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RURAL COMEDY DRAMA IN
FOUR ACTS ∴ ∴ ∴ ∴ ∴

“Sackett’s Corner Folks”

---OR---

“The Prodigal Brother”

--BY--

HARRY M. DOTY,

CHATHAM, N. Y.

PRICE 25 CENTS A COPY

NOTE—ERROR ON PAGE 15.

On page 15 an error was made in Deacon Todd's first speech when making up the forms of this book. The line now reads: "If he does, he is a bigger fool than I ever took him to be." This line appears correctly two speeches below. The first line of Deacon's first speech on this page should read: "Beats all, don't it, how these here fellers what skip" etc.

Sackett's Corner Folks

— O R —

The Prodigal Brother

Rural Drama in Four Acts

By Harry M. Doty

Author of the Rural Comedy, "In Old New England"

AMATEUR PRODUCTION FREE

Professional or Traveling Companies are forbidden the use
of this play, or any part of it without the written
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CAST OF CHARACTERS.

- Nathaniel Pettigrew**, "Uncle Nat" one of Nature's noblemen, who faces a perplexity but emerges triumphant.
- Elijah Pettigrew**, the prodigal brother, who, in his younger days, wasn't what he might have been.
- Ralph Pettigrew**, "Uncle Nat's" son, who makes a sacrifice but loses nothing by it.
- Bildad Teeter, P. M.**, who "keeps" the village store, "runs" the postoffice and believes in "paying back a joke right prompt."
- Deacon Todd**, who is a master hand at dominoes and likes to know what's going on.
- Adnah Rogers**, the village blacksmith, who can shoe horses, make and mend wagons, but who isn't over anxious to do it.
- Melancthon Satterlee**, whose chief aim in life is to live without undue exertion.
- Jim Bentley**, who carries the mail, distributes gossip and is inclined to stretch the truth "just a leetle".
- Eb. Gowdy**, who "ain't just right in his head" and therefore cuts some peculiar capers.
- Sime Flanders**, "Uncle Nat's" hired man, who believes in persistence but finds the course of true love isn't always smooth.
- Master Willie Williams** with an old head on young shoulders. He believes in being well paid for valuable information.
- Mrs. Pettigrew**, "Uncle Nat's" wife, a true helpmate and a most excellent advisor.
- Huldy Haskins**, who isn't in a marrying mood until the show is nearly over.
- Arathusa Gwendoline Fitzgibbons**, who is somewhat gushy and who wants someone to share her lot.
- Submit Tewksbury**, who says what she thinks and who thinks a good deal. She gets her "come-appearance."
- Little Mary Williams**, a fluent listener but not much of a talker.

SYNOPSIS.

ACT I. Scene: Store and postoffice at Sackett's Corners.—Playing dominoes.—“There ain't goin' to be no serap.”—Bildad and Submit. Tampering with the mails.—Submit's postal.—Submit in high badgeon.—“I hain't on the last lap yet.”—Arrival of the mail.—Wonderful corn and more wonderful pumpkins.—“If that horse of yours can go as fast as you kin lie, he'll get to the end of the state afore he starts.”—“Don't you wish we had some of them pumpkins all made into pie?”—A load of turnips for the editor.—Local news, from the Claytown Center Clarion.—“Noses like hissen ain't on the market any more.”—“Mary Ann Green is Bein' sparked red hot.”—The quilting party at Cy Hoskins'.—“I ain't seen her but I'll bet it's improved her looks.”—Susie Whittaker gives up takin' lessons on the melodeon.—The demise of Abe Bines.—“Loss fully covered by insurance.”—Some spirited bidding.—Willie Williams “tells on” Jim Bentley.—Arrival of “Uncle Nat.”—Some dry weather stories.—The letter with the new tangled stamp.—The message from Elijah.—After twenty years.—Elijah in hard luck and wants to come back.—The perplexity of “Uncle Nat.”—Huldy makes a few pointed remarks.—“I wuz brought up to believe in repentance and forgiveness.”—“Got a tongue like a razor, hain't she?”—“And it ain't one o' them safety razors, nuther.”—Mel's solicitude for Huldy.—“Been a courtin' her for five years but don't seem to be gitting along none.”—The strange case of Eb Gowdy.—“Thought he was a settin' hen.”—“Hangin' onto the pump for dear life.”—Bildad and Adnah get “the rigs” on each other.—“I like to pay a joke back right prompt.”—The dinner horn.—“Do we eat to live or live to eat?”

ACT II. Scene: Sitting room in “Uncle Nat's” home.—Woman's work.—“Mebbe they've all got hired girls.”—“Uncle Nat” forgets the “things from the store.”—The letter from Mexico.—“He left us just when we needed him most.”—Reading the letter.—“Didn't want no stain on the name of Pettigrew.”—Parson Bemiss' sermon and its effect upon “Uncle Nat.”—Out to the barn to think it over.—Huldy's admirers.—“I don't care a snap of my finger for either of 'em.”—“He'll forgive him and

tell him to come."—Mel and Huldy.—"I'll bet Sime Flanders has been pesterin you again."—"A sour, crabbid, dried-up old widderer."—Sime and Huldy.—"That homely old bach."—The "second-hand husband."—Sime hears Mel's soliloquy.—The "pie-faced jelly fish" and the "spindle-shanked hyena."—Bloodshed averted.—"I guess I'll tell Lije to come on."—Ralph's sacrifice.—The letter to Elijah.—"Seal 'er up and I'll go and drop it in the mail box."

ACT III. Scene same as Act II. (Two months are supposed to have elapsed since Act II during which time Elijah Pettigrew and Arathusa Gwendoline Fitzgibbons have arrived at "Uncle Nate's" home). Arathusa "gushes".—The shattered paradise.—Eb. and the imaginary horse.—"I'll bet my suspenders on it."—"A lunatic and violent, too."—"Uncle Nat" quiets Arathusa's fears.—Changing Eb's mind.—"Dinner? That's so."—The improvement in Elijah.—The pancake race.—"If you don't git your reward on the other side, there just ain't no truth in scripiter."—Submit on an errand of mercy and help.—She encourages (?) Elijah.—"Course, if you've got to go, the Corner is as good a place as any to be laid away in."—"Uncle Nat's" contribution.—Lon Jeffers poverty stricken.—"Never could seem to get on."—Mel uses Eb. in his effort to win Huldy.—"If this scheme works I'll soon have Sime Flanders cut out.—Eb. and the imaginary wife.—Weeding onions.—"It worked like a charm. I've got her thinkin'!"—Sime's big idea.—Eb. again pressed into service.—Another imaginary wife.—"I'm the laziest critter on earth."—The scheme worked fine.—The "tech" of rheumatism.—"I've got the inside track now, all right."—Arathusa wants a husband to share her lot.—Mel an eavesdropper.—"Here is where Mel Satterlee gits acquainted with the owner of the aforesaid lot."—Mel and Arathusa.—"You country men are so kind and considerate."—"Arathusa Gwendoline Fitzgibbons."—"Melanethon Hezekiah Satterlee."—Mel proposes.—Accepted.—"A \$25,000 lot and it's mine."—"My hunk of maple sugar."—"My onliest own."—Keeping it quiet.—Eb. on the job.—He tries his hand at love making with the aid of the churn.—"Ain't a bad looker, nuther."—"My can of maple syrup."—Sime and Huldy.—Huldy surrenders.—Eb. in the right place at the wrong time.—A drop in churns.

ACT IV. Scene same as Act III. The mysterious letter.—Help for Lon Jeffers.—The unknown friend.—Mrs. Pettigrew's curiosity.—"Hope my snorin' won't disturb you."—Eb. lets the cat out of the bag.—Bread and milk for Eb.—"Have any **specialists ever examined him?**"—Mel owns up.—His conference with "Uncle Nat."—"For obtaining a husband under false pre-

tenses.'—Arathusa's "lot".—"If either of you has been 'took in' I figger it's her."—"Uncle Nat's" advice.—The tempest averted.—Mel's change of mind.—Eb. in a chicken mood.—How Deacon Todd and Jim Bentley didn't get the hundred.—The mysterious friend pays the dominie's back salary.—"Uncle Nat" gets one of the mysterious missives.—"These here old spees must be playin' me a trick."—A \$2000 bank account.—Ralph wants to be pinched.—More mystery.—Ralph's college course assured.—Mrs. Pettigrew "clean beat".—Woman's curiosity.—"Whoever 'tis that's doin' this has got my religion to a T."—Arathusa, Nat and Elijah.—Arathusa worried.—More confessions.—"I fear he don't love me."—More advice.—Another tangle straightened.—Sime brings more news.—The strange doctor.—The operation on Eb.—"Cut a hole in his head and took out a piece of bone."—Eb. as good as new.—Physician sent by the unknown friend.—Curiosity at fever heat.—"I'd give my best heifer to know who 'tis."—"And I'd throw in my best reseat for gingerbread."—Sime's engagement.—Congratulations.—Huldy "owns up."—The identity of the mysterious friend revealed.—A lucky streak in mining.—Improvements on the farm.—The home for Sime and Huldy.—Mrs. Pettigrew to have her hired girl.—Making amends.

NOTE.

The arrangement of the stage to represent a village store in the first act is not difficult. The postoffice boxes may easily be represented by obtaining at any grocery store one or more of the wooden boxes in which are shipped canned and bottled goods and which are divided into square or oblong compartments. Remove both top and bottom of the box, place a glass over one side, paint numbers on the glass to represent box numbers, place the boxes on one end of the counter and fill with letters, postals and papers.

A counter which has been discarded will be easy to find in almost any village. The arranging of the shelving back of this counter needs no direction. Any grocer will loan a sufficient quantity of canned goods to make a showing.

Other furnishings may include a set of old-fashioned counter scales, a small show case, a barrel containing a half dozen brooms, two or three flour barrels, pickle and mackerel kegs, a few soap boxes, some hard-bottomed chairs, an old coffee mill, if one can be borrowed, a box containing a few pairs of boots and shoes. Many manufacturers furnish dealers with empty paper boxes, such as their goods are placed in, for advertising purposes. These

can also be borrowed from almost any store. Posters, placards and advertisements of various kinds, hung on the walls, add realism to the scene.

The furnishings of the store can be carried to any extent desired, depending solely upon the stage room available.

In this act all entrances and exits may be made at one point, representing the street door of the grocery. The counter should be placed at the extreme left or extreme right of the stage. If the coffee mill mentioned above can be obtained, a pleasing and realistic effect is obtained if, as the curtain rises, Bildad is discovered grinding coffee. Deacon and Adnah play dominoes in silence until the grinding is completed and Bildad has placed the ground coffee in a bag, tied it with a string and placed it on the counter.

“Sackett’s Corner Folks”

Act I

Scene: Store and postoffice at Sackett’s Corner. Bildad Teeter, postmaster, grinding coffee or sitting in front of counter, reading paper. Deacon Todd and Adnah Rogers finishing game of dominoes; Melanethon Satterlee looking on. Deacon remarks “Domino”; gathers up dominoes and board and says:

Deacon—Shucks, Adnah, it hain’t no use fer you to try to beat me playin’ dominoes. That makes four games out of five. I tell you I know more about that game than the man what invented it.

Adnah—You do, hey? Then all I’ve got to say is that the feller knows mighty little about it.

Deacon—There, Adnah, don’t take it to heart. I’ll let you win next time.

Adnah—You will, will ye? I’ve got one of them souvneer postage cards with a pikter on it showin’ you lettin’ sumbody git anything you kin git fer yourself. I’m goin’ to skunk ye next time, skunk ye, do you understand?

Bildad—Hold on boys, hold on, the first thing I know you two young fellers will have your hands in each other’s hair and you ain’t either of you got no more’n you want. More’n that Uncle Sam won’t stand fer no fights in the postoffice.

Mel.—No danger, Bildad. There ain’t goin’ to be no scrap. Couldn’t nuther of ’em lick anything bigger’n a postage stamp. This here sass afterward is a part of the game with ’em.

(Enter Submit Tewksbury, l. u. e.)

Submit—Mornin’, Bildad, any mail fer me?

Bildad—Yep, the Claytown Center Clarion and a postal from Chicago. (Rises, goes behind case and returns, reading postal). This here postal is from Fake & Soakem, the greatest mail order house in the world. It says that the oilcloth and gingham has been shipped, that they’re out of the complexion beautifier you ordered and that they can’t send you that hair switch until you send ’em a bigger sample of hair. (Men all laugh.)

Submit—(Indignantly snatching postal and paper). The next

time I git a postal, Bildad Teeter, I'll thank you not to read it. I'll read it myself. My correspondence ain't none of your business. I've got a great mind to report you to the government fer tamperin' with the mails.

Bildad—Now hear her talk. That's what I git fer tryin' to be accommodatin'. I was jest reedin' it to you becuz I thought prob'ly you'd forgot your spees.

Submit—Forgot my spees! I'll give you to understand, Bildad Teeter, that I don't need 'em. I hain't on the last lap yet.

Bildad—No, ner I don't bleev you've ever ben on the fust one. Leastwise I never hearn none of the boys say so.

Submit—Bildad Teeter, you're an impudent, insultin' old hussy. You ain't fit to be postmaster. And I ain't the only one what says so, nuther. (Exits indignantly l. u. e.)

Mel.—Guess you give her her come-uppance that time, Bildad.

Bildad—Well it does me good to show up them kind of folks what sends away fer everything they want. Her dad, like a lot of others, sends to them mail order houses and the stuff they git out there they pay cash in advance fer while what they git of me they have charged. If I hadn't been tryin' to collect fer a year from Submit's father fer caliker fer her a dress, I wouldn't say nothin'. I just want her to know that I know what they done with the money they owe me.

Adnah—What you say is right, Bildad, but where did you git that last wagon you bought? You didn't git it from me.

Bildad—Why, no, er—you, see—that is—

Adnah—Yes, I see. Shoe's kinder on 'tother foot now, ain't it?

Jim Bentley—(Heard outside). Say boy, you just stand by that colt a minute, will you while I run in with the mail. It'll save tyin'. (Enter Jim, carrying mail sack which he hands to Bildad). Hello, Bildad. You can't say I ain't on time this mornin'. Got the colt on the job, and here I am fifteen minutes ahead of time and the train was late down to Jonesville, too.

(Bildad goes behind case and cancels stamps after which he distributes the mail).

Mel.—Shouldn't think a mail route is just the place fer a colt, Jim.

Jim—Well, p'raps not, but he's got to be broke in some time so's to give the old mare a rest and it might as well come fust as last.

(Villagers, silent parts, enter, l. u. e., and stand or sit, waiting for the mail and when mail is distributed, get letters or papers and exit. There should be three or four of these characters.)

(Willie Williams and his little sister enter, l. u. e., and sit

with mouths open, listening to the conversation of Deacon, Mel. and Adnah.)

Deacon—I hear that new feller what bought the Whipple place, between here and Jonesville, has got us all skunked on corn this year.

Jim—Yessir, got the finest piece anywhere in these parts. You know he went in big fer fertilizer. Everybody said he was plumb nigh crazy but they've changed their tunes since they saw that crop. He give me a sample of that fertilizer, 'long 'bout plantin' time and wanted me to try it. Said the yield would surprise me. and, say, it sure did. Used that fertilizer in half a dozen hills and stuck a stick in each so's I would know 'em. Went out to look at it yesterday and the corn in them hills is so gosh dinged tall, I'll have to use ladders to git the ears. It won't take more'n half a dozen to fill a bushel basket, nuther. And that ain't all; where I put that fertilizer it growed a dozen ears on each stalk and I'll be dad busted if there hain't a half a dozen ears on each of them sticks I used to mark the hills with.

Adnah—Say, Jim, if that there colt of your'n can git over the road as fast as you kin lie, he'll go so rapid he'll git to the end of the route before he starts.

Mel.—Oh, I dunno, Adnah. I'm inclined to believe Jim's tellin' the gospel truth 'bout that corn 'cause I once saw that same sort o' fertilizer grow bunkum punkins on a lot that wouldn't grow white beans before. Never saw punkins grow like 'em. 'Twant no use to try loadin' 'em on a wagon. Couldn't do it. Had to use stun boats to git 'em to the barn. And that wan't all of it. They was so pesky big we had to split 'em into quarters to git 'em through the barn doors.

Deacon—Yessir, that's right. That's the fall my tenant house burned. Didn't have time to build another before cold weather set in so I just hooked my yoke of oxen onto one of them punkins, dragged it over to my place, cut doors and winders in it and my hired man and his family lived there all winter just as cozy as could be.

Willie—Say, Sis, don't you wish we had one of them punkins up to our house, all made into pie?

(Sister nods head vigorously.)

Bildad—Say, Mel, here's your copy of the Clarion. You might like to look it over while I finish sortin' this here mail. (Looks at paper.) I see the date on your label says October 1896. 'Bout time you took the editor another load of wood.

Mel.—Nope, goin' to take him turnips next time. It's less trouble gittin' 'em. (Opens paper and begins to read in silence.)

Deacon—Read 'er out loud, Mel. Don't you spese me and Adnah and Jim wants to know what's goin' on?

Mel—All right. Here she goes. (Reads.) "Eph. Foster went to go down cellar to draw a pail of eider Tuesday. He slipped and went end over end and lit on the pail, squishin' it flatter 'n a pancake and skinnin' his nose. He'll have to buy a new one."

Deacon—New pail or new nose?

Mel—Pail, I guess becuz noses like hissen ain't on the market any more.

Mel—(Reads). "Cy Hoskins' wife had another quiltin' party by a feller from Hackettstown. Folks think they'll make a hitch of it."

Adnah—I'll bet Marry Ann had that put in the paper to bring Al Johnson to time. Ben a courtin' of her fer five years and never could git up spunk enough to ast her to be hissen.

Jim—Well, if that don't fetch him, nothin' will.

Mel—(Reads). "Mrs. Jane Sawyer hit herself a awful crack in the corner of the haymow while huntin' eggs. She's some better now but limps considerable yet."

Adnah—It don't say whether she got any eggs or not, does it?

Mel—No.

Adnah—That's the way with that paper. Never tells the whole story.

Mel—(Reads). "Cy Hoskins' wife had another quiltin party last week. She's got her neighbors to make her seven quilts so far this year and all she gives 'em is some crackers and a cup of tea. There's a good deal of talk about it."

Jim—Yes, and 'twas darned cheap tea, too. She sent by me fer to git it down to Hackettstown.

Mel—(Reads). "Amelia Tucker has got the newralgy in her face so that it don't look like her face at all."

Jim—I hain't seen her but I'll bet it has improved her looks.

Adnah—Tut, tut, Jim. Musn't talk like that about her even if she 'ud give you the mitten once.

Mel—(Reads). "Jane Hinsley ain't enjoyin' as poor health as usual this week."

Deacon—Well, that's too bad. Jane hain't well unless she's sick two-thirds of the time.

Mel—(Reads). "Susie Whittaker has give up takin' lessons on the melodeon, it makes her eyes ache so to study the notes."

Adnah—I'll bet the neighbors is glad of it.

Mel—Well, I swan, Abe Hines over to the Cross Roads is dead.

Deacon—No!

Mel.—Yes.

Adnah—What does it say about it?

Mel.—(Reads). “Abram Hines, one of the Cross Roads’ most prominent and respected citizens died yistiddy after bein’ sick fer some time with several diseases. Loss fully covered by insurance.”

Deacon—They didn’t put a very high figger on him, did they? His policy wan’t only fer \$250.

Willie—Say Mr. Teeter, is they any mail fer us and the Smiths and Johnsons and Davises and—and—(thinks) and the Greens? And Ma wants a pint o’ ’lasses in that pail. (Puts pail on counter) (Bildad hands mail to Willie). (Willie turns to sister). Say, Sis, do you want some candy? (Sister nods head.) Well, I ain’t got no money but I’m goin’ to have some in a minute. (To Jim). Say Jim, you ain’t paid me that five cents you promised me and if I don’t git it right away, I’m goin’ to tell.

Jim—I ain’t got it today, Willie. I’ll pay you tomorrow.

Bildad—Does Jim owe you, Willie?

Willie—Yes, he does, and if he don’t pay, I’m goin’ to tell.

Bildad—Well, Jim, I guess here’s where I even up with you fer puttin’ that snake in the mail bag. Willie, you tell what it is and I’ll give you ten cents.

Jim—Willie, you keep still and tomorrow I’ll give you fifteen cents, and bring you a pint of peanuts.

Bildad—You tell now and I’ll give you twenty cents and a quart of peanuts.

Jim—Twenty-five cents.

Bildad—Thirty cents.

Jim—Thirty-five cents.

Bildad—Forty cents.

Jim—Forty-five cents and bring it tomorrow.

Willie—Nope. Got to have it now.

Jim—Forty-five is all I’ve got.

Bildad—Fifty cents and the peanuts, Willie.

Jim—Willie, if you open that mouth of yours, I’ll larrup you within an inch of your life.

(Willie takes sister aside and says: “Sis, you take these things and start on home because I’m goin’ to tell and then I’ll have to run like a—a—a—elephant. (Places mail in girl’s arms and gives her pail). (To Teeter). All right, Mr. Teeter, give me the fifty, the peanuts and some candy fer me and Sis and I’ll tell. (Bildad gives money, candy and peanuts).

Jim—If you do, you know what’s comin’ to you.

(Willie gives stick of candy to sister and she exits. Tries to

bite other stick. Takes it from mouth and examines it. Gosh, Mr. Teeter, how long you had this candy? (Goes to exit. Jim shakes fist at him). Say, Mr. Teeter, what I was goin' to tell was that I caught Jim kissin' my big sister, Kate, the other night. (All laugh and Jim starts for Willie who makes hasty exit.)

Jim—'Tain't no such thing, Bildad, and he knows it. I wan't nowhere near the house.

Bildad—Never mind the explainin', Jim; nobody expects you to admit it. You're human, like the rest of us, and it's mighty embarrassin', sometimes, to be caught. I guess we'll call it even on that snake joke if it did cost me fifty cents. (Jim shoulders mail sack which Bildad hands him and exits l. u. e.)

(Enter Nathaniel Pettigrew l. u. e.)

Nat—Good mornin' everybody.

All—Good mornin' Nat.

Nat—Terrible dry, ain't it?

Deacon—Should say it wuz. Been drivin' my cows to the big creek every day now fer three weeks. Not a drop of water in the barnyard trough and hardly enough in the spring fer the wimmen folks to wash the dishes with. Ain't seen it so dry in twenty years.

Nat—Guess that's right, deacon. Dropped our old drake into a washtub this mornin' and it's so long since he had a chance to swim that he most drowned. He's clean, plumb fergot how to paddle. (All laugh.)

Mel—Say, Nat, guess you must be on probation fer membership in the Marynias club, ain't ye?

Nat—Guess you mean the Ananias club, don't ye? No, I hain't. I never was much of a jiner.

Bildad—Say, Nat, it's a wonder them wimmens righters hain't kicked afore this becuz one of them female names is hooked onto that club what stands fer stompin' the truth under foot but I spoze they'll git around to it when there hain't nothin' else to kick about.

Nat—Mebbe so, Bildad, but if I read it straight, they've got kickin' material enough stored away to last 'em some time yet. Wait 'til they git to votin', then we'll have 'em holdin' all the offices. Just think of Abbie Smithers as poundmistress, draggin' Sike Dusenbury's cow off to the pound, Mandy Gookins as deaconess, passin' the contribution box, Melissy Tucker as justice of the peace, a finin' Dave Green boy fer pullin' the pickets off somebody's fence, and Submit Tewksbury as postmistress. How would that suit you, Bildad?

Bildad—Not monstrous well, Nat, but I guess it would suit Submit all right, considerin' that she allowed, a few minutes afore you come in, that there ought to be a change here.

Nat—What you been doin' now, readin' her postal cards agin? Speakin' of postal cards, Bildad, just toss out my mail if there is any.

(Bildad hands out several papers and two or three letters.)

Nat—Well, I guess I ought ter have brought a market basket along.

(Takes mail and puts it in his pocket with the exception of one letter which he examines carefully.)

Nat—Say, Bildad, What's this, one o' them new fangled stamps I've been readin' about?

Bildad—I dunno, Nat. I noticed it when it come in.

(All crowd around to examine stamp. Deacon puts on glasses; takes letter and looks at it closely.)

Deacon—That hain't no United States stamp. It says suthin' 'bout Mexico on it.

Nat—(Taking letter.) That's so. And the postmark says Mexico, too. I wonder who in creation it's from. I don't know nobody down there. I'll bet a Dominique hen somebody wants to sell me a gold mine or suthin'. Can't wait until I get home. Guess I'll have to rip 'er open right here. (Opens letter with jack-knife and reads in silence.) Good thing fer me that none of you fellers didn't bet or I'd been out a hen. Who do you spoze it's from? But, pshaw, it hain't no use guessin' fer you couldn't guess it in a year. It's from Lije.

Adnah—What, not from Lije Pettigrew?

Nat—Yessir, from Lije Pettigrew.

Mel—And everybody thought he died years ago.

Nat—I didn't know whether he was dead or alive. Hain't seen hide ner hair of him nor heard a thing from him since he he went away twenty years ago this month.

Deacon—Jimminetty, how time does fly. It don't seem as long ago as that.

Nat—No, it sure don't.

Bildad—I don't want to be curious, Nat, but what does Lije have to say fer himself?

Nat—Well, I hain't really sensed it all yet but it kinder looks as if he ain't struck it very rich and wants to come back. Says he's clean tuckered out. Wants to know if I'll take him in and let by-gones be by-gones.

Adnah—Be you goin' to do it? I don't spoze you be after

the way he went away and left you when you was havin' hard work to make ends meet.

Nat—I dunno what I'll do. The thing hits me awful sudden. I've got to think it over. He didn't do right by me, that's a fact, but he's my brother, my only relative, and if he's in trouble and I can help him, I dunno but its my duty to do it.

Mel—I don't believe you'll do it, Nat. It hain't human nater to help a feller what went away and left you as he did when you was nearly workin' yourself to death to keep body and soul together.

Nat—Yes, that's just what he done and I felt hard towards him but twenty years is a long time to hold a grudge. I guess I'll mosey along hum now and talk the matter over with ma. I've found her a perty good counsellor all these years and I guess between us we can make up our minds what to do.

(Exit Nat l. u. e.)

Bildad—Well all I've got to say is that if Nat takes Lije in, he 's got more of that milk of human kindness they tell about than I have.

Mel—Same here. Went away all of a sudden when Nat had his nose to the grindstun, tryin' to support his mother, his wife and child and his wife's sick sister and bad luck meetin' him at every turn. Even borrowed money to pay some of Lije's bills. Said he done it so there wouldn't be no stain on the family name becuz a good name was all he'd got.

Adnah—Yessir, he did. And there hain't another man in this town that would a done it.

(Enter Huldy Haskins l. u. e.)

Huldy—Good mornin', Bildad. Give me five pounds of granulated sugar, a package of corn starch, a pound of coffee and some saleratus. We asked Nat to git 'em fer us and he was gone so long that I drove down to see what was keepin' him. Met him out here and found he's clean forgot all about 'em. There ain't no placin' dependence on the men folks any more.

Bildad—Well, they's an excuse fer him this mornin', Huldy. Nat got a letter that kinder knocked the thoughts of groceries out of his head.

Huldy—Oh, I spoze so. I know how you men folks stiek up fer one another. I never got no letter yet that made me fergit what I was sent fer. What was this here letter about?

Bildad—You remember Lije Pettigrew.

Huldy—Remember him? Guess I oughter.

Bildad—Well, Nat got a letter from him down in Mexico this mornin'. He's poorer 'n a church mouse, he ain't gittin' along,

is all run down and wants to come up here and live with Nat and let by-gones be by-gones.

Huldy—Well, of all things. We hadn't heard a word from him in years and supposed he'd give up the ghost long ago.

Adnah—Well, he ain't and we've been a tellin' Nat that after the way he dug out, we wouldn't take him back.

Huldy—No, 'tain't likely you would and 'tain't many others that would but there ain't many hearts in Sackett's Corner that's as big as Nat's and that's why I'm guessin' that the up-shot of it all will be that Lije will git a letter tellin' him to come.

Deacon—If he does, he's a bigger fool 'n I ever took him to be. out and leave their folks in the lurch wait 'till they see the poor-house starin' 'em in the face before they spend much time bein' sorry fer what they've done. If he wan't in hard luck, you wouldn't hear nothin' from him 'bout makin' up with Nat and fergittin' old scores. Nat oughter write a good, strong letter down there to him, askin' him how he likes bein' in the same fix he left his folks in years ago and say to him that he kin git out of it the best way he can.

Huldy—That's your way of lookin' at it. I was brought up to believe in repentance and forgiveness and so was Nat. As I said before, I'll bet Nat tells him to come on.

Deacon—If he does, he's a bigger fool 'n I ever took him to be.

Huldy—I want to know. Well I'll tell you one thing, Deacon Todd, if there hadn't been someone to overlook the meanness and fergive the sins of some folks that live a good deal nearer here than Mexico, them same folks would a had a good deal harder row to hoe. And I ain't mentionin' any names nuther.

Deacon—Whew, Huldy, you needn't flare up so. You don't mean me, do you?

Huldy—I ain't said who I mean but you've heard that old sayin' about puttin' on the coat if it fits. (To Bildad.) Well, Mr. Teeter, if you've got them things ready, I'll start along or Nat'll have to come back and see what's become of me. (Takes bundles and exits l. u. e.)

Bildad—Say, she's got a tongue like a razor when she gets riled, hain't she?

Adnah—That's what she has. And it hain't one o' them safety razors, nuther.

Mel—Well, guess I'll be startin' on towards home and bein' Huldy's got a team, p'raps she'll give me a lift. A woman hadn't oughter be drivin' fer herself anyway, nowadays, with so many

of them pesky automobiles likely to run her down any minute. (Exit Mel l. u. e.)

Bildad—Beats all how 'fraid Mel is that Huldy's goin' to git hurt. don't it?

Adnah—He don't fool nobody none by sayin' that. He's been tryin' to shine up to her fer five years that I know of but he don't seem to be gittin' along none.

Deacon—It's a good thing he hain't. Thunderashun! I wouldn't be hooked up to a woman with a tongue like that fer anything.

Bildad—Pshaw, deacon, Huldy's all right. You musn't lay it up agin her becuz she got back at ye kinder hard when she was stickin' up fer Nat.

Deacon—I don't, but I don't like the way some wimmen has of insinuatn' things. Them's the kind that keeps a man in hot water all the time.

Adnah—Well, I wouldn't spend too much time worryin' 'bout Mel becuz he hain't got clear sailin' there, not by a jug full. Sime Flanders, what's workin' fer Nat, has got a sort of a leanin' towards Huldy too, and she seems to treat 'em 'bout alike and Mel and Sime are as jealous of each other as two old cats.

Deacon—Yes, Mel gits jealous every time a man looks at her, no matter who 'tis.

Bildad—That's so. Dave Stevens told me 'tother day that Mel is even jealous of Eb. Gowdy, brother of Hank Gowdy, who's been livin' in Nat's tenant house this year. Eb. hain't quite right in his head, you know.

Adnah—Say, that's a strange case of Eb's, hain't it? Hank was tellin' me 'bout it 'tother day when he was down to the shop to have his shovel mended. Eb. was as bright and lively a boy as ever was. Got took sick with typhoid fever and it went to his head and ever since then when he gits his mind sot on a thing, he can't git it off of it until somebody comes along and talks to him a minute 'bout suthin' else. Hank and Tom Filkins was a talkin' 'bout hatchin' chickens 'tother day and Eb. was listenin'. Perty soon he was missin'. Hank went out to look fer him and where do you spoze he found him?

Bildad—I dunno, where?

Adnah—Settin' in a bushel basket, cluckin' to beat the band. Hank told him to git up and then Eb. sez: "Brahma hen, 15 eggs, stayed on nest, set well, hatched 'em all," and so on. He thought he was a settin' hen. Heard Tom tell Hank what a good setter his Brahma hen was and how many chickens she hatched and the hen idee got into Eb's head. It took Hank a minute or two to git

him thinkin' 'bout dinner, then when he'd eat enough, had to git his mind changed agin or he'd a put down vittles all the afternoon. Hank's wife to'd Hank she was goin' over to Hacketts-town to git a picture of the Rock of Ages to hang in the settin' room. When she come back she found Eb. out in the back yard a hangin' onto the pump with both arms fer dear life. He thought he was that pieter.

Bildad—What did she do then?

Adnah—I didn't hear. Prob'ly she told him he was post-master down to Sackett's Corner and then most likely he begun to read everybody's postal cards he could git hold of. (Deacon and Adnah laugh boistrously.)

Bildad—Huh, think you're smart, don't ye?

Adnah—Oh, tolerable, Bildad, just tolerable. Say, what time is it?

Bildad—(Looking at watch.) It wants a quarter to twelve.

Adnah—Jumpin' fishhooks! Is it as late as that. Didn't think 'twas more 'n ten o'clock. I must be gittin' home to dinner becuz Pete Sanders is a comin' down this afternoon to git a tire set and there hain't a spark of fire in that there forge.

Bildad—Guess I'll have to git hold of Eb. Gowdy and put him in that shop and make him think he's the village wagon maker if anything ever gits done. (Bildad and Deacon laugh.)

Adnah—Think you're smart, don't ye?

Bildad—Tolerable, Adnah, tolerable. Guess we're 'bout even on Eb's readin' postal cards now. (As Adnah exits.) Come in again' Adnah.

Deacon—Adnah likes to git the rigs on 'tother feller, don't he? It's different, though, when the joke's on him.

Bildad—Yes, but that don't make no difference with me. I kinder like to pay back a joke right prompt and I couldn't let that chance slip.

(Dinner horn blows. Bildad goes to door and answers.)

Bildad—All right, Mandy. Be right in.

(Bildad goes about, locking doors.)

Deacon—Say, Bildad, do we eat to live or live to eat.

Bildad—Gosh, deacon, there hain't but one answer to that riddle, 'specially when a feller hain't had a mouthful since breakfast.

Deacon exits and Bildad follows after taking large door key from Pocket.)

(CURTAIN.)

Act II

Scene—Sitting room in Nat Pettigrew's home. Mrs. Pettigrew at work, sweeping and dusting.

Mrs. P.—Dear suz, it does seem that there ain't no end to a woman's work. I saw a piece in the almanac the other day that said: "Man works from sun to sun but a woman's work is never done" and I declare to goodness, it's gospel truth. With bakin', churnin', sweepin', dustin', mendin' and patchin' we women folks never seem to git a breathin' spell, leastwise I don't, and we've got to keep goin' if things are kept lookin' half way respectable. I've read about these here study clubs and literary sassieties and other things wimmen belong to and I've wondered what shape their houses must be in because somethin' or other has got to be let go when a woman gits to be a jiner. Mebbe, though, they've all got hired girls, leastwise I hope so. That's somethin' I never had. When Pa's brother Lije went away, all of a sudden, years ago and left us with a mortgage on the farm and nothin' much else but the clothes on our backs, Pa and me just had to put in our best licks to keep out o' the poorhouse without a thought of hirin' anybody to help us. But since Huldy's been here, things has been some easier.

(Enter Nat d. e. with letter.)

Mrs. P.—Where's the things from the store, Pa, out in the kitchen?

Nat—Je-ru-sa-lem, Ma, I clean, plumb forgot all about 'em.

Mrs. P.—I expected you might so I sent Huldy down to see what was keepin' you and to git the groceries if you forgot 'em because we need 'em to git dinner with.

Nat—I had the hull list right on my tongue's end when I went into the store but Bildad handed me a letter that made me fergit about everything else.

Mrs. P.—Land sakes, it must have been important.

Nat—You're just right. Here 'tis.

Mrs. P.—(Takes letter.) From Mexico. Pshaw, this can't be for you. You don't know nobody down there.

Nat—Just what I thought but it is fer me and it's from somebody we both know although there have been times when we wan't very proud of the acquaintance.

Mrs. P.—Land o' Goshen! Who?

Nat—Guess.

Mrs. P.—Now, Pa, you know I ain't no good at guessin'. Tell me.

Nat—I'll have to because you couldn't guess it in a week. It's from Lije.

Mrs. P.—What, Lije Pettigrew?

Nat—Yes, Lije Pettigrew.

Mrs. P.—Well of all things. It's twenty long years since we heard from him and we not knowin' whether he was dead or alive.

Nat—Yes, Ma, twenty years and durin' most of 'em my feelins towards him wan't real brotherly, nuther.

Mrs. P.—You had cause, Pa, you had cause.

Nat—I sure did, Ma. He left us just when we needed him the most, left us a fightin' fer our very lives. I've said un-Christian things about him, and I've thought 'em too, but since I read the letter I've sorter softened towards him in spite of myself. After all, time kinder heals all wounds and twenty years is a long stretch.

Mrs. P.—I know it does, Pa, but things such as he done are hard to overlook. Les read the letter, though. I'm gittin' all in a fluster to know what he says.

Nat—You read it. I want to hear it again. I was so kinder excited when I read it down to the store that I guess I didn't really sense it all.

(Mrs. P. takes letter and reads.)

Durango, Mexico,19....

(Supply date here.)

Nathaniel Pettigrew, Esq.,

Sackett's Corner, N. Y.

Dear Brother Nat:—

After the years that have passed and after the things that have happened, I hardly know how to begin a letter to you. Many times during the past few months I have tried to write but words failed me. This time I have succeeded although I fear a message from me will be unwelcome. Nor can I wonder. I wronged you. Candidly I admit it. I will not waste words but will come directly to the point. Nat, I ask the forgiveness of yourself and wife, although I do not deserve it. If ever a man was repentant, so am I. Surrounded by people who care nothing for me and have no interest in me, I feel myself an exile, an outcast. Nat, I yearn to come home. To know what I have endured for twenty years might soften your heart which I know is hardened toward me. I deserved punishment and I have received it. May I come? May I spend the remainder of my days in the only place that can ever be home to me, 'mid those green fields, those glorious old hills and the scenes that were so familiar to me in years gone by? Don't say no, Nat, don't punish me further. Whatever amends

lie in my power I will make although I realize it is impossible to right all those wrongs. What is your answer? Please write at once. Don't keep me in suspense.

Your brother,

Elijah.

(Nat and Mrs. P. gaze at each other in silence.)

Nat—Well, Ma, what do you think?

Mrs. P.—I declare, Pa, I don't know. What do you think?

Nat—I didn't think of nothin' else on my way from the store and I don't know as I am any nearer makin' up my mind than I was at the start.

Mrs. P.—Well, I ain't got no opinion, nuther. It strikes me so kinder sudden that I want to ponder on it.

Nat—My first thought was not to pay no attention to the letter or else to write him that no matter how much he is sufferin' he won't be punished enough fer what he has done to us by leavin' as he did, takin' the little money we had saved up to pay on the mortgage and leavin' a lot of his bills fer me to pay out of what little we was able to git out of the farm. Of course I wasn't obliged to pay 'em but the folks he owed couldn't afford to lose it and I didn't want no stain on the name of Pettigrew if I could help it.

Mrs. P.—Yes, Pa, you did and there ain't many other men in the Corner that would a done it. It's nigh onto impossible to git some of 'em to pay their honest debts to say nothin' of them they don't owe.

Nat—As I was sayin', I'm kinder relentin' towards Lije. After I read that letter, I got to thinkin' 'bout parson Bemiss' sermon last Sunday. You know he bore down hefty on repentance and the heapin' on of coals of fire. It has been a long time since one of his sermons impressed me the way that one did. It seems to me now that I could repeat every word of it. It's before me as plain as the market report in that there paper (points to paper on table.) These words keep running through my head: "There comes a time in the life of every man who has grievously wronged another, a desire to undo, as far as he is able, what he has done. That is repentance. When this desire, this regret, is deep seated the mental anguish of the transgressor is as great as, if not greater than that he has brought upon others. It means that he has come to a realizing sense of his sin, it means that the pleadings of the Silent Voice have triumphed, and when this time comes, when in honesty and in earnestness he pleads for forgiveness, it is, it seems to me, our duty to meet him half way, to let by-gones be by-gones, and to extend the helpin' hand to the repentant one." That wan't all

of it, Ma, but the pith of the sermon is in them few words. The parson wan't makin' no attempt at eloquence; he wan't makin' no "grand stand play" as our Ralph tells about. They was just plain words, but they was spoke with an earnestness that drove 'em into the hearts and minds of us all.

Mrs. P.—Well, Pa, if there's anything in comin' events castin' their shadders before and preparin' folks fer what is goin' to happen, it may be that the parson was especially inspired on our account when he wrote that sermon.

Nat—There, Ma, that proves what I've always heard, that great minds move in the same channel. That's just what I've been thinkin'. Perhaps it was the way the All Wise took to show us our duty. And mebbe not. Perhaps 'twas just a happen so. At any rate it sot me thinkin'. But I can't see my way clear just now. I'll go out to the barn and finish greasin' that harness afore dinner and mebbe when I came in I'll know what to do. If we write him to come, it's goin' to mean sacrifices we don't neither of us like to think about. (Exit Nat l. u. e.)

Mrs. P.—It sure is a tryin' time fer pa but I guess he'll work things out all right in the end. He usually does.

(Enter Huldy r. u. e.)

Huldy—It's a fortunate thing I'm here, Sarepty, to tag them men folks around and remember what they forgit. Suppose I hadn't been here today to chase Nat down to the store fer them things. You wouldn't a had 'em, that's all.

Mrs. P.—That's right Huldy, but there's an excuse fer pa today. You step to the door and tell Sime to put out the horse and I'll tell you all about it.

Huldy—The horse is bein' put out. Mel Satterlee, knowin' that old Daisy is skittish of them automobiles when she feels like it, rode up with me so's I wouldn't be brought home in pieces if I met one. I've ast him to dinner, seein' as how it's near dinner time and considerable of a piece to walk back to the Corner.

Mrs. P.—That's all right, Huldy, but you know it won't please Sime to have Mel around. If there's any bloodshed, you'll be the cause of it.

Huldy—Got to have your dig at me, hain't you. I reckon there ain't goin' to be no fuss because I don't care a snap of my finger fer either of 'em and they know it.

Mrs. P.—I hain't so sure about that, Huldy.

Huldy—About what?

Mrs. P.—About your not carin' fer either of 'em. You just can't make up your mind which, that's all.

Huldy—'Tain't no such thing. Well, if we're goin' to have any dinner today, I've got to be movin'. It must be time now.

Mrs. P.—Dinner's cookin' and I figgered to have it late today because we had a late breakfast and Pa and Sime sed a late dinner and a lunch before goin' to bed would just suit 'em. Besides, I want to tell you about a letter Pa got this mornin'.

Huldy—I know all about it. I knew it before you did.

Mrs. P.—Land sakes, where'd you hear about it?

Huldy—Down to the store. Nat opened it there, read it, told them setters what was in it and they was all talkin' about it when I got there.

Mrs. P.—Well, what do you think about it?

Huldy—When I first heard about it, and remembered Lije's low-down, contemptible meanness, I was fer tellin' him to stay where he is, keep on sufferin' and see how he likes it and that no matter how sick or poor or lonesome he is, it's good enough for him. But I dunno. Mebbe that hain't the way to look at it; mebbe if he's thoroughly repentant, he ought to be given a chance to show it. But no matter how much or how little he thinks about it, I know what Nat'll do.

Mrs. P.—What?

Huldy—He'll forgive him and tell him to come.

Mrs. P.—When Nat went out, just afore you come, he said if Lije comes it will mean sacrifices we don't neither of us like to think of. I know what he meant. We've been scrapin' and pinchin' to git money enough together to send Ralph to college. You know his head is set on studyin' electricity. If Lije comes, it will mean that Ralph will have to wait anyway another year and mebbe longer for, from Lije's letter, I see he is sick and poverty stricken. There ain't no place fer him to sleep so we'll have to raise that ell to make another room and will most likely have to pay out considerable for doctor's bills for him and there ain't no tellin' what other expense there will be. But if Pa wants to forgive Lije and let him come back, I ain't got a word to say. I couldn't be that ongrateful. I don't fergit how, when mother was took sick, Pa went right over, brought her here and done everything he could fer her as long as she lived and how he set up night after night with brother John when he had the typhoid. John always said it was Nat's nursin' that saved his life. Turn about is fair play. If Lije comes, I'll treat him as if nothin' had happened and will do all I can for him.

Huldy—Sarepty, y-u're doin' just right and it's exactly the way I would look at it if I was in your place.

(Enter Melancthon Satterlee d. c.)

Mel—Howdy, Mrs. Pettigrew. Ain't nothin' in pertiekler the matter with this brand of weather is there?

Mrs. P.—No, Mel, there surely hain't. Huldy, I'll go and see if the water is bilin' off them potatoes while you entertain Mel. (Exit Mrs. P. d. c.)

Mel—Say, Huldy, you said when we was comin' up that you couldn't listen to what I wanted to say because you was so flustered fer fear we would be hit by one o' them autermobiles but there certainly ain't nothin' goin' to hit us here unless it's an earthquake and there ain't one o' them due yet fer quite a spell.

Huldy—I know well enough what you're goin' to say 'cause you've said it every chance you've had for the last five years.

Mel—Well, if you know what 'tis, there hain't no use o' beatin' round the bush. You know I want you, Huldy and want ye bad. Now which is it, yes or no?

Huldy—It hain't nuther. I hain't ready to talk marryin'.

Mel—I'll bet Sime Flanders has been pesterin' you agin. Now, Huldy, what's the use of your fritterin' away your time on him? He's a sour, crabbid, dried-up old widderer. You don't want no second-hand husband. And there ain't no use of it, nuther, when you can git a brand new one by just sayin' the word.

Huldy—I ain't sayin' nothin' for or agin' Sime but I hain't in a marryin' mood today and I don't want to hear no more 'bout it now.

Mel—All right, Huldy, but you can find cases right here in the Corner where second wives ain't treated as they ought ter be and you'd better think o' that before you turn down a chance to git a husband that'll do by you as a wife ought to be done by.

Sime—(Heard outside). Mel! Mel! (Putting head in door) Oh, here ye be, eh? Say, Mel, Nat wants to know if you'll come out to the barn and show him how to make them rings you put in your hogs' noses.

Mel—All right, Sime, I'll be right there. (Aside) Drat the pigs and darn them rings. (Exit d. c.)

(Enter Sime l. u. c.)

Sime—(Looking after Mel) So that homely old bach is hangin' round here agin is he, Huldy? I hope you don't give him no encouragement. He ain't fit fer ye. Never seen one of 'em yet that got married at his time of life that knowed how to treat a wife. What you want, Huldy, is a man that's had some experience with women. Do you suppose one o' them sour old baches ever thinks of fetchin' in an armful of wood or a pail of water or anything else fer a wife when he gits one? 'Course not. If you

marry Mel. Satterlee, it won't be a year before you'll work yourself down to a shadder. You can see plenty of cases of it right here in the Corner. Hook up double with me, Huldy, and git a helpmeet that will be one in suthin' besides name.

Huldy—I hain't in no "hookin' up" mood today, Sime, and if I was, I guess nothin' you could say about second wives down to the Corner would make any difference. I rather guess I'd be able to take care of myself with a second-hand husband or a first-hand one if I wanted either, which I don't. (Exit Huldy r. u. e.)

Sime—Second-hand husband. That means me. Some more of Mel. Satterlee's insults. Gosh, but he's jealous. Mel's had it in fer me ever since I used to lick him every chance I got when we went to school together. Ding'd if I don't believe I could do it yet and I will, too, if he uses that there tongue of his'n too free. (Looks off left.) There he comes now, lookin' madder 'n a hatter. He guesses I put up that job to git him down to the barn and away from Huldy. And he's right. I guess I'll just hide and see what happens. (Gets behind table.)

(Enter Mel l. u. e.)

Mel—(Looking about.) Both of 'em gone, eh? Down in the kitchen a spoonin' I suppose. Well, ding my buttons if I can tell what she sees about that Sime Flanders to admire. He's the humliest critter breath was ever put into. Gosh, but he's jealous of me. And I guess he's got reason becuz it kinder looks as if Huldy favors me some considerable. If I was here all the time like he is, he would stand no chance at all. He'd better look out what he says about me to her, though, or I might be inclined to pound the stuffin' outen him.

Sime—(Rising from behind table.) Say, Mel, have you got any special time set when you want to commence that job? And say, talkin' about humly critters, I guess you hain't got no lookin' glass down to your house, hev ye?

Mel—So you was hidin' round to play the spy, was ye? Just like ye. You heard what I said and I hain't goin' to take none of it back.

Sime—(Advancing.) Ye hain't, eh? Well I kin make ye and I'm half a mind to. So you think you can win Huldy Haskins, do ye? Well, I'll tell ye right now that she ain't goin' to take up with no old knock-kneed, piefaced, jellyfish like you when there's a real man (slaps himself on breast) around and don't you fergit it.

Mel—Who's a pie-face, you old spindle-shanked hyena?

Sime—I'll show you who's a hyena.

(Shake fists in each other's faces.)

Mel—I'll show you who's a pie-face.

(They clinch and commence to wrestle. Enter Nat d. c., Huldy l. u. e. and Mrs. P. r. u. e. Mrs. P. grabs Sime, Huldy grabs Mel and Nat steps between and separates them. Sime and Mel struggle to get at each other.)

Sime—Let go of me, Huldy, I'll teach him to be careful who he's callin' names.

Mel—Just give me a chance and I'll pulverize him so fine that that tongue of his'n won't be insultin' nobody else.

Huldy—Stop or I'll never speak another word to either of you.

Mrs. P.—I declare, I never seen such goins on. Anybody would think neither of you was more'n a dozen years old.

Nat—Look a here, you young bantam roosters, you just straighten your feathers or else go out in the back yard and have it out.

Mrs. P.—Why, Pa, how you talk.

Sime—All right, Huldy, I'll let up on him this time but it's only for your sake.

Mel—I'll quit just to accommodate you, Huldy, but he needs a thrashin'.

Huldy—I'm ashamed of you. The idea of two men as old as you be a fightin'. If you think anything of my friendship, shake hands and promise to behave yourselves hereafter.

(**Sime** and **Mel** glare at each other but make no move to shake hands.)

Huldy—Come, git a gait on you.

(**Sime** and **Mel** advance slowly, grasp hands loosely and shake slightly.)

Huldy—Now, Sime, do you promise to behave?

Sime—(First glancing vindictively at **Mel**.) Y-a-a-s.

Huldy—Now, Mel, do you promise.

Mel—Y-a-a-s.

Huldy—Now git out of here, both of you, and come into the kitchen where I can keep an eye on you. (Pushes **Mel** off l. u. e. and beckons to **Sime** who follows.)

Nat—Say, Ma, that old sayin' about the course of true love not runnin' smooth ain't no joke, is it?

Mrs. P.—It don't appear to be in this case.

Nat—Ma, I've ben thinkin' the thing over and I guess if you're willin' I'll tell Lije to come on. It'll be an awful disappointment to **Ralph** to know that he'll have to wait another year for that course in electricity but he's always listened to my reasonin' and I guess I can explain things to him.

Mrs. P.—All right, Pa, do as you think best and I promise you I'll do my part.

Nat—I'm sure you will, ma, and I want you to know I appreciate it. Now suppose you go and git the letter ready. You know letter writin' ain't my strong holt.

Mrs. P.—I don't know exactly what to say, Pa, but I'll do my best. I'll bring it in and read it to you when it's finished and if it suits you, we'll put it in the box so the carrier can git it in the mornin'. (Exit Mrs. P. d. e.)

Nat—Lije don't deserve it but somehow or other I just can't say no to him.

(Enter Ralph Pettigrew l. u. e.)

Ralph—Hello, father, ben lookin' all over for you and couldn't find you.

Nat—That's because you didn't look in the right spot. What's on your mind?

Ralph—Nothin' serious. I just wanted to say that if you don't care, I guess I'll take the colt and drive over to Becket to those church doins tonight. Most everybody down to the Corner is goin'.

Nat—I ain't got no objections. Have a good time while you're young. Life is a short span anyway and if we have the pleasures, we've got to take advantage of them as they come along. But say, Ralph, I'm glad you come in because I've got suthin' I want to say to you. You don't remember your uncle Elijah, because you was a babe in the cradle when he went away.

Ralph—No, father, I don't remember him and from what I've heard about him, it's just as well that I don't. I'm never goin' to forgive him for the way he treated you and mother.

Nat—Ralph, I've felt the same way for twenty years. I've said I never wanted to see him again and I've thought un-Christian things about him but we've just had a letter from him and that, with some other things, has sort of changed the feelins of your mother and me toward him.

Ralph—He couldn't write any letter that would make me forgive him.

Nat—So I used to think. This letter says he's in Mexico, all broken down in health, among a lot of people who don't care nothin' for him and, although he didn't say so in so many words, I take it that besides not havin' any friends, he's poorer 'n pusley. He begs us to forgive him and wants to come back. Ralph, I'm the only near relative he's got and you know what the Good Book says about forgiveness.

Ralph—All right, father, do as you like. Of course it isn't anything to me.

Nat—Yes, Ralph, it is. His comin' back will mean considerable to you and that's what I meant a minute ago when I said I wanted to talk to you. I've promised you the course in electricity you have wanted since you entered your teens. We've been savin' up the money and have got nearly enough but if your uncle comes back it means more expense. He will want medicine and perhaps care that we will have to pay for. There ain't a room in the house we can give him. It means that we've got to go to work and raise that ell one story that we've been hopin' to do for so many years and it'll take money and all we've got is that we've laid aside for your education.

Ralph—I suppose that means you want me to let the education go.

Nat—No, Ralph, it don't, but it means you would have to wait. I'm goin' to give you an education if I have to mortgage the farm to do it, but you're young yet and I'm hopin' that in a year or two we will save enough more, somehow or other, to pay for your course. The question is, are you willin' to bear your portion of the sacrifice we will all have to make in order to let your uncle Lije come back?

Ralph—Father, let me ask you a question. Do you really want uncle Elijah to come?

Nat—Yes, boy, I do. He ain't done right by us but it's our duty to put out the helpin' hand if he is repentant and asks our forgiveness.

Ralph—Then I'll do my part. You've done the very best you could by me so far and I can see it would be ungrateful if I stood in the way of something you want although it means a disappointment and a sacrifice. It won't be any harder for me than for you and mother. If uncle Elijah's fate hangs on my decision, you may tell him to come.

Nat—Thank you, boy, thank you. It was hard for me to ask this but I rather thought you would do it.

Ralph—While you're at it why don't you do that ell addition off into two or three rooms instead of one big one and then take a summer boarder or two? Other folks around here are doin' it and makin' money at it, too.

Nat—I declare, boy, I'd never thought of that. I'll talk it over with your mother. A few extra dollars wouldn't come amiss.

Ralph—Well, if I'm goin' over to Becket, I'd better go out and wash that carriage.

Nat—All right, and on your way out, ask your mother if she's got that letter done yet. (Exit Ralph l. u. e.)

Nat—I declare, the boy took it better 'n I thought he would. He's true blue and no mistake. (Enter Mrs. P. d. c. with letter)

Mrs. P.—Here is the letter, Pa, and, I declare, it was the hardest one I ever tried to write.

Nat—I don't doubt it, Ma, but I knowed you could do a better job at it than I could. You know I got pretty well acquainted with your letter writin' several years before we stood up in front of old parson Brown and I always said that there wan't none of 'em that could beat you at sayin' a thing short and to the point. Less hear what you've got writ.

(Both sit. Mrs. P. adjusts spectacles and reads:)

Sackett's Corner, N. Y.

(Supply date.)

Mrs. P.—"Dear Brother Lije:" Is that the way you want to start it?

Nat—Y-a-a-a-s, I guess so, although it kinder goes agin' the grain as I think back. But let it go that way.

Mrs. P.—(Resuming). Your letter received and I was very much surprised to hear from you."

Nat—That's all right, so far.

Mrs. P.—(Resuming). I'll say, right at the start, that when anyone comes out, point blank, and asks fer forgiveness, it's hard work to refuse it. Therefore I forgive you. But that isn't the only reason. I haven't forgo t what was taught me and you at mother's knee and I've tried to live up to it all these years. You didn't treat me just as a brother should but I'll overlook it all—

Nat—That's good, ma. I want him to know we ain't forgot.

Mrs. P.—(Repeats.) "But I'll overlook it all and will welcome you back and Sarepta and me will do the best we know how by you." (I thought I'd put that in so he'd know I ain't agin' his comin'.)

Nat—That's all right, ma; good idee.

Mrs. P.—(Resuming.) "And will let bygones be bygones. Let us know about when you'll be here and we'll be on the look-out for you."

Nat.—Fust rate, ma, fust rate. Plenty long enough and it tells the hull story. Seal 'er up and I'll go out and drop it in the box.

(Mrs. P. seals letter and hands it to Nat.)

Mrs. P.—And I'll go and see how Huldy's gettin' on with the dinner. (Exit Mrs. P. d. c. Exit Nat l. u. e.)

CURTAIN.

Act III

(Scene: Same as Act II.)

(Two months are supposed to have elapsed during which time Elijah has arrived, also Miss Arathusa Fitzgibbons, a city boarder who is an enthusiastic member of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.)

(Enter Ara. d. c.)

Ara.—Oh, this is lovely, grand, beautiful, superb. Pure and exhilarating ozone, verdant pastures, majestic forests, babbling brooks, pleasant walks. The odors of the flowers and the new mown hay are surpassing fragrance, wonderful incense. Oh, that I could stay here always to bask in the beautiful sunlight, to gaze at Nature's wonderful and entrancing panorama, to witness her kaleidescopic changes as one tint succeeds another on the giants of the forsets in the glorious autumn time. It is soul-stirring and when one stops to ponder, he is filled with awe at the marvelous works of the Creator. Oh, it is sublime, wondrous and sublime; so restful, so refreshing. (Sighs.) But in four short weeks I must forsake it all and reluctantly return to the place where duty calls to the busy mart, the overgrown metropolis where all is hubbub and confusion, where humane instincts and thoughts of right and justice are endangered and sometimes forgotten in the chase for the almighty dollar, where the poor, dumb brutes are the victims of atrocious cruelties, where, in the conduct of public affairs, men are found whose only thought is of gain and self-aggrandizement. There I labor with others of my sex that there may be seen the dawn of a better day, the day when woman shall have the right of franchise conferred upon her when—

(Eb. Gowdy heard outside.)

Eb.—Whoa, durn ye. Stand still 'till I git into this wagon or I'll smash in your old slats.

Ara.—Oh, horrors. A poor horse in the hands of a human monster. And in this beautiful spot, too, where I supposed only the most humane instincts existed. Is my idea of a paradise to be shattered? Is human nature the same the world over? I must hasten to the relief of that poor animal.

(Starts to exit d. c. when she meets Eb. entering. Eb. takes no notice of Ara.)

Eb.—(Starts about stage as if driving a horse and goes through motions of whipping. Ara., in fright, rushes about stage to avoid him.) Go on there. I'll teach you to stake. G'lang. (whips) durn your old hide, (whips). That there jag of wood

don't weigh more'n a hundred pounds and I'll bet my suspenders on it.

Ara.—Oh, what shall I do? A lunatic and violent, too.

Eb.—(Whips vigorously and then walks about stage quietly with arms extended as if holding reins over a horse that had just been started after a fit of balking.) There, I thought I'd git you started.

Ara.—I must reason with him by gentle and persuasive means. (To Eb.) Please, kind sir, let me plead with you in the name of humanity to be kind to your poor, dumb animal, your faithful servant, the horse, man's best friend.

Eb.—(Still driving). Don't bother me. Got this old bone heap started and if I let him stop before he gits to the top of this hill, I couldn't start him again with nothin' short of dynamite.

(Enter Nat d. c.) (Eb. ignores him.)

Ara.—Oh, Mr. Pettigrew, I'm so glad you've come. I am so frightened by this awful man. He is raving crazy and in his delirium is abusing a poor horse. I have tried to reason with him so that if he ever really does drive a horse, he will be kind to it.

Nat.—Shucks, Miss Fitzgibbons, he wouldn't hurt a flea. That's Eb. Gowdy, one of our neighbors, what ain't just right in his head at times. When he gits his mind sot on a thing, sometimes, he can't git it off until someone changes it fer him and this is one of them times. On his way from the Corner just now he passed old Jim Green who was tryin' to start his balky horse up a hill and Eb. thinks he's doin' the same thing. I'll change his mind in a jiffy. (Goes to Eb. and grasps him by the arm.) Hello, Eb., you ain't drivin' no horse. You're listenin' fer the dinner horn and when you hear it, you're goin' to run fer home like all git out.

Eb.—(Pulls away.) Giddap, think I want to be all day git-tin' home with this here jag o' wood? (Whips.)

Nat.—Eb., see here. Hungry, dinner horn, dinner, listen, run. (Nat goes r. and puts hand to ear as if listening. Eb. stops whipping and watches.) I hear it. Dinner's ready. Dinner Eb., horn, run.

Eb.—Dinner? That's so. Hungry? Oh, my. (Clasps hands across stomach. Goes r. and listens.) Horn, Nat, horn. Dinner, pork and beans, potatoes, coffee. Good bye, Nat, see you later. (Runs off r.)

Nat.—There he goes, Miss, and he won't think of nothin' but dinner until someone switches his mind off onto suthin' else or the spell leaves him. Been that way fer years. Had typhoid fever when he was a boy and that's the way it left him.

Ara.—What a sad case. And to think there should be such misery amid such beautiful surroundings.

Nat.—Yes, 'tis too bad but I've noticed that if a feller is singled out fer bad luck, it generally comes to him no matter who he is or where he lives.

(Enter Mrs. P. l. u. e., dust cloth in hand.)

Mrs. P.—Say, Pa, Lijah is a settin' in his chair out under the old harvest apple tree and the sun's got around so it's perty hot. He wants to know if you'll come and help him in here where it's cooler.

Ara.—And I think I'll take a walk down to the brook before dinner. I want to gather some of those beautiful flowers. (Exit r. u. e.)

Nat.—All right, Ma, I'll go right out. If Lije keeps on improvin' the way he has since he come, it won't be long before he kin navigate alone. The day he got here he could hardly stand up and this mornin' when I helped him out to the tree I didn't do nothin', searcely, but stiddy him a little bit. (Exit l. u. e.)

Mrs. P.—Yes, and I do hope he'll keep on improvin' because he keeps gittin' more 'n more chipper when he sees he's gittin' his strength back. I guess I'll just take a minute to dust up before Pa and Elijah git here. (Dusts all the furniture in silence previous to entrance of Nat. and Lije.)

(Enter, slowly, Nat. and Elijah. Nat supports him. Elijah is made up pale and walks with a cane.)

Mrs. P.—(Moving easy chair near table.) Pa, help 'Lijah to this chair. It's more comfortable 'n any of the rest of 'em.

(Elijah sits and wipes face with handkerchief.)

Elijah—Thank you, Nat, and you, too, Sarepty. I don't know how I'm ever goin' to pay you for the kindness you're showin' me.

Mrs. P.—Shucks, 'Lijah, don't you say a word. We're gittin' our pay by seein' you gettin' your strength back from day to day.

Nat.—Yessir, Lije, this here brand of pure air is just the very best kind of a braecer. Beats these here patent medicine tonics all holler. 'Tain't goin' to be no time at all before you and Sime will be a racin' every mornin' to see who can put down the most of them buckwheat pancakes of Huldy's.

Elijah—I hope so, Nat, and I don't know but you're right becu'z I certainly am a feelin' better. There was never a happier minute in my life than when I received your letter and although I was comin' as fast as steam would carry me, it seemed as if we was just crawlin'.

Nat.—Good thing, then, you didn't have to come the old-fashioned stage coach way, wan't it?

Elijah—Yes, it was, Nat. I never would have survived it. And when I finally did git to the Corner, it seemed as if I couldn't wait to git a glimpse of the old farm.

Mrs. P.—And now you're just goin' to enjoy yourself, git well and strong and have nothin' to worry about.

Elijah—Mebbe I won't worry but I can never forgit how I wronged you and Nat years ago and I'll never be able to forgive myself or make proper amends.

Nat.—Lije, don't you ever let me hear you say that again. When mother 'n me wrote you that letter to come to us we decided that bygones should be bygones. What is past is goin' to be a closed book. We ain't never goin' to speak of it again and we're goin' to try not to think of it. Right here is where we make a new start; you're one of us again and so long as we've got a cent, you're goin' to have your share.

Elijah—Thank you, Nat, thank you. Although I don't deserve it, nothin' I've ever heard has done me as much good as them few words. You and Sarepty are two in a thousand and if you don't git your reward on the o'her side, there just ain't no truth in scripiter.

(Enter Ralph d. c.)

Ralph—Pa, Submit Tewksbury is out in the kitchen and wants to know if she kin see you on a little matter of business.

Nat.—Certain, send 'er right in.

(Exit Ralph d. c.)

Mrs. P.—Well, I wonder what it can be that Submit wants. Suppose it's anything private?

Nat.—Nope, I don't. If she's got anything to say, she's goin' to say it here. I hain't havin' no secrets from you and Lije.

(Enter Submit d. c.)

Submit—Mornin' folks. Well, if there ain't 'Lijah. (Shakes hands with Elijah.) Heard you was here but hadn't seen you before. Lookin' kind o' pindlin', ain't ye? Kinder different from what you was when you went away. Don't suppose it's consumption, do you? Looks some like it. You've got the consumptive color. But then, I hain't goin' to say nothin' to discourage you. Course you want to live as long as you can but if you've got to go, the Corner is as good a place to be laid away in as any although they ain't keepin' the cemetery up like they used to and I 'spose the time will come when it won't be nothin' but a lot of weeds.

Elijah—No, Submit, I don't suppose I do look as I used to and I notice you've changed considerable but, of course, when one gets to be your age—

Submit—Well, Lije Pettigrew, that's a nice way to talk to me when I come here and try to say somethin' comfortin' and encouragin' to you.

Nat—Kinder got your come-uppance that time, didn't you Submit? But what business have you got with me?

Submit—I declare, I almost forgot that. You know 'Lonzo Jeffers has been sick a long time. The ladies' aid society sent me over there yesterday to see how they was gittin' on. They're sufferin' fer the necessaries of life and I've started out to see what I kin git fer 'em.

Nat.—What do you want me to give, Submit?

Submit—Anything you want to. Somethin' to eat would probably be as acceptable as anything.

Nat—How would a barrel of potatoes do?

Submit—Just the thing.

Mrs. P.—Yes, and they shall have a big roll of butter, too, and I shouldn't be surprised if I can find some clothes of Ralph's that Hully and me can make over for the children. I'll go and see right away. (Exit Mrs. P. l. u. e.)

Nat—And I'll go and tell Sime to take them potatoes over before night. (Exit Nat l. u. e.)

Submit—And I'll be joggin' on because I've got a lot of places to stop at. Good day, 'Lijah. Hope you'll be lookin' better the next time I see you.

Elijah—Thank you, Submit, I think I'm going to.

(Exit Submit d. e.)

Elijah—Lon Jeffers sick and poverty stricken. Poor Lon. Never could seem to get on. Good fellow, too, and always was. But if the rest of the folks hereabouts are like Nat and Sarepty, the family won't suffer. I guess I'll go into the parlor and lop down on that sofa a few minutes. I declare, I feel all tuckered out. Can't seem to stand nothin' any more. (Rises *slowly* and exits r. u. e. with aid of cane.)

(Enter Mel. Skinner, l. u. e., dragging Eb. Gowdy.)

Mel.—Now look a here, Eb., your name is Sime Flanders and you've got a wife that is lazyer 'n sin. You've just got to git after her good and strong. She don't do nothin' all day long but read them paper-covered novels. Meals ain't never ready, dishes ain't washed, fire's out, no wood in the house. Just tell her what's what. Go at it vigorous. Let her know who's boss.

Eb.—Me, Sime Flanders and got a wife? Why yes. that's

so. She ain't no good. 'Course she ain't. I'll make her come to time. Can't have no such goins on as that.

Mel—(Aside). I've got him started on the right track. Now I'll call Huldy and if this here thing works out as I cal'late it will, I'll soon have Sime Flanders cut out. (Goes to door and calls Huldy.) (Huldy heard answering in the distance.) (Mel. goes r. 1st e., out of sight of Huldy and prepares to listen, meanwhile Eb. is walking pompously about stage.)

(Enters Huldy d. c. As she enters Eb. says, talking to imaginary woman, without noticing Huldy.)

Eb.—Yes. I'm Sime Flanders and you're Mrs. Sime Flanders, the laziest critter I ever laid eyes on. Where's your dinner? Ain't ready is it? Been settin' here all the mornin' readin' paper-covered novels. Dishes ain't washed, fire out, nothin' done. Spendin' all your time with flum de dums and fol de rols. Why ain't you brought in the wood and water? You ain't fit to have a decent man. You bet if I was single again I wouldn't marry any woman that walks. Git up there. Stir your stumps or I'll—(makes dash at imaginary woman as Mel. rushes on stage and grabs him.)

Mel—Hold on here, Eb. What you doin'?

Eb.—Let go of me. I'm Sime Flanders and I'm tryin' to teach that woman of mine to be of some account.

Mel—No, Eb. you ain't Sime Flanders. You're Eb. Gowdy and you're weedin' onions. See, here's the row (points to imaginary row of onions on floor of stage, gets down on hands and knees and goes through motion of weeding.) See, Eb., like this (weeds). You try it.

Eb.—Onions, onions? That's so. That's what I was doin' (Crawls from stage l. n. e. on hands and knees, weeding vigorously. Mel and Huldy watch him as he exits).

Mel—Beats all what strange notions that feller gits in his head, don't it? Remembers things that happened in the past, too. When Sime's wife was livin' he used to be at Sime's considerable, you know, and he remembers how Sime used to abuse her. And, by the way, Huldy, now that you've seen this, you wouldn't want to be number two for Sime, would you?

Huldy—Look here, Mel Satterlee, do you mean to say that I don't do nothin' but read novels, let fires go out, let my breakfast dishes go without washin' and—

Mel—No, no, Huldy, gosh no, I don't mean that but see how he treated his first wife and why wouldn't he abuse number two?

Huldy—Well, I'm bound to admit there's suthin' in it but I

hain't said I'm goin' to be number two, or number one, nuther, for anybody.

Mel—I wish you'd say you'll be Mrs. Melancthon Satterlee, number one, though.

Huldy—Well, I ain't goin' to say nothin' 'bout it. I told you the other day I ain't in a marryin' mood jest yet.

Mel—All right, Huldy, I kin wait a spell.

Huldy—Guess you'll have to. (Exit d. e.)

Mel—Say, wan't that a great scheme? Worked like a charm. I kin see I'm gittin' on. I've got her thinkin'. (Exit l. u. e.)

(Enters Sime Flanders r. u. e.)

Sime—By chowder I've got a great scheme. I jest ought to pat myself on the back fer thinkin' of it. When I come in, I saw Eb. Gowdy out in Nat's onion patch, weedin'. I'll git him in here, tell him he's Mel Satterlee, fill him up with a lot of stuff a crabib old bach might say, start him sayin' it and then call Huldy in. (Looks off r. u. e.) There he is, headed this way. I'll call him. (Calls.) Eb., you've got that job done; come in here.

(Enter Eb. slowly l. u. e.)

Eb.—Ain't they no more onions to weed?

Sime—Onions? Course not. You don't weed onions or do anything else. You're Mel Satterlee, the laziest critter on earth. You're lookin' fer a wife that'll support you takin' in washin'. You want someone to git up in the mornin' and light the fire, to bring in the wood and water, to plant the garden and take care of it and when she ain't doin' anything else, to make rag carpet fer the neighbors and you're goin' to ask the first person you see where you can find such a woman. (Looks off left.) (Aside.) I swan, here comes Huldy now. I wan't expectin' no such luck. Guess I'll jest hide and see the fun. (Conceals himself behind wing. r. 1st e.)

(Enter Huldy l. u. e.)

Huldy—Well, I declare, Eb. Gowdy, you here again?

Eb.—Gowdy, Gowdy, no, my name is Satterlee, Mel Satterlee, and I'm the laziest critter on earth. I'm lookin' fer a wife. I ain't goin' to work. I want her to support me takin' in washin', to git up in the mornin' and light the fire, bring in wood and water, to plant the garden and work it and to make rag carpet fer the neighbors. You don't know where I can find her, do you?

Huldy—No, I don't. (Aside) And Mel Satterlee don't nuther, I'll tell him that. (To Eb.) See here, you ain't Mel Satterlee, you're Eb. Gowdy and you're huntin' for Mel Satterlee. You're goin' right over to his house and tell him the woman he's lookin' for ain't in Sackett's Corner. Understand?

Eb.—Gowdy, Gowdy? Why, yes, so I am. That's my name. Mel Satterlee, house, woman ain't here. All right, I'll go, I'll find him. (Exit l. u. e.)

Huldy—Take in washin'! Make garden! Weave rag carpets! He heard Mel Satterlee say suthin' like that or how would he know anything about it. The contemptible old lazybones. If I don't give him a piece of my mind the next time he talks about marryin', my name ain't Huldy Haskins. (Exit l. u. e.)

Sime—(Enters from r. 1st e. and dances wildly about stage.) Whoop-e-e-e (Stops suddenly and limps. Face contorted as if in pain.) Darn that rheumatiz. By Jimminy Crikety, but that worked fine. Won't she give Mel, a settin' out the next time she sees him. I've got the inside track now, all right. That's as plain as a wart on your nose. I really ought to ask Eb. to be best man when the time comes. I'm goin' to follow up my advantage. Huldy's down in the kitchen and perhaps she'll listen now to a suggestion 'bout becomin' Mrs. Simon J. Flanders, Esq. (Exit l. u. e.)

(Enter Arathusa Fitzgibbons d. c.)

Ara—Such a delightful walk, such quiet, such peace, such contentment; lambs gamboling in the fields, horses frisking about the pastures. Such a contrast with what the poor dumb animals in the city are forced to endure, inhuman drivers, galling collars, torturing checks, loads that are too heavy. (Mel appears d. c. and listens.) I would like to stay here always but fate has otherwise decreed: I must return and again engage, with others of my sex, in the work of interceding for the animals that cannot speak for themselves.

Mel—(Aside). Gosh, you could find enough of that to do right here if you knew where to look.

Ara—I've sometimes wished I had a kind and loving husband to help me in my work, someone to share my lot but it begins to look as if I must travel life's pathway alone, all alone. But I must not repine or abandon hope. Many women older than I have found their inamoratas and have lived happily ever after. Oh, for a husband to share my lot. (Exit r. u. e.)

(Enter Mel. who looks after Arathusa.)

Mel—Wants a husband to share her lot. I wonder if there's a house on it. She lives in New York and there's where the lot is. Course there's a house on it. They don't let no land go to waste down there. But s'pose there ain't? I read the other day that land in New York was worth \$500 a foot. And s'pose that lot's 50 feet across. Less see, how much would that be? (Takes envelope and pencil from pocket and figures.) \$25,000. Whew!

I guess I ain't so anxious for Huldý after all. She ain't got nothin' but that tenant house Pete Crawford is a livin' in. Ain't worth a cent over \$500. Gee, but it's lucky I happened in just as I did. Here's where Mel Satterlee spruces up some and gits acquainted with the owner of the aforesaid lot. (Exit d. c.)

(Enter Ralph d. c., followed by Elijah. Elijah sits.)

Ralph—I don't need to ask you how you feel, uncle Elijah, because your looks show that you're a sight better than when you came.

Elijah—Yes, Ralph, I believe a few more weeks here will make me feel quite like myself again and then perhaps I can do something to help your father and mother instead of bein' a burden on 'em.

Ralph—Now look a here, uncle Elijah, you know father and mother don't want to hear you talk about bein' a burden.

Elijah—I know they don't but it's true and I just can't help sayin' it sometimes. And I've just discovered that you've given up your schoolin' so I could come back. Boy, your uncle Elijah ain't goin' to fergit that and he's goin' to make it up to you some day.

Ralph—I don't want you to think anything about it. I didn't give it up, simply postponed it a year or two. I'm young yet and it won't make a bit of difference.

Elijah—I know how young folks get their minds set on things and how hard it is to give 'em up. But you ain't goin' to lose nothin' by it, not if I can help it.

(Enters Submit d. c.)

Submit—I was just on my way back and I thought I'd just drop in and tell you and Sarepty how well I've been a doin' gittin' things for Lon Jeffers' folks. Everybody give suthin' and I guess they'll have plenty to carry 'em along until Lon is able to work again. (To Ralph). Say, Ralph, you just run out and tell Sime when he's on his way down to Lon's with the potatoes and butter to stop at Haskinses and git that jar of preserves and that sack of flour Mrs. Haskins is a goin' to send down.

(Exit Ralph d. c.)

Elijah—Well, Submit, there's some sympathy left in this old world, ain't there?

Submit—Well, why shouldn't there be? We don't none of us know when bad luck will come our way.

Elijah—That's right, Submit, and it's in just such times that we find out who our friends are.

Submit—That's so. Say, Elijah, you don't want to give suthin', do you? Pshaw! What am I a sayin'? Of course you

ain't got nothin' to give or you wouldn't be here a livin' on Nat and Sarepty. If you should happen to git well, I spoze you will git out and do suthin' for yourself, won't you?

Elijah—I hope to, Submit, but if you was in my place and I asked you that question, do you know what I'd expect you to tell me?

Submit—No. What?

Elijah—I'd expect you to tell me that it wan't none of my affairs.

Submit—I want to know. I don't see nothin' in it fer you to git your back up over. It's a pretty how de do if I can't ask you a civil question without gittin' my head snapped off. (Exit Submit, indignantly, d. c.)

Elijah—That tongue of Submit's always was her worst fault and I can't resist the temptation, sometimes, to take her down a peg or two. Guess I'll take a stroll down the road a piece. I'll never get strength back in this carcass of mine if I don't exercise some. (Exit d. c.)

(Enter Mel. and Arathusa l. u. e. Mel is wearing his "best" coat and vest, collar and tie.)

Ara.—So you're a bachelor, are you? Then, of course, you've never known what it is to have a helpmate ready with her needle, her sympathy and her many kindly ministrations to provide you with the many little comforts of life.

Mel—Yes—that is—no, I ain't. When I was a youngster, I didn't mind it much but since I've settled down, it gits sort o' monotonous goin' it alone.

Ara—There is where our hearts beat with one accord. For years I have been so occupied with my work in the glorious cause of prevention of cruelty to animals that I have had but little time to think of the tender passion.

(Both sit. Eb. Gowdy appears d. c. and listens.)

Mel—(Aside). A lot worth \$25,000. And she ain't a bad looker, nuther. I'm goin' to land 'er if I can. (Hitches chair a little closer.) Yes, it does take folks in the same boat to sympathize with each other. Now I've often thought I'd git married if I found the right one but, of course, there ain't none around here that a feller would want.

Ara—And I've sometimes thought how nice it would be to have a kind lovin' husband, but down in the city the men are all so busy that they don't seem to have time to devote to a wife.

Mel—(Hitching closer). Well, 'tain't so here. A feller ain't so rushed but what he has the time to see that his wife gits the attention she deserves.

Ara—(Coyly). Yes, and you country men are so kind and so considerate.

Mel—(Moving still closer). (Aside.) Now's the time to pop. Your whole name is Arathusa Gwendoline Fitzgibbons, ain't it?

Ara—Yes.

Mel—I hardly ever use my whole name but when I do it's Melanethon Hezekiah Satterlee. And say, Arathusa—I can call you that, can't I—don't you—I mean—I was goin' to say—

Ara—(Coyly). Yes, Melanethon Hezekiah.

Mel—(Aside). Gee. (To Ara) I was sayin—I mean I was thinkin' Arathusa Gwendoline Satterlee would sound better 'n Fitzgibbons. (Aside) There, I finally got it out. (To Ara) What do you think? (Both rise.)

Ara—Melanethon!

Mel—Arathusa! (Fall into each others arms.)

Mel—Now we won't say a word about it to anyone for a spell yet, will we my hunk of maple sugar?

Ara—No, my onliest own. Oh, I am so happy.

Mel—And now less go and git the license right away so we can be spliced when we git ready. (Aside) A \$25,000 lot and it's mine. Mel. Satterlee, you've struck luck once anyway. (Exit l. u. e. with arms about each other.)

(Eb. enters, shuffles slowly across stage and looks after them for a moment, turns and exits d. e., returns carrying a dash churn which he places on a chair and takes a seat beside it. This should be done with much deliberation. Sime and Huldy appear d. e., discover Eb. and stand listening.)

Eb.—(Looking at churn). A lot with \$25,000. Ain't a bad looker, nuther. (Draws chair closer). Goin' to git her if I can. Often thought I'd git married but there ain't nobody around here that I'd want. Your name is Arathusa Gwendoline Fitzgibbons, ain't it? Mine's Melanethon Hezekiah Satterlee.

Sime—Great Snakes! Eb. has heard Mel makin' love to that city boarder.

Huldy—Well, I hope to goodness he gets her.

Sime—So do I, Huldy, so do I.

Eb.—Say Arathusa—I can call you that, can't I?—don't you think Satterlee would sound better 'n Fitzgibbons? Arathusa! (Rises, grabs churn and hugs it). Now we ain't goin' to say a word about it to anyone be we, my can of maple syrup? Now come on and I'll git the license so we can be spliced when we git ready. (Exit Eb. l. u. e. with arm about churn.)

Sime—Gosh all fishhooks, Mel's got her.

Huldy—I hope he has and I hope she'll make life miserable

for him. No one around here he'd want. Did you ever hear the like of that?

Sime—Never mind, Huldy, he ain't worth wastin' no time on. There's somebody around here I want. Now what do you say?

Huldy—Well, Sime, I ain't quite ready to say yes but I shouldn't be surprised if I got around to it before long.

Sime—Huldy!

Huldy—Simon! (They fall into each others arms just as Eb. enters, still embracing the churn. Eb. looks at them in astonishment and drops churn on floor.)

CURTAIN.

Act IV.

(Scene—Sitting room. Mrs. P. discovered sewing, Elijah reading.)

(Enter Nat d. c., takes papers and packages from pocket and places them on table.)

Nat—There's the mail, Ma. Nothin' of any account, I guess. Say, speakin' of mail, Bildad Teeter, Deacon Todd, Adnah Rogers and the rest of 'em down to the Corner is full of curiosity over a letter Lon Jeffers got yesterday. It come from a New York lawyer and had a money order in it for a hundred dollars.

Mrs. P.—Well of all things. Who ever heard of a lawyer givin' anything away before?

Nat—The lawyer didn't give it. The letter he wrote said the money had been given to him by a client who heard Lon was in hard luck and wanted to help him out.

Mrs. P.—And the letter didn't say who the client is?

Nat—No. The lawyer wrote that the client didn't want anything said except that he was a friend of Lon's.

Mrs. P.—Well, I ain't surprised that they's curiosity about it. Nothin' like that ever happened in the Corner before and whoever 'tis couldn't a picked out anyone more deservin' to send the money to. But, my land, what a peculiar way to give it. I just shan't rest easy 'til I know who 'tis.

Nat—Then I guess you've got considerable settin' up nights to do. Hope my snorin' won't disturb you.

Mr. P.—Now, Pa, you're makin' fun of me again but the thing is so unusual that it arouses my curiosity.

Nat—Shucks, it don't take much to do that.

Elijah—I'll guarantee that Lon ain't no happier to git it than the feller is to give it, bein' as he knows it's goin' to do somebody some good.

Nat—Well, I wish there was more of them kind of people on earth. It's mighty few of 'em I've run across so far.

Elijah—There is now and then one but, as you say, they ain't as thick as they might be.

(Enter Eb. Gowdy r. u. e.)

Eb—Want a wife, Nat, got to have a wife. Everybody else gittin' one. Mel. Satterlee, summer boarder, \$25,000, lot in New York. Sime Flanders, too, Nat, Sime Flanders. Sime hug Huldy. Huldy hug Sime like this (Throws arms about Nat's neck. Nat struggles and gets away).

Nat—Well, if Huldy got a hug like that, I'll bet it squeezed a lung out of place. Ma, there may be suthin' in it. I guess I'll just question Eb. a little.

Mrs. P.—Curiosity ain't all on my side of the house now, is it?

Nat—Tryin' to git even, ain't you? I don't care nothin' 'bout it. Just thought I'd find out 'cause I thought you wanted to know.

Mrs. P.—That's a perty thin excuse.

Nat—So Mel is goin' to marry our summer boarder and Sime is goin' to marry Huldy, is he? How do you know?

Eb.—Saw 'em, heard 'em.

Elijah—Then I guess there won't be any great privacy about it.

Nat—Where did you see 'em?

Eb.—Right here, this room. Saw it, heard it all.

Nat—Well, I declare, Lije, this is gittin' to be a court room. ain't it?

Elijah—Rather looks that way.

Nat—Say, Eb. you're dreadful anxious to fill somebody's wood box and there's one down to your brother Hank's that ain't been filled today. Wood box empty, you want to fill it.

Eb.—That's so. I can carry the biggest armful of wood of anybody in Sackett's Corner. Wood box empty. I fill it. (Starts to exit.)

Mrs. P.—Hold on, Eb. Wait a minute. (To Nat) 'Tain't right, Pa, to tell Eb that. They say he fills that box every mornin'. (To Eb.) See here, Eb., there ain't no hurry about that wood. You're hungry and you're goin' out into the kitchen with me and git a big bowl of bread and milk. Come, Eb., hungry, kitchen, bread and milk.

Eb.—No, wood box empty, must fill quick.

Mrs. P.—No, Eb. bread and milk first, out in kitchen.

Eb.—Kitchen? Kitchen? Oh, yes, hungry, bread and milk, yum, yum. (Rubs stomach). All right. I'll go. (Exit Mrs. P. and Eb. d. c.)

Nat—Poor Eb. A pitiful case. I used to think he'd be better in his head some day, but I don't see no improvement.

Elijah—I've been thinkin' considerable about him since I got back. Has any good doctor, any specialist ever examined him?

Nat—Not as I knows of.

Elijah—Well, down in Mexico there was a case somethin' like him, feller 'bout his age. This man underwent a surgical operation, simple operation, too, it was, and when I left there his mind was as clear as a bell.

Nat—P'raps somethin' like that might help Eb. but it hain't likely anything of the kind will be done because his brother Hank has got all he can do to buy bread and butter for his family.

(Enter Mrs. P. d. c.)

Mrs. P.—By the way Eb. is a puttin' down the bread and milk, one would think he hadn't had nothin' to eat fer a week.

I told Huldry to switch his mind onto suthin' else when he's had all he ought to have.

(Enter Mel Satterlee.)

Mel.—Howdy Mrs. Pettigrew, howdy Nat, howdy Lije. Looks like we're in for another dry spell don't it? Say, Nat, could I see you outside just a minute?

Nat—I guess so but can't you say it right here? There's plenty of room.

Mel—No, it's a little private business with you.

Elijah—I was just goin' out, anyway, so you and Nat can have your talk right here. (Exit d. c.)

Mel—Say, Nat., I'm kinder darn worried.

Nat—Guess it's about the fust attack you ever had ain't it?

Mel—Well I dunno but 'tis. And I don't like it.

Nat—Prob'ly not, but spoze you'd had it all your life as I have.

Mel—I never could have stood it.

Nat—Never can tell what you can stand 'til you have to. But what's on your mind? Tell me 'bout it and if I can help you, I will.

Mel—You know Miss Fitzgibbons.

Nat—Our boarder? Guess I orter know her by this time.

Mel—Well, her name ain't Fitzgibbons at all.

Nat—What's that? 'Tain't her name? What is her name, then?

Mel—Mrs. Melanethon Satterlee.

Nat—Eh? You and her been gittin' married?

Mel—That's just it. Week before last, over to Hacketts-town.

Nat—Well I'll be tetotally jiggered.

Mel—Say, Nat, do you know anything about her?

Nat—Not much.

Mel—Has she got any money?

Nat—Guess so. She pays her board prompt every week.

Mel—I don't mean that. Has she got any property?

Nat—Not that I ever hearn tell of.

Mel—Just what I thought. I'm goin' to have the law onto her fer obtain' a husband under false pretenses.

Nat—How's that?

Mel—Well, one day when I was here to see you I was comin' into this room when I heard someone talkin'. It was her a talkin' to herself. She was a sayin' how lonesome she was and how she wished she had a husband to share her lot. I made up my mind then and there that I was the feller that would fill the bill and—well, to make a long story short, I married her as I told you a minute ago.

Nat—I don't see any false pretenses so far.

Mel—I'm comin' to that. For the last two or three days I've been kinder droppin' remarks about buildings and taxes and real estate and one thing another, thinkin' p'raps she'd say suthin' 'bout that lot but never a word.

Nat—Lot? What lot.

Mel—Why that one she wanted to give a husband a share in.

Nat—(Laugh) Well, by gum, if that ain't the best I ever heard.

Mel—I don't see nothin' to laugh at.

Nat—No, course you don't and if your head hadn't been thicker 'n a plank, you'd a knowed what she meant by sharin' her lot. She meant someone to share life's burdens with her the same as me and Ma have shared 'em fer years. And say, Mel, I'm goin' to tell you right to your face that if either of you has been took in, I figger it's her.

Mel—But I can't live with her. She don't know nothin' 'bout cookin' or housekeepin'. I ast her and she told me so.

Nat—No, she don't, becuz she never had no chance to learn, but even at that she's a dum sight too good fer you. Now I'll tell you suthin' 'bout her. Although she's kinder gushy at times, she's one of the best hearted wimmen that ever wuz. She's been workin' and earnin' her livin' fer several years and p'raps she's got a little money saved up although I don't know nothin' 'bout it. If she can't cook and keep house, she can learn and if you know when you're well off, you'll fix that house of yours up in decent shape, treat her just the very best you know how and never let her know that the only reason you married her was because you thought she had money enough so you could hang 'round and do nothin'.

Mel—You're pretty rough on me, Nat, but, I declare, I believe you're right although I was awful disappointed. There's only two folks that knows about it, you and me, and I'll promise you I ain't goin' to tell.

Nat—And I'll promise you the other one never'll tell. Now go and find her and make your plans fer gittin' some of the happiness there is in life fer them that look for it.

Mel—I'll do it, Nat, and thank you fer makin' me see things in the right light. (Exit Mel l. u. e.)

(Enter Eb. Gowdy d. c.)

Eb.—Full crop (Pats stomach) Nat, good Jersey milk, home made bread, um, um.

Nat—Full crop, eh? No, Eb., only chickens have crops.

Eb.—Crops, chickens? Oh, yes, chickens. (Imitates clucking of hen, crows like a rooster and flaps arms in imitation of movement of rooster's wings, also imitates hen scratching.)

Nat—Say, Eb., while you've got chicken on the mind, you might go out and hunt the eggs and take 'em in to Huldy.

Eb.—Eggs? Eggs? Oh, yes, eggs, barn, haymow, hen house, eggs, eggs. (Leaves stage r. u. e., clucking like a hen.)

(Enter Deacon Todd and Elijah d. e.)

Deacon—Hello, Nat, I was just goin' by, saw Lije out in the yard and thought I'd stop in a minute.

Nat—All right, deacon, glad you did. Shoe string's always hangin' out, as the feller says. What's the news down to the Corner?

Deacon—Nothin' much. Yes there is, too. You know Lon Jeffers got a hundred dollars from a New York lawyer who said some other fellow had told him to send it.

Nat—Yes, I heard you talkin' 'bout it down to the store.

Deacon—Well, me and Jim Bentley thought if somebody had so much money to give away, we might as well have some of it so we got that lawyer's address and told him we could use a hundred apiece in our business.

Nat—Ain't got the hundred with you, have you?

Deacon—No, I hain't, ner Jim hain't, nuther. We both got a letter sayin' that the lawyer's client hadn't instructed him to send us nothin' and that when he got them orders, the money would come along. Bildad was goin' to write fer a hundred, too, but when he seen them letters, he changed his mind. There ain't none of us down to the store who kin figger out who that client is.

Nat—No one else hain't got no letters with money in 'em, has they?

Deacon—Yes, they have. I was just goin' to tell you 'bout that. You know they ain't only a handful of us in the church any more and it takes tall scratchin' to make ends meet. Owed the domonie \$75 last year and \$50 this year. Yesterday he got a check fer the hull amount from that lawyer and the same kind of a letter come with it. Besides that, the letter said that later on this feller, whoever he is, is goin' to paint the church, buy a new organ, put down a new carpet and do everything else we've all been wantin' to do for some time but ain't had the money.

Nat—Wall, I swan.

Deacon—And that ain't all. You know Clem Whittaker's horse died last month. Clem's poorer 'n a church mouse and didn't have no money to buy another horse to work his little place with he was a feelin' perty mauger. This mornin' parson Bemiss got another letter from that lawyer feller with a check in it fer \$75. The letter said to spend the money fer a horse fer Clem and to say a friend of his give it to him.

Nat—Well, if that don't beat the Dutch. This here mystery grows deeper. But it's the kind of mysteries I like to hear 'bout.

Elijah—Yes, it shows somebody knows what happiness money brings if rightfully used among those who deserve help.

Deacon—That's so but what we can't figger out is how this here client knows about these things. He can't be nobody around these parts becu'z we've all got as much as we can do to git money enough to take care of ourselves without havin' any to give away. But I must be joggin' back hum. Guess I'll stop at the post office on the way. P'raps I'll find that hundred waitin' fer me. (Exit Deacon l. u. e.)

(Enter Huldy d. c. with letter which she hands to Nat).

Huldy—Just got that out of the box. I see there is a lawyer's name on the corner of the envelope. You hain't been gittin' into trouble have you?

Nat—Well, it'll seem kinder natural if I have. I've never been out of it. Just hand me my specs, Huldy, and I'll see what he's got to say. (Huldy takes glasses from stand and hands them to Nat who opens letter and reads).

Nat—Je-ru-sa-lem crickets! Say, Huldy, these here old specs must be playin' me a trick.

Huldy—What's the matter?

Nat—Here, you read the letter out loud. I sure didn't read it straight.

(Huldy takes the letter and reads:)

Law Offices of J. B. Taylor, 89 Broadway, New York city.

(Supply date.)

Mr. Nathaniel Pettigrew, Sacketts Corner, N. Y.

Dear Sir: In compliance with the direction of a client, whose

name is withheld at his own request, I have this day placed on deposit to your credit in the bank at Hackettstown the sum of \$2000 and have ordered the bank book forwarded to your address.

Yours truly, J. B. Taylor.

Huldy—Well, of all things.

Nat—That's just as I read it but there must be some mistake 'bout it. Nobody would be a givin' me \$2000. Huldy, be you sure it's my name on the envelope?

Huly—Yes, plain as day.

Nat—Two thousand dollars. More money than I ever had at one time in my life. Now who on earth—

Elijah—This here thing is gittin' contagious ain't it? You rotice, though, that nobody is gittin' any money except them that's worthy of it.

(Enter Ralph, d. c., excited and with letter in hand. Mrs. P. follows).

Ralph—Pinch me, father, quick.

Nat—Pinch you! What fer?

Ralph—'Cause I want to know whether I'm awake or not.

Nat—Say, Ralph, you ain't goin' to be another Eb. Gowdy, are you?

Ralph—I don't know what I am. I know I can't believe my eyes this mornin'. I just got this letter from a lawyer in New York, tellin' me that someone he represents has told him to open a bank account for me over to Hackettstown, that \$800 has been deposited and that I'm to use it to go to college and take that electrical course.

Mrs. P.—Pa, did you ever see such goin's on as they is here nowdays? Everybody gittin' money and nobody knowin' who it's from.

Elijah—No, not everybody. You'll notice that only them that's worthy gits it.

Ralph—I don't know whether I'm worthy or not but I do know that I never was happier than I am at this minute. Pa, when can I start?

Nat—Just as soon as you want to but you and your Ma just listen a minute if you can stand still as long as that. You ain't the only one what's been gittin' letters. Here's one I just got, tellin' me this same unknown feller has opened a bank account fer me by depositin' \$2000.

Mrs. P. and Ralph—What!

Nat—Gospel truth.

Mrs. P.—Two thousand dollars for you?

Nat—That's just it, Ma.

Mrs. P.—Well, I confess I'm clean beat.

Nat—So be I, Ma, and I'm wonderin' whether I ought to take it or not.

Huldy—Take it? Of course you'll take it. Nobody would give it to you if they didn't want you to have it.

Elijah—Huldy's right. I wouldn't hesitate a minute.

Mrs. P.—Well, I declare, this has got me so completely upset that I've just got to go somewhere and think it over. Come on, Huldy, let's us go out into the kitchen and see if either of us can think who 'tis that's dealin' out happiness in this wholesale fashion.

(Exit Mrs. P. and Huldy d. e.)

Ralph—Pa, I can't really believe this yet. I'm goin' up to my room and write a letter to the bank and find out if the money's there.

Nat—All right, and while you're about it, you might ask about that \$2000 of mine. I ain't really convinced, nuther.

(Exit Ralph l. u. e.)

Nat—Whoever 'tis that's doin' this has got my religion to a T. Sometimes I've set and dreamed what I'd do if I had plenty of money. I've thought over the different ones I know that's in hard luck. I've pictured what I'd do for 'em and how happy I'd make 'em if I had the means. As it is, I've done what good I could by givin' a load of wood here, a barrel of potatoes there, a ham and some spare-rib somewhere else and so on but it hain't been much, nothin' but temporary helps.

Elijah—Yes it has, too. It's been all you could afford and more and if you don't git your reward for it in the hereafter, there ain't no truth in Holy Writ.

(Enter Arathusa d. e.)

Ara—Good morning, gentlemen.

Elijah and Nat—Good morning, Arathusa.

Ara—Mr. Pettigrew, I've come to have a little talk with you. I am in trouble and I feel that I must tell someone about it.

Elijah—Then if you'll excuse me I'll—

Ara—No, I'll tell you both for I want advice.

Nat—What is it, Miss Fitzgibbons? If Lije and me can do you a favor, you know all you've got to do is to say the word.

Ara—Thank you. I knew you would. First I want to tell you that I'm not Miss Fitzgibbons. I have been married nearly two weeks.

Elijah—Married! Who to?

Ara—To Mr. Satterlee.

Elijah—What, Mel. Satterlee?

Ara—Yes.

Elijah—Well, all I've got to say is—No, I won't say it. Let's hear your story.

Ara—Well, the story would be a long one but the sum and substance of it is that I fear he don't love me.

Nat—Now, little one, you just put your mind at rest on that score. I've knowed Mel ever since he was knee high to a grasshopper and although he's more or less peculiar, he ain't a bad feller at heart. The trouble is he ain't never had no experience with women folks and he don't know how to treat 'em. You know it's an old sayin' that the way to a man's heart is through his stomach. Now you jest let Ma and Huldy give you a few pointers in cookin', go right home with Mel, keep him fed up well, overlook his shortcomin's and I'll guarantee there won't be a happier pair in Sackett's Corner.

Ara—Do you believe it, Mr. Pettigrew, do you really believe it?

Nat—Believe it? I know it.

Ara—Thank you so much. You can't imagine what a load you've taken off my mind.

Nat—It'll turn out jest as I say; I'll guarantee it.

Ara—If Mrs. Pettigrew is in the kitchen, I'm going to take my first lesson in cooking right away. (Exit Ara d. c.)

Elijah—Didn't take much to make her happy, did it?

Nat—But I shouldn't have been so sure of Mel if he hadn't come to me to talk about suing her for gittin' a husband under false pretenses. He married her because he thought she had money and now he finds out she hain't. She's a good little woman, though. I told him so; bore down hard on him and finally got him thinkin' right and when he went away he promised to treat her as he ought to.

Elijah—Do you suppose he'll do it?

Nat—Yes, I do.

(Enter Sime l. u. e., followed by Mrs. P.)

Sime—Say, Nat, more things have been happenin'.

Nat—What now?

Sime—This mornin' a stranger drove up to Hank Gowdy's with a Hackettstown livery rig. Went in and had a long talk with Hank. Hank told him all about Eb., how he had typhoid fever years ago and hadn't been right in his head since. By and by they called in Eb. and the stranger listened while Hank and Eb. talked. Then the stranger, who turned out to be a doctor from New York, got Eb. to set down and begun feelin' of his head. Perty soon he ast Hank if Eb. had even been hurt, had a bad fall or anything of the sort. First Hank said no and then he happened to think that a few weeks before Eb. was took down with the fever he fell from a haymow, struck on his head and was pickled up insensible. The doctor then said that he thought the fall and not the fever was what was the matter with Eb. and that he would like to operate on him. Hank talked it over with his wife and they finally agreed to it. Old Dr. Johnson of the Corner was called in to help. They give Eb. some chloroform or suthin' and the New York doctor cut a hole in Eb's head and took out a little bone that had been pressin' on Eb's brain all these years. It seems that Eb's skull was splintered by that fall. Eb. was just comin' to as I came by Hank's and the doctor says he'll guarantee Eb. will be as bright as anybody from now on.

Nat—Well I'll be jiggered. But how did this doctor happen to come here?

Sime—I was a comin' to that. When he asked Hank if he could operate, Hank said he hadn't got no money to pay for it although he'd like to have it done and the doctor said it wouldn't cost him nothin' because he had been sent to the Corner by a friend of Eb's who didn't want his name mentioned.

Nat—That unknown friend again. Will wonders never cease. I declare. I'd give my best heifer to know who 'tis that's doin' all this good 'round here.

Mrs. P.—Yes, Pa, and I'd throw in my best reseat for gingerbread for good measure.

Sime—I hain't got no heifer ner, no reseets but I'd jest give a month's wages to know.

Elijah—Better not get reckless, Sime, you'll need all your money when you and Huldly set up housekeepin'.

Sime—Eh? What? Who told you 'bout it?

Elijah—About what?

Sime—Why about—that is—

Mrs. P.—Sime, have you finally got her?

Nat—Kinder let the cat out the bag that time, didn't you. Never mind, me and Lije knew all about it. Eb. told us.

Sime—Eb? What did he know about it?

Nat—He seemed to know all about it. He heard you and Huldy settle it right here in this room. As usual, he probably blundered it at the wrong time.

Mrs. P.—I've jest got to call Huldy and see what she's got to say fer herself. (Goes d. e. and calls Huldy).

(Enter Huldy d. e.)

Mrs. P.—Huldy, we wanted you to come in and receive our congratulations.

Huldy—Congratulations? On what?

Nat—Come now, Huldy, you needn't make strange of it. We've found out that you jest couldn't stand Sime's pesterin' any longer and that you're the future Mrs. Flanders.

Huldy—I don't know how you found it out but I don't 'spose there's any use denyin' it.

Elijah—Not a bit, Huldy, and we're all glad to hear it.

Huldy—You always said, Nat Pettigrew, that a woman couldn't keep a secret but you can't say I didn't keep that one.

Nat—Yes, you did, Huldy, but I'll bet 'twas mighty hard work.

(Enter Ralph d. e.)

Ralph—More things happenin'. A doctor has just cut a hole in Eb. Gowdy's head, took out a piece of bone and says Eb.'ll be as good as new.

Nat—Yes, Ralph, Sime was just tellin' us about it.

Ralph—Never saw such a time as there is down to the Corner. Everybody's talkin' about the unknown friend that's helpin' folks 'round here and yet don't want folks to know who 'tis. Bildad Teeter says he hain't done as much business in years. Every day at mail time the store is filled with people. They all buy a little suthin' as an excuse fer bein' there but Bildad says that don't fool him any. Every one of 'em is hopin' they'll git one of these letters with money in 'em.

Elijah—Now that the family is all here—yes, Sime, that includes you because if you ain't in yet, you are perty near—the time has come to make a confession. I can tell you who 'tis that is contributing to the assistance of some of the needy and deservin' people in Sackett's Corner.

Mrs. P.—You know, Elijah, and have kept us in suspense all this time?

Elijah—Yes, I know.

Huldy—Well, for the land sake, tell us quick.

Elijah—I am the man.

All—You!

Elijah—Yes, Elijah Pettigrew.

Sime—Well, if that don't beat anything I ever heard tell of.

Nat—Your money, Lije? I can't understand it. You said in your letter that—

Elijah—Excuse me, Nat, but I know what you're goin' to say and I didn't say any such thing.

Mrs. P.—You didn't say you was sick and didn't have no money?

Elijah—No, I didn't. You took that for granted and that's just what I wanted you to do. In anticipation of this day, I made a copy of that letter and have carried it with me ever since. (Takes letter from inside pocket of vest.) Here is what I said: (reads) "In a strange land I am broken in health and spirit. Surrounded by people who care nothing for me and have no interest in me, I feel myself an outcast. To know what I have endured for years might soften your heart toward me. Whatever amends lie in my power, I will make although I know it is impossible to right all those wrongs." (To Nat) That ain't all of the letter but it's the part you had in mind, ain't it?

Nat—Yes, I guess it is.

Elijah—Does it say anything about my being penniless

Nat—No, it don't but that's the way mother and me took it when we read it.

Elijah—Well, I ain't as rich as I might be but I can draw my check for \$100,000.

Mrs. P.—A hundred thousand dollars! Why that's more money than there is in the hull of Sackett's Corner.

Elijah—Yes, I presume it is but I got it honestly, every cent.

Huldy—I don't want to be too inquisitive but I'm most dym' to know how you made it.

Elijah—No secret about it at all. A lucky streak in minin' fer silver in Mexico, after a dozen failures, is the way I got it. Sold a part interest in the mine and own the balance yet.

Sime—Got it out of a mine, eh? Say, Ralph, less you 'n me take out picks, go out into the hill pasture, turn things bottom side up and see if we can find some pay dirt.

Elijah—No need of that, Sime. From now on this money is goin' to be used to bring happiness to this family and to help those of our neighbors who can't help themselves. About the first thing we're goin' to do is to fix the old house over, build a new barn and put everything in ship shape. The old farm's goin' to be cultivated as usual because Nat wouldn't know how to act without suthin' to do. He's got to have a superintendent and you'll jest fill the bill. Down in the orchard I'm goin' to build a house fer you and Huldy, if Nat'll give you a buildin' lot, and I know he will. Sarepty is goin' to be relieved of the drudgery of housework, Ralph is goin' to have all the education he wants and durin' the rest of our days we're goin' to live in peace and plenty. What do you say, Nat?

Nat—I don't know what to say, Lije. It seems so like a dream that it makes me feel like askin' your forgiveness fer ever havin' laid anything up agin' you.

Elijah—You ain't goin' to do nothin' of the sort. There ain't a man but would a felt hard towards me fer what I done and there ain't one out of a thousand that would a told me to come when I wrote that letter, askin' if I could come back. I would have come anyway and tried to gain your forgiveness when I got here but you don't know how much better it made me feel to know before I started that I was forgiven and that I would be welcome.

Mrs. P.—Elijah, you've made up a thousand times over for whatever you've done to us.

Elijah—I'm glad to hear you say that, Sarepty, but I can't feel that the debt is paid and it won't be so long as I can do anything for you and Nat and for the others of the deserving among Sackett's Corner folks.

CURTAIN.

NOTE—ERROR ON PAGE 15.

On page 15 an error was made in Deacon Todd's first speech when making up the forms of this book. The line now reads: "If he does, he is a bigger fool than I ever took him to be." This line appears correctly two speeches below. The first line of Deacon's first speech on this page should read: "Beats all, don't it, how these here fellers what skip" etc.

After you have presented "Sackett's Corner
Folks," don't fail to play

"IN OLD NEW ENGLAND"

By the same Author

CAST OF CHARACTERS.

Jedediah Perkins, owner of "Old Homestead Farm," and every
inch a man.

Tom Perkins, Jed's son, the victim of circumstantial evidence..

David Angell, Jed's cheming and unscrupulous neighbor.

Lem Haskins, the hired man, whose courage fails at the critical
moment.

Hezekiah Slocum, with a penchant for conundrums and borrowing.

Robert Donald, a geologist, one of Jed's city boarders.

Algernon Percival Montgomery, a city boarder, who will know bet-
ter next time.

George Washington Lincoln Jackson, an "ordinary nigger" who
"just hangs 'round."

(Cast continued on next page.)

Mrs. Perkins, Jed's wife, a woman of the right sort.

Araminta Perkins, Jed's sister, whose tongue is not paralyzed.

Gladly Angell, daughter of David Angell, whose faith sustains Tom.

Minervy Ann Johnson, the kitchen "help" who objects to being borrowed.

SYNOPSIS.

ACT I. Kitchen at "Old Homestead Farm."—The trials of Nervy Ann.—Angell seeks Jed.—Old Dominique saves her head.—Jed's garden experience.—Angell's proposition.—The interrupted nap.—The inventor of snores.—Wash's mule.—"Took the elevator over the fence."—"I's proprietor o' dat mule."—The "brand new" eggs.—The loyal son.—Tom accused by Angell.—Jed's plain talk.—Tom proclaims his innocence.—"David Angell, I believe the boy."

ACT II. Sitting room.—Lem tells of Jed's absent-mindedness.—Lem and Hezekiah.—The conundrum.—The telephone.—"Sun dries the traces."—The "human torpedo."—Tom decides to leave.—Parting of Tom and Gladys.—Faith in Tom.—The mortgaged farm.—Angell renews his proposition.—The mule in the garden again.—Angell's plans.—Wash an eavesdropper.—Wash and Hezekiah and a conundrum.—Hezekiah tells of a big wind.—How the church was moved.—Mrs. Perkins plans to raise money.—The advertisement.—"No mosquitoes or ghosts."—Mrs. Perkins telephones to Araminta.—Call "central."

ACT III.—Sitting room.—The arrival of 'Minty.—Wash and the parrot.—"You is nigger, hain't you?"—The city boarders.—The tame elephant.—Hezekiah's story.—"The elevator 'll go down 'stid o' up when you die."—Lem's courage fails.—'Minty and Gladys.—"There she goes with her dander up."—Wash tells a secret.—The cure for indigestion.—The interrupted proposal.—Donald's discovery.—"Secrets break out on me like measles and chicken pox."—Departure of Donald.—A stormy interview.—"I don't believe them bonds was ever stolen."—There's the door."—"I guess dat'll hold him fer a spell."

ACT IV. Parlor.—"Wuz his board all paid?"—The little cows that give the condensed milk.—Jed's discouragement.—"Seems like bad luck meets us at every turn."—Mrs. Perkins' optimism.—Algy and the "kitten."—Return of Donald.—Good news.—"I believe his innocence can be proved before the sun sets."—Donald accuses Angell.—The find.—"I've played my cards and lost."—The mule saves the farm.—Return of Tom.—The stain removed.—Tom and Gladys.—Angell asks forgiveness.—The future Mrs. Haskins.—Wash comes to confess.—"Hookin' up in double har

ness.”—“Goin’ to live ‘til he gits tired o’ seein’ hisself hangin’ round.”—“I’ll lend ye anything on the place ‘ceptin’ mother.”—“The credit is not all mine. Fully as much belongs to the mule.”

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