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A LIVE NOVEL.

Bodley

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A COMEDY IN THREE ACTS.

BY

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WM. S. BODLEY.



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WM. S. BODLEY,
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A LIVE NOVEL,
A COMEDY IN THREE ACTS.

BY WILLIAM S. BODLEY.

CHARACTERS.

JASPER JANUARY.—The novelist.
MR. CLINCHER.—His adviser, the sage of Bluegrass.
EDWARD BALLOU.—Gloomy and bashful, in
love with Martha.
ROWAN DILLAND.—The hero. Also in love
with Martha.
MARTHA ESTILL.—The heroine.
LIZZIE MACHEN.—Engaged to Jasper.
MRS. ESTILL.—Mother of Martha.
AGNES JONES.—A neglected daughter.
LAWYER BROAD.—A suitor to Lizzie.
MOSES.—A colored boy; Jasper's servant.
SOPHY.—A colored girl; Mrs. Estill's servant.

} Jasper's
Model
Characters.

SCENE.

THE BLUEGRASS REGION, KENTUCKY.

STAGE DIRECTIONS.

R. means Right; L., Left; R. D., Right Door; L. D.,
Left Door; 2 E., Second Entrance; U. E., Upper En-
trance; M. D., Middle Door.

RELATIVE POSITIONS.

R., Right; L., Left; C., Centre; R. C., Right of Centre;
L. C., Left of Centre.

ACT I.

SCENE.—*A woodland, with glimpses of a landscape of green fields. Fallen tree at 2 L. E.*

Enter Rowan L., with letter in his hand.

Rowan. The very spot—just as it was six years ago! Now I do feel at home again—at my old, rich, green, beautiful home for good! It ought to be a happy thought; but there is a sort of sadness in snapping off college life and the fellows forever to the past. No wonder the first thing I do here is to write back there—to my old haunts—to my chum—to Fred Stone! But it's hard luck I must needs write about that contemptible, disagreeable—bah! I hate to think of it! Well, it need be no matter—this letter mailed, and the affair ends. College, Fred Stone, old boy, and the rest, good-bye, forever! To-day—to-day, and here—I begin life as a man!

Enter Mr. Clincher, L.

Why, Mr. Clincher! I'm glad to see you!

Clincher. (Shaking hands warmly.) Welcome, Rowan, boy! Welcome back to Bluegrass County. Ah! here's a home—old Bluegrass! Just look abroad at it! See how it rolls and swells for you! How are you, boy? But isn't this the very spot for a view of all you care for! See yonder (*pointing*) the noble farm of old widow Estill, with her lovely daughter Martha. Ah, Martha's name interests you! And yonder is Jim Stokes's "thousand acres;" and yonder Bob Prather's magnificent pastures, and yonder Jack Larue's hundred-acre garden-spot, and yonder old Stingy Jones's gold mine of a place, and yonder the ruins of the old cross-roads post-office, and yonder—confound it!—the brand-new railroad station; and here (*plucking his hand on his heart*) is a welcome home from all of them for old Squire Dilland's son! How are you, boy? (*Shakes hands again.*)

Rowan. Thank you. Oh, I know the whole county greets me when you say welcome. I've not forgotten, Mr. Clincher, yours is the mind and the heart of all Bluegrass.

Clincher. (Rather sadly.) So they say—so they said, Rowan.

Rowan. And as usual you're on hand just when needed ; I want your advice.

Clincher. Advice! (*In an aggrieved tone.*) Ah, Rowan, I doubt if I should venture to give it.

Rowan. (*Surprised.*) I've never heard of such a doubt.

Clincher. Yes, Rowan, boy, it is violent ; but it's in the wind.

Rowan. What's the matter ?

Clincher. A great deal, a great deal. Never mind it. I thought I saw a way to avert the trouble ; but (*with feeling*) Rowan I hold in my hand a note from a young man who, like yourself, is about to start in the world. He fails to appreciate me ; he disregards my advice.

Rowan. But, Mr. Clincher, that simply proves he's a fool.

Clincher. It would seem so, but (*again with feeling*) Rowan, boy, you know it yourself, and it goes without my saying, for twenty years in matters social, agricultural, political or otherwise, I have been esteemed an authority hereabouts.

Rowan. The wisest man in Bluegrass—not a soul denies it.

Clincher. Ah, it is a proud position ! But (*with feeling*) has my honor or my honesty ever been questioned ?

Rowan. Of course not.

Clincher. To do so would be to assail Bluegrass county, the masterpiece of earth,—combining exquisite beauty with solid fertility ; how I love it ! and shall Bluegrass county after all be deceived and disgraced in me ?

Rowan. Does the scoundrel's note threaten that ?

Clincher. Why Rowan, boy, there are no threats, but this marriage of his will ruin me.

Rowan. Marriage ! whose marriage ?

Clincher. Did I say marriage ? I was talking about this note. You know Jasper is to be married to my ward, Lizzie Machen ; a sudden engagement. He came home only a month ago, and the wedding is only two weeks off—the impetuous children ! However, I want to see Jasper about this note of his. Where is he ?

Rowan. He's at my house yonder. Let me call him for you (*going*).

Clincher. Do, please. (*Exit Rowan, L.*) Come to think, it's infernal strange that I should have moved so smoothly through a long and honored life only at last to be brought up against myself as a—as a sort of defaulter. Hello, there's that lawyer! On time, of course. Bearers of misery are always prompt. It's a light load for them.

Enter Lawyer Broad, L.

Welcome, lawyer Broad, welcome!

Broad. (*Coldly.*) Good morning, Mr. Clincher.

Clincher. Good morning, sir.

Broad. You received my note, I suppose?

Clincher. Yes, and it has made me miserable enough. I'm no bookkeeper. I thought my accounts with Lizzie were all right. Ever since you told me I was in that dear girl's debt—dishonestly in her debt—it has seemed to me as if the sky were hanging and sinking with terrible disaster and about to burst, not on me alone, but—on all Bluegrass. Think of it, Mr. Broad! I have the love of everybody; I know everybody and everything in Bluegrass.

Broad. I don't dispute it.

Clincher. If there's a head of stock I do not know, it is an interloping scrub from some other county; if there's a farm I'm not familiar with, it is my own. I know every man, woman and child in Bluegrass, and I love them all! Mr. Broad, all I need is time. Is there no way to postpone the settlement of Lizzie's accounts?

Broad. Only one. You must either have the marriage put off or have the money ready. We can help each other. I find that you ought to have on hand an uninvested balance of \$8000; how much have you?

Clincher. I have given Lizzie about \$2000; five thousand are gone.

Broad. Where?

Clincher. Never was money lost in a better cause.

Broad. How?

Clincher. For the honor of Bluegrass county.

Broad. Speak plainly.

Clincher. No horse ever went out from Bluegrass county that could not count on Jonathan Clincher for a backer.

Broad. You lost it on horse-races, then?

Clincher. And every horse an honor to his birth-place. I knew them all, Mr. Broad, from the days they were foaled. No man ever did a shrewder thing than to back Jim Stokes's War Dance filly, or Bob Prather's Lexington colt, or Jack Larue's prince and model of runners—Fire Fly.

Broad. But they all lost.

Clincher. No sir! Fire Fly has never lost!

Broad. Has he ever run?

Clincher. Not yet; but when he does, a hurricane could not dust him! Why, where are they going to find anything to beat such a colt? Just look at his pedigree—the finest in the world—a warm stream of bounding blue blood clear back to the beginning, two hundred years ago! Sixteen hands high—perfect form—graceful but powerful—a lovely bay, rich as mahogany—with the spirit of a prince and a courage all his own—I would stake my life on him! No no! They—can't beat him—they can't—they shan't!

Broad. So you thought of the others doubtless. Yet, they lost.

Clincher. Yes, but it was bad luck, such as wouldn't happen again in a hundred years. Now take the case of Bob. Prather's colt—

Broad. Never mind the reasons—

Clincher. Do not stop me, sir! Do not stop me!

Broad. Why not?

Clincher. Because I'm talking horse!

Broad. You've lost five thousand and have given your ward two thousand. Where is the balance, one thousand dollars?

Clincher. Where it should be, sir. I do not like your cold-blooded questions. Where it should be.

Broad. You have it on hand then.

Clincher. No, sir. I have it on Fire Fly. The odds against him at Lexington are tremendous. Postpone the marriage until after the races, and Fire Fly will have made everything right.

Broad. Is that your only hope?

Clincher. Hope! A cowardly, insulting word! It's a sure thing.

Broad. At any rate the marriage must be postponed or the match broken off in some way. That's what I call a sure thing. Have you told this boy Jasper you will withhold your consent?

Clincher. No, sir, and I won't. It's a good match for both. But it is too abrupt, and outside of its danger to me, it ought to be postponed. I expect Jasper here in a moment.

Broad. What sort of a fellow is he?

Clincher. A thorough-bred—rich—full of conceited confidence—but smart and loveable—brash now as a two-year-old—reading the world through his fancies—ready to dash headlong after anything that pleases him—

Broad. And to make a fool of himself.

Clincher. Of course; that's a natural conclusion.

Broad. There you have him. I know your ward Lizzie myself; better than you suspect perhaps. I've studied her. Let that boy offend her once and the wedding will be postponed—twice and the match is off! Have you any influence with the boy?

Clincher. I have influence with every body in Bluegrass. Jasper asked my advice yesterday. He said he thought that as he was about to marry he ought to have something to do—something easy he preferred. The nicest and easiest thing he could think of was to be an author—to write a novel.

Broad. Ah, here's your chance! You encouraged him of course?

Clincher. Of course I did. He seemed to be in earnest. Always adopt a boy's bent in advising him. But last night he sent me this note saying he had tried writing a novel for six hours, and it wouldn't do. (*Jasper sings a lively tune without.*) That's the boy now.

Broad. Well, you know what you've got to do. Remember this, if the match is broken off, I will see you out of all your trouble. (*Exit Broad L.*)

Clincher. Things are brighter, decidedly brighter! (*Jasper sings.*) Ah, ha, my blithe boy, you are too young

to marry, for I'm too old to be disgraced. Jasper, boy, come here.

Enter Jasper R., with hunting equipments.

Stand right there, boy, and answer my questions. Tell me this: How did Skinner Keen come to practice law? and Dr. Weller medicine? and Sam Anderson to make whiskey? and Henry Clay Gulper to drink it?

Jasper. By your advice, of course, Mr. Clincher.

Clincher. Yes, but—was I right?

Jasper. You have n't been wrong in twenty years.

Clincher. Yes, and when I said to you yesterday, "Jasper, boy, be a novelist," was I wrong?

Jasper. You were right, Mr. Clincher, right.

Clincher. Right? Then what did you mean by this? (*Reads from note.*) "It won't work. I can't write a novel."

Jasper. Please tear that up (*Clincher does so gladly*); I wrote it in a fit of desperation. I had started out under the delusion that to be a novelist was only to seize one's bright thoughts, put 'em on paper, mix 'em up, and there's your novel. Gloriously easy and easily glorious, thought I, I'll do it right off. I got your approval, rushed back home, locked my doors, squared myself at a desk, wrote twenty pages in two hours, and then—I stopped.

Clincher. Stopped?

Jasper. Yes. Stopped dead still like a trembling colt balked by a heavy load.

Clincher. What was the matter?

Jasper. I had written all I knew—started a thousand new ways with dictionary words—no go—robbed the dictionary of all the good ones and barely had enough left at the end of six hours to write that note.

Clincher. That miserable chicken-hearted note!

Jasper. I tell you it was terrible to have to give up so soon, especially when I thought how easy others find it to write novels. Thousands are at it always—

Clincher. Thousands upon thousands, boy!

Jasper. Thousands of printing presses are grinding out novels day after day. The world is full of book-stores, and the book-stores are full of novels—

Clincher. I know it, boy!

Jasper. Millions of readers are stretching out their arms for more—more novels!

Clincher. Millions are longing for you, Jasper!

Jasper. I know it! When I thought of all these things, it nearly maddened me. I seized my gun and rushed out of the house!

Clincher. To kill yourself, doubtless.

Jasper. No—rabbits or something else as weak and silly as myself. Lord, how I slaughtered them!

Clincher. (*In glee.*) And how is it now—*now*, Jasper, boy?

Jasper. Look at me and see a novelist.

Clincher. (*Seizing his hand.*) I can see it still after I joyously shut my eyes! But what brought you to your senses?

Jasper. The simplest thing imaginable. I happened to hear that Rowan was home and went to see him. When he went to college six years ago he and my cousin Martha loved each other. Now. He loves her yet and intends to tell her so; she loves him yet and she'll let him know—hero and heroine!

Clincher. Well? Go on.

Jasper. This thought struck me: Oh, if I were only a novelist I'd watch every step and make a note of every word in their love making.

Clincher. Yes, yes! Of course. And so you would gather materials, something to write. Jasper, boy, get the facts.

Jasper. Precisely. I attempted to reproduce Bluegrass County without first studying its manners and people in real life with that object.

Clincher. Exactly. You were born and raised here and thought you knew them; but you now see a novelist studies everything with a remote sort of eye. Your knowledge grew up slowly with yourself.

Jasper. Yes. It's part of me—

Clincher. Like the back of your neck, and you can't see it and analyze it unless you study it in others by comparison, or, by twisting your head, in a combination of mirrors. You must see everything over again uncomfortably with

double eyes—as novelist and man. Why, for instance, here you are engaged to be married, and you don't know at this moment whether the love between you and Lizzie is the genuine thing—whether it would stand the test of going into a novel.

Jasper. You go deep—clear to the quick, Mr. Clincher.

Clincher. Certainly we go deep. An ordinary man may slur things over, but a novelist must be thorough—he must stab to the heart. Jasper, if people fail to show you the bottom of their hearts you must stir them up. Grief, shame, hate, fear, jealousy—

Jasper. Oh, I'm no soft-hearted novelist! I'll stir 'em up—friend and foe! But not a soul shall know what I'm about—not even Lizzie.

Clincher. That's the talk, boy, that's the talk!

Jasper. It would never do to let people know. “Look out for him!” they would say, “He's a novelist—a character snatcher—a dissector of human nature!” No, I'll keep my secret and find out other people's.

Clincher. That's the way! Ha! ha! you'll do—you will do, Jasper, boy! and Bluegrass County has a novelist at last! (*Seizing both his hands.*)

Re-enter Rowan.

Rowan. Hello! This is happy! What has Mr. Clincher advised? What are you going to do, Jasper?

Jasper. Hear him! What am I going to do! When it's as good as done! Why, I am going to do something glorious.

Rowan. What? (*Clincher signals to Jasper not to tell.*)

Jasper. Nothing. Am I capable of it?

Rowan. Nothing? Mr. Clincher, did you advise that?

Jasper. Yes, he did. Have you any objections?

Rowan. Not one. It was perfect wisdom. You will succeed.

Jasper. (*To Clincher, nettled.*) I'd give a pretty to tell him all about it—just to show him how badly he's fooled.

Clincher. No—no, boy. Let your work speak for you.

Jasper. (*Acquiescing.*) (*To Rowan.*) Come, Rowan, let's be off to Aunt Estill's. My Lizzie is there, and *your* Martha. (*Winks at Clincher in a business-like way.*)

Rowan. My Martha? The last time I saw her we were mere children.

Clincher. And now you're a man and she's a lovely woman.

Jasper. And here you are, come back like the long-lost hero of a romance. (*Winks at Clincher.*) But say, go back and get your gun.

Rowan. Gun! What for—to hunt Martha with?

Jasper. No. That would end all in the first chapter. To thunder with—

Rowan. To do what?

Jasper. Oh, nothing; only get your gun. We will go out hunting, so to say, and merely drop in on the girls by a strange chance, you know, such as befits the romantic return from college of our hero, who with his faithful friend has wandered through the sombre woods in that direction.

Rowan. What's all this! If you do nothing as well as you say it, you'll lead a busy life.

Jasper. Anyhow, please get your gun.

Rowan. All right then. Armed or unarmed, I'm half afraid to meet Martha. Perhaps she has forgotten me. You say she has sometimes spoken of me?

Jasper. Over and over again. But do go, get your things, and I'll bring you to her. (*Rowan starts L., but returns taking letter from his pocket.*) I forgot this; I must mail it in time for the next train.

Jasper. (*Taking it from him.*) Ah, go on! Never mind the letter; I'll attend to that. (*Rowan going.*) Hello, Rowan! This letter is n't sealed or stamped.

Rowan. Nor read either. You undertook the job; now do it all. It will make no difference. Nobody could understand it, for it is a very deep, mysterious document. You can try, if you wish. You'll accomplish *nothing*, which is in your line now, I believe. (*Exit Rowan, L.*)

Jasper. Ah, hurry back, Rowan; for you are to supply the sugar—the love—for a novel that will sweeten the world.

Clincher. A solid Bluegrass novel, Rowan, made up, not of speculations, but of chunks of human nature, quivering with life and dripping blood! Ha! ha! Jasper, boy!

Jasper. Ha! ha! Mr. Clincher! I'm happy; indeed I am. I feel—bully!

Clincher. (*Starting.*) Lord bless me! That reminds me; Bob Johnson ships that \$10,000 calf to-day, and I haven't taken my last look yet. (*Going.*) Get to work, Jasper! I'll always be with you! Bluegrass has never had a novelist and she needs you. (*Exit, L.*)

Jasper. And so this novelist goes to work, picking up a passion there and a secret here (*looking at Rowan's letter, putting it in his pocket and drawing forth a small note-book*) and always—let's see—(*writes in a book*)—deep and remote in thought, keen and alert in observing, and, when any human nature can be got in chunks, cutting deep, clear to the quick. (*Looking off to R.*) Hello! here comes Martha, now! (*Writes.*) “On a certain lovely day, in Bluegrass County, Kentucky, the beautiful Martha Estill, the heroine of this novel, was descried by her cousin slowly and thoughtfully wending her way through the lawn-cropt woods-pasture that spread before her mother's comfortable mansion —” (*slapping book into his pocket and going L.*) And I'll bring the hero on in the first chapter! (*Exit, L.*)

Enter Martha R. (with leaves and grasses in her arms).

Martha. Yes, this is the very spot. Six years—how long Rowan has been gone! I said I would be his wife—how funny six years make it seem! And how doubtful. We were mere children. I wonder if he loves me yet? If I knew, I think I should be perfectly happy. (*Pauses.*)

Enter Agnes. (She stands back.)

No—no; I can't be happy till Edward takes back his note, so foolish for him, so pitiful for me. (*Taking it from her pocket and in so doing dropping leaves, etc.*) (*Looking around and seeing Agnes.*) So very, very pitiful for her! (*Hiding the note.*) Oh, Agnes, yonder are some very bright leaves! Won't you get them for me? (*Pointing off L.*)

Agnes. Martha, you don't want the leaves; but you do want me to go for them,—at least you want me to go. You'd rather I would not return.

Martha. Why, Agnes, what do you mean?

Agnes. I mean you have changed towards me since yesterday. Something has come between us. Are you ashamed

of me because I'm not so well dressed as you or Lizzie? Or because my father, with all his riches, is mean and stingy to me? You were not formerly so particular about these things.

Martha. Why, Agnes, I love you to-day; yesterday I was only friendly to you; that's the only change.

Agnes. (*Brightening.*) And why? But never mind! If you would only love me—nobody else does. Oh, I see the leaves you want now! (*Exit L.*)

Martha. (*Taking seat on the fallen tree.*) This dreadful little note; I can't help reading it over and over again; so tender, so passionate, so hopelessly misguided; it almost makes me cry. Why did you send it, Edward? (*Crumples it.*)

Enter Lizzie R. (rapidly).

Lizzie. (*Stopping short.*) What are you doing—crying?

Martha. No, I'm only arranging leaves for mother's mantel.

Lizzie. Indeed! But where are the leaves?

Martha. Oh, I've dropped them; there they are. (*Lizzie picks up her handful and pours them in Martha's lap.*)

Lizzie. There, now! It will please your mother.

Martha. Yes, indeed. I gather them every fall. To neglect it now would be very wrong.

Lizzie. (*Reproachfully.*) Any neglect of those who love us is very wrong.

Martha. Have I neglected you, Lizzie?

Lizzie. Ever since yesterday. You neglect me now, sweet. (*Taking seat close.*) I'm your most intimate friend; yet you ran away from me out here to cry over that note (*Martha tries to conceal it*), and you would hide it as a secret even from me. Can't you trust me with it?

Martha. What good could it do? It would only make you sad.

Lizzie. I never was sad and I want to be. (*Reaches for note.*)

Martha. No, Lizzie; it belongs in part to another and he—

Lizzie. He! (*Makes a determined reach.*) Are—you—in—love?

Martha. A man is in love with me.

Lizzie. That's not so sad.

Martha. But he's a man whom I've always regarded as a brother, cousin—anything dear but lover. I think that is sad.

Lizzie. (*Throwing her arms with impulsive curiosity about Martha's neck.*) Oh, tell me, Martha! (*Slyly takes note from Martha's hand.*) (*Reads*) "Dear Martha: No doubt my—" but who wrote it? (*Turns to end.*) "Edward." And who is Edward?

Re-enter Agnes. (*She stands back.*)

Martha. Edward Ballou.

Lizzie. Edward Ballou! What, not your mother's common overseer?

Martha. He is not an overseer, Lizzie; you surely know better than that. (*She rises and moves to C.*)

Lizzie. Well, then, if he's not an overseer he's what overseers used to be in slave times, only he's of the humane kind. And does he dare to love you, Martha? Why (*laughingly*), the shy, gloomy man; (*Martha looks at her reproachfully, and Agnes moves forward in anger*) I thought him too deeply wrapped up in himself and his oversee—occupation to dream of loving anybody. Indeed, it's too comical—that man in love! (*Laughing.*)

Agnes. (*Coming down angrily.*) You laugh at him, and I despise you for it. Suppose Edward is bashful and gloomy, that surely is anything but funny! For those who know him and appreciate him his heart and character are sufficient. If he seldom laughs they do not make remarks about it; if he is so shy and bashful they have forgotten it; if he is an overseer, Miss Machen, he is honest and able, and no one has a right to abuse him for it. (*Starts to go, then turns.*) Martha, you can tell her, can't you, how good and true he has always been to you and your mother. (*Exit R.*)

Lizzie. What did she mean by such an outburst?

Martha. She loves him.

Lizzie. Oh, how cruel I have been! (*Runs and looks R. after Agnes; then returns and embraces Martha.*) Forgive me, Martha, and explain it all to me. I declare I love the

man myself now. (*Reads*) "Dear Martha: No doubt my conduct just now surprised and alarmed you—" What conduct?

Martha. It was so singular! I was reading alone in the parlor yesterday. I think I felt him come in; I turned; he was in the centre of the room; his face was, oh, so white, and he trembled. His lips moved but made no sound; I thought him ill and asked him. His lips moved but could not answer. In an instant he was gone. Then --that note.

Lizzie. How very curious!

Martha. No, not curious in Edward. He is so sad, so intense. But listen: (*takes the note and reads*) "No doubt my conduct just now surprised and alarmed you. God knows I did not intend it so. I came with a heart full of love to tell you. I reached your side, but there I found my love beyond the utterance of my tongue. I could not speak and so I fled. Martha, I ask you all I dare—to let me hope.
EDWARD."

Lizzie. And does he hope now?

Martha. I do not know. Since then I have avoided him. If I speak to him he might misconstrue me, for to make it plain I mean no encouragement would wound his feelings—he is so sensitive.

Lizzie. He must be cured.

Martha. But how? What can I do, Lizzie?

Lizzie. He is retiring in his habits—lives almost entirely within the four walls of himself. There, this love of his must be a starved thing that feeds upon its musings, growing monstrous. We must draw him out. And I can do it—how lucky! I invited him and Agnes to my party, at which I'm to surprise everybody by inviting them to my wedding. I even asked your mother to urge him to go. She said she'd try to take him herself. Now he shall go! Come, sit down and I'll tell you how to manage it. (*They take seats on tree and seem to be deeply engaged in talking.*)

Enter Jasper and Rowan U. E. (Both bear hunting equipments. They stop, and Rowan gazes fixedly at Martha.)

Jasper. (To *Rowan*.) There they are! Is your gun heavily loaded?

Rowan. I think so. Why? It is Martha and she's beautiful.

Jasper. Will she lumber?

Rowan. Who? What? Oh, the gun—yes, she used to lumber. I wonder if she'll know me.

Jasper. Well, then, let me manage it. You slip up close behind them, aim up into the tree, pull trigger and—

Rowan. What are you talking about! Why should I do that?

Jasper. To stir 'em up to the core. Just think. Martha will faint in your arms. You've been away six years, and you ought to come in with thunder now. Quick, will you?

Rowan. No.

Jasper. Then I will.

Rowan. No—no—don't! (*Jasper lifts his gun and starts forward*). Stop, Jasper! Here, leave it to me. (*He restrains Jasper and tip-toes near to the girls, pointing his gun into the tree but looking through his lifted arms at Martha. Jasper stands back, watching nervously. A pause; after which Jasper accidentally fires his gun and disappears. Lizzie and Martha spring to their feet, Lizzie dropping Edward's note from her lap.*)

Lizzie. } (Terrified.) (To *Rowan*.) Oh, sir, do not shoot
Martha. } again!

Rowan. (Lowering his gun.) Pray, do not think I fired! It was shameful.

Lizzie. Come, come Martha, let us run! He might shoot us next!

Martha. (Aside.) It is Rowan! Rowan! Has he forgotten me?

Rowan. I beg you let me explain.

Lizzie. (Dragging *Martha* away.) What does the man mean by speaking to us so tenderly! Oh, do come, Martha.

Martha. (To *Lizzie*.) That is Rowan. He has forgotten me.

Rowan. Do not go, Martha. Don't you know me!

Martha. (Turning.) I do know you, Rowan; and I'm so

glad to see you home again. (*They shake hands with embarrassment.*) You are so changed.

Rowan. Am I? Oh yes, it is six years, and then that gun was—another—did you really think I—well if you don't mind the gun I won't—you also are much changed.

Jasper reappears, U. E.

Martha. Am I? Sure enough, one changes a great deal when growing up, and then I suspect I don't look exactly like myself; that gun, you know—but your gun doesn't even smoke! Isn't it strange! Whose gun was it—I can't imagine. (*They stand back talking eagerly.*)

Lizzie. (*To Jasper who has joined her.*) How frightened I was. How I enjoy to know it was only your mischief. (*Glancing around at Rowan.*) So that is Rowan, the wonderful Rowan Martha has talked about so much! He is rather handsome. Why doesn't Martha introduce him to me? I might as well be a thousand miles away. They are virtually alone at this moment, and might as well kiss and hug at once—the old lovers! Martha shouldn't mind me, should she?

Jasper. Of course not! Not in the least; she knows you've done it. See here, Rowan! Here's the way to make yourself a hero! (*He quickly embraces and kisses Lizzie.*)

Lizzie. (*Indignant.*) Jasper! That was outrageous!

Jasper. You shouldn't mind. Martha knows you've done it before. I told Rowan myself. Get to work, Rowan! (*Pointing to Martha.*)

All. (*Astonished.*) Jasper!

Jasper. What's the matter with you all! What's a kiss anyhow! What's a hug! (*Reflectively aside.*) What is a kiss? What is a hug? A novelist ought to know such things. (*Takes out the note-book and starts to make an entry—thinks.*) I've forgotten already how they feel. No matter. (*To Lizzie.*) Come here; let me tell you something. (*Calmly kisses her again, rolls his eyes up thoughtfully, tastes with his lips and reaching a decision enters it in his note-book.*) Never mind the kiss, Rowan. (*He quickly puts his arm around Lizzie's waist. Repents business.*) Never mind the hug, Rowan. (*To Lizzie.*) Say, Lizzie, tell me how a kiss or a hug affects you! (*Stands ready to note reply.*)

Lizzie. What is all this nonsense! What's in that book? Here, show it me.

Jasper. Please don't disturb me, Lizzie. I'm busy.

Lizzie. Busy! Jasper, are you a fool!

Jasper. Oh, go on; get mad if you like. You'll soon know whether I'm a fool or not. (*To Martha, who is L. C., pleadingly.*) My dear cousin, I know you are glad Rowan is back. How did your heart feel when at the sound of the gun you beheld him before you? Tell me, please.

Martha. Jasper, you are behaving shamefully. (*She moves up.*)

Jasper. (*Taking Rowan aside—importantly.*) Now tell me truly. Describe your sensations when you cast your eyes upon Martha just now after six long years of separation.

Rowan. Fool!

Jasper. He felt like a fool (*makes entry in book*).

Lizzie. (*Coming down.*) I must see that book—give it me!

Jasper. My darling, I will not.

Lizzie. But you shall.

Jasper. I'd rather give you my heart.

Lizzie. Haven't I got it already?

Jasper. As Romeo said, I wish I had it back.

Lizzie. You are welcome to it.

Jasper. But, like Romeo again, I'd take it only on condition that you'd try to win it once more.

Lizzie. Didn't I get it fairly?

Jasper. Yes, but too easily. To save my soul I couldn't tell now how it happened—'twas all so sudden.

Lizzie. And you'd like to try it all over again?

Jasper. I'd like to see how a girl goes about it—how she traps a fellow's heart.

Lizzie. Traps! Do you think I set traps for you?

Jasper. No. Heaven made you a trap, and I tumbled in blindly.

Lizzie. Blindly!

Jasper. I want to lose my heart with my eyes open.

Lizzie. You think, perhaps, you'd be more circumspect next time.

Jasper. I'd keep a remote eye on everything.

Lizzie. You doubt my love then.

Jasper. No, I don't.

Lizzie. Then what is all your doubting about! What is the matter with me or you or anybody! What's in that book! Let me see it—I will see it! (*Jasper retires up, and Lizzie follows. They engage in a lively dispute in dumb-show. Jasper tries to overhear Martha and Rowan, who are L.C.*)

Rowan. Martha, do you remember that last tender parting we had?

Martha. Yes. What foolish little things we were then!

Rowan. Not so foolish after all. We thought our love and tears and vows as grand as anybody's. We loved each other truly if it was childish love.

Jasper. (*Aside.*) Love! There's love talk going on, and I can't hear a word.

Martha. I shall always smile when I think of that scene.

Rowan. But I shall always treasure it.

Jasper. Treasure! Love and treasure! Lizzie, if you must talk, whisper. I can't understand you or anybody else.

Lizzie. Who else is there?

Jasper. (*Coming down.*) Now, Rowan, for my sake, make a note of your feelings. Here are pencil and paper. Write down what you've said to each other and describe your feelings while it was coming. (*Offering Rowan book and pencil.*)

Rowan. I've a notion to cram them down your throat.

Jasper. Martha, please. (*Forcing book and pencil into her hands.*)

Martha. Jasper, pray have done with this nonsense! (*She throws the book down. Lizzie secures it, and Jasper pursues her.*)

Lizzie. Do hold him, Mr. Dilland! (*Rowan does so.*) (*Reads.*) "Experiments on Lizzie—Set No. 1." Oh, the monster! (*Reads.*) "Incident—kissed her. Sensation—slight. Inclination to repeat—slighter!" Look here, Jasper January! (*Reads.*) "Remark—kissing is utterly tasteless, a humbug. Avoid kisses." Jasper January, you

are a mean—this is a sneaking, treacherous thing to do, nothing else! (*Flings book away and paces stage.*)

Martha. (*Picking up the book.*) May be if you'd only read more, Lizzie, it would all be explained.

Lizzie. It can't be explained; it was meant as a deliberate insult. But go on, read it, if you are so anxious.

Martha. (*Reads.*) "Incident—hugged her. Observation—her corset was awful tight!" (*Lizzie screams and rushes away R., Martha laughing, dropping note-book and following.*)

Rowan. (*Following them, picks up book. Reads.*) "Moral—slash the corsets." (*Flings the book at Jasper angrily.*) (*Exit R.*)

Jasper. Stir 'em up—shame, grief, hate, love too and treasure—I should say so! ha! ha! If Mr. Clincher could just see the novelist now!

Enter Clincher (from behind tree).

Clincher. Ha! ha! oh, I was here! Bob Johnson's calf is gone, and I hurried back to you. You didn't know, boy, I was choking behind that tree. Lizzie was mad, very mad, wasn't she? But I can make it up for you any time. Ah, boy, you're getting facts, materials—hello! what's this? (*Picks up Edward's note.*) Somebody's note. "Dear Martha," it begins, and "Edward" signs it.

Jasper. What's it about?

Clincher. That's a secret.

Jasper. Let me see it. (*Takes note.*) (*Indignant.*) See here, Mr. Clincher, that pale, trembling, bashful fellow, my aunt Estill's overseer, dares to say he loves my cousin Martha! Read this! I'll wring his neck!

Clincher. (*Reads.*) "Dear Martha: No doubt—" (*Peruses rest.*) Jasper, this will never, never do. Why, Martha is my favorite of all the girls—her mother young again. And this Edward! (*Dropping into an extremely confidential tone.*) Jasper, boy, it has always been my pride that I know every man, woman and child in Bluegrass and love them all; but (*with feeling*) there is one whom I hate, every inch of him. He is the man who never would let me know him, this same "Edward," Edward Ballou! He must be put down.

Jasper. And I'm the one to do it! I'll choke the life—

Clincher. No, no, boy; here's a chance for the novelist with a secret. Be deft and gentle with him.

Jasper. I will, Mr. Clincher, but I'll be thorough! He's bashful, and I'll use this note to ridicule his love till I squeeze it out of him. He himself will not know what I'm doing, no more than the characters in book novels know what their authors are doing with them. Ah, Mr. Clincher, it was lucky to get hold of this secret. By the way, there's something mysterious in that letter of Rowan's. (*Takes Rowan's letter from his pocket and opens it.*)

Clincher. (*Aside.*) He has opened it! I will not countenance such conduct. (*To Jasper, who is reading and pays no heed.*) Lord bless me, I must go! Stingy Jones asked me to eat a turkey dinner with him. (*Exit rapidly.*)

Jasper. (*Reading.*) "My dear Fred: I send you here-with the rough draft of a letter you should cause Black Johnny to hand to Stella. You will see I have made it rather 'soft,' for to let her carry out her threats would, I'm afraid, spoil everything. You can copy it into your hand-writing like the rest and sign it. Here it is: 'My darling little wife'"—hello! Rowan married! novel-writing is exciting work, and I like my trade. (*Reads.*) "'My darling little wife: I am home again, but not for long, I hope. I shall fly back to you as soon as possible. A short parting used to be sad, but now this long enforced absence is frightful. However, a better time is coming. I promised to send you money on arrival here. You shall have it, but I can't send it now. I'll bring it myself as soon as I work out a certain scheme I have in mind. Believe me, dear Stella,' etc. and to you, my dear Fred, I am and ever shall be

Truly your chum,

ROWAN DILLAND."

Great Cæsar! what does it mean? Rowan can't be married, or he would have told me. At any rate, he wouldn't have put this letter into my hands unsealed. It's the most—

Re-enter Clincher (out of breath).

Clincher. Stingy Jones evidently couldn't catch his tur-

key. I saw her in his far field, half mile this side of his house.

Jasper. (*Slapping letter into his pocket.*) Mr. Clincher, I want your advice.

Clincher. Well, tell me what you want it to be.

Jasper. That letter of Rowan's is infernal nonsense.

Clincher. That's a bad business, very bad.

Jasper. I've got to write another for him to find out what it means.

Clincher. Ahem! (*Aside.*) I'll oppose this with my most stolid silence.

Jasper. I'll tell Fred Stone that Rowan is sick, not able to write himself; has brain fever or is about to have it. How will that do?

Clincher. (*Aside.*) I never advise lying.

Jasper. I'll ask him to answer to me.

Clincher. Ahem! (*Going.*) (*Turns back when Jasper speaks, and listens admiringly.*)

Jasper. Mr. Clincher, you do not dream how rapid are the strides I'm taking. A little while ago I did not know for certain I was a novelist. Now my skeleton plot is drawn and my model characters are at my mercy. Rowan shall be my hero, with a mystery in his college life; Martha my heroine, with two lovers; that gloomy Edward Ballou my misanthropic villain, and Lizzie my wife. Four characters and two secrets to start with! I'll have them raging around me! Come on, Mr. Clincher, (*leads him by the arm*) and first of all I'll hunt the villain down! (*Both going.*)

CURTAIN.

ACT II.

SCENE.—*Parlor in Mrs. Estill's house. Sophy discovered busy about the room. Large door in rear. Lawn view beyond.*

Enter Mrs. Estill R.

Mrs. Estill. Sophy, run call Mr. Ballou; there he goes now! (*Opening desk and taking out some papers.*) Dear old Mr. Clincher! When we had troubles they were always

his own, and what a comfort he was to us! That dreadful night during the war, he absolutely saved us! Now he's in distress, and I'm almost glad of it—to have a chance to repay him. (*Handling papers.*)

Enter Edward, M. D., Sophy following.

Edward, can you let the farm take care of itself for a day or two?

Edward. Yes, if you desire it, Mrs. Estill.

Mrs. Estill. I want you to work on some accounts. The wheat is all sold, isn't it?

Edward. The last of it to-day.

Mrs. Estill. And the hands don't need you to watch them, do they?

Edward. Not badly.

Mrs. Estill. Well, Mr. Clincher was here last night, and the dear old soul confided a most distressing discovery to me. Somehow his accounts as Lizzie's guardian are wrong. I told him I would find out what's the matter, and he firmly believes I'm such a manager that I could. You can, can't you?

Edward. I suppose so. I'll try, anyhow.

Mrs. Estill. I'm sure you'll do it. And when you get through, Edward, I do so want you to take a little holiday.

Edward. A holiday would distress me to death.

Mrs. Estill. But I beg you, Edward. You should go out into the world a little, and there's such a good opportunity now. Lizzie's party comes off next week. I'm going myself, and she wants you to go.

Edward. You know how I'm about myself.

Mrs. Estill. Yes, I know, and it distresses me so that I would take it as a particular favor if you would do as I wish. It requires only a little of the resolution that you make so useful on the farm. People will surely like you Edward, as I do, and as Martha and Agnes and all who really know you do.

Edward. What is the nature of Mr. Clincher's trouble?

Mrs. Estill. (*Provoked slightly.*) Edward, you must not change the subject in that way with me. I want to tell Lizzie to-day that you will go to her party.

Edward. Mrs. Estill, I cannot go. I'm only a farm manager.

Mrs. Estill. You are the best informed farmer in the county, and no man hereabouts is your superior in any respect.

Edward. Well, a farmer is all I care to be. To go amongst strangers, to feel I'm masquerading in false garb as it were, to know that eyes are directed at me—I would think that every body was laughing at me, or, worse still, pitying me!

Mrs. Estill. A morbid bashfulness! You deserve to be pitied and laughed at! I wish somebody would seize you and drag you out of your shell! Well, well. (*Resuming search among the papers.*) Here are some of the papers, but the large book is in the dining-room. Come, we'll look at it there. (*Exeunt R.*)

Moses appears at M. D.

Moses. Sophy, hab Mars. Jasper come yet?

Sophy. Nobody's master hab come, Mister Moses January, cause you ain't got no marster. You ain't no fiel' han' no more. You 'tends er gennelman, an' I's lef ther kitchen fer ter live in ther parlors. I's er lady an' you's er gennelman.

Moses. 'Fore goodness, Sophy, I done forgot 'bout dat. (*Coming forward with great ado of politeness.*) Missis Sophy Estill, howdy?

Sophy. Mister Moses January, good mornin'.

Moses. Hab yer been spry since las' time?

Sophy. Purty toler'ble. Sit down, Mister January. Take ther easy cheer thar. (*She sits on sofa, and Moses on chair.*) How's you been?

Moses. Kinder peert. But lemme say somethin', Sophy. Dis here stylushness iz er good thing, but I doan' wanter be settin' way off here 'way frum you. Lemme try haffer dat sofer. (*Moves to sofa, Sophy turning her head away, with exaggerated affectation of modesty.*) Looky' here, Sophy, you ain't er feared ur me, iz yer? 'Cause thar ain't no gal livin' what I lubs like I does you!

Jasper appears M. D. and stands back.

Sophy. Go 'way! You hab said dat too of'en. You ain't

no stylish gennelman at all! Gennelmen ain't all ther time sayin' love an' kissin'.

Jasper. (*Aside.*) Love and kissing! Here's the primitive article!

Moses. I ain't gone an' kissed you yet.

Sophy. You 's gwine tu. You can't fool me. (*Moses puts his arm around her.*) I knows when ther b'ar iz er climin' up ther tree, an' whut fur.

Moses. I ain't no b'ar climin' up no tree.'

Sophy. Yes, yer iz. Doan' I see yo' arm roun' it! You 's climin' fur honey.

Moses. Dat's er fac'—no use 'sputin' 'bout it.

Sophy. Well, you jis look out! I 's wors'en bees when I 's mad!

Moses. I doan' keer, no more'n er b'ar does. I 's got er sweet toof an' er thick hide. (*Draws her face around and is about to kiss her.*)

Jasper. Go it, Moses! (*In alarm they attempt to rise, but Jasper puts his hands on their heads and holds them down.*) Keep your seats! Don't be afraid of me! I want things to go on without regard to my presence. Keep your seats, I tell you! Now, Moses, tell me how you came to kiss Sophy the first time.

Moses. 'Fore goodness, Mars Jasper, I doan' know!

Jasper. Do you, Sophy?

Sophy. I doan' know, Mars Jasper. Mose did it; I didn'. I doan' care fur kissin'. 'Taint 'spectable.

Jasper. Yes, it is. The world is full of it. It's the mysterious manifestation of all the better human impulses, and it is worthy of profound respect and study. It's the climax of every novel, and it is always true to nature. I've made a study of it. (*Takes out his note-book.*)

Sophy. Lorsy mercy! I didn' know all dat, Mars Jasper.

Jasper. Moses, how many times have you kissed Sophy?

Moses. She wouldn' 'low me to tell.

Sophy. I doan' keer. Mars Jasper's said it's 'spectable.

Moses. More'n er hundred times, I 'spec'. (*Jasper notes it.*)

Sophy. Lorsy mercy! Mars Jasper, dat nigger iz hurtin' my feelins'! 'Taint ten times! (*Jasper notes it.*)

Jasper. How long since you began it?

Moses. Las' night, wuzn' it, Sophy? (*Jasper notes it.*)

Jasper. Well, keep it up whenever I'm around, and I'll tell you what I'll do for you. Moses, I'll give you this suit I've got on and the black one.

Moses. I 's done sot my heart on dem close, Mars Jasper.

Jasper. And, Sophy, you shall have a new dress. All you've got to do is to go on kissing a hundred times a day.

Sophy. But s'posin' Missis wuz ter ketch us?

Jasper. Don't mind her or anybody else.

Moses. Golly! She'd git awful mad!

Jasper. So much the better if you stir her up! (*Going.*) Remember, go right ahead as if I hadn't said a word. (*Exit Jasper M. D.*)

Moses. (*After a pause.*) I doan' feel like kissin' now, does you?

Sophy. Mars Jasper done sp'iled it.

Moses. But dem clo's'll come pow'ful cheap!

Sophy. Dat's mighty true.

Moses. Duz you recomember der fast time what we kissed?

Sophy. Las' night? Course I does! Dis am ther very room. I wuz sittin' here, an' you wuz on dat cheer, an' you moved tu whar you iz now. My head wuz turned—dis way.

Moses. Den I jis said "Sophy."

Sophy. An' you skeered me, 'deed you did, 'cause you sed it so sof'. But I nebber turnt my face yo' way. I jis said "Moses," sorter chokin'.

Moses. An' when you said "Moses" dat time I foun' out my real name. I nebber said nuffin' though. I couldn'. I jis edged up er little, didn' I? (*Edging closer to her.*)

Sophy. I nebber said nuffin', neether.

Moses. Den I jis put my arm 'long top uv ther sofa, dis way.

Sophy. But I knowed it wuz thar.

Moses. 'Deed you did, honey! An' den what did I jis say?

Mrs. Estill *appears* R. D.

Moses. { I said "Oh, Sophy!"
Sophy. { I said "Oh, Moses!" (They are about to kiss.)

Mrs. Estill. Sophy! (They rise hastily.) What do you mean? And you, Moses, how dare you!

Sophy. 'Fore goodness, Missis Estill, Mars Jasper tole us we mus'!

Mrs. Estill. Told you you must!

Moses. 'Deed he did, Missis Estill! He tole us we mus' kiss er hundred times er day!

Mrs. Estill. Sophy, go to the kitchen at once! Miranda, the cook, shall have you again.

Sophy. Please, ma'm, Missis Estill, doan' sen' me to Mirandy!

Mrs. Estill. Go! (Exit Sophy, R., weeping.) Moses, leave the place! (Exit Moses.) (They reappear M. D. and have their kiss.)* What impudence! I suppose they told the truth about Jasper, he's such a dear boy at his pranks! (Looks among papers.)

Euter Edward, R. D., carrying a large book. Here's the other paper, Edward. (He takes it and turns to leave the room.) Don't go, Edward; I want to talk with you.

Edward. (Aside.) Does she know?

Euter Martha D. L. (Runs to Mrs. Estill.)

Martha. Dear mother, you look so well! Good morning, Edward. Oh, mother, there's such a surprise for you! Here comes Rowan.

Euter Rowan D. L.

Mrs. Estill. Why, so it is! Rowan (shaking hands), I would hardly have known you!

Rowan. But I'm the same boy, Mrs. Estill.

Mrs. Estill. I hope so; but not altogether the same, for you are a man! Jasper is the last boy left in my little world. He'll never be anything else to me if I live to be a hundred. (Edward starts to go.) You know Edward, here, don't you, Rowan. No; you went away before he came. Edward, this is Rowan Dilland. You've heard of us speak of him often.

* Hereafter during this act Moses and Sophy should appear at a few available opportunities to carry on their kissing. The sound of kissing from without might be heard once or twice with funny effect.

(*Rowan and Edward shake hands, Edward showing embarrassment.*) Well, Rowan, you've been through college, and have seen the world, and now I suppose you're ready to settle down. Have you seen Mr. Clincher?

Rowan. About the very first.

Mrs. Estill. Of course. Well, what'll you be? Did he approve of your plans?

Rowan. I didn't ask. His advice to Jasper scared me off.

Mrs. Estill. What was it?

Rowan. He advised him to do—simply nothing.

Mrs. Estill. That was right! Ha! ha! He knew he wouldn't do anything else half so well. Nothing means mischief, and I have reason to know Jasper is already busy. (*With enthusiasm.*) Jasper is a great boy, very much like his father—my dead brother, John. He turned out a congressman and a general, and died at the front. Like Jasper, he was full of folly when a boy; but his folly was brimful of ideas. Jasper runs after rainbows now, and he doesn't catch them; but he's getting exercise and experience. Mr. Clincher knows him. But here I am, talking away about Jasper and neglecting you! (*During this speech Martha arranges leaves, etc., on table, and Edward moves towards M. D., plainly to escape.*)

Enter Lizzie, M. D.

Lizzie. (*Taking Edward by sleeve and leading him back embarrassed.*) No you don't, Mr. Edward! You shan't avoid your fellow-creatures any longer. I, for one, won't stand it! Society has some capital in you, and it shall lie idle no longer!

Mrs. Estill. (*With sympathy.*) Bless the dear girl!

Edward. (*Shrinking, but forcing a smile.*) Really, Miss Machen, you—you flatter me.

Lizzie. Don't call me Miss Machen! You are one of my "Lizzie" friends. I don't flatter you—not a bit! I accuse you! I want you to promise to come to my party. Mrs. Estill is coming. Oh, you shall have just your own sort of a time. Come now, promise me, won't you?

Edward. Really, Miss Lizzie, really—I can't stay here—
I—

Lizzie. (*Pitying him.*) But remember the promise, when you come back. (*Releases him.*) I must have it! (*Aside.*) I suffer with him! (*Edward moves towards M. D.*)

Enter Jasper, M. D.

Jasper. Ah! ha! Mr. Ballou! Just the man! (*Takes him by the hand and drags him back.*) Happy to find you! I have something to tell you. (*Aside.*) I'll do it gently—remotely.

Edward. (*With some spirit.*) Let me go, sir!

Jasper. Let you go? Oh! you mean let go. Certainly. But if you try to run away, I'll catch you and bring you back. Wait, just a moment. My dear Aunt Mary, you're looking so well to-day. (*Kisses her, and returns to Edward.*) Mr. Edward, I had the queerest dream just now about you! Do you want to hear it, Aunt Mary? And you, Martha? Lizzie? Rowan? Mr. Edward? (*Enter Clincher, M. D.*) and you, Mr. Clincher? I had a dream, and the way it has been verified is remarkable. You all want to hear it? Of course you do!

Clincher.

Jasper.

Edward.

Lizzie.

Agnes.

Rowan.

Mrs. Estill.

Martha.

Well; Martha, Lizzie, and Rowan abandoned me all alone, out in the woods-pasture just now, and—I wept.

Lizzie. There, now; you begin with a falsehood. You have never cried in your life.

Jasper. (*Absorbed and speaking slowly.*) I wept scalding tears, for I felt sure I had just hurt Lizzie's feelings, as she does not mind hurting mine, and my heart was sad. In my agony I threw myself upon the deep soft grass, and, like a little child, cried myself to sleep.

And then I had a dream. I dreamt I saw a shadow on the grass. There it was, moving slowly to and fro—thus—and quivering. And every now and then reaching out its dark, crooked arms slowly—thus; and then drawing them into itself again. Oh! it was so gloomy black I thought I was blind when I looked at it.

Presently I saw a sunbeam playing upon the grass at a

little distance. Oh! it was brilliant with all the hues of the rainbow; and whatever it touched became like itself.

Then I saw the shadow reach out its arms for the sunbeam and tremble with love, and I trembled with fear, for in the clasp of a shadow a sunbeam dies. Gaily the sunbeam tipped along nearer to the shadow—nearer—nearer—nearer. I shut my eyes.

When I looked again, they were very close to each other—but apart. The shadow was heaving with passion. The sunbeam was pouring the beauties of its nature into a dew-drop on the grass, which I dreamed was a tear it had dropped out of pity. And there was a bit of paper under the tear, and it was the shadow's declaration of love.

As I gazed the sunbeam became a bright, fair maiden—it was you, Martha! and the shadow became a man—it was you, Mr. Edward! and then I woke and found this note (*drawing it*), which was sure enough a declaration of love; I'll read it.

Edward. (Indignant.) Sir! (*Seizes the note.*) You shall answer for this. (*Tries to say more, but is too much distressed.*) (*Exit M. D.*)

Martha. (Sobbing.) Shame on you, Jasper! (*Exit R. D.*)

Lizzie. I despise you! (*Exit R. D.*)

Rowan. You've been a brute all day! (*Exit M. D.*)

Mrs. Estill. Poor Edward! Jasper, I'll ask you to explain this presently. (*Exit L. D.*)

Jasper. (With great concern.) Mr. Clincher, what does all this mean?

Clincher. (In a matter-of-fact way.) It means, boy, you have stirred them up. But (*with apprehension*) you have done it thoroughly, boy, very thoroughly—'most too thoroughly.

Jasper. I tried to do it gently.

Clincher. But you didn't do it gently; you did it deliberately, in cold blood. However, boy, you did your best, and I'll see that it's all right. To fail to set things all right is a thing I seldom do. I tell you, boy, you settled that Mr. Edward; you pulverized his love.

Jasper. Yes, but I treated him shamefully.

Agnes. (Coming forward to Jasper—fiercely.) And he ought to hate you! I do. He shall have his revenge or I will. (*Exit M. D.*)

Jasper. (*In dismay.*) Mr. Clincher, I have made a terrible mistake somehow. I have won everybody's hate.

Clincher. (*At a loss to comfort him.*) Hate?

Jasper. Yes, hate.

Clincher. Well, after all, boy, there's a cheerful view to be taken of hate. Hate is one of the very boldest attitudes in a novel; your true novelist feeds on shame and glories in hate.

Jasper. But your true novelist doesn't have all his characters hating himself. Mr. Clincher, please do not mention that word novel to me again. (*Re-enter Rowan M. D.*) (*To Rowan, reproachfully.*) And even you said shame on me.

Rowan. I did indeed, and I came to repeat it.

Jasper. You have no right to do so; it was all done for your benefit.

Rowan. My benefit! and how, pray tell me?

Jasper. To put down your rival for Martha's love.

Rowan. Who said I had such aspirations?

Jasper. Yourself.

Rowan. Is it possible I said so much, and to you? I take it for granted you have repeated me to her.

Jasper. "For granted!" well no, not yet.

Rowan. (*Angrily.*) I give you leave; make the most of it. 'Tis your last chance, for I'm quit of you from this on. (*Exit M. D.*)

Jasper. (*As Rowan goes.*) Now he is mad.

Clincher. Be a philosopher, boy, like myself; you've got to make people miserable in order to get any credit for making them happy again. That's the way novelists do. Don't allow yourself to be put out by a little trouble like this. It will all be over in a few weeks.

Jasper. But I want it over at once; why Lizzie is angry enough to refuse to marry me.

Clincher. It will only be a short postponement.

Jasper. Postponement?

Clincher. Yes, that's all. Why, Jasper, boy, what is such a short delay compared to the loss of a lifetime's reputation?

Jasper. I'm losing both reputation and Lizzie.

Clincher. But remember what I and Bluegrass are gaining.

Jasper. What?

Clincher. Why—your novel.

Jasper. Blast the novel.

(*Enter Martha R. D.*)

Martha. (*Starting back from Jasper.*) I hoped you had gone.

Jasper. Why did you hope that, Martha?

Martha. Because after your conduct just now you should no longer remain here. (*Exit R.*)

Jasper. (*In great distress.*) Did you hear that, sir?

(*Enter Lizzie M. D.*)

(*He hastens to her.*) My dear, darling Lizzie!

Lizzie. Stand back, Jasper! I came to say the very last words I shall ever speak to you.

Jasper. Why, Lizzie—

Lizzie. Not one word! you stole that note—

Jasper. I swear I found it.

Lizzie. You stole that note and used it to wound, deeply wound the feelings of one who had never harmed you or any person in the world. You nearly broke Martha's heart. You disgraced yourself and me, and—our—engagement is ended. (*Going.*)

Jasper. Lizzie, you do not know what you are saying.

Lizzie. (*Almost breaking down.*) Hereafter you'll be a stranger to me. (*Exit M. D.*)

Jasper. Oh, mercy, what does she mean? Did you hear her, Mr. Clincher? Explain it, explain it, you confounded old wise—oh, Mr. Clincher, please tell me, is she in earnest?

Clincher. (*Aside.*) This is what I wanted, but it's too bad—too bad.

Jasper. Tell me, is she in earnest?

Clincher. Of course she's in earnest, boy, but—it's only for a little while—only 'till after the races.

Jasper. What have the races got to do with it?

Clincher. Listen to me, boy. She will love you all the more for this quarrel after everything is settled, and I'll see to that Jasper, boy, depend on me.

Jasper. I'll go to her at once.

Clincher. She is in no humor to hear you now.

Jasper. Then I'll write to her.

Clincher. You should leave her alone about three weeks.

Jasper. I'm to marry her in two.

Clincher. Perhaps, boy, perhaps. Anyhow, you will marry her. Leave that to me. The first thing to do is to set yourself right with Rowan and Edward.

Jasper. I'll write to Mr. Edward at once, begging his pardon abjectly, and I'll mail Rowan's letter for the next train. (*Taking a paper from his pocket.*) Here it is. (*Looks at it.*) Great heavens, Mr. Clincher! (*Reads*) "Dear Martha; No doubt my—" It is Mr. Edward's love note! I thought he snatched it from me! (*Nervously looks through papers from his pocket.*) Mr. Clincher, the ruin is complete!

Clincher. What's the matter now?

Jasper. Nothing can save me! That man has got Rowan's letter to that woman Stella, whoever she is.

Clincher. Miserable boy, what have you done!

Jasper. Tell me, what can I do?

Clincher. Calm yourself; leave it all to me, boy. I'll see Mr. Edward and get Rowan's letter back. Perhaps he hasn't even looked at it yet.

Jasper. And what shall I do?

Clincher. Nothing.

Jasper. But I must do something.

Clincher. Then write the novel—or, better still, gradually soften Lizzie.

Jasper. How can I do it?

Clincher. Keep away from her.

Jasper. Nothing else?

Clincher. Look sorrowful, cast down, poetical—

Jasper. I'm all that without an effort.

Enter Edward M. D. (Agnes follows and stands back.)

Clincher. (Going up to Edward.) Mr. Edward, I wish to speak with you.

Edward. Yes, sir; about those accounts, I suppose.

Clincher. (In dismay.) What accounts?

Edward. The guardianship accounts.

Clincher. But—what do you know about them, man?

Edward. Not a great deal yet. So far, I have had only a few minutes to give them. At the first glance, however, there was such a patent error—

Clincher. (*Stopping him.*) Never mind the accounts, Mr. Edward, boy. I wanted to ask you about—let's see—about a letter that you got into your hands by mistake just now.

Edward. (*Indignantly, but quietly.*) I have a letter which got out of my hands by mistake or treachery. I don't know how it got into the hands of that mischief-maker there. (*Pointing at Jasper.*)

Clincher. You are mistaken. Look at the letter you have. (*Edward does so, with surprise.*) I ask you to return it to me.

Edward. May I ask why?

Clincher. It is a matter of deep concern.

Jasper. (*Going up to Edward briskly.*) He speaks for me.

Edward. (*To Jasper.*) Do you dare to speak to me? I do not understand all this! (*To both.*) If you mean to drag me into ridicule again, I say to you, take care! I will not cringe and help to shame myself as I did just now. (*To Jasper.*) Do you want this letter? You stole the one I wrote and made a villainous use of it against me. I'll keep this one. (*Exit L. D.*)

Jasper. (*Following.*) Mr. Edward! (*Agnes steps before him.*)

Agnes. No! you shall not persecute him any further; if there is anything in that letter to harm you, you may dread it. (*Exit L. D.*)

Jasper. He's gone! and the letter with him! (*Pacing stage distractedly.*)

Clincher. (*Also pacing.*) The miserable boy has got me mixed up with all this rumpus.

Jasper. What can I do? (*Pacing.*)

Clincher. Nothing, nothing, nothing. (*Stops.*) Jasper, boy, you wring a most painful confession from me; you are a fool! (*Pacing.*)

Jasper. I know it; that's nothing wise to say. It's merely another of your profound yeses to the inevitable. (*Pacing.*)

Clincher. Instead of gently stirring people up, you have tampered with their very lives, not secretly and remotely, but openly and offensively, boy.

Jasper. You advised me.

Clincher. But I told you to keep out of their clutches. Now, you are the ridiculous villain all tangled up in your own plot. Your alleged characters are all your deadly enemies—and mine too.

Jasper. Tell me how to set them right. (*Pacing.*)

Clincher. Set them right! Do you think, boy, they are the dead creations of a book to be set about as you please. Leave them alone, boy. Go to your room, lock yourself in and—write up your materials! You've got plenty now. Make me the comical old fool! (*Pacing.*)

Jasper. Mr. Clincher, you laugh at me! (*Pacing.*)

Clincher. Laugh at you! Why, boy, I'm a thousand times worse involved than you are! (*Pacing.*)

Enter Broad M. D. (Stops back on seeing Jasper and Clincher pacing. Sophy and Moses appear, M. D., ready to kiss.)

Even Fire Fly can't save me now!

Jasper. I will get that letter back! I'll hunt that fellow up and choke him till he gives it to me! (*Starts off: runs into Broad.*)

Broad. (Calmly.) What's the matter, young man?

Jasper. (Startled.) Who are you? Oh, I know you. What do you want here?

Broad. My name is Broad, and I am here on my own business, wherein I am a rather important character.

Jasper. Character! I reject you, sir? (*Going towards M. D. Tosses Sophy and Moses apart.*) Clear out of this, you apes! Sophy, where's your master Edward? Where is he? Moses, go and find him instantly! (*Exit M. D.*)

Enter Mrs. Estill.

Mrs. Estill. (Calling off.) You, Sophy! Come back here instantly! Go back to the kitchen! Oh, I beg your pardon, Mr. Broad, but those servants are acting unaccountably. In fact, Mr. Broad, the whole house is upset! Mr. Clincher, what does it all mean? Didn't some one say Edward is in love with my daughter?

Clincher. (Composing himself.) Jasper seemed to have some such notion; but he'd say anything, he's such a harum-scarum boy.

Mrs. Estill. Where is he?

Clincher. I don't know. I hope he's gone off quietly to mope.

Mrs. Estill. To mope?

Clincher. Yes, to mope like a monkey.

Broad. To study out mischief, I suppose?

Clincher. Yes, to mope like a monkey studying out mischief. He's been trying outrageous impossibilities, and he deserves to suffer. He reminds me of that pathetic story of the little boy and the apples. Did you ever hear it? No? Well those apples were on the other side of a high paling fence with spikes on top, and that particular boy couldn't climb such a fence. But he was a very smart boy, and he thought he could reason out a way to get over that fence without climbing it. So he started his little mind, and he reasoned that there was no reason why he shouldn't get at the apples by lifting himself over that fence by his boot-straps. So he stooped down, thus (*suiting action to word and speaking slowly with increasing strain*), and took hold, and he tugged and he tugged at those boot-straps; but the harder he lifted the tighter his feet held the earth—still he tugged; and he tugged till his face, which was red, grew blue; still he tugged; and his prospects grew blue also—still he tugged; and his blue eyes grew also—still he tugged; and his right blue eye popped through the fence and flew to its apple—still he tugged; and his left blue eye popped through the fence and flew to its apple—still he tugged; and the blue-eyed apples were gazing at him—still he tugged; and he tugged, and he tugged till he broke his—

Broad. Boot-straps?

Clincher. —till he broke his—

Broad. Suspenders?

Clincher. —till he broke his heart—then he ceased to tug.

Mrs. Estill. Is that all? Didn't he get the apples?

Clincher. No. He went off and moped like a monkey. Isn't that a sad story, Mr. Broad?

Broad. It might have been sadder.

Clincher. How?

Broad. Were the apples green?

Clincher. Ah! Mr. Broad, you jest on a serious subject.

Broad. I never jest on any subject.

Clincher. There is one dearer by far to Jasper than apples to a little boy. I mean Lizzie, Mrs. Estill. And there is a high fence and miserable remoteness between them.

Broad. Are you in earnest?

Clincher. In dead earnest.

Mrs. Estill. Surely Jasper and Lizzie have not quarreled?

Clincher. She has broken off their engagement.

Mrs. Estill. What could have possessed her to do such a thing?

Clincher. His ridicule of Mr. Edward, just now.

Mrs. Estill. It was cruel; but it is the only way to bring Edward out. I was disposed to give Jasper credit for it. Lizzie thought to draw Edward out by begging him to go to her party; she pities him—a great mistake.

Clincher. Yes; a great mistake. Pity melts the metal in a man, and so runs his character deeper into ruts and crevices; but cruelty, injustice, ridicule, are positive forces that batter and hammer him into steel that shines and cuts in the world.

Mrs. Estill. Very true, Mr. Clincher. You'll make up the quarrel between Lizzie and Jasper—won't you?

Clincher. I've pledged myself to do it.

Broad. (*Aside.*) Not if I can help it. (*Aloud.*) Mr. Clincher, we had better begin on those accounts.

Mrs. Estill. But Edward has them.

Clincher. (*Joyfully.*) Did you give them to Mr. Edward?

Mrs. Estill. Of course; he's an expert bookkeeper and perfectly discreet.

Clincher. (*Aside.*) Then I'm safe. Fire Fly, the track is clear!

Enter Sophy, L. D.

Sophy. Missis Estill, dinner am on.

Clincher. Come, Mr. Broad, come dine with us. Allow me, Mrs. Estill. (*Exeunt R. D.*)

Enter Edward and Agnes, L. D. (They start across.)

Edward. I cannot go where they are. They will laugh at me.

Agnes. They dare not!

Edward. Agnes, in all the world you are the only being I dare confide in. I thought Martha so good and so noble—is it a marvel that she won even me to love her?

Agnes. (*Aside.*) How blind of him to say this to me!

Edward. They think it is absurd. I—I in love! It is absurd! I could laugh at myself! Why, Love is represented as a beautiful, rosy-cheeked boy that flies from heart to heart with messages of joy and hope. How could my joyless, hopeless heart send forth such a messenger! Mine was a sad child, full of emotion, trembling out in the world; a lone little trespasser.

Agnes. (*Aside.*) Sad, indeed; but not lone.

Edward. I hoped; rather, I dreamed, that Martha would send it back, with a glow upon its cheek caught from her smile. But she laughed at it! She took it to others for their amusement! I see—I see—I have no right to love. (*Casts himself into a chair with his head on a table.*)

Enter Martha, R. D. (*She crosses to Edward as Agnes turns away from him despairingly. Seeing Martha's intention, Agnes jealously seizes her arm.*)

Martha. (*To Agnes.*) What do you mean?

Agnes. (*Fiercely at first.*) I mean that he loves you and you do not love him! (*Then pleadingly.*) Forgive me, Martha, but do not speak to him now!

Martha. Agnes, I know your secret. He shall know the truth from me. I pity him—that's all. Stay and hear me. (*Going close to Edward.*) Edward.

Edward. (*Starting up.*) Martha!

Martha. Yes, Edward. I came to say Jasper's conduct distressed me as it wounded you.

Edward. And yet you caused it.

Martha. You are unjust. I do not know how he got your note.

Edward. (*Hopefully.*) Then you did not help to ridicule my love?

Martha. Oh, no! no!

Edward.—And you respect it?

Martha. Yes, I respect it deeply.

Edward. (*Seizes her hand.*) Martha, your kindness has filled me with hope! (*She withdraws a little.*) Do not utterly cast me down again.

Martha. I came here to speak frankly, Edward, as I should have done yesterday when I got your note. I can never love you as you ask. Another loves you as I never could.

Edward. Martha, what do you mean?

Martha. Agnes loves you.

Agnes. (*With deep reproach.*) Oh, Martha! Martha! (*Coming forward.*) You shall not talk so!

Martha. Agnes, I know I am right. Edward, look where you will in your life here, there you'll find Agnes, with her sympathy and her help. Look where you will in your heart, her loving deeds have found a home there. Oh, you have been doubly wrong! Don't you see it so, yourself?

Edward. Martha —

Martha. Edward, do not speak yet! You do not know your heart.

Enter Jasper, M. D. (Haggard.)

Jasper. (*To Edward.*) I've found you at last, have I? (*Seeing Martha's distress.*) Martha, what has he said to you? It is false! He stole that letter of Rowan's and wants to make you hate him! (*To Edward.*) Here, sir! Are you going to return that letter, or must I take it from you? (*To Agnes.*) You've put him up to this!

Edward. (*Incensed.*) You impudent wretch!

Jasper. Will you give me that letter?

Edward. No!

Jasper. Then I'll take it! (*Rushing upon him. Agnes screams and throws herself on Jasper.*)

Martha. (*Running to door R.*) Mother! Rowan! Mr. Clincher!

Enter all R. D. and M. D.

Martha. Oh, do come! Jasper is mad! Oh, hold him.

(*Rowan, Broad and Clincher hold him. He struggles.*)

Jasper. (*In broken sentences.*) That man—Edward there—has got Rowan's letter—let me go—you don't understand

—Mr. Clincher will tell you so—he told me—to write a novel—make him give up the letter—let me go! (*He is forced back to M. D., struggling and calling out.*)

CURTAIN.

ACT III.

SCENE.—*Lawn in front of house; the latter is brilliantly lighted up. Dance-music within. Rustic settee R. C., behind which is a clump of bushes. Moses and Sophy discovered on the settee, woe-begone, and kissing and counting languidly.*

Sophy. Iz you tired, Moses?

Moses. No; I ain't tired as you iz. (*Kissing her gingerly.*)

Dat am eighty times ter day.

Sophy. An' dis one (*kissing him same way*) am ninety.

Moses. You iz countin' wrong, honey—you knows yer iz.

Sophy. I ain't cheatin' 'tall. What number iz it?

Moses. I 'spec's it's ninety-fo' (*Kisses her and yawns.*) Dat wuz ninety-eight.

Sophy. (*Yawns also.*) An'—dis'n—am— (*She falls off asleep.*)

Moses. (*Purses his lips as if to kiss—yawns—purses his lips wearily again, and falls asleep also.*)

Enter Jasper R. 1 E. (Dejected.)

Jasper. (*Seeing Moses and Sophy.*) Poor things, let them rest. I believe I've actually made them miserable too. (*Looks into house.*)

Enter Clincher R. 3 E.

Clincher. Why, Jasper, boy, what are you doing here? Lizzie forbade it.

Jasper. Yes, if she were in heaven, and I were to die, all to join her, she would keep me out. But I tell you I was bound to come here, if only to peep! I have groaned and moaned by myself till I am desperate.

Clincher. Have you worked any on the novel?

Jasper. (*With a reproachful smile.*) No—no. But occa-

sionally I have amused myself by trying to write, not a novel, but anything. And, as I chased thought after thought to the loveliest places I could imagine, I came to admire myself, and then to love myself—love was what I needed! But that sort of self-comforting doesn't last one. The writing it requires—I mean the setting down of letters, words and sentences—is tedious labor, very like plowing; and, after all, when I got the black and white before me, it seemed only black and white—the glow was gone for me, and everybody doubtless. If I had the power to project my thoughts hot and gleaming into the open-mouthed wonder of the wide-eyed millions, so to say, I'd do it; but what's the use of pursuing an idea away up yonder to find that in picking up your pen away down here you've let it escape! Literature consists of only the thoughts with clipped wings—the birds that can't fly again. I'm certain of one thing anyhow; I'll never try to write another line; I'm tired and sad—I want Lizzie.

Clincher. Does she give you no hope?

Jasper. She won't even look at me.

Clincher. And your cousin Martha?

Jasper. She flies from me. I cornered her once, and she flew at me.

Clincher. Has that man Edward told her about Rowan's letter?

Jasper. No; I think not. She avoids him, and Rowan too. I suspect Agnes has made her cautious about Rowan. But why are you here, Mr. Clincher?

Clincher. To speak to Lizzie in your behalf, boy. That done, I'll go try to get Rowan's letter back from that man who has it. But come, I hear a carriage on the pike. (*They retire.*) (*Moses becomes restless, makes an exclamation, and awakens us from a nightmare.*)

Moses. (*Rubbing his eyes.*) Golly, I wuz scared! I dreamed whut I was drownin' in merlasses liker big black fly, an', golly, how I buzzed tryin' ter git loose! (*Buzzing.*)

Sophy. (*Slapping us if at a fly, and awakening.*) Git ou' way from here! (*Fully awake.*) I dreamed whut a wasp wuz tryin ter sting my mouf!

Moses. Ef dat iz ther way what yer dreams 'bout my kessin', I 's done; you hear me!

Sophy. I reckon yer iz done! I aint gwine ter 'low no more.

Moses. You 's done parulized my lips, an' I could n' ef I wanted.

Sophy. My lips am blisters! 'sides, you ain't han'sum no more.

Moses. Dat's what I jes 'lowed tu myself 'bout you.

Sophy. Den doan' look at me no more! (*They rise and quarrel.*)

Moses. I ain't er lookin'; my eyes could n' stan' it!

Sophy. Doan' cum hangin' roun' me no more, neither!

Moses. Doan' you be feared! 'Scuse dis darkey! Good-bye, honey!

Sophy. Good-bye yo'self! (*They stand apart—back.*)

Re-enter Clincher.

Clincher. (*Starts into house; then pauses.*) No. Twenty years ago I used to go to dances, and skip a night's rest as these young folks are going to do; but now (*surveys his clothing*), these won't do, and, Mr. Clincher, until Fire Fly wins and you set Jasper right, you won't do. (*To Sophy.*) Go in and tell Lizzie I want to see her. (*Exit Sophy.*)

Enter Lawyer Broad. (*In evening dress.*)

Broad. Ah, Mr. Clincher, you are a man of taste,—how do I appear?

Clincher. Very well indeed, Lawyer Broad.

Broad. I flatter myself that when I relax a little from the stated calm of my usual deportment, I am not an unattractive personage. (*Makes an awkward dance movement.*)

Clincher. Are you actually going to dance?

Broad. (*Serious.*) I am; and more than that. You remember, I said if my plans should go through, you would never be asked questions about your accounts. Now, who could decide that matter? Only two people,—Lizzie and her husband that is to be.

Clincher. And who is to be her husband?

Broad. Your question is not flattering. I shall this very night bring my suit to a final hearing.

Clincher. Lord bless me, Lawyer Broad! has she encouraged you?

Broad. I will be frank with you, Mr. Clincher. I have met her several times recently, and I am sure she was much impressed by the distinguished consideration I showed her. The last time she mentioned that she was to give a party and, after I had informed her that only the very rarest attraction could induce me to attend a social entertainment of the kind, she invited me to come, and I accepted with a degree of eagerness. I flatter myself that the delicate compliment quite won her heart, for she smiled delightedly. Now that her thoughtless engagement to that young fellow, Jasper, is off, I see nothing to fear.

Clincher. Well, here she comes.

Enter Lizzie from house.

Lizzie. Why, Mr. Broad! (*Shaking hands.*) You did come, sure enough! I feel, oh, so highly flattered! Do walk in, Mr. Broad. Moses, show Mr. Broad to the gentlemen's room. (*Broad enters house.*) Mr. Clincher, why didn't you come in? Oh, I know what you are going to say—clothing! Bother how you're dressed, so long as we girls know it is dear old Mr. Clincher! But doesn't Mr. Broad look funny in a dress suit! Oh, I've had so much fun out of him, that he almost made me forget my troubles!

Clincher. Twenty Lawyer Broads, girl, could'nt make you forget that glorious boy Jasper.

Lizzie. Why not! But you are always right. If Mr. Broad could make me forget Jasper, I would love him.

Clincher. Then you would love two men at once.

Lizzie. What two?

Clincher. Lawyer Broad and Jasper.

Lizzie. But Jasper would be forgotten.

Clincher. Then you would love even forgotten Jasper.

Lizzie. I love to hear you talk, Mr. Clincher: but I hate—Jasper January—and I'll say so every chance I get.

Clincher. Your tongue may say so; but it will have a talking match with your heart.

Lizzie. And what will it say?

Clincher. Thump! Simply thump! thump! Thump-a-

ty-thump! Ha! ha! dont you think, my dear girl, to put down that warm, true love you still feel for Jasper. Ah, you don't know how miserable and lonely he is. Why, he can't help it, he is coming here to-night.

Lizzie. If he does I'll turn him away.

Clincher. But he comes only to peep in.

Lizzie. To peep in! That would be shameful! To peep like the little darkies—oh, don't let him do that, Mr. Clincher! But do come into the house, won't you?

Clincher. No. Run in to your company. Enjoy yourself, but do not forget that Jasper—

Lizzie. (*Holding her hands over her ears.*) No, no, no. I will hear no more! Mr. Clincher, I must look happy to-night, and therefore I must not think or feel at all. Good-night, Mr. Clincher, good-night. (*She re-enters house.*)

Clincher. Jasper is all right there. (*Dance-music within.*)

Jasper re-enters R. (*He crosses to threshold.*)

Jasper. (*Looking in.*) There she is, all smiles, surrounded by her guests in the midst of bright lights and music, whilst I—

Clincher. Whilst you, boy, are enjoying the very essence of true love—suspense. You missed it in your former hasty courtship.

Jasper. I'd give my life to have my arm around her waist again, to feel her heart responding to mine, oh to—who is that man dancing there with Lizzie? (*Pointing.*) That awkward but distinguished-looking steer!

Clincher. That is Lawyer Broad.

Jasper. Oh, yes, I see now! She's laughing and enjoying herself, as if she were not dancing over people's feelings and trampling on them! See him! Lizzie is trying to make him dance faster, and he hastens his steps like an elephant. It makes me sick to see him! I will not stand here and be a witness of my own humiliation! (*Continues to watch every movement.*)

Clincher. Poor boy! my heart bleeds for him! I'll get Rowan's letter and set everything right this very night. (*Exit R.*) (*Jasper retires slowly to R.*)

Enter Lizzie (*from house*).

Lizzie. (*Looking.*) I don't see Jasper. I wonder if he

is really here. I want to—I do so want to tell him to go away. It's too provoking he isn't here—he must go away! (*Jasper appears, unseen by Lizzie, at R. 3 E., but Broad enters from house and he hides behind bushes.*)

Broad. Miss Machen, I could not help following you to say you danced divinely. Did I waltz pleasingly?

Lizzie. Charmingly, Mr. Broad.

Broad. Ah, my dear Miss Machen, I thank you. In my early youth I did pride myself on my terpsichorean grace, but I feared I had become rude in the art from want of practice. It must be true of dancing as they say of skating and swimming, one's skill is never entirely lost.

Lizzie. I consider myself very fortunate in having you to dance at my party. (*Takes seat on rustic bench.*)

Broad. I enjoy it, especially with you.

Lizzie. You are very kind to say so. (*Aside; annoyed.*) I wonder what he means by following me here!

Broad. May I venture to sit on that bench with you, Miss Machen?

Lizzie. Certainly, Mr. Broad. (*Smiling.*) There is no other seat except the ground.

Broad. (*Seated.*) Many thanks. May I venture a little further, Miss Lizzie?

Lizzie. (*With a startled glance at his proximity.*) I do not know what you mean.

Broad. May I express my sentiments?

Lizzie. Oh! Of course, Mr. Broad.

Broad. Speaking of dancing just now, it occurred to me to say that with yours as its partner my heart would dance throughout a joyous existence.

Lizzie. (*Astonished.*) Why, Mr. Broad!

Broad. (*Eagerly, to retrieve the error.*) But remember, Miss Lizzie, I have not said it yet; I merely threw out the suggestion.

Lizzie. (*Amused.*) I'd rather you would not say it, Mr. Broad, for as I think the words over they gradually startle me. You are too sedate a gentleman to trifle.

Broad. I never trifle. Excuse me if in making my meaning clearer I speak with difficulty. I am sure you have observed that ever since I first saw you—

Lizzie. Mr. Broad, be careful. I shall lose respect for you if you say sentimental things.

Broad. I pledge you my character I was never more in earnest in my life. I would have spoken long ago except that I heard you were engaged.

Lizzie. Engaged?

Broad. Yes—to a Mr. February.

Lizzie. February?

Jasper. (*From hiding-place.*) February!

Lizzie. You mean Jasper January, perhaps. You are wrong; I hate him.

Broad. Then so do I.

Lizzie. (*With mock pleasure.*) You do! Oh, you touch my heart with your sympathy, Mr. Broad. (*Looks away from him.*)

Broad. (*Encouraged.*) Miss Lizzie, I wish to speak a few serious words to you.

Lizzie. (*Aside.*) I'll get rid of him at once and for good. (*Aloud, but not looking around.*) What is it about?

Broad. (*Sighing.*) Ah, words are stupid signs! It's about yourself. (*Jasper comes down behind settee, shaking his fist.*)

Lizzie. Then I am just dying to hear it; do go on, Mr. Broad.

Jasper. (*Aside.*) No he won't, either! (*He seizes Broad's head with his left hand and wrenches it violently towards left, and at the same instant bends down, quickly kisses Lizzie and withdraws. She screams, glances indignantly at Broad and slaps him loudly. She rises to left and he to right, with a slight collision.*)

Lizzie. (*Turning angrily.*) Mr. Broad, you are brutal, sir! I gave you no warrant to kiss—to insult me! (*Turns to go.*)

Broad. I'm surprised to find you such a rough tease.

Lizzie. (*Turning again.*) Tease! I should leave you instantly, but when you assert that I am angry to "tease" you after the gross indignity you have offered me—

Broad. Hold, Miss Machen, I beg of you! Your words and bearing are as bitter as if you were in earnest.

Lizzie. I let you know I am in earnest! (*Turns to go.*)

Broad. You are inimitably facetious.

Lizzie. (Once more turning and stamping with rage.)
Facetious!

Broad. Yes, Miss Machen; but really, I am a poor subject for your fun, for I allow nothing to worry or startle me. It is true that when you jerked my head around just now—

Lizzie. What!

Broad. I was considerably surprised at the weight of your arm—

Lizzie. I slapped you, sir! It was unladylike, but had my hand held a bolt of lightning it would have struck you when you dared to kiss me! (*Turns to go.*)

Broad. I did not kiss you, Miss Machen.

Lizzie. (*Turning back again.*) Do you dare deny it?

Broad. Most solemnly. You must have imagined that kiss.

Lizzie. Imagined a kiss! and from you? Oh, horrible! If you do not respect me, sir, you shall obey me. I am the mistress here, and I order you to leave my place.

Broad. Do I fully understand you to be in earnest?

Lizzie. You are stupid to ask such a question.

Broad. Well, then, I go without a particle of regret.
(*Exit R.*)

Lizzie. A perfect beast! I'm all in a tremble and must look like a fright! I can't go into the parlors as I am now.
(*Exit L.*)

Jasper. (*Looks after Broad.*) Good-bye, ha! ha!—a thoroughly rejected character he is! (*Looks into house.*)

Re-enter Lizzie L.

Lizzie. (*Seeing Jasper; aside.*) Jasper! What impudence! I'll not notice him! (*Turns back, then stops.*) No, I'll not run away as if I feared him. (*Faces audience and remains so throughout this scene.*)

Jasper. (*Seeing her; aside.*) The angel! I will speak to her! But what can I say to make her listen? (*Aloud, tenderly.*) Lizzie, do you know who it is that speaks?

Lizzie. (*Coldly.*) Oh, yes, I know you, who you are.

Jasper. You know my voice, then, changed as it is by sorrow?

Lizzie. I know your voice, changed as it is for some mischief.

Jasper. By sorrow, I swear it, *Lizzie*. Just turn and see what a wreck your cruelty has made of me,

Lizzie. I prefer that you turn and leave me. I have vowed never to look at you again.

Jasper. Would you be so heartless?

Lizzie. Do go. You detain me from my company.

Jasper. Am I not company?

Lizzie. Company I'd like to say good-bye to.

Jasper. And would you press me to call again?

Lizzie. I'd wish you good-speed—might no accident turn you back again.

Jasper. Then you really wish never to see me any more?

Lizzie. Exactly; that's what I said.

Jasper. And you wouldn't press me to call again?

Lizzie. I said I would not.

Jasper. And I am not company?

Lizzie. You are going back over the same ground.

Jasper. Oh, *Lizzie*, I want to carry you back with me, step by step, until we come again to those happy, happy times when—

Lizzie. (*Touched.*) *Jasper*, nothing could induce me ever to recognize you again—yes, one thing would.

Jasper. Oh, name it, *Lizzie*!

Lizzie. That you humbly beg the pardon of one you have wronged.

Jasper. Beg a pardon!

Lizzie. Yes, of Edward Ballou.

Jasper. But that's a very hard condition. (*Aside.*) I'd beg a million!

Lizzie. It is but right you should.

Jasper. But think what a thing begging a pardon is. (*As to an imaginary person.*) Pardon, sir, I, sir, with malice aforethought, knowing it to be wrong, sir, deliberately injured you, and now I come to say, sir, that since I am tired of the triumph or mirth I felt at the time, sir, forgive and forget, sir. Oh, I'd rather kill a man than beg his pardon! It is a terrible thing, *Lizzie*; but for your sake I'll do even that. And now?

Lizzie. And now—nothing. When you have done as I say, I'll—I'll acknowledge your existence. (*Aside.*) How I do love him after all! I dare not look at him now. Were I to do so I would just melt and swim to him! (*She retires to the door of the house slowly, in such a way as to avoid looking at him. He can hardly restrain himself from embracing her.*) (*Nervously.*) Don't you touch me! Don't you dare! Take care! Take care! (*Pausing at the door.*) Jasper, I will tell you good-night. (*After a short pause, without looking.*) Are you gone, without a word.

Jasper. No—no!

Lizzie. But you should go. (*Almost turns to him.*) Good-night. (*Enters house.*)

Jasper. She is gone, but she is yielding. I know now what it is to love. What can I do next? Let's see.

Sophy. (*Peeping into the house.*) Let's see!

Jasper. Why, Sophy, you black witch, what are you doing?

Sophy. Peepin' in, Mars Jasper. Jis seein' ther dresses—au, dey iz purty! an' dancin', au my! it are sweet! But dat Mars Lawyer Broad what wuz here, he can't dance, not wurf nothin'! Missis Lizzie maked on whut she doan' lub you, but she do, Mars Jasper.

Jasper. Have you heard her say so?

Sophy. No, sir, I ain't heared nothin'.

Jasper. Then how do you know?

Sophy. 'Cause—'cause—I knows it here. (*Putting her hand on her heart.*)

Jasper. And I know it here. (*Imitating her.*) One sympathetic thrill of instinct like that teaches one more of human nature than would years of study. But, Sophy, if she loves me, why does she treat me so eruelly?

Sophy. 'Cause she hates you.

Jasper. Hates me! She loves me, yet hates me. Explain that oracle, sphinx!

Sophy. Mars Jasper, you hab no provoke to call me names like dat.

Jasper. Why does she hate me?

Sophy. 'Cause you made Mars Edward cry.

Jasper. Cry! Did he cry?

Sophy. Not no wet cry; but he cried, an' I cried 'cause he did.

Jasper. Do you like your marster Edward?

Sophy. Yes, sir. Everybody likes Mars Edward.

Jasper. A nice choice for a villain! Does Martha like him?

Sophy. Yes, sir, she likes him, but she do not lub him, she lubs Mars Rowan. But, Lorsy Mercy, she doan' know it!

Jasper. Then how do you know it? (*She puts her hand to her heart.*) She knows everything by instinct. Experience is a humbug.

Enter Clincher R. (He looks greatly agitated, and Sophy stares at him; Jasper looks around.)

Jasper. Mr. Clincher, what has happened?

Clincher. I've just seen Mr. Edward, boy, and you'd better prepare for more trouble. I found the poor fellow pale, and distressed, and uncertain what to do. When he saw me he seized my arm with an admirable grip. "Do you come again for that letter?" he asked. "Yes," said I. "Then," he exclaimed, "your anxiety confirms the worst. Mr. Clincher," he hissed, "that letter means that Martha is in danger. A married man is seeking to marry her!" I argued with him in vain, boy. He is on his way here now to denounce Rowan. Can you explain that letter or not?

Jasper. No—no—no. But a letter from Fred Stone is due. The train has just passed. Moses! (*Moses appears.*) Jump on my horse there, and run him to the station. Get my mail and bring it here!

Moses. (Starting.) Yes, sir.

Clincher. And bring my Lexington paper, to-day's, with the races in it.

Moses. Yes, sir. (*Exit R.*) (*Clincher and Jasper follow Moses off.*)

Enter Martha and Rowan.

Rowan. Do you ever think, Martha, of our first meeting after my return; when I came upon you and Lizzie out in the woods-pasture?

Martha. Yes, I remember it.

Rowan. A singular meeting, wasn't it?

Martha. Yes, very unexpected, and Jasper behaved absurdly.

Rowan. I do not mean that. I refer to the way we greeted each other.

Martha. It piqued me that you did know me at first.

Rowan. I did know you; but you gave no sign of knowing me.

Martha. Why, I knew you instantly. (*They take seats.*)

Rowan. I knew you; you knew me. Yet we almost needed an introduction before we could speak to each other. Wasn't that singular?

Martha. So it was.

Rowan. What did it mean, Martha?

Martha. Why, I attach no particular meaning to it.

Rowan. I do. We had parted, six years before, with tears in our eyes, and our last words were vows of love. Isn't it so?

Martha. Yes.

Rowan. During those six years (*taking her hand*) I had treasured the love of our childhood day by day. Martha, look at me—had you?

Martha. Rowan, you change the subject. We were talking about that meeting in the woods-pasture.

Rowan. I do not change the subject (*offering to clasp her waist, from which she withdraws partially*). I had returned then, not dreaming of the changes in you, not appreciating the changes in myself perhaps. I thought to find that when we met again, those six years would be as a single day to the past in our love. I found you, not the young girl of my memory, but a beautiful woman—how could I greet you? No words, not even your name would have satisfied my heart. It prompted me then and still prompts me to clasp you in my arms (*clasping her passionately*) thus, Martha.

Martha. (*With an effort.*) Rowan, you have said too much.

Rowan. Martha, I have just begun.

Martha. I do not fancy such jesting as this, Rowan. (*Offering to escape.*)

Rowan. Then, seriously—

Martha. I should not listen—now. Let me go, please.

Rowan. Oh, answer me one question, Martha. (*She listens.*) May I judge your heart by mine?

Martha. Rowan, I will not answer. I do not know my mind or my heart, while you hold me so. I had no right to let you go so far. (*Struggling weakly to free herself.*)

Rowan. Why not, Martha?

Martha. Because I have been warned against you.

Rowan. (*Releasing her.*) (*Both rise.*) Warned against me?

Martha. Yes, Rowan. (*Starts off; then pauses.*)

Rowan. Warned against me—how?

Martha. I don't know what it means! (*Turns quickly and takes Rowan's outstretched hands.*) But, Rowan, I cannot and will not believe any evil of you! See! (*Throws herself into his arms.*) I trust you, Rowan, against the world.

Rowan. Because you love me as I love you?

Martha. Yes. (*Sobs.*)

Enter Edward R. 3 E.

Edward. (*Aside.*) It is a cruel fate to have to make her miserable now, to tell her she loves a villain! (*Aloud.*) Martha!

Martha. (*Springing from Rowan's side.*) Edward!

Edward. (*Hesitating.*) Martha—

Martha. (*Returning to Rowan, with a reliant air.*) Edward, perhaps it is well you saw what you did, for—

Edward. I know what you would say. You are glad I have actually seen how hopeless was my love. I have known it from the beginning. But I came here, as a duty, to tell you of your peril.

Martha. Edward, what do you mean?

Edward. I mean Mr. Dilland there.

Rowan. And what of me?

Edward. Why, this of you! (*Producing the letter.*) Look at this! (*Rowan does so.*) Do you know it?

Rowan. What's this—my letter?

Edward. The writing is yours.

Rowan. Yes, it is, and I see written on your face—thief!

Edward. (*Restraining himself.*) And your face is too true for such a blackened heart! Martha—

Rowan. Give me that letter—'tis mine.

Edward. It was yours. So was your perfidy whilst you could keep it hid!

Martha. Oh, Edward! Rowan! Say no more now! Run, Sophy, tell mother and Lizzie to come!

Exit Sophy.

Rowan. (*To Edward.*) To do you justice, I ought to throttle you! If you attempt to read that letter, I will.

Edward. Read it! No. Martha, I respect you too much to read it before you. But, think the worst a letter can prove, and then you will not know how utterly unworthy of you that man is!

Martha. Oh, Edward, you do not know what you are saying!

Rowan. Martha, look at me—it is a lie!

Agnes. (*Appearing from the door.*) It is no lie!

Edward. (*Approaching Rowan.*) A lie! You dare to say it is a lie!

Rowan. (*Rushing upon him.*) Yes—yes. And I will make you own it too! (*Martha screams and throws herself between them.*)

(*Mrs. Estill, Clincher, Lizzie, Jasper and Sophy appear.*)

Mrs. Estill. Martha, my child, what is the matter? Jasper, you have been the cause of all the trouble. Explain this wretched scene. (*Jasper looks from one to another in dumb distress.*)

Rowan. No, Mrs. Estill, it is my place to explain it. It is no secret from you that I love Martha and she loves me. This man, too, has asked her hand, and now he tries to make her doubt me. His motive is plain—

Edward. Never mind my motives, sir. Explain this letter away if you can. It is true, I dared to love Martha, but I will triumph in her happiness wherever she may find it—with you, if you prove yourself worthy of her. If not, you shall never have her. Explain that letter.

Rowan. Are you done? Well, never fear, I will explain it; and then prepare yourself to answer how you got it, sir!

Jasper. (*Stepping forward with great determination.*) He got it from me!

All. Sh! Sh!

Jasper. I will speak! I am responsible for the whole trouble, and I will make a clean breast of it!

Rowan. (*To Jasper.*) Be silent! I have no faith in anything you say! I'll speak for myself!

Clincher. Rowan, boy, be calm. Give Jasper a chance. Take the word of old Clincher who loves you all, the boy knows it all and will set you right. (*To Jasper.*) Say something quick and to the point!

Jasper. They won't listen to me!

Clincher. They are waiting.

Jasper. But I don't know what the letter means! (*With sudden hope.*) Yes! Yes! I can explain! I hear my horse's hoofs! Listen, all of you, don't you hear him on the pike? It is Moses with the letter! From Fred Stone, Rowan! There he is! Run Sophy, hold the horse! Here, Moses, here!

Enter Moses.

Moses. Mars Jasper, here am one! (*Hands Jasper a letter.*) Mars Clincher, here am one! (*Hands Clincher a paper.*)

Jasper. (*Breaking open the letter.*) Fred Stone! Listen to me, all of you. (*Opens letter and reads.*) "Jasper January, Esq. Dear Sir: Your extraordinary letter has reached me. Evidently Rowan's illness—"

Rowan. What illness? What is this new nonsense?

Clincher. Be patient, Rowan, boy. Wait just a little.

Jasper. (*Reading.*) "Evidently Rowan's illness began with the brain fever—"

Rowan. Brain fever! Jasper, if you dare read another line—

Clincher. Listen, Rowan, listen. You are innocent, I know it. That letter saves you from an explanation that would seem absurd, perhaps, however true.

Jasper. (*Reading.*) "Evidently Rowan's illness began with the brain fever. That is the only way in which I can account for your queer mistake in speaking of that girl Stella as his wife."

Rowan. What is all this? I demand to know before it goes any further! Am I listening to a lunatic?

Clincher. No, boy. Only a novelist.

Jasper. (*Reading.*) "Stella is only a—" ha! ha! Mr.

Edward, all of you, who do you suppose that girl Stella was? (*Reads.*) "Stella is only a character in a novel that Rowan and I are trying to write."

Clincher. Ha! ha! Rowan, I'm ashamed of you—to write novels! You deserved to get into trouble! Why even Jasper blushes for you! But it is all clear now—away with jealousies, accusations, explanations, and every other kind of bother! Why even old Mr. Clincher has something cheerful to say! Fire Fly ran his preliminary race at Lexington yesterday—here it is! (*Holding up the paper.*) But what's the use to read it! I can actually see it! You all know what he looks like and what a starter he is—how he jumps away surprisingly, like a rabbit from his form! Away they go, and there he is, ten lengths ahead, just tipping the top dust, his head pulled double passing the quarter! Easily, easily, swiftly he leads them by far at the half! Easily, easily, leading them splendidly, jumpety, jumpety, dancing on quietly all through the third! Look how they straggle and string into fragments rounding the last curve! But see! they are bunching, and all come together down the broad home-stretch! Who leads? Is Fire Fly there? Fire Fly! Fire Fly! (*Fumbling the paper.*) Shame! What is that jockey boy doing to him—whipping Fire Fly! Confound the dust, I can't see the finish! Did he win? (*Runs his eyes over the paper.*) What's this? It is not true! Fire Fly is broken down! (*Reels.*)

Mrs. Estill. (*Going to Clincher.*) Dear Mr. Clincher, take heart! Things are not so bad.

Clincher. (*Despairingly.*) Yes, yes, Mrs. Estill, things are gone to ruin—Fire Fly has lost!

Mrs. Estill. But that's nothing—a mere trifle.

Clincher. (*To Mrs. Estill.*) But those accounts—the accounts. I am disgraced.

Mrs. Estill. Your accounts are all right.

Clincher. Eh?

Mrs. Estill. Edward has found your error. The balance is in your favor. Edward, tell him.

Edward. Mr. Clincher, did you know the law allows you a commission on the moneys handled?

Clincher. (*Proudly.*) Yes, I know the law. But do you

think I would charge commissions against that girl—the orphan daughter of Colonel Robert Machen?

Lizzie. And do you think the daughter of Colonel Robert Machen would take the money earned by old Mr. Clincher! Mrs. Estill has explained matters to me. Not a dollar of that money belongs to me, and do you think you could force it on me?

Clincher. No; I'm afraid not, girl. It is gone.

Lizzie. And I'm glad of it. It went for the honor of Bluegrass County.

Clincher. Ah, that's the talk, girl! That makes it seem all right. Thank you, Mr. Edward, thank you. (*Shaking hands with him.*) Thank Heaven, I know every man in Bluegrass now, and love them all.

Jasper. (*Who has been puzzling over Fred Stone's letter.*) See here, Rowan, explain this to me. Fred Stone says in his letter—

Clincher. Be patient, Jasper, till I have given a little advice. Take it, all of you, and be happy. Rowan, I advise you to marry Martha (*joining their hands*), and Martha, you had better marry him. Lizzie, you have your guardian's consent to marry Jasper; you are the best loved girl in Bluegrass. That's right, give him your hand. (*Jasper kisses her.*) Ha! ha! There's no humbug in it now. Mr. Edward, your hand (*takes it*), and Agnes, yours (*takes it*). I'll not stand between you long. Sophy! Moses! What's the matter with you two?

Moses. Mars Jasper sed whut we mus' kiss all ther time.

Sophy. 'An we hate kissin'.

Jasper. Clear out! I'll give you the things I promised.

Moses. 'An no more kissin'?

Jasper. Not a kiss.

Moses. { Oh, Sophy. }
Sophy. { Oh, Moses. } (*They kiss.*)

Jasper. Hello! You've done it, after all!

Sophy. But we nebber counted it, Mars Jasper.

Clincher. Ah, Jasper, the counted kisses are the humbug ones!

Jasper. Rowan, explain this letter to me, and we will all let by-gones be by-gones. Fred Stone says (*reading*),

“Your letter has been so suggestive of complications in our story, that I have substituted your name for that of Stella’s husband.” Now tell me, what sort of a fellow is Stella’s husband?

Rowan. A cruel, thieving, deep-dyed villain.

Jasper. I knew it, Mr. Clincher! I knew I was making myself the villain of all the novels in Christendom!

Rowan.

Martha.

Edward.

Lizzie.

} What are you talking about?

Jasper. (*To audience.*) See! My characters are exactly like those of the books—they know nothing of what has been done with them. Ah, could the characters of all incapable novelists turn against them, as mine have risen in their might against me—well, there would be few novelists left to tell a tale.

CURTAIN.



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