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THE REFORMERS REFORMED

A Comedy in Four Short Acts

BY

ELIZABETH GALE

AUTHOR OF "AUNT MAGGIE'S WILL," "THE RAG CARPET
BEE," ETC.

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SYNOPSIS.

ALICE ROSS, having quarreled with her sweetheart, founds the Progressive Philanthropists Club which enthusiastically begins to uplift humanity. In order to carry out their idea of coming in touch with all classes the club girls take positions as house maids. This, together with some of their other missionary work, quickly involve them in such difficulties that the club is disbanded, the reformers are reformed and Alice and her lover are happily reunited.

LIST OF CHARACTERS.

ALICE ROSS. .*Founder and president of the Progressive Philanthropists Club*

MAY
JUNE
ROSE
HELEN
EDYTH
OLIVE
FLOSSIE
BARBARA }*Members of the club*

LUCY (MRS. ROWLAND) . .*A practical young married woman*

MRS. MILLS
MRS. HUNTER } *Friends of the girls*
MRS. DALFORTH }

JULIA *A maid*
BRIDGET *Another maid*
MRS. SCHULTZ *The mother of a poor child*
MRS. WEST *An experienced reformer from the
limited field of Hicksville*

ACT I. *Room in home of Alice Ross.*

ACT II. *The same.*

ACT III. *Mrs. Millington Mills' Drawing room.*

ACT IV. *Dining Room in Alice's House.*

THE REFORMERS REFORMED

ACT I.

SCENE:—*A room in the home of ALICE ROSS. It is the time for the meeting of the Progressive Philanthropists Club and five of the members, ALICE, MAY, JUNE, and HELEN are already there and are standing and sitting about talking. Chairs are placed for ten and at the extreme left there is a small table. To the right and rear of the room is a door.*

ALICE. (*taking her place behind the table*) I am going to call the meeting to order. There are five of us here and that's a quorum. I think we have waited long enough for the others, don't you?

HELEN. Oh, I think so. The afternoon will be gone and we won't have a thing done if we don't start soon.

ALICE. (*rapping with her pencil on the table*) Well, then, I call the meeting to order.

MAY. (*passing it*) Have some candy before the meeting starts.

HELEN. This is delicious. Where did you get it, Candy Kitchen?

ROSE. They have the best chocolate cream peppermints I have ever tasted.

ALICE. (*with dignity*) The meeting will please come to order and the question before the meeting is——

JUNE. (*rising*) I beg your pardon, Miss Presi-

dent, but we should begin by reading the minutes of the last meeting.

ALICE. Oh, pardon *me*. I forgot. We will have the minutes of the last meeting.

MAY. But the secretary has not come, how can we?

ALICE. That's so. Well, the treasurer can read her report.

HELEN. What's the use when there is no secretary to take down what she says? There is really no use in having a meeting without a secretary to keep track of what we do.

(Enter EDYTH and OLIVE who carry a large book, the minutes of the club.)

EDYTH. Hello, girls!

ALL. Hello, Edyth! Hello, Olive!

OLIVE. Hello, everybody! I am awfully sorry to be so late but I really couldn't help it.

ALICE. As soon as you can, Olive, please read the minutes. We are waiting for them. You have just come in time to save the meeting.

OLIVE. *(seating herself and opening the book)* Just as soon as I find my place. Here it is. *(reading)* The minutes of the Progressive Philanthropists Club. Last Thursday afternoon the first meeting was held at the home of Helen Drew and it was decided not to put the Fijii islanders on our list for the present but to devote ourselves to charities nearer home. A missionary box was packed and—*(dropping her book and scrambling for it)* Girls, you have no idea how nervous I get when I read these minutes. Gracious! I feel as if I were addressing a whole senate or congress or something.

EDYTH. You flatter us.

OLIVE. *(reading)* A mission box was packed and

sent to Hicksville, a lonely little country settlement, with the hope that it might bring a breath of city life and culture to these solitary denizens of the plains.

MAY. }
ROSE. } Fine!

EDYTH. How could you think to say all of that!

ALICE. You see I knew what I was doing when I appointed Olive secretary. But to get back to business. Ladies, you have heard the minutes of the last meeting. Are there any objections?

HELEN. (*rising*) Yes. I think she ought to give the date instead of just saying *last Thursday*.

ALICE. Oh, you are too particular. Everybody knows when last Thursday was. There are no objections so the minutes stand approved and we will hear the treasurer's report.

ROSE. (*studying her book with a puzzled expression and speaking very deliberately*) At the last meeting we had three dollars and twenty-five cents. At this meeting, if you all pay your dues, we will have (*counting on her fingers*) f-four—fifteen.

ALICE. That is all right, I am sure. There are no objections to that so we will go on with the question which is: Does the Ethical aspect of—

EDYTH. Oh, bother the ethical aspects! Let us get to work and sew, and while we are sewing we can talk about something interesting. Say, did you know that Maud Ellis has another new hat?

ALL. Another one!

EDYTH. Yes, and it's trimmed with cerese. Imagine her in cerese. I tried to persuade her to get blue but she just wouldn't.

(*Enter FLOSSIE.*)

ALL. Hello, Flossie!

ALICE. Did you bring your sewing?

FLOSSIE. Yes, of course I did. But, Alice, you didn't say how old it was, you just said come and sew for a poor child, so I took it for granted that it was a boy and I am crocheting him this—(*holding up a gay tie*) See. All boys wear neckties, you know.

ALICE. Y-yes, of course they do.

OLIVE. Oh, I thought it was a baby so I am making it this. (*she holds up a little dress*) Isn't it pretty?

ALICE. Oh, that is darling!

EDYTH. Oh, isn't that sweet!

FLOSSIE. The dainty little thing!

JUNE. Why, isn't that funny! When you didn't say how old it was I took it for granted that it was a girl about fourteen and I am making this jabot. You know all girls like fussy, lacy things.

MAY. And I am making this collar to go with it.

HELEN. I thought it was a girl too, but a little one, so I am making it this embroidered sunbonnet.

ROSE. And I thought it might be a girl of about ten so I am making this little petticoat for it. Isn't it cute?

ALICE. Dear me! This is rather confusing.

OLIVE. How old is it, Alice?

ALICE. Why, really, I don't know. I never thought to ask. I just took it for granted that it was a boy and about six years old so I am making it the dearest little pair of blue lingerie pants. (*taking them from her work-basket*) Aren't they cunning? And you know they will be so lovely and cool for the poor child this summer.

OLIVE. (*with a gesture that includes each garment*) Yes, but fancy any one child wearing all of this at once.

ALICE. Still, Olive, not knowing anything about

the child, I could scarcely have planned things better, for no matter what it is it will have something to wear.

(*Enter BARBARA.*)

BARBARA. Oh, girls, see what I have brought for the poor child! A rattle (*shaking it*) and a tin horn! (*she blows it*) Isn't that great? I'd like to keep it myself. There was no use in my trying to sew anything for I just simply couldn't. And anyway, any child would like these better than clothes. (*she tries them again*)

ALL. Gracious! Stop.

(*Enter MRS. ROBERT ROWLAND.*)

ALL. (*rising and taking turns in embracing her*)
Lucy!

ALICE. I am so glad to see you, dear.

OLIVE. It certainly is good to get a glimpse of you again.

ROSE. Since you have been married we scarcely ever see you.

LUCY. Oh, girls, I am glad to see you, too, but please don't smother me.

ALICE. Take this comfortable chair.

BARBARA. How are your apple-trees, honey?

EDYTH. Yes, how did you manage to tear yourself away from that fascinating wilderness of a place that you live in.

LUCY. Wilderness indeed! You ought to see how perfectly beautiful the country is now, why——

ROSE. We know how lovely it is. You have told us dozens of times.

LUCY. Have I? And it seems to have been breath wasted; you don't appreciate it yet. But tell

me what you are doing. I hear that your latest fad is philanthropy.

ALL. Fad! The idea!

ALICE. (*loftily*) We are earnestly endeavoring to uplift humanity. This is the Progressive Philanthropists Club.

LUCY. That sounds interesting. What have you done?

ALICE. We are just beginning the work. We have sent a mission box and are now preparing a wardrobe for a poor child.

LUCY. You mean that you are sewing for poor children.

ALICE. No, a poor child.

LUCY. Are all of these things for the same baby? Why, it must be a regular dime museum freak.

MAY. Oh, Lucy, aren't you mean!

EDYTH. I don't believe you have a spark of human feeling.

LUCY. Oh, but I have, and that is why I am so interested in the poor, queer little thing.

ALICE. You don't understand, Lucy.

LUCY. (*with a sigh*) No, I suppose I don't. I never could keep up with you; you have such an original way of doing things.

ALICE. It is not nice of you to make fun of us, Lucy, and when I explain——

LUCY. Oh, don't try to explain. I am far too practical to ever grasp your theories. But I really didn't mean to make fun of you and to prove it I will tell you that I came to see you to-day in regard to the philanthropic work you have taken up. I thought you would be dealing with all sorts of people and might know of some one I could get for a maid.

ALICE. W-well, you see we are just starting the work and have not yet come in contact with many people.

JUNE. I don't see how it is that people who keep house are always having trouble with your maids.

LUCY. (*with an air of great superiority*) When you have kept house, as I have, for two years, you will see a great many things you do not seem to see now.

ALICE. I never intend to keep house. I have chosen a broader field for my work.

LUCY. Meaning?

ALICE. Meaning the world. I shall never confine my efforts within the four walls of a home. All classes, all ages, all races shall in some way be touched and uplifted by what I do.

LUCY. But even a great work such as this can have its foundation in a home. And besides, what have you done with Billy? I thought you were going to marry him.

ALICE. Oh, that was broken off nearly two weeks ago. Billy is a good boy in his way but he is far too narrow minded for me. I tried to interest him in this work but he said such uncomplimentary things that we simply had to part. (*by way of changing the conversation*) Will you have some candy?

LUCY. (*taking one*) Thank you. (*sighing*) Poor Billy.

ROSE. We all feel very much as Alice does about the work, but she has the ideas and plans things for us to do.

LUCY. If you would all get together some fine day and plan a way for us surburbanites to solve the servant problem we should be eternally obliged to you.

ALICE. I have an idea now. A splendid scheme. I will be a servant for a time. I will take a position, in your village, if you like, and by my example of industry and cheerfulness as well as my conversation will uplift the servant class to an appreciation of the nobility of their work and the special privileges it offers.

LUCY. (*laughing*) I can find you a place if you want it.

ALICE. (*eagerly*) And will you, really?

LUCY. You don't mean it!

ALICE. Indeed I do.

LUCY. You are crazy, Alice. You have never done a stroke of housework in your life.

ALICE. But I can and it would bring me into closer sympathy with one class of people whom I would help.

BARBARA. So can I work. Only last Tuesday I dusted the parlor and I wish you would find me a place, too.

JUNE. I think it would be a good plan for us all to have a little practical experience.

LUCY. On second thought I do, too. Some one would be sure to learn something through it, and if you are sure you want to do it, there will be no trouble in finding you places. Let me see. There are one, two, three, four, five, six, eight, nine of you.

FLOSSIE. Oh, no. I didn't say anything. I am not going. Why, I'd *die* if I ever put my hands into a pan of dirty dishwater.

LUCY. You certainly would if you were in my house. I insist on having the dishwater *clean*.

HELEN. So you will find us all places? When shall we come?

LUCY. (*rising*) To-morrow, if you can get ready by that time, on the train leaving the city at two-thirty. I will meet you at the station and see that you meet your several mistresses safely. In the meantime I will go to an intelligence office and look for a maid for myself. Of course I would love to have one of you but think you would have better experience with strangers.

ROSE. Of course. And what a lark it is going to be!

MAY. We shall have no end of fun. Alice, you are a genius. No one but you could have thought of such a unique thing to do.

LUCY. Yes, Alice, you have outdone yourself in this. But I must go. There is always so much to attend to when one runs into the city for a day. Good-by, girls. And you will not fail me to-morrow?

ALL. Of course we won't. Good-by.

LUCY. Good-by. (*exit*)

OLIVE. Isn't this perfectly splendid! It gives us such an opportunity to—er—er——

HELEN. Yes, doesn't it?

FLOSSIE. I wish I dared go with you.

ALICE. Have you all finished your sewing?

ALL. I have. I have.

ALICE. Then we will pack and send the poor child's bundle and get ready for our next venture in the way of usefulness. (*they fold and pack their sewing into a pasteboard box or brown paper parcel, talking as they work*)

JUNE. The first thing I am going to teach the maids is not to talk about their mistresses.

OLIVE. Isn't it a perfect shame the way they gossip. Two of them never meet for a moment without saying the most dreadful things about the people for whom they work.

ALICE. Yes, and we must show them—tactfully, of course—that it is a very dishonorable thing to do.

HELEN. And they are so untidy. I am going to set them an example of neatness. Here, Alice, don't forget my little sunbonnet.

ROSE. And maids are usually so stupid.

ALICE. Oh, girls! I am afraid that——

ALL. What?

ALICE. I am afraid that when these housekeepers find what it is to have really intelligent girls to help them they will never let us go.

CURTAIN.

ACT II.

SCENE:—*Same as first act but the time is a week later. As the curtain rises all of the club girls except BARBARA and FLOSSIE come in dressed in long coats and carrying suitcases and satchels. Beneath their coats they wear simple black dresses and some of them still have on their little white caps under their hats; while others have not stopped to take off their white aprons.*

ALICE. (*throwing down her bag*) If I were not so utterly and thoroughly indignant I would cry.

MAY. (*dropping into a chair*) Gracious! I am nearly dead. It was trot, trot, trot, from morning until night.

JUNE. With me it was scold, scold, scold. I never could have believed that any human being could have such a disposition as that Mrs. Harris had. And her voice! (*shuddering*) I can hear it yet.

(*They all take off their hats and coats and one by one find chairs.*)

OLIVE. If you think you had a hard time just look at me. I believe I have lost ten pounds this week. Why, I didn't get half enough to eat. I never saw such stingy people.

MAY. Salt fish and baked beans—that was my diet.

HELEN. I didn't mind what I had to eat, but to be called untidy and made to fix my hair like this. (*displaying a very sleek head of hair*) That was just t-too much. (*she weeps*)

ROSE. And I was called a blockhead.

ALICE. (*weeping*) And I was told not to flirt with the butcher's boy. Imagine *me* doing such a thing.

JUNE. You worked for Mrs. Black, didn't you? Well, she wasn't a circumstance to my mistress.

ALICE. I don't see how she could be worse. S-she called me a *f-fool*. Such language for people who call themselves cultured!

MAY. I wouldn't care what such people said. I would feel myself too far above them to be hurt by their rudeness.

ALICE. That's all very well to say, b-but to have your best intentions s-snubbed and treated as mine were—I just can't b-bear to think of it. Boo-hoo-hoo!

HELEN. I know just how you feel. Boo-hoo-hoo-hoo!

EDYTH. Well, it is all over now and I am not going to cry about it. I'd cry though if I had to go back. Just see my hands. They are all callous from working so hard, and still I was called lazy.

MAY. Lazy! That's nothing, I was called an idiot. But it did not disturb me any, I thought I knew more than my mistress. Did you ever in your life see such clothes as she wore? All of the maids in the place dressed better than she did.

JUNE. And weren't you lonely? Not a soul to speak to from morning till night!

OLIVE. I talked to the cook, and I believe I taught her something, too.

ROSE. I believe you did. She left on the same train that we did.

JUNE. A new idea spreads quickly in a place like that. Every maid in the village has either left or given notice.

EDYTH. Some of the mistresses did not seem to appreciate the new ideas, I understand, and gave the

maids notice. They said they had grown too impertinent and independant to be of any use.

MAY. They certainly were a narrow minded lot. I gave the cook a novel to read and she, being a really intelligent girl, became so interested in it that she burned up the dinner. And you should have heard the fuss that was made about it! Mrs. Addington did not seem to realize that culture is far more important than cooking.

HELEN. What do you suppose Lucy will say? She will never forgive us. She will think we made things worse instead of better.

MAY. I don't care what Lucy says or thinks. We tried to do our duty and that is enough for us to with whom we had to deal were not capable of appreciating our grade of intelligence.

OLIVE. Let us strike them off our charity list and put the Figii Islanders on.
know.

ALICE. (*drying her eyes*) Yes. We tried to do our duty to both maids and mistresses but the people

EDYTH. Yes, long distance charity connections are most satisfactory after all.

OLIVE. Just as it is easier to scold the butcher over the phone than over the counter.

HELEN. And I just love to pack missionary boxes.

MAY. And that sort of people is apt to be more appreciative than—housekeepers, for instance.

ROSE. And I have a beautifully illustrated volume of Tennyson's poems that I will put in the box. I have read most of it.

(*Enter BARBARA.*)

ALL. Barbara!

BARBARA. (*throwing down her satchel*) Oh, oh, oh, oh! I am perfectly furious! And I am so mortified.

ALL. What kept you?

BARBARA. What kept me! That wretched woman kept me. Oh, I can scarcely believe that anyone could do such a thing! Just as I was leaving she missed her gold thimble and she would not let me go until she had found it. Suspected *me* of taking it.

ALL. You!

ALICE. (*rising and resuming her usual superior air*) These are the things that philanthropists must expect. We have had our troubles too, Barbara, but we have borne them courageously. (*she goes to the table and examines the mail that has accumulated during the week*)

HELEN. When you hear the horrible details of our experience you will gasp. But we have not complained.

BARBARA. Oh, I am not complaining. I can stand it as long as you can. But it makes me *mad* just the same.

ALICE. (*enthusiastically as she looks up from a letter she is reading*) Mrs. Millington Mills is giving us a bridge party. The whole club is invited.

ALL. Oh, good!

ALICE. We have come home just in time for it.

JUNE. (*looking over her shoulder*) But it is to be at the time for our next club meeting. We surely can't let a card party interfere with our philanthropic work.

EDYTH. Oh, let's forget philanthropy for a while. Haven't you worked hard enough this week? I feel as if I needed a whole year's vacation.

ALICE. It will not do us any harm to take a little pleasure.

MAY. And I think I shall wear my blue——

(*Enter FLOSSIE.*)

FLOSSIE. (*embracing each in turn*) Oh, you dear,

brave, darlings girls! So you are home again! I must kiss you all. Is it your day off? On what train are you going back?

ALICE. We are not going back at all.

FLOSSIE. You are not going back! I thought you were going to stay six months.

ALICE. In a week we have accomplished all we need to for the present and now we are going to a card party.

CURTAIN.

ACT III.

SCENE:—MRS. MILLINGTON MILLS' *drawing room.*

The club girls and two other guests, MRS. DALFORTH and MRS. HUNTER, are seated about three card tables. At the most prominent table MRS. MILLS and ALICE, FLOSSIE and JUNE are playing. At the second table are MRS. DALFORTH and BARBARA, HELEN and EDYTH; and at the third, MRS. HUNTER and ROSE, OLIVE and MAY. A door leads from the rear of the room into the hall and at the left is another door through which the maids enter.

FLOSSIE. (*studying her cards*) You dealt this hand, didn't you, June? So that makes me the dummy. Can the dummy bridge it?

MRS. MILLS. Oh, no, Flossie, dear. And you must not show your hand until the trump has been made and the first card lead.

FLOSSIE. Oh, yes. I remember now. And as soon as I lay down my hand my only duty is to talk to you while you play. I love to be a dummy.

EDYTH. Tell me, please, are you playing with the left bower?

MRS. DALFORTH. There are never any bowers in whist.

EDYTH. That's so, and you don't use the joker either, do you?

HELEN. Oh, Edyth, you have trumped my ace! Don't you know that is high card?

EDYTH. That is all right; I wanted to be sure of the trick.

MRS. DALFORTH. You have lost a trick that way.

EDYTH. I don't see how. I took it, didn't I?

MRS. HUNTER. Well partner, shall I play to a club?

ROSE. Pray do. That is the one thing I am sure of in this game. I know just when to say that.

MRS. MILLS. When we have finished playing, Alice, I want you to tell me all about this new club of yours. Your last venture, I hear, was something quite unique.

FLOSSIE. They took positions as real servants. Weren't they courageous?

ALICE. (*warming under the praise*) The hardships we endured were nothing compared with what we accomplished. We instilled into the minds of the maids a few ideas of their rightful independence.

MRS. MILLS. Why, I thought your object was to make them more contented with their present lot and bring about harmony between mistress and maid.

ALICE. (*loftily*) When we were dealing with actual conditions we did the work we saw before us unflinchingly.

MRS. MILLS. Weren't you rather ambitious to take up such a complex problem to start with?

ALICE. We do not mean to shirk any phase of our duty.

(*Enter JULIA at left.*)

JULIA. (*to Mrs. MILLS*) Please, m'am, there is a woman—(*seeing ALICE*) Why, hello, Alice!

ALICE. (*rising in confusion*) What! You here!

JULIA. (*coming forward confidently and leaning on the table as she talks*) Sure I am. Came this morning. Say, you must have a swell job! And you landed it quick for a greenhorn.

ALICE. (*with dignity*) Really, Julia, I think you do not quite understand.

JULIA. Hey?

ALICE. I am not really a servant at all as you have been led to believe.

JULIA. Well, if you ain't now you was once, and a fierce one at that. You needn't put on any airs with me. Who was it that showed you how to make a bed and dust a room? Hey?

ALICE. Oh, Julia! how can you speak in that way after all I have tried to do for you. After all I have taught you!

JULIA. Done for me! Taught me! I like your nerve. You were the biggest nuisance that I ever struck in the five years I have been out to service. Always standin' around gabbin' about our "noble calling," and "respecting our rights." If you want it straight from me, we all thought you was a little cracked.

MRS. MILLS. Julia, you are insulting one of my guests. You will kindly leave the room.

JULIA. Sure I will, and I'll leave the house too if she is goin' to be comin' here. I've had all I can stand of her. (*straightening herself up and imitating ALICE'S superior air*) And I feel myself far above the level of your rebukes. (*she leaves the room with great dignity*)

(*She leaves the room with great dignity.*)

ALICE. I have never met with such wretched ingratitude.

MRS. MILLS. I am shocked beyond words.

MRS. DALFORTH. I never heard of such a thing.

MRS. HUNTER. I am sure I do not know what we are coming to.

(*Enter BRIDGET at left.*)

BRIDGET. Plaise, m'am, there is a woman waitin' to see ye fer the last half hour. Can she come in now? (*glancing about at the girls*) Begorra, now! Is it me own eyes that sees it! There's Nellie and Eidie and Barbara and—(*embracing her*) June. Lord love yer swait, innocent face. And phat a lady ye are! Ye're most as fine as the misses herself! It's glad I am to see ye so grand, but do ye mind the times we had in the kitchen together?

MRS. MILLS. Bridget, these ladies are my guests. I can not allow you to talk to them in this way. What does it mean?

BRIDGET. It mains, m'am, that we are auld friends and all had jobs in the same town. (*coming forward and winking confidentially at MRS. MILLS*) There's many a tale I could tell you, m'am, about the times we had.

MRS. MILLS. Bridget, you may go.

BRIDGET. Yis, ma'am, but wan minute till I tell ye about the neighbor's hen that got into the kitchen—

MRS. MILLS. You may go, Bridget. I can't listen to it now.

BRIDGET. (*as she moves toward the door*) Arra, m'am if ye could have seen the way she chased it out. Ha-ha-ha! I nearly kilt meself laughin'. And if ye could have seen her scrub the floor, ma'm! And if ye could have tried to ate her buscuits! Ha-ha!

MRS. MILLS. Bridget, leave the room!

BRIDGET. Yis, m'am. Ha-ha-ha-ha—(*exit*)

ALICE. Isn't this dreadful

HELEN. But we have done with them now. You know, Mrs. Mills, we have decided to confine our efforts to the sending of missionary boxes.

OLIVE. And we hope that our work in that direction will be better appreciated.

MRS. MILLS. I certainly hope it will. But let us go on with the game and try to forget this unfortunate interruption. I am so sorry about it, but we must not let it spoil the afternoon. It is my deal, isn't it? (*she begins to deal*)

MRS. DALFORTH. It is a perfect outrage.

MRS. HUNTER. I never heard of anything like it. I am sure I don't know what we are coming to. (*they all begin to play*)

(*Enter MRS. SCHULTZ at rear.*)

MRS. SCHULTZ. I vas tinkin' I should never find yer, I vas so long gittin' here. Phew! I ain't got no vind no more I talked so hard mit dot gal dot wouldn't let me in.

ALL. Gracious!

MRS. MILLS. And I think, my good woman, that you are in the wrong place now.

MRS. SCHULTZ. No, I ain't. I vas lookin' for a ladies president dot send me a bundle once already, und she iss here. I know dot all right.

JUNE. She means you, Alice.

MRS. SCHULTZ. (*coming over to ALICE and putting her bundle on the card table*) Should you be dot ladies president.

ALICE. (*weakly*) Y-yes.

MRS. SCHULTZ. (*as she unties her bundle*) I vas to vash to-day already fur Mrs. O'Shea but I puts her off by der next goot day vile I comes here and talks mit you to der face.

ALICE. That was good of you.

MRS. SCHULTZ. V-vell, I don't know how goot it iss. See! (*she spreads out the clothes the girls have sent*) I gets already some dings fur mine schild. Look once und guess vat iss mine schild like, huh? Vat you tink, huh? I ain't got so much to say, but one ding dot I wants to ask you iss:—Don't yer like how mine schild looks, huh? Und I should say, ven you don't like how he looks, I puts mine own clothes on mine own schild und it ain't no body's peesness vat dem clothes iss. Und I should say shust one ding more—mind your own peesness und don't send me no more ruffles bants. *So!*

(*Exit MRS. SCHULTZ.*)

ALICE. (*weeping*) Oh, this is too much!

MRS. MILLS. There, dear, don't feel so bad about it. You meant well.

OLIVE. I am sure it was not your fault that she did not like the pretty things we sent. But I shall never forgive her for hurting your feelings.

ALICE. I am not c-crying about myself. I weep to think that she did not even know enough to take advantage of her opportunity to better herself.

(*Enter at the rear door MRS. WEST.*)

MRS. WEST. (*loudly*) So here you are, are you?

ALL. Gracious! Mercy! Oh!

MRS. WEST. Your hired girl did not seem to understand what I was talking about, or else she didn't care. I thought for a minute that I was in the wrong place, but I see I ain't. This looks all of a piece with the other business. What new kind of foolishness is this that you are up to, hey?

MRS. MILLS. I am giving a bridge party. Did you wish to see me?

MRS. WEST. Mn-m-m. I don't know. I am lookin' for the Progressive Philanthropists Club. I

went to its home address and was told that it was here. I have business with its president, Alice Ross.

ALICE. (*drying her eyes*) I am Alice Ross. Can I do anything for you?

MRS. WEST. N-no, I don't know as you can, but I calculate that I can do considerable for you. I'm Deborah West and I come from Hicksville. Maybe you've heard of me.

ALICE. No, but we all know about Hicksville.

MRS. WEST. Humph! Know about Hicksville, do you? Well, Hicksville wouldn't be nothin' without Deborah West. It has been my duty and my pleasure all of my life to keep people straight. I was born to it, a sort of mission you might say, and I've worked hard at my trade. Hicksville people have been takin' my advice for the last twenty years and it has made Hicksville what it is.

MRS. MILLS. This is very interesting, Mrs. West. Won't you be seated while you tell us about it?

MRS. WEST. No, thanks. I'll stand up. But what I want to know is (*to ALICE*) how you ever got it into your head that Hicksville needed a missionary boy. We're all hard workin', respectable, prosperous folks—thanks to me. It ain't jest what you'd call a lively place, though, and last Tuesday when that box came we was all real interested since nothin' unusual had happened for quite a spell. We had a real good time over the outside of that box and I want to thank you for it.

ALICE. You—you are very kind.

MRS. WEST. I took a hammer and Sophia Wood she got the hatchet and we hammered and split until we got the top off—all of the rest of the women folks standin' around guessin' what it was and talkin'. Now, I am chock full of sentiments about the inside of that box but I don't suppose you'd like to hear 'em all. How-some-ever, I am goin' to tell you

some. (*taking a nest of blond hair puffs from her bag*) Jest look at that. And there ain't a single person in our whole township that's baldheaded except old Jim Tompkins, and he said he jest *wouldn't* wear 'em. Don't know as I blamed him either.

HELEN. But they are not for bald people; I wear them.

MRS. WEST. Tush, child! Let me finish. (*holding up a pair of lorgnettes*) Look at that.

EDYTH. There is nothing the matter with that I am sure, it is a very nice lorgnette.

MRS. WEST. I know what it is called but I don't know its use. See here. You jest *can't* set 'em on your nose and what earthly use are glasses that you have to hold on with one hand. My land! Two hands ain't enough for our Hicksville women to work with.

ALICE. I am sorry, Mrs. West, that you are not pleased but——

MRS. WEST. Oh, you needn't apologize. Now, I have jest one more sample. (*shaking out a net and spangle creation*) None of us Hicksville ladies ballet dance.

FLOSSIE. Ballet dance! The idea! That is the tunic of my old rose evening gown—the prettiest one I ever had.

MRS. WEST. Tis, hey? Well, if you can use it you can have it back. Before we read your letter most of the ladies thought that box came from the state insane asylum——

THE CLUB. Horrors! Mercy! Gracious!

MRS. WEST. But no, says I, the folks that sent that ain't *insane*, they're jest *in* society and have taken up the charity fad and happened to hit us. And I was right, too. I always am. But that box opened my eyes. Your talents, Deby West, says I to myself, needs a broader field. You have done your

duty by Hicksville and there are other folks that needs you bad. So I came straight here as soon as I could get ready. (to ALICE) And I am goin' to begin with you and train you up to be what I think a girl of your years ought to be.

ALICE. Mrs. West, I wish you to know——

MRS. WEST. I know all I need to know——

MRS. MILLS. I know that you are being very impertinent to Miss Ross.

ALICE. And I won't s-stand being treated so.

MRS. WEST. Yes, you will, leastwise until you show some signs of improvement.

ALICE. I don't want to improve. I don't need to improve. I give up philanthropy. G-girls, I disband the c-club. People are too wretchedly, horridly, wickedly ungrateful. I'll never try to do another thing for them—never, never, *never*.

MRS. WEST. Oh, I guess maybe you will. I ain't come here to make you give up charity work. Charity is a good thing only it is like a sassy lobster, you've got to know how to take aholt of it. And that is what I'm agoin' to teach you along with the rest. I'm an expert at helpin' folks; I've been doin' it all my life.

MRS. HUNTER. Then *I* would suggest that you take your valuable services where they would be more appreciated.

MRS. DALFORTH. Back to Hicksville, for instance.

MRS. MILLS. Yes, Mrs. West, I think you'd better return at once.

MRS. WEST. (*folding her arms and striking an attitude of immovable determination*) You do, hey? Well, if you think I am goin' to move one inch from this town until I've set folks straight it is because you don't know Deborah Lucretia Ann West.

CURTAIN.

ACT IV.

SCENE:—*The dining room in ALICE'S home. At the rear of the room is a door, in the center of the room a table which ALICE is setting under the direction of MRS. WEST who sits in the foreground knitting.*

MRS. WEST. Now don't cry into the sugar bowl. My land! when you get started you are a regular cloud burst. And the more you cry the slower you work, and the slower you work the longer I stay. I've been here a whole week now and you haven't learned any more housekeepin' yet than a pussy-cat could do. And I never worked harder in my life than I have tryin' to teach you.

ALICE. Why don't you take a vacation?

MRS. WEST. I never leave a duty till it is done.

ALICE. If I had known how hard it was going to be I would never have let you come but you were so persistent I thought this was the easiest way out of it. I know better now.

MRS. WEST. Knives on the right side of the plate.

ALICE. (*drying her eyes*) How much more shall I have to learn?

MRS. WEST. Well, all of the girls in Hicksville can wash and iron, and scrub and sew and knit and sweep and clean. And some of them can play the pianer besides and sing.

(*ALICE throws herself down on a chair leans her head on the table and weeps loudly.*)

MRS. WEST. What's the matter now?

ALICE. I am heart sick and discouraged. And I

am thoroughly stupid and useless. I wish I were dead. O Billy, Billy, Billy!

MRS. WEST. *O Billy!* Who's Billy? I never heard of him before. He isn't some one you was thinkin' of marryin', is he?

ALICE. I was once but I never will now. I sent him away and he will never come back again. Boo-hoo-hoo!

MRS. WEST. Well, that's good I'm sure. I don't approve of matrimony. None of the Hicksville girls got married. I taught 'em better. Now stop your cryin' and go on with the table settin'. Philanthropy is a good deal better than matrimony anyway and when you have learned a little more about house-keepin' I'll start you in on that. I know how and there ain't no foolishness about my philanthropy.

ALICE. I wish I'd never heard of philanthropy. That's what came between us, and we used to have such good times! Boo-hoo-hoo!

MRS. WEST. Now stop that. There is no sense in this everlastin' cryin'.

(*Enter BARBARA, EDYTH, HELEN and OLIVE.*)

ALL. Why, Alice, what's the matter?

BARBARA. Aren't you going to the card party??

MRS. WEST. Card party! Well, I guess not. She ain't half through with her work yet.

ALICE. I am never going anywhere again.

OLIVE. Alice!

ALICE. When I get through with this I am going to enter a convent.

EDYTH. Poor Billy!

HELEN. Oh, girls, let's tell her!

MRS. WEST. (*rising*) Now you see here! What are you aimin' at? Don't you bring any men around these premises. I don't like 'em and I have trouble enough without 'em.

OLIVE. But Billy——

MRS. WEST. Can do what he likes outside this house. I give him the whole town to perform in, but he ain't comin' here. Now you hear me say it. (*she resumes her seat with an air of defiance*)

EDYTH. If I were in your place, Alice, I wouldn't let her bully me.

MRS. WEST. (*turning on her suddenly*) You wouldn't, hey?

(*EDYTH with a little scream hides behind the other girls and FLOSSIE, in her automobile coat and hat enters talking volubly and not noticing MRS. WEST. She is followed presently by MRS. MILLS who is also dressed for motoring.*)

FLOSSIE. Oh, girls, girls! I am back and I have had the most delightful time. Mrs. Mills took me all over the state in her car. You'll never guess where I've been and what I've seen. I would have given anything in this wide world to have had you all with me. Such adventures! Such excitement! I never had such experiences in my life. What do you think, girls? We punctured a tire——

HELEN. How wonderful! We puncture one every time we go out.

FLOSSIE. And we had to get out and wait for nearly three hours while they fixed it. And where do you think we happened to be?

ALL. Where?

FLOSSIE. HICKSVILLE! And what do you think we did?

ALL. What?

FLOSSIE. We went to weddings.

BARBARA. So calm down, Flossie, and tell us a connected story. How many weddings did you go to?

FLOSSIE. Three. But there have been eight weddings in the place this week. Mrs. West, it seems

was very much opposed to marriage and there hasn't been a wedding in the village for fifteen years, but they're making up for lost time while she's away. And, oh, girls! One of the brides I saw was Mrs. West's niece.

MRS. WEST. What! My Evelina!

FLOSSIE. Mrs. West! I—I didn't see you.

MRS. WEST. So it seems. But tell me that again. Ain't you mistaken? Are you sure that it was Evelina? I didn't mean her to get married.

FLOSSIE. I—I am sorry, Mrs. West—but——

MRS. WEST. Don't stand there stammerin' around that way. Tell me about it. Who in Hicksville dared to marry her?

FLOSSIE. No one in Hicksville. He is a city man; his name is Swift.

MRS. WEST. My land o' Goshen! Where's my hat? I'm goin' right home.

MRS. MILLS. But she is already married, Mrs. West. You can do nothing now.

FLOSSIE. And you wouldn't find her in Hicksville. She is away on her wedding trip.

MRS. WEST. And the rest of them that got married—did they all go on wedding trips.

FLOSSIE. Of course they did and they had the loveliest time!

MRS. WEST. After all my teachin'! Why, I took as much trouble with them girls as if they had been prize pumpkins for the county fair. And now they don't know no better than this! All my time and trouble wasted. The wicked, ungrateful critters!

MRS. MILLS. Oh no, Mrs. West, your time has not been wasted. You have taught the girls a great deal and I am sure that they will always be grateful to you for it. The trouble began when you tried to interfere with things that should not concern you. You and Alice——

ALICE. Oh, Mrs. Mills, I am entirely out of it. I have given up philanthropy. I have given up everything. I have nothing to live for now that Billy's gone.

MRS. MILLS. I am sorry if you have given up philanthropy, Alice, for it is a good thing—only you should temper your zeal with a little more wisdom.

MRS. WEST. That's jest what I tell her. In other words, put your good works where they're wanted. A bunch of hair puffs may be mighty becomin' but if I don't know it there ain't no use in your givin' 'em to em.

MRS. MILLS. Very true, Mrs. West, and you may know a great deal more than other people do, but if they are not ready to learn it you can't make them.

MRS. WEST. (*thoughtfully*) W-well, I guess that's right, too.

MRS. MILLS. So you and Alice have both learned something and I hope you will start now on a gentler course of philanthropy.

(*Enter* MRS. ROBERT ROWLAND.)

LUCY. How do you do, Mrs. Mills. Girls, I wonder if you can ever forgive me for that dreadful week you spent in our village.

ALICE. We wanted to go, Lucy. It was not your fault.

LUCY. Oh, yes it was. I should not have allowed you poor innocent lambs to stray into such a pitfall. It was too hard an experience for you and I shall never forgive myself for it.

FLOSSIE. But Billy will forgive you for it helped to disband the club—And, oh, Alice! I forgot to tell you, I met him as I was coming in and he is waiting in the parlor to see you.

MRS. WEST. He is, hey? Then I guess that means

another weddin'. Now, there is one thing I can't get used to and that's a weddin', so I guess I'll go home where the weddin's are all over.

FLOSSIE. Oh, but they're not! Old Jim Tompkins says that when you come back he is going to marry you.

CURTAIN.

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