rains but it pours. Was ever a man so persecuted by kindred?

*Bridget—*Misther Smith, it's mesilf that hates to say it, but Oim not able to enjure the work, an' so I'll be askin' for my wages in the mornin'. *(Exit.)*

Mrs. Smith—(sobbing) Oh, Charles, what shall we do?

*Mr. S.—*Do? I'll order the whole tribe out of the house. I'll sell out tomorrow. We'll go to Mexico—South America—anywhere out of the way of my relations.

*Mrs. S.—*Charlie, dear, I can't bear to think of your rudely ordering them away. An idea has just occurred to me, wherby we may rid ourselves of our unwelcome visitors. Let us feign sickness. Of course we will be guilty of deception, but then the exigencies of the case seem to justify it.

Mr. Smith—All is fair in love or war, and in some other emergencies as well. You're a genius, Maud Elizabeth Smith. The flu is abroad in the land, and I heard yesterday of a few cases of small pox in the city. Imagine the consternation of these dear cousins of mine when they find no breakfast awaiting them in the morning. Ha! Ha! Ha!

CURTAIN

ACT III.

(Same room. Mr. C. Smith lying on a couch, covered with various articles of clothing. His wife reclining in an easy chair with feet elevated on another. She is very pale, owing to an application of face powder. Various bottles of medicine are on the table. Bridget in attendance. Footsteps sound near. Children's voices heard. Enter Jeremiah, Peleg and family, Miss Tabitha, with Adoniram in rear.)

Jeremiah—Hello! Why, Charlie, what's the matter?

(A groan and some muttered unintelligible words are his only answer. A low moan escapes the lips of Mrs. S., who seems asleep.)

Mrs. Peleg—Land sakes! Are they both sick?

Bridget—Indade, mum, they took that bad that Oim afraid they've got the flu, or worse yit, the smallpox.

Miss Tabitha—*(screams)* The flu! Smallpox!

Bridget—Well, mum, it's more than loikely, seein' there's so many dyin' of both diseases in this city.

Mrs. Peleg—O, Peleg! Let's git eout o' this place, for mercy's sake! Hurry, children, run upstairs. Oh, dear! We've been exposed already.

(A great scramble is made to exit.)

Adoniram—*(lingers behind the others. Soliloquizes)* I reckon it's no use thinkin' of gettin' any help from

Charlie. I'll have to pawn my watch. Jewhillikens! How he groans and mutters! Crazy as a loon, I vow. It's sure some awful disease, an' I'm bound to ketch it, if I don't git out o' here. (*Runs from room.*)

(*When the sound of hurrying footsteps and excited voices have died away, Mr. Smith jumps from his couch and dances about the room in great glee. Bridget claps her hands, while Mrs. Smith bursts into uncontrollable laughter.*)

Mr. Smith—Well, Bridget, how about your wages?

Bridget—Sure, it was mesilf that spoke too hasty, last night. I've niver a thought o' lavin' the loikes o' you, an' the misthress.

Mr. Smith—(*lays his hand caressingly on his wife's shoulder.*) Hurrah for you, little wife! Your strategy has succeeded in repelling this invasion of kindred.

(*Bridget stands with folded arms beside the pair, a broad smile on her good-humored face.*)

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