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# For Love or Money



Helen Sherman Griffith

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For Love or Money

# For Love or Money

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

- COLONEL VAN TRITON, . . . *in the harassing position  
of Guardian.*
- ROBERT ACTON, . . . . . *a modest, misunderstood lover.*
- HAROLD WESTON, . . . . . *a loyal friend.*
- LOUISE HERNDON, . . . . . *seeking to be loved for herself.*
- MISS HORTON, . . . . . *Louise's aunt, her cap set for the  
Colonel.*
- MRS. AMBROSE, . . . . . *with views for Marjorie—and herself.*
- MARJORIE AMBROSE, . . . . . *not "out" but coming.*
- KATY, . . . . . *Louise's maid.*

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## COSTUMES, MODERN

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## PROPERTIES

Small dog, paper bag of peanuts, box containing flowers, step-ladder, bonnet in bandbox, telegraph blank, small tea service with several cups.

TIME IN REPRESENTATION:—ONE HOUR AND FIFTEEN  
MINUTES.



# For Love or Money

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## ACT I

*Time : Afternoon.*

SCENE.—*Drawing-room in LOUISE'S house. Curtain rises disclosing empty stage. Enter MARJORIE, centre back, carrying paper bag. She looks cautiously about room, closes door carefully.*

MARJORIE (*advancing front and putting bag on table*). There, I actually got past the dragon! Mamma is in the library, pouring gossip into Louise's ear. I know it's gossip—probably scandalous gossip—because mamma is smacking her lips and Louise is frowning. Mamma is smacking her lips figuratively, of course. She would never be so vulgar as to do it literally. (*Sits herself on arm of chair.*) Never was girl so pestered as I am. I really don't know "where I am at" any more. I mayn't do tomboy things because I'm too old. Yet I'm not grown up enough to go to parties and talk to young men. I am so tired of behaving properly. (*Rises.*) I am going to have one good time at any rate. These peanuts (*lifts bag from table*) are atrociously vulgar, from mamma's point of view, but I intend to eat them all. (*Door opens.*) Oh, some one's coming! (*Faces door, bag behind back.*) What if it's mamma! *Enter KATY, back. In relieved tone.* Oh, it's only Katy.

KATY (*injured*). Only Katy! Sure, an' how would the house be gittin' on widout me, I'm after wantin' to know!

MARJORIE. It would fall to rack and ruins. I meant I was glad you were not mamma,

KATY. So am I, miss.

MARJORIE (*displaying bag*). Katy, do you like peanuts?

KATY (*mollified*). Do I? Well, now Miss Marjorie, you do know the way to a body's heart.

MARJORIE. Well then, take me to a place of safety where we can eat them together.

KATY. A place of safety, miss? What's wrong? (*Looks about anxiously.*)

MARJORIE. Yes, where mamma cannot see me. I am not "out," Katy, but (*sighs*) I suffer all the restrictions of that emancipated state.

KATY (*leading way to door, L.*). Ach, an' it's sorry I am for yez. Just be after comin' down to de kitchen an' you an' cook an' me can have a cozy time of it together along wid de bag.

MARJORIE (*following*). I knew you'd enter into the spirit of the thing. Oh! (*Stops short.*)

(*Enter MRS. AMBROSE, and LOUISE, back.*)

MRS. AMBROSE (*regarding MARJORIE through lorgnette*). Marjorie, what have you in that bag?

MARJORIE. Oh, oh—why—why, a little present for the dog! Katy was just going to show me the puppies. They're lovely puppies, aren't they, Katy?

KATY (*aside*). However did Miss Marjorie find out about thim pups? Cook an' I was keepin' it a secret for fear as how they's be drowneded.

LOUISE. Puppies? Why, Katy, this is news to me.

MARJORIE (*aside*). To me, too. I thought the pups were a creation of my own brain.

KATY (*beginning to cry*). Sure, mum, they's not big pups. An' they's only four. They're that good down in the cellar, they'd win yer heart! Oh, miss, you won't be after tellin' Miss Horton? I couldn't stand havin' of 'em drowneded, nor cook, nuther.

LOUISE. There, Katy, that will do. We shall discuss the matter later.

MARJORIE. In the meantime, Katy, you must keep your promise. (*Waves bag significantly.*)

KATY. Ah, Miss Marjorie, you do cheer a body up amazin'.

MARJORIE. Of course. A woman's heart lies very much in the same region as a man's. Eh, Katy? Now, right



about face, march! (*They link arms and march to door.*)

MRS. AMBROSE (*scandalized*). Marjorie!

(MAJORIE *drops KATY'S arm and walks off with exaggerated primness, KATY following.*)

MRS. AMBROSE (*to LOUISE*). My dear, I did it for the best. I could not but be aware that Mr. Acton is paying you marked attention—don't blush, my dear. You must not feel shy before such an old friend. (*Puts an arm around LOUISE'S waist.*) And I want to be a true friend, so, my dear, I thought it my duty to repeat to you what I overheard.

LOUISE (*in mechanical voice*). You heard Mr. Acton say —?

MRS. AMBROSE. "I am a poor man. That debt must be paid. Otherwise I should not think of marriage. I must have money."

LOUISE. And you are sure he was talking to a woman?

MRS. AMBROSE. I saw her, my dear. Now, what do you make of it?

LOUISE (*evasively*). What do you make of it?

MRS. AMBROSE (*firmly*). To my mind there is only one interpretation. He is in love with this other woman but she is poor while you—ah, my dear, I shall not wound you further.

LOUISE (*nervously, fingering books on table*). You don't think he could have been referring to some debt to be paid to him—in order that he could afford to marry —?

MRS. AMBROSE (*coldly*). Of course it is easy to twist the meaning one desires, into anything. I have done my best, my dear. I am going to your aunt now. But (*pauses at door*), forewarned should be forearmed. Remember.

(*Exit MRS. AMBROSE, back.*)

LOUISE (*sinking into chair*). How petty, how mean, how grasping the world is! Am I so insignificant, so plain, so uninteresting that it is impossible for any man to love me for myself? I distrust the whole world now—except dear old Hal. I know he does not love me for my money because he has such heaps himself. But he does not love me in the right way to marry me—nor I him. He's just like a brother to me. But with Robert—Mr. Acton—why—

(*Rises.*) Oh, I am sure he is to be trusted! One look into his eyes! (*Pauses.*) But there, as Mrs. Ambrose says, one cannot very well deny spoken words. This determines me to carry out my plan. It seemed cruel to doubt Robert before, but now I think I am justified. Ah, here comes the Colonel.

(COLONEL VAN TRITON *rushes in precipitately. Starts at sight of LOUISE, then sighs with relief.*)

COLONEL. More petticoats! Which one of 'em is it? Ah, my dear. (*As LOUISE turns.*) Here I am, safe and scott-free.

LOUISE (*smiling and offering her hand*). Why, Colonel, you act as if the police were after you.

COLONEL (*mopping his brow*). So they were, my dear. Two policemen in petticoats. And oh, bless me, here they come! (*Sinks down upon sofa.*)

(*Enter MRS. AMBROSE and MISS HORTON together, back.*)

MRS. AMBROSE } (*together*). Ah, my dear Colonel?  
MISS HORTON }

(*They sit down on sofa, one on each side of COLONEL, who attempts to rise. They each catch at an arm and hold him down.*)

MRS. AMBROSE. Don't move, dear Colonel, you look so tired.

MISS HORTON. Quite fagged out, my dear Colonel, and so—so depressed!

MRS. AMBROSE } (*together*). Let me cheer you!  
MISS HORTON }

LOUISE (*aside*). There is evidently no chance for me to unfold my plans. I'll go and complete the details. (*Starts to go, R.*)

COLONEL (*rising and breaking away forcibly*). Miss Louise! My dear—— (*LOUISE pauses.*) You said you wanted to see me on business. Come, come. (*Pleadingly.*) I am sure it was important business?

LOUISE (*to COLONEL, smiling*). Yes, Colonel, it is very important, but I am not quite ready to break the news. I am sure Aunt Carolyn and Mrs. Ambrose will entertain you until I return.

(Exit LOUISE, R.)

COLONEL (*aside*). Shall I come out of this whole, or will they halve me!

MISS HORTON (*rising*). My dear Colonel, I wanted to ask you about ——

MRS. AMBROSE (*rising*). Dear Colonel Van Triton, you are forgetting your promise to ——

MISS HORTON (*crossing*). The Colonel has promised me ——

MRS. AMBROSE (*reseating herself on sofa*). Just sit down here, Colonel. We ——

MISS HORTON. Colonel, if you will come with me to the library, I ——

MRS. AMBROSE (*with dignity*). The Colonel is going to sit here with me.

MISS HORTON. He is going to the library with me.

MRS. AMBROSE. Colonel, come here.

MISS HORTON. Colonel, I am waiting.

COLONEL (*turning from one to the other*). My dear ladies, I should be most glad to advise you; to talk upon any subject. But why can't we all sit here together, eh? And have a nice, cozy little chat, eh?

(*He sets three chairs in a row and bows obsequiously to MRS. AMBROSE and MISS HORTON in turn. They hesitate a moment, then each rush for a chair, pushing them close together and forcing the COLONEL upon the centre chair.*)

MRS. AMBROSE } (*together*). My dear Colonel, as we  
MISS HORTON } were saying ——

KATY (*at door, back*). Mr. Acton, mum. Mr. Weston.

(*Ladies and COLONEL jump up.*)

COLONEL (*aside*). A blessed release!

(Exit KATY.)

(Enter ACTON and WESTON, back.)

ACTON (*aside, looking about room*). She is not here. (*Shakes hands perfunctorily with others.*) Ah, Miss Horton, how-do. How-do, Mrs. Ambrose. Nice day, Colonel. (*Stands apart abstractedly.*)

WESTON (*to COLONEL*). Well, my dear old Don Juan, which came out ahead to-day? Oh, I saw you through the crack, making love to both of them! (*Nudges him.*)

COLONEL (*indignantly, to WESTON*). I making love to them! I was trying to escape.

WESTON (*laughing*). Trying to escape? Ho, ho! You're a sly old dog. (*To MISS HORTON.*) A sly old dog, isn't he, Miss Horton? (*They talk aside.*)

MRS. AMBROSE (*aside*). Now, I must keep Mr. Acton and Louise apart. She might be tempted to accept him in spite of my warnings. Mr. Acton would make such a good match for Marjorie—after she comes out. Of course he hasn't the money that Harold has, but poor Hal's family—in trade! Marjorie will have enough for both, and Robert's family-tree is beyond reproach!

ACTON (*to MISS HORTON*). I hope we shall have the pleasure of seeing your niece this afternoon, Miss Horton? She is well, I trust?

WESTON. The ball last evening was not too much for her?

MISS HORTON. She is well, thanks. Yes, well, but dear child, she is frail—such an exotic. She needs care, tenderness, luxury.

ACTON (*aside*). That is a dig at me, I suppose, because I'm a poor man.

MRS. AMBROSE. Louise is indeed a delicate flower.

COLONEL (*aside*). I am glad that those two can agree on some subject!

MRS. AMBROSE (*with meaning look at ACTON*). I dare say, if she were transplanted from her present—er—path of luxury she would be as weak as—as —

(*Enter KATY, back.*)

KATY. Tea, mum. Miss Herndon says will the ladies come to the library to take a cup of it?

(*Exeunt KATY, MRS. AMBROSE, MISS HORTON, back.*)

ACTON (*to COLONEL*). I say, Colonel, can you give me a hint as to some good and speedy investment? I want to turn an honest penny in short order.

COLONEL (*consulting pocket note-book*). The X. Y. & Z. is going up—P. G. & F., too. The first is the highest

flyer, generally. I'm going to telephone my broker now. Shall I buy for you?

(COLONEL and ACTON walk to door, talking aside.)

WESTON. This investing is a mean business; the sort of "investing" that Acton means to do. Pity every one in the world wasn't born with enough money.

(Exit COLONEL, back, ACTON advances, front.)

WESTON. Better leave that sort of thing alone, old man. It's a mean business.

ACTON. It's easy for you to preach—with your millions. I must make all I can, in any way I can. You don't know the bitterness of poverty, Hal, how it saps one's hopes, undermines one's ambitions. (Enter LOUISE, R., unseen.) Ah, Hal, if I had an assured income, I could rise. I feel sure that, unfettered by poverty, by the petty demands of everyday needs, I could make my mark. But I'll have it before long now, Hal.

WESTON. It would bring you more luck to earn it penny by penny.

ACTON. And lose my youth in the process? No, when a sum is ready to hand I should be foolish not to take it.

WESTON. And is the Smith debt to be paid?

ACTON (*firmly*). Yes, it must be paid. You see, Hal, you understand I must have money, even at the cost of some self-respect.

(Exit LOUISE, unseen.)

WESTON. Well, I don't blame you for trying to collect that, old boy. You are quite justified. But say, can't I lend you something—just enough to tide you over a honeymoon and all that?

ACTON. Thank you, Hal, but that would be borrowing from Peter to pay Paul. No, I'll set myself on my own feet, thanks.

(Enter KATY, carrying tea tray, followed by MISS HORTON, MRS. AMBROSE and COLONEL. KATY places tray on table. Exit KATY.)

MISS HORTON (*seating herself beside table*). We thought it more sociable to have the tea in here. (*Pours.*)

KATY (*heard without*). Sure, now, is it safe to be doin' it? What'll they say to the pore little lamb?

MARJORIE (*heard without*). They'll fall down and worship him. How could they help it? Hold the door open, Katy.

WESTON (*aside*). I hope Marjorie hasn't picked up a lover. If her mother would give us half a chance I'm sure she and I could come to an understanding.

(*Enter MARJORIE, back, carrying a puppy.*)

MARJORIE (*rapturously, advancing front and sitting on floor with puppy on her lap*). Dere oo is, oo dear tootem-wootems! (*Holding puppy up.*) Look, every one. Isn't he sweet?

MRS. AMBROSE (*scandalized*). Marjorie!

MARJORIE. Yes, I know, mamma. But he is sweet. Mr. Weston, do give him some cream. I want to watch him lap it, his tongue is so pink.

(*Enter LOUISE, back. HAROLD pours cream into saucer; he and MARJORIE feed dog.*)

ACTON. Ah, Miss Herndon, I am so glad to see you again.

LOUISE (*coldly, ignoring hand*). Thank you, Mr. Acton. Aunt, will you pour me a cup of tea?

ACTON (*aside*). Now, what in the world have I done to deserve that?

MISS HORTON (*giving LOUISE a cup of tea*). Mr. Acton, how do you take yours?

(*MISS HORTON, MRS. AMBROSE and ACTON talk aside.*)

LOUISE (*to COLONEL*). I am ready to talk to you now, Colonel. No, we need not go to the library. (*Leads him aside.*) It is only a request I have to make which you must grant.

COLONEL. Must, my dear? A request? Say command.

LOUISE (*smiling*). It does amount to that. You see, Colonel, I—— (*Looks about to see that they are out of hearing of others.*) I am so—so suspicious, I want to find my true friends.

COLONEL (*gallantly*). My dear, we are all your faithful slaves!

LOUISE. How do I know that you all are? Some of my

friends may—may be seeking me for my money. Oh, I know it is a horrible idea, but I can't help it. I keep hearing things—people flatter me, toady to me—men that I know are interested in other girls propose to me until I don't know the real feeling from the false. It is horrible, Colonel—a nightmare. I—I daren't let myself fall in love with any one for fear —

COLONEL. For fear he's in love with your fortune?

LOUISE. Exactly. And so I want to be, for a time—without any fortune.

COLONEL (*puzzled*). Why, how can you do that?

LOUISE. The simplest thing in the world. In fact, it's already done. All you have to do, Colonel, is to play your part!

(LOUISE *joins the others.*)

COLONEL (*bewildered*). Play my part! What part? Is the girl mad?

ACTON (*aside*). Shall I attack the guardian first, in the approved three volumned novel style and ask his permission to pay my addresses to his ward, or shall I speak out like a man to — (LOUISE *approaches him with a cup of tea.*) Oh, thank you, thank you! My dear Miss Herndon, if I might presume —

LOUISE (*coldly*). You may not presume anything. (*Joins others.*)

ACTON. I should have to be a snow man to speak out to that. (*Tastes tea.*) Even the tea is chilly.

MRS. AMBROSE (*severely*). Marjorie, get up off the floor at once and take that horrid little dog back where he belongs.

MARJORIE (*rising with puppy in her arms*). He belongs at home, for Katy has given him to me. (*Sits on arm of chair.*)

MRS. AMBROSE. Marjorie!

(MARJORIE *rises and stands primly.*)

MISS HORTON. Marjorie, will you have a cup of tea?

MARJORIE (*curtseying primly*). No, thank you. Mamma says it is bad for the complexion.

MRS. AMBROSE. Marjorie!

MARJORIE (*curtseying primly*). When I am not "out,"

(Enter KATY, back, with telegram.)

KATY (to COLONEL). A message for the Colonel, sint up from his office by a impertinint little b'y wid red hair an' muddy boots.

COLONEL. Dear me. Our office boy has black hair. I wonder what it can be? (*Opens telegram.*)

KATY. It's the mud that's black, sir. An' me wid the hall jus' cl'aned. Ach, the wicked spalpeen.

COLONEL (*clutching his hair wildly*). What's this, what's this! (*Sinks trembling into chair.*)

KATY (*screaming*). Ach, they's kilt 'im wid deir yellow papers. It's water he'll be after wantin'.

(*Exit KATY, running. Others gather anxiously about COLONEL.*)

LOUISE (*in low voice, bending over COLONEL*). Don't take it so. I thought you would understand. It's the scheme. I wrote that telegram. We are to pretend that I've lost my fortune.

COLONEL. Eh? But, my dear, you should have prepared me!

ACTON (*reading out telegram*). Matherton mines failed. Miss Herndon's interests deeply involved. Am forwarding papers. Cunningham, agent.

WESTON. By Jove, that's bad news!

MISS HORTON. What does it mean? Is Louise poor? Has she lost her fortune? (*Shrieks.*)

COLONEL (*sitting erect*). Ha, ha, good joke that. I — (*LOUISE puts her hand over his mouth.*)

ACTON (*looking at WESTON and tapping his forehead*). It's gone to his head.

WESTON. Poor old man!

MRS. AMBROSE (to LOUISE). My poor, penniless child! (*Kisses her.*) Come, Marjorie. (*Moves toward door.*)

MISS HORTON (*wildly*). Oh, it is not true! Say it is not true. (*To COLONEL.*) You villain, traitor, scoundrel!

MRS. AMBROSE (to ACTON). You will go with us, Mr. Acton?

MARJORIE. With you, not us, mamma—if you go. I shall stick by my friends. (*She seats herself determinedly.*)



MRS. AMBROSE. Marjorie! (*To ACTON.*) You will come?

ACTON (*bowing*). And I shall stay with her, madam.

MARJORIE. Ah, bravo, Mr. Acton. I knew your heart was in the right place!

(MARJORIE *shakes hands with ACTON.* LOUISE *starts back in hurt astonishment.*)

CURTAIN

## ACT II

*Time : Next morning.*

SCENE.—*Same as Act I. Furniture covered with linen slips, books piled ready for packing, step-ladder at one side of room. MISS HORTON discovered sitting in easy-chair.*

MISS HORTON (*dolorously*). So this is the end of all my hopes and plans! Beggared by the man I had honored with my love—or the same as beggared, for now Louise cannot afford to give me my quarterly allowance. Meagre enough it was, I grant, out of her millions. But I could keep up appearances. Her millions! And they are gone at one fell swoop. How could any one be idiot enough to risk millions in one enterprise! Why, a young jackanapes could give the Colonel lessons in business. If ever I get him, I'll manage his affairs! (*Despairingly.*) But I never will get him, now that I'm a pauper. Why, I dare say I won't be able to afford a hairdresser! That spiteful Ambrose woman will set her cap for him harder than ever. Why can't a woman be content with having had one husband? (*Looks about room.*) Ah, what a sad wreck of our happy home! They tell me a trifle will be saved from the ruins—enough to keep the wolf from the door, I suppose. Ah, me!

(*Enter KATY, back, carrying small bundle.*)

KATY. A package for yourself, Miss Horton, with Colonel Van Triton's compliments. But I don't know as I'd be after openin' it just here. It was left by the butcher's b'y an' himself told me in confidence as how it was swatebread.

MISS HORTON. The dear, thoughtful Colonel! Hum, it is rather moist, Katy. I'll take them down to cook and explain a new recipe I found. The dear, thoughtful—ah—

scoundrelly Colonel! He is doing this to flatter me, to blind me to his offense. I'll not eat the things.

KATY. Ah, mum, it'd be a pity to waste 'em like. They're real tasty with cream gravy, mum. (*Smacks her lips.*)

MISS HORTON (*looking at bundle*). Yes, they don't keep. But the cold-hearted villain! The—well, I'll talk to cook about the new recipe, anyway.

(*Exit MISS HORTON, back.*)

KATY. Sure, these do be queer days. It's times too many to count as I've heard Miss Louise a-sighin' an' a-wishin' she was a beggar. An' now she is one, she's no happier 'n when she was rich. Ah, womin is strange beasts, as the poet says. I'm glad I'm not one but only a poor, sinsible waitin' maid.

(*Exit KATY, L.*)

(*Enter WESTON, back.*)

WESTON (*looking about room*). Well, well, this looks real enough. I was hoping that the Colonel's telegram would prove a bad dream. But I'm afraid it's true. Well, I must propose to Louise to-day. I am in honor bound, as her oldest friend, to offer to set her on her feet—retrieve her fallen fortunes—all that sort of thing. I wonder why I find it so hard? She's a sweet girl—would make any man a good wife. And I love her. I do. I love her like—like a sister. (*Pauses.*) Ah, that's just it. Like a sister. There's the trouble. Now Marjorie—bless her little heart! Wasn't she a brick yesterday? She would stick by her friends, rich or poor! Indeed she would. But I wonder what Acton meant by saying he'd remain with her? She didn't seem to have much difficulty in understanding what he meant. They appeared on pretty good terms—jolly good terms. I wonder if he can be in love with her? Confound it all, I thought he was in love with Louise. But that was when Louise had money — He's been talking a good deal about wanting money, to help him on with his career. He had eyes and ears for no one but Louise until yesterday's catastrophe, and now—Marjorie—he—she—oh pshaw, he couldn't be such a cad as that!

(Enter LOUISE, R.)

LOUISE (*coming front*). Good-morning, Hal. You are a true friend, at least.

WESTON (*shaking hands*). I should hope so, indeed. But why so cynical?

LOUISE (*spreading her hands*). Is not all this enough to make one cynical? But what weighty matter was engrossing you? You did not hear me come in.

WESTON. I was just thinking—fact is, I was thinking about Acton. (*Anxiously.*) You don't think he can be in love with Marjorie, do you?

LOUISE (*trying to speak lightly*). His actions yesterday suggested it, didn't they? A rather sudden attachment. He used to consider her something of a spoilt child.

WESTON. Oh, she's not that! Not a bit of it. Only beastly hectored.

LOUISE (*teasingly*). You are very quick to take her part. (*Soberly.*) What if—if Mr. Acton is in love with her? (*Moves toward step-ladder.*)

WESTON. Well, if—if he should manifest such a fondness it would be, as you say, somewhat sudden. I should be inclined to consider Acton—under those circumstances—a cad. And I hardly like to think that of a friend, you know.

LOUISE (*one foot on ladder*). It is a hard name to give a friend.

WESTON. Yes, I know. But Marjorie is rich and he used to be—I beg pardon, Louise, but Acton was jolly well crushed on you once —

LOUISE (*bitterly*). Yes, when I had money! (*Mounts ladder.*)

WESTON. That's just it. But hold on, what in the world are you going to do?

LOUISE. I am going to take down this picture. (*Reaches up to picture hanging on wall.*)

WESTON. But why didn't you ask me to do it for you?

LOUISE. Would you have done it?

WESTON (*eloquently*). I would do anything in the world for you!

(Enter ACTON, back, unseen. He pauses on hearing WESTON'S words.)

LOUISE (*looking down from ladder*). Anything, Harold?

WESTON. I'd—I'd die for you, Louise. You know I'd lay down my life for you. Will you marry me?

LOUISE. Would you marry me?

ACTON (*aside, bitterly*). And I was fool enough to think she cared for me! To believe that now she was poor I could dare offer her my humble home, which had seemed too meagre to ask an heiress to share. But she prefers money again—out of a man's pocket, now her own is empty.

WESTON (*eloquently*). Would I marry you? Oh, wouldn't I! (*Aside*.) If she were only Marjorie!

LOUISE. You would do anything for me? Yes, I believe you would. Well then ——— (*Pauses*.)

ACTON (*aside*). She has accepted him. My card-house is down—pouf!

(*Exit ACTON, back.*)

LOUISE (*reaching up and removing picture from wall*). Well then, take this picture as I hand it down to you.

WESTON (*taking picture from LOUISE and leaning it against the wall*). And when shall the wedding be?

LOUISE (*descending ladder*). What wedding?

WESTON. Why, ours, to be sure.

LOUISE. Oh, you dear old goose! Don't you suppose I saw through you? You aren't in love with me. How could you believe that I would accept you, just to retrieve my fallen fortunes! That is the spirit in which you offered yourself, is it not? Come, confess.

WESTON. But I meant it, Louise, honestly.

LOUISE. Hush, hush! Further perjury is unnecessary. We are too good friends to talk at cross-purposes. Come, let us have a game of tennis. The sheriffs have not come into that court yet.

(*Exeunt WESTON and LOUISE, R.*)

(*Enter COLONEL and MRS. AMBROSE, back, MRS. AMBROSE clinging to COLONEL'S arm.*)

MRS. AMBROSE. Ah, Colonel, I sympathize with you deeply, deeply. I appreciate what you must suffer. There are so many people in this world who are ready to think ill of one!

COLONEL. But madam, I think I have given good cause

for people to think all sorts of things. And not only to think them but to say them. I am playing a despicable part—a most despicable part!

MRS. AMBROSE (*shaking her finger*). Naughty, naughty! I cannot hear you malign yourself, my dear Colonel. It was all for the best. You could not know that the mines would fail. You——

COLONEL. But, madam——

MRS. AMBROSE. Ah, I know. The hand of Providence was in it.

COLONEL (*aside*). Another slur upon Providence.

MRS. AMBROSE (*looking about room*). Why, I certainly expected to find Marjorie here. Where can the child have gone? I must find her. She is really very troublesome. Colonel, you will excuse me for a few moments?

COLONEL (*quickly*). With pleasure, madam. Ah—er—I mean, I shall await your return with pleasure. (*Bows low.*)

(*Exit MRS. AMBROSE, R. COLONEL seats himself and takes up newspaper.*)

(*Enter ACTON, back.*)

ACTON. Good-morning, Colonel. Mines looking up?

COLONEL (*flirting*). Ah—ah—— Don't know, I'm sure.

ACTON. Not interested in mines any longer?

COLONEL. They—ah—— (*Shortly.*) No, I'm not.

ACTON. Hum. (*Fingers books on table abstractedly. Pause.*)

COLONEL (*rattling paper nervously*). I suppose you no longer consider me—ah—a good adviser since—our last meeting? How about that little investment?

ACTON (*indifferently*). Investment? Oh, that's all off.

(*Enter WESTON, R., unseen.*)

COLONEL (*to ACTON*). Off? How so?

ACTON. Fact is, Colonel, I had thought of marrying and naturally wanted to better myself a little in a worldly way. But that's all off now and—well, my worldly betterment is a matter of utter indifference to me.

WESTON (*drily, coming front*). That is a melancholy state of mind, Acton. Is money all the world to you?

ACTON (*irritably*). I just said it was nothing to me, nothing—now. (*Aside.*) He does not crow over me, at any rate. I could not stand that.

(*Exit ACTON, back.*)

WESTON (*to COLONEL*). I say Colonel, Louise said something just now about sheriffs. It isn't as bad as all that, is it?

COLONEL (*nervously*). No, no. Sheriffs? Of course not.

WESTON. But she said —

COLONEL. She did, did she? Well, she knows more about it than I do. (*Aside.*) How far is she carrying this?

WESTON. But Colonel, is that strictly businesslike, not to look after her interests more carefully?

COLONEL. Oh, hang the business! I'm looking after her interests all right.

WESTON (*aside*). He's certainly queer. (*Aloud, firmly.*) Colonel, I really must request you to come to the library and talk this affair over. As Louise's old friend I have a right to inquire into what is at best a mysterious affair—a mysterious affair, sir.

COLONEL (*laying aside, paper*). It certainly is. I agree with you there. (*Rises, aside.*) Now for another pack of lies. "Oh, what a tangled web we weave" and so forth. What will my reputation be worth when I get out of this?

(*Exeunt COLONEL and WESTON, R.*)

(*Enter ACTON and MARJORIE, back, MARJORIE leading puppy by a string.*)

MARJORIE. Now cheer up, Mr. Acton. I am sure it will all come out right in the end. (*Ties dog to leg of table.*) You know the old proverb, "Faint heart never won fair lady." Pitch in and propose to her. Have it out.

ACTON. But —

MARJORIE. No buts. You ought to have done it months ago.

ACTON. But —

MARJORIE. Oh, you need not deny it. I know. I

have eyes and I am a woman—even if I am not “out,”—and I know love when I see it. Yes, you must propose. I’ll tell you, rehearse it with me. The very thing! (*Claps her hands.*)

ACTON. But —

MARJORIE (*impatiently*). There you go again. Can’t you say anything but “but”? Come, try. Now, I’m Louise and you are you. Begin and go straight through. I won’t interrupt unless you blunder. Begin. You’ve no idea how it will help you. (*Poses.*)

ACTON. But I tell you —

MARJORIE. You have not told me. Go on.

ACTON. Oh, well, if you will have it. (*Aside.*) It may unburden my mind. (*To MARJORIE.*) My dear Miss Herndon, I had hoped, I had been led to believe that you cared for me. But my hopes have been dashed to the ground—my belief —

MARJORIE. Good gracious, that’s no way to propose! What are you talking about? Tell me—her—that you love me—her—madly; will never give up hope; will never take no for an answer, and so forth and so forth. Go on. (*Resumes attitude of timid expectation.*)

ACTON (*fervently*). How I wish I might say it to her! Well, to humor you. (*Enter LOUISE, R. unseen by others, pauses horror-struck.*) My darling, my dearest! I love you. I—I have loved you devotedly —

MARJORIE (*sotto voce, without looking round*). Good. Come closer.

ACTON (*approaching*). I have loved you since the first moment I knew you. At times, I have dared to hope that you loved me!

MARJORIE (*sotto voce, without looking around*). Not so humble. Be more assured.

ACTON (*passionately*). I have believed that you loved me. Moreover, convinced of your—your love for me, I dared to fling pride to the winds, to hope that you would stoop to me, a poor man —

MARJORIE (*sotto voce, without looking round but beckoning with her hand*). Don’t say “stoop.” And it’s time to kneel.

ACTON. I love you. (*Kneels.*) Will you marry me? Will you take me for what I am, forgetting your high position and my humble —



(Exit LOUISE, sobbing.)

MARJORIE (*startling*). What was that?

ACTON (*still on his knees, turning*). What was what?

MARJORIE. I thought I heard some one crying.

ACTON. It was your beast of a dog. (*Rises.*) But I say, what an idiot I've been to go through all this when she's engaged to another fellow.

MARJORIE (*surprised*). Who is? Louise? To whom?

ACTON (*gloomily*). To Harold Weston. I heard him propose here, this morning, and she accepted him.

MARJORIE. Oh! (*Tries to laugh.*) That's—that's a surprise to me. I—— (*Bursts out crying.*)

ACTON (*aside, amazed*). Hello, I didn't know the wind blew from that quarter! (*Putting his arm about Marjorie.*) Oh, come now, little girl. Never mind. I was a brute to blurt it out like that. Forgive me.

(Enter MRS. AMBROSE, back.)

MRS. AMBROSE (*shrieking*). Marjorie!

MARJORIE (*startling*). Oh, mamma!

MRS. AMBROSE (*sternly*). Come with me, at once.

MARJORIE. But——

MRS. AMBROSE. I want no objections. Come.

MARJORIE. But, mamma——

MRS. AMBROSE. At once. Do you hear me?

MARJORIE. Oh, well. (*Unties dog. To ACTON.*) Thank you, but—but don't tell, will you please?

MRS. AMBROSE. Marjorie!

(Exeunt MRS. AMBROSE and MARJORIE, back.)

(Enter LOUISE, R.)

ACTON (*coming forward*). Ah, Miss Herndon, may I have a word with you?

LOUISE (*coldly*). I cannot imagine what you could have to say to me.

ACTON (*tenderly*). Can't you imagine? (*Humbly.*) I have been waiting all morning to speak to you.

LOUISE. And made the most of your waiting.

ACTON. Made the most of my waiting? Oh, I suppose you are jesting. Ha, ha, ha! Yes, it is inconsistent for a poor fellow like me to waste time so.

LOUISE. You call what you have been doing this morning a waste of time?

ACTON. Well, I don't, of course. But my employer might.

LOUISE. Yes, he might. Still, as you will soon be in a position to ignore the opinions of employers—

ACTON (*in surprise*). What do you mean?

LOUISE. I thought you soon expected to have money at your command? Appearances point that way.

ACTON. Oh, you mean my investment?

LOUISE (*sarcastically*). So, that is what you call it!

ACTON. I am merely using the Colonel's words. (*Aside.*) I suppose she considers that I have been gambling.

LOUISE. Did Colonel Van Triton advise you to do it? (*Aside.*) Has he turned against me, too!

ACTON. Why, yes. I think the Colonel's judgment still sound. Of course, in this misfortune of yours—I—he—

LOUISE. Do not hold him responsible for that. I brought it on my own head.

ACTON. Brought it on yourself? But I don't understand!

LOUISE. No, I dare say you do not. Well, Mr. Acton, I hope you will be happy.

ACTON. Happy! I? How could I be happy when all my—my hopes, my desires have been dashed from me at one blow?

LOUISE (*bitterly*). Is money so much to you, then?

ACTON. Money? Money! Pah! It is nothing to me, nothing! (*Fiercely.*) Do not judge others by yourself, my dear lady.

LOUISE. I do not in the least know what you are talking about.

ACTON. That is a mere trite commonplace. You know perfectly well what I am talking about. But, Miss Herndon, I am determined to justify myself. You must know that I love you—have loved you ever since—

LOUISE. Stop! How dare you! (*Aside.*) The very words he used to her! Oh, the perfidy!

ACTON. How dare I? I don't know. Every poor fellow dares when luck, friends, everything is against him. It is despair, I suppose. And I repeat, Miss Herndon—hopelessly, I admit—that I love you devotedly—

(*Enter MRS. AMBROSE and MARJORIE, back.*)

MRS. AMBROSE. Sir! (*Advances.*) Young man, what does this mean?

ACTON. Mean? Must I explain my affairs to the world?

MRS. AMBROSE. As the mother of my daughter, you must explain them to me. I entered this room to find my daughter in your arms. A little later I return to find you attempting to make love to another woman. I repeat, sir, what does this mean?

(*MARJORIE laughs.*)

ACTON. But, my dear madam —

(*Enter KATY in great agitation.*)

KATY (*to LOUISE*). Oh, ma'am, where's the Colonel? They's two men awaitin' down in the hall as looks like policemin, a-askin' fer 'im. Their language is awful, mum.

(*Enter COLONEL, MISS HORTON and WESTON, R.*)

COLONEL. What's this? Two men looking like policemen? What can they want with me? (*Aside.*) Have they got wind of this beastly joke on 'Change?

MISS HORTON (*shrieking*). They have come to tear us from our home! We shall be thrown upon the world's mercy! (*To COLONEL.*) And you have done this! You, villain, traitor, thief!!!

CURTAIN

### ACT III

*Time: Same afternoon.*

SCENE.—*Same as Act I. Curtain discloses LOUISE directing KATY in the arranging of books, furniture, etc.*

LOUISE. Put everything as it was before, Katy. The comedy's played out.

KATY. You're meanin' as how we won't have to be l'avin' this house at all, at all?

LOUISE. I mean just that.

KATY. An' the p'licemin won't be after turnin' us out? An' we won't have to live in t'ree rooms an' a bath? An' Miss Horton can be after havin' her swatebrids an' dollar a pound tay? Praise be to the saints! But how is it wid yersilf, Miss Louise? Sure, it's dancin' yez ought to be wid the j'y of it, 'stid of mopin' like.

LOUISE. Oh, Katy, I am the most miserable of mortals!

KATY. Miserable? Miserable, mum? When it's so rich you be?

LOUISE. That's just it. Every one loves me for my money. For what I can give them, Katy, not for what I am to them.

KATY. Ach, sure, mum, there is nobody as can hilp lovin' of yez f'r your own swate silf, mum. I do, I'm sure. An' there's others, mum. (*Begins to cry.*)

LOUISE (*heartily*). Thank you, Katy. Your loyalty is cheering. My strategy has proven one good friend, at least. (*Goes to door, pauses.*) Oh, Katy, if a package comes for me, say there is no answer.

(*Exit LOUISE, back.*)

KATY. Yes, mum. (*Drying her eyes.*) Well, now, who'd a thunk it? Here's a young lady, beautiful, starry-eyed, swan-necked, rolling in dollars—just like a heeroyne of romantics. I've read heaps on 'em where the heeroyne wasn't so swate-like, an' beloved as Miss Louise is too. There's two young men at laste a-wantin' her 'r I'm a

Dutchman. An' it turns out like the reel love-stories as she ain't lost her money at all, at all—lastewise it's turnin' that way—an' yit, she's unhappy. Well, it does beat me.

(Exit KATY, R.)

(Enter MISS HORTON back, with bandbox.)

MISS HORTON. Katy, will you — (*Looks about room.*) Why, I certainly thought Katy was here. Fate is against me. Just as I had screwed my courage to the sticking point (*even to writing out the label*) of renunciation, Katy is not here. I thought to send this bonnet—such a love of a bonnet—back without a renewal of temptation. Katy is not here to send; the bonnet is still on my hands, thrust back upon them as it were, by Providence. And now I shall have to make up my mind all over again. (*Sighs and opens box.*) Heigh-ho! Such a becoming bonnet, too. (*Holds up bonnet and surveys it.*) And such a mental exertion to decide upon where to put that bow. And now, I must give it up. Ah, 'tis a weary world to be poor in! (*Crosses to mirror and tries on the bonnet.*) Ah, it's sweetly pretty! And the Colonel would greatly admire that touch of mauve. The Colonel was always so fond of mauve. The Colonel—oh, the author of all our woes! (*Replaces bonnet in box.*) I must assist in the melancholy process of packing up. Why (*looking about her*), everything is put back in its place! Now it will have to be done all over again. (*Commences to pile books on floor.*)

(Enter KATY, back, with package.)

KATY (*laying what is unmistakably a florist's box on table*). A package for Miss Louise, mum. (*Bell rings. Exit KATY. Reënters, followed by COLONEL.*) Colonel Van Triton, mum, to see the ladies.

(Exit KATY.)

COLONEL (*testily*). Good-afternoon, madam. Will you kindly tell your niece that I wish to speak to her upon very urgent business? Very urgent business, madam. She has gotten me into a pretty lot of trouble!

MISS HORTON (*indignantly*). My niece gotten you into trouble? You—you unnatural creature! You monster!

You betray a sacred trust—take for your own nefarious purposes the money of a helpless, orphaned girl, squander it, pauperize the poor, weak child and her unhappy aunt! and then you come here and dare to speak like that! I ——

COLONEL. But, madam, you don't understand!

MISS HORTON. I do understand, only too well. And to think that I, too, almost trusted you once!

COLONEL. And will again, I trust. If you will allow me to explain ——

MISS HORTON. One cannot explain one's crimes. No, sir. I shall listen to nothing more from you.

COLONEL (*genuinely distressed*). But Miss Horton, I—I cannot bear to lose your—your good opinion of me. I want it—'pon my soul I do. We—we used to be happy together, eh? (*Smiles cajolingly*.) I really think our natures are sympathetic—atune—all that sort of thing. Madam (*approaches*), I regard you highly—I ——

MISS HORTON (*sternly*). Stop, sir! (*Aside*.) I really believe he is—was—going to propose! Oh, my poor heart! (*Aloud*.) I must be firm. At whatever cost to my own poor feelings I shall remain loyal to my niece!

(*Exit MISS HORTON, back.*)

COLONEL. Now, here's another to do! Miss Horton is a real kindly soul. She would cheer my declining days immensely. Never knew I wanted her until I lost her. Another misfortune arising out of that silly jest. Jest, indeed! (*Laughs bitterly*.) I was an old idiot to allow it. And there's Acton, been storming about my office for the last half-hour, raving like a love-sick loon. Says I must bring them together. I! How, I'd like to know? (*Pauses, hands thrust deep in pockets, in perplexity*.)

MRS. AMBROSE (*heard without*). Thank you, Katy, I dare say I shall find them in here.

COLONEL. Mrs. Ambrose! This is too much! More than I bargained for! (*Looks about room*.) And no way of escape.

(*Enter MRS. AMBROSE and MARJORIE, back.*)

MRS. AMBROSE. Ah, my dear Colonel, such a delicious surprise! (*Aside*.) I saw him come in here. (*Aloud*.) Such an excellent opportunity to—eh? (*Pauses*.) I am

sure you have oceans to say to me. Oh, you sly man! (*To MARJORIE.*) Marjorie, my dear, go down to the front hall and wait there until I come.

MARJORIE. But I want to see Louise.

MRS. AMBROSE. Which is just what I do not want you to do—until I have seen her first. She must explain this morning's incident. Go, my dear. (*Exit MARJORIE, unwillingly, back.*) Ah, dear Colonel, shall we not retire to the library for our little talk? So much more private!

COLONEL. But I am here to see Miss Louise on very important business, very important.

MRS. AMBROSE. I dare say. So am I! But that will do later. Our own affairs first, Colonel, our own affairs!

COLONEL (*aside*). I verily believe she is going to make me propose to her! (*Aloud.*) But, madam, I—I assure you I know of—of nothing —

MRS. AMBROSE (*taking his arm*). Of nothing to prevent our cozy little talk? Neither do I. (*Leads him to door, L.*)

COLONEL (*trying to draw back*). But I don't understand—you don't understand —

MRS. AMBROSE (*tenderly*). Ah, but you are going to make me! Dear Colonel!

(*Exeunt MRS. AMBROSE and COLONEL, L. arm in arm.*)

(*Enter LOUISE, R. Sees package on table.*)

LOUISE. A package for me! (*Approaches table.*) And a note. (*Takes up note.*) Addressed in Robert's handwriting, marked "Answer." Why was I not told of this? (*Rings bell, then opens and reads note. Reading.*) "My dear Miss Herndon, I know things look much against me, but believe me, I can explain all. I venture to send you these flowers. If you have enough faith in me to let me explain and clear myself, send the boy away without an answer. I shall understand and come at once. Yours, Robert Acton." (*Speaks.*) He will come at once. The boy was sent away without an answer, goodness knows how long ago. He may be here at any moment.

(*Enter KATY.*)

KATY. Did you ring, mum?

LOUISE. I certainly did. Katy, why was that package

left here and never brought to me? Did you not see that the note is marked "Answer"?

KATY. Oh, yis, indade, mum, but it was yersilf as was after tellin' me that if a package come I was to tak' it an' say "no answer."

LOUISE. But that was a package from the dressmaker!

KATY. I'm right sorry if I've made a mistake, mum. How was I to know?

LOUISE. Of course you could not know. But it can't be helped now. Go, Katy, go.

KATY. Yes, mum. An' if you'd be after writin' a note, mum, I'd tak' it anywhere for you.

*(Exit KATY, back.)*

LOUISE. I'll write a note and let Katy give it to Mr. Acton when he calls.

*(Exit LOUISE, R.)*

*(Enter WESTON, back. He looks carefully about room; then goes to door and beckons. Enter MARJORIE on tiptoe.)*

MARJORIE. I ought not to be here, at all. Mamma told me to wait in the hall.

WESTON *(indignantly)*. Like a servant! At least she will not begrudge you a comfortable seat.

MARJORIE *(looking about)*. I am really surprised to find such a thing here. I thought the sheriffs came this morning to seize the furniture. The Colonel certainly managed to pacify them with great ease. I wonder if some one offered to pay Louise's debts? Mr. Weston, did you pay them off?

WESTON *(in astonishment)*. I? Certainly not. I have nothing to do with Louise's debts.

MARJORIE *(drily)*. Oh, if you're starting out on that basis, I am sorry for Louise.

WESTON. I dare say you think my friendship countenances such an act. But Louise is too proud to accept money from a mere friend.

MARJORIE. But you ought not to be considered a mere friend—now.

WESTON. Now? I don't understand you. But never mind, I want to know the meaning of something much more



important. What did your mother mean by saying that she saw Robert's arm around your waist?

MARJORIE. She meant what she said, I fancy. But how can that be of more importance to you than your engagement to Louise?

WESTON (*amazed*). My engagement to Louise!

MARJORIE. That is the subject we have been discussing, is it not?

WESTON (*puzzled*). Why, not that I was aware. To begin with, I am not engaged to Louise.

MARJORIE. Not engaged to Louise! But Mr. Acton heard it all!

WESTON. So Acton was eavesdropping! Well, he must have left too soon. I'll make a clean breast of it, Marjorie. (MARJORIE *makes gesture of dissent*.) Well, Miss Marjorie, if you insist. I did propose to Louise. I felt in duty bound to help her out of her difficulties and all that, don't you know. But all the while I was in love with the dearest——

MRS. AMBROSE (*heard without*). You were saying, Colonel?

MARJORIE. Mamma! Quick, to the hall!

(*She gives her hand to HAROLD and they rush off, back.*)

(*Enter MRS. AMBROSE and COLONEL, L., arm in arm.*  
*Enter MISS HORTON, R. Sees others and slips behind screen.*)

MRS. AMBROSE (*sentimentally*). Ah, Colonel, it is sweet to find a kindred soul in this hard, cold world! Now, you and I——!

COLONEL (*in matter-of-fact voice*). We seem to like the same shade of red, madam, and—ah—both agree upon the Cuban policy. But that hardly constitutes—ah——

MRS. AMBROSE. It is the keynote, Colonel. To agree in little things, means harmony in the whole. Eh, Colonel?

MISS HORTON (*looking around screen*). She is trying to make him propose to her! Sooner than see him so sacrificed, I will marry him myself! (*Comes from behind screen.*) Colonel, when we were interrupted you were about——

MRS. AMBROSE (*screaming*). That woman here!

MISS. HORTON (*haughtily*). Certainly. Why should I not be here—in my own home?

COLONEL (*aside*). At it again!

MRS. AMBROSE. This interruption is most inopportune.

MISS HORTON. It is the Colonel and I who were interrupted. He was just telling me —

MRS. AMBROSE. He was just telling me —

(*She sees MISS HORTON move forward, stops speaking and moves forward also. Each grasp COLONEL by an arm.*)

MRS. AMBROSE } (*together*). Colonel, what were you  
MISS HORTON } going to tell me?

(*Enter KATY, back, followed by ACTON.*)

KATY. Mr. Acton, mum.

(*Exit KATY.*)

COLONEL (*wrestling himself free*). Another escape! I shall have to make a decision or be forced into bigamy. (*To ACTON.*) So, you have followed me here, young man. What in thunder do you want now? I can't explain away your gambling, if the lady will call it that!

ACTON. I have called by appointment, to see your ward.

(*Enter KATY with note, which she gives to ACTON.*)

KATY. Miss Herndon wishes to be excused. She says to give you this.

(*ACTON takes note and reads.*)

MRS. AMBROSE. Louise asks to be excused? But I must see her immediately. It is very important.

COLONEL. And I, too. I have been waiting half an hour to see her immediately.

KATY (*to COLONEL*). She said to tell you, sir, as how she'd be down in the library in five minutes, sir.

(*Exit KATY.*)

ACTON (*bitterly, crushing note*). Yes, she will receive you all, in the library. It is only I she wishes to avoid.

MRS. AMBROSE (*haughtily*). I should think she would

wish to avoid you, young man. Any right-principled young woman would.

(*Exit* MRS. AMBROSE, R.)

COLONEL (*to* MISS HORTON). My dear friend, perhaps these five minutes, until Louise comes down, we might spend together profitably? (*Offers his arm.*)

MISS HORTON. Oh, Colonel!

(*Exeunt* MISS HORTON and COLONEL, L., *arm in arm.*)

ACTON (*alone*). Here is a pretty kettle of fish. If I say I was not proposing to Marjorie, then it will place her in a queer light. Yet, I can't let Louise go on thinking—what does she not think? The moment she loses her money she catches me, as she believes, proposing to a girl with a million in her own right! And I silent all these months because I could not make my pride knuckle under to marrying a girl with money! And to top it all, she thinks I've been gambling! I certainly was born under an unlucky star! (*Walks up and down gloomily.*)

(*Enter* WESTON and MARJORIE, *back.*)

MARJORIE (*to* WESTON). Remember, Mr. Acton was rehearsing to me, the proposal he wanted to make to Louise, and she overheard him. You are to help me convince her that it was only a rehearsal.

WESTON. I am also to convince Acton that it is you who are engaged to me.

MARJORIE. You will have to convince mamma of that, first.

WESTON (*to* ACTON, *coming front*). Ahem! I say, old chap. (*ACTON does not turn.* WESTON *dramatically, to* MARJORIE.) Mark how he moves apart—his clouded brow, his perturbation! Can this be madness! (*To* ACTON.) I say, old sleep-walker. (*Nudges him.* ACTON *starts from his reverie and looks around.*) We want your congratulations.

ACTON (*bitterly, turning away*). You need not taunt me with it.

WESTON. What do you mean?

MARJORIE (*shyly*). You don't understand, Mr. Acton. Mr. Weston—Harold—said "we" want your congratulations. (*WESTON and MARJORIE join hands.*)

ACTON. What? you—he—why, can this be so? (*Grasps their hands.*)

WESTON (*gleefully*). Indeed it is so, old chap. I'm the happiest man in Christendom.

MARJORIE (*demurely*). If mamma agrees.

ACTON. But I thought—I was sure—I must see Louise at once! (*ACTON moves toward door, R.*)

(*Enter LOUISE, R.*)

LOUISE (*coldly*). Still here, Mr. Acton? Did I not explain the misunderstanding concerning the flowers? They are there. You may take them. (*Motions toward box on table.*)

ACTON (*sadly, lifting box*). Ah, poor little flowers, must you suffer too, from a misunderstanding?

MARJORIE (*taking box and opening it*). Oh, Louise, what a shame to let such lovely flowers wither!

LOUISE. Put them in water then, Marjorie. They are more yours than mine.

MARJORIE. You give them to me? (*Turns to WESTON.*) See, Harold, my first engagement present. (*LOUISE winces.*)

WESTON. Thank you, Louise. May I not share in the congratulations?

LOUISE. Congratulations upon what?

WESTON. Why, upon my engagement to Marjorie, of course.

LOUISE (*bewildered*). Your engagement?—to Marjorie? But I thought—Mr. Acton—it certainly appeared—Mrs. Ambrose thinks——

MARJORIE. I was trying to encourage Mr. Acton by getting him to practice a proposal—I see now, how witless it was in me. Afterward he told me that it was hopeless anyhow because you were already engaged to Harold. That made me cry and he was trying to comfort me when mamma unfortunately entered.

LOUISE. Mr. Acton said that I was engaged to Harold?

ACTON. I came here this morning to offer you, a poor woman, the love I dared not give the heiress. I entered by accident upon a scene——

WESTON. And left before he learned that what you accepted was my aid in lifting down a picture,

LOUISE. Mr. Acton—you—you really mean what you just said?

ACTON. Can you doubt me?

LOUISE. No, no. And forgive me that I ever did. (*Gives him her hand.*) Listen, all. I have a confession to make. I have not lost my money. It was merely a—a ruse in which I made the Colonel share in order to—to——

ACTON (*reproachfully*). To test me!

LOUISE. Ah, forgive me! I—I did not want to believe. But so many people talked. And—and Mrs. Ambrose said she had heard you telling some woman that you would not think of marrying, but that you needed money.

ACTON (*puzzled*). I said I would not marry unless I had money. But I certainly discussed my affairs with no woman.

WESTON. Isn't it that old debt you were trying to collect from that rascal, Smith?

ACTON. Ah, yes, I was talking to Miss Smith about it at the ball, night before last. I recollect seeing Mrs. Ambrose pass. She misconstrued my words! The—the——

MARJORIE. Ahem!

ACTON. I beg your pardon, Miss Marjorie, but your mother really does seem to be at the bottom of this misery.

MARJORIE. It was mean of her to tell. Harold, for fear of the stern parent's no, let us elope. (*She mounts on chair and leans over the back.*) "Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou, Romeo?"

HAROLD (*dropping on one knee*). But soft, what light through yonder window breaks. Is it the East and Juliet is the sun? Arise fair sun, the horses await us. The road is long and time is fleeting.

MARJORIE. And the villain still pursues us! Stand from under and catch my Saratoga trunk. (*Lifts her arms to make gesture of flinging.*)

(*Enter MRS. AMBROSE, back.*)

MRS. AMBROSE (*aghast*). Marjorie!

(*WESTON springs to his feet and assists MARJORIE from chair.*)

(*Enter MISS HORTON and COLONEL, L.*)

COLONEL (*indignantly*). The jest is too long drawn out. Louise must have seen the folly of it by now.

LOUISE. Ah, Colonel, your tongue need be silent no longer. Check the wild rumors on 'Change as you business men know so well how to do. Our conspiracy is successful.

COLONEL. Our conspiracy! Yours, if you please. Young lady, do you appreciate the vexation—the worry—the embarrassment you have put me to? My very reputation is at stake!

LOUISE. I am sorry, Colonel.

COLONEL (*testily*). Sorry! Is that all?

MRS. AMBROSE (*advancing front*). Ah, Colonel, no one could ever doubt your honesty!

(COLONEL *looks about for place to hide.*)

(*Enter KATY, back.*)

MISS HORTON (*stepping between COLONEL and MRS. AMBROSE*). In which sentiment I agree with you. In proof of it, I have just promised to become the Colonel's wife!

(MRS. AMBROSE *shrieks and faints in KATY'S arms.*)

COLONEL (*reproachfully, to LOUISE*). So, you are sorry, young lady. Is this what I get for my pains?

MISS HORTON. You have me, Colonel!

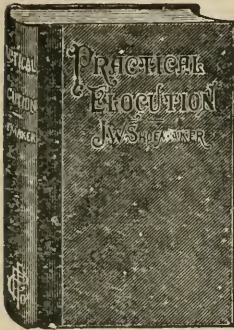
LOUISE. And you also have the assurance for which I sought. You know that you are loved for yourself!

(LOUISE *turns to ACTON.*)

CURTAIN

JUN 25 1903

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