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THE FLOWER

OF THE FAMILY

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THE FLOWER OF THE FAMILY.

A COMEDY IN THREE ACTS.

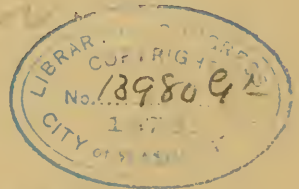
BY THE AUTHOR OF

"Sylvia's Soldier," "Once on a Time," "Down by the Sea," "Bread on the Waters,"
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All Teetotalers," "A Little More Cider," "Thirty Minutes for Refreshments,"
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"The Visions of Freedom," "The Merry Christ-
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"A Thorn among the Roses,"
"A Christmas Carol,"
"One Hundred
Years Ago,"
&c.

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41-45 FRANKLIN STREET.



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By GEORGE M. BAKER,
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Electrotyped at the Boston Stereotype Foundry,
19 Spring Lane.

THE FLOWER OF THE FAMILY.

A COMEDY IN THREE ACTS.

CHARACTERS.

ABNER HOWLAND, a Merchant.
OSCAR LORING, his Ward.
TOM HOWLAND, his Nephew.
POLICY NEWCOMB, an Insurance Agent.
SPICER SPOFFORD, Clerk in an Insurance Office.
MRS. GORDON HOWLAND, a Widow.
ALICE HOWLAND, her Daughter.
LINA HOWLAND, Abner's adopted Daughter.

COSTUMES.

Modern and appropriate Summer Dresses.

ABNER. Light pants; white vest; shoes; white stockings; Panama hat; long, white hair; dark coat, thin.
OSCAR. First dress: Dark pants, tucked into long boots; blue flannel shirt, sleeves rolled up; red handkerchief tied about his head. Second dress: Light suit, with straw hat, blue ribbon.
POLICY NEWCOMB. Light pants; white vest, very long thin gray coat; broad-brimmed straw hat; bald wig, with red curly hair, and "dabs" of side-whiskers.
SPICER SPOFFORD. Very fashionable suit; light curly wig; light mustache; eye-glass and cane.

Mrs. GORDON HOWLAND. Black bombazine dress; white widow's cap; neat gray hair.

ALICE. } Act 1: Pretty muslin morning dresses. Acts 2 and 3:
LINA. } Afternoon dresses, to suit taste.

This play is modelled after the now fashionable "Society" plays, where taste in setting the stage, and in the selection of apparel for both male and female characters, is indispensably necessary to success. No extravagant characters — with the exception of "Spofford," something of the "Dundreary" style, and Newcomb, of the "Col. Sellers" type — are introduced; the author's design being to present an every-day story, with a home setting, in which people we meet are the actors.

207 SPRINGFIELD STREET,
BOSTON, July 25, 1876.

THE FLOWER OF THE FAMILY.

ACT I. — SCENE: *Handsome apartment in ABNER HOWLAND's house. Doors opening to garden, c. in flat. Window L. in flat, with lace curtain. Easy-chair at window. Mantel with clock; vases and ornaments R. Under mantel, work-basket, with chair beside it. Door L. L. C. opposite door, table with damask cover, writing materials on it. MRS. HOWLAND in chair L. of table, sewing. ABNER HOWLAND seated R. of table, with newspaper.*

Abner. Now I'm not going into a passion. I don't blame you, sister, but I say, emphatically and decidedly, this absurd flirtation must be stopped.

Mrs. H. But, Abner —

Abner. Don't *but* against my decision. I can't, shan't, and won't allow it. This fop, this dandy, this Spicer Spofford, — bah! the name's enough to sicken one, — has gained access to my house on the pretence that he was a dear friend of your husband, my brother. Pretence, mind you, for Gordon was a plain, blunt man, thirty years older than this whipper-snapper. Do you suppose Gordon could have formed a friendship with this walking clothes-horse, who is no credit to anybody but his tailor?

Mrs. H. Don't be unjust, Abner; you know nothing against the man, and he can make himself very agreeable.

Abner. So it seems; for without as much as "by your leave" to me, her adopted father, he makes love to Lina. It's absurd, ridiculous! He's a fortune-hunter.

Mrs. H. Ah, there you are wrong, for by your desire Lina passes for my daughter.

Abner. True; when I went abroad, ten years ago, I left this child of an old friend — a child whom I had adopted — to be brought up by you, to call you "mother" and me "uncle," for then I had made up my mind she should marry my ward, Oscar Loring, on his return. Gordon was a poor man then, and I feared, were it known that she was to be the heiress of a rich old bachelor, some fortune-hunter would snatch her before my return.

Mrs. H. I suspected this was your intention.

Abner. I've no doubt of it. Trust a woman for smelling a match. Well, I came back a year ago to find that Gordon had embarked in speculation, gained a small fortune, but, continuing his risks, had lost all, and died a poor man.

Mrs. H. Gordon was a good, kind husband and father, and a Christian.

Abner. No doubt of it. A good Christian, but a poor speculator.

Mrs. H. He never meant to leave me penniless. Often in the midst of his speculations he said to me, "Fear not, wife; should I fail, you are well provided for."

Abner. Humph! the old house at Mayburn, with nothing to live upon; poor provision that. Gordon was always too generous; he didn't look out for himself. Not like me — I'm all for self.

Mrs. H. You, Abner? the most kind and generous —

Abner. No such thing. There's my ward, he will be a rich man. I expect him every day. With Lina for his wife, I shall have made comfortable provision for her future. No more expense on her account. But now, in steps this fellow, who must have found some clue to her expectations, and is trying to win her for my money. I tell you, sister, I don't like it.

Mrs. H. Then why not tell him so, Abner?

Abner. And raise a flame where now there's but a spark. No, no, I've too old a head for that. But you ought to know some way to stop it. Women who are so handy at making matches must surely have some reserved power with which to break them when occasion requires.

Mrs. H. Ah, but Lina evidently favors Mr. Spoford's attentions. 'Twould never do for me to interfere. Were it my own daughter, Alice —

Abner. Then I should have nothing to say. Alice is all well enough; too much given to romping, racing, riding, and fishing —

Mrs. H. And equally well skilled in washing, sewing, and cooking.

Abner. O, yes; Alice is a good girl, and will make some poor fellow a capital wife; but to pick out my Lina, the flower of the family, — one in a thousand, —

graceful, beautiful, accomplished,—fit mate for a prince, it's — it's — wicked.

Mrs. H. But if she loves him.

Abner. I won't let her; 'twould break Oscar's heart.

Mrs. H. They have never met.

Abner. But my letters to him have been filled with praises of her. He must be half in love with her from my description, and the sight of her will complete the conquest. But if he comes and finds this dandy — O, it's absurd, ridiculous!

Mrs. H. I wish I could help you; but 'twould be unkind for me to interfere. I am but a dependent here.

Abner. Now, stop that; stop it, I say. You a dependent! You are my unlucky brother's widow. You shared his poverty, and you have a right to share my prosperity; for had I died before him, all I have would have been his. Dependent — you! Why, you have brightened my dull old bachelor quarters with a woman's cheering influence, and made me a dependent upon you for comfort, peace, and happiness. I am the gainer, not you; and you know I am all for self; so don't talk of dependence. Tell me some way to get rid of this intruder. Can't you manage to give him a hint that his company is no longer agreeable?

Mrs. H. I suppose I could.

Abner. And you will, Mary, when I confess to you that this match has become something more than a desire, — that on it depends my fortune.

Mrs. H. Your fortune, Abner?

Abner. Yes. I am terribly embarrassed. My real estate is heavily encumbered, and ill luck everywhere is following my investments. One of our steamers blew up at the wharf: no dividends there. A train smashed on our railroad: heavy damages, and no dividends for a long time. The White Squall is a month overdue. Three months ago I borrowed fifty thousand dollars of my shipbuilders, Silas Warner & Co., pledging the cargo of the White Squall for its repayment. She's overdue. Something's the matter with her insurance; and the Warners are frightened — threaten to attach this place. And the fat's sizzling in the fire generally.

Mrs. II. And I have heard nothing of this.

Abner. Well, you see, I've been expecting Oscar every day. He is of age. I hold large sums belonging to him, which I would not touch without his consent, though ruin threatened me. Were he at home, he would help me until the White Squall arrived. But now, how can I ask his help should the girl I have promised him be won by another?

Mrs. II. Abner, you should have told me of this. There is my old house at Mayburn, just as I left it when Gordon died; sell it, with all it contains. You can surely raise money by its sale.

Abner. No, no; if my house goes with the rest, you must have a home, Mary. No, no; not that.

Mrs. II. And yet, Abner, you are all for self. If this is selfishness, how near it is akin to nobility.

Abner. O, tut! tut! tut! Help me to get rid of this man.

Mrs. H. His next visit shall be his last. I will promise you that.

Abner. Good; you promise. I feel better, for I know you will not fail me.

Lina (outside c.). You are just as hateful as you can be, Tom Howland.

Abner. There's Lina, and quarrelling with Tom, as usual. Do you know, Mary, I had fears, when Tom came here, that he would fall in love with Lina; but they quarrel every day, and evidently detest each other.

Mrs. H. I cannot imagine what has come over Tom, he was always so gentle in the old place.

Abner. O, it's all right. Let them fight, if it keeps them from falling in love. I'm just selfish enough to enjoy it.

(Enter LINA, c., holding her apron filled with flowers. She comes down L.)

Lina. I've had glorious luck, mother, foraging in Tom's flower-beds. Aren't they sweet? *(Takes a handful, and showers them on Mrs. H.'s head into her lap.)* And isn't he just raving. He chased me with a rake; but the rake's progress, unlike Hogarth's, was rather slow, and I escaped. Here, uncle, a rosebud for your coat *(comes back of table to R. of ABNER)*. Let me fasten it *(places rose in coat)*. There now, you are adorned for conquest. Prepare, O city maidens, to be captivated. Who will be this old man's darling. Prepare to be caught.

Abner. My darling is already caught *(slips his arm about her waist)*.

Lina. Do you think so? Haste makes *waist* (*slips away.*) free, uncle. Ha, ha! I'll not let you spoil my posies. I want them for my vases (*goes to mantel, and arranges flowers.*).

Abner (*to Mrs. H.*). Now, isn't she just splendid. Ah, Mary, if your girl only had her winning sweetness, her beauty, her grace, what a pair they would make.

Mrs. H. O, she's sweet, Abner. But then, like you, I'm a bit selfish, and my Alice just suits me.

Abner. Lina, you're a wild thing; you want a husband to tame you.

Lina. Do I? Whose husband do I want?

Abner. Whose husband? Well, say mine.

Lina. I'll say what you like, uncle, but I'll have my own.

Abner. Oscar Loring is my choice.

Lina. You may have him; but I can't imagine what a man is to do with a husband.

Abner. Marry him to the girl he loves best.

Lina. Hadn't he better marry the girl he loves best himself.

Abner. Not when she is his daughter.

Lina. Ha, ha, ha! Uncle, I'm caught at last. But Oscar Loring I have never seen. You are a merchant. You don't expect to sell goods without a sample.

Abner. You shall see the goods, and I know you'll like the pattern.

Lina. I shouldn't like a pattern husband (*stands back*). There, look at my flowers; aren't they lovely? If I could only have secured a few geraniums before

Tom surprised me; he's so stingy. I watched my chance, and when his back was turned, went through the beds as Sherman marched to the sea (*sings*).

Hurrah! hurrah! for Tom has left them free;
 Hurrah! hurrah! the choicest now for me;
 Marching over flower-beds with none to hinder me,
 Gayly assailing Botania.

(*Enter TOM c. with a rake; stops in doorway.*)

Tom. Bo-tania! Look here, Lina, if I catch you among my flower-beds again, I'll tan you without any Bo.

Lina. Who cares for you, grubber. I wouldn't make such a fuss about a few flowers.

Tom. Few! Hear that. My prize geraniums! You would have torn them from their mother earth, ruthlessly despoiled my beds of their beauties.

Lina. Who is to see these beauties, if they lie abed forever?

Tom. O, you're a nuisance.

Lina. You're another.

Mrs. H. Children!

Abner. Don't interfere. Let them spat. I like it.

Tom. I tell you, Miss Lina, private rights must be respected. Here I slave in the garden day after day, for what?

Lina. Exercise, I suppose. You don't accomplish much.

Tom. That's false. My flowers are the admiration of the whole neighborhood; they overtop everything.

Lina. Yes, that patch of sunflowers is a towering monument of your skill.

Tom. Look at my dahlias.

Lina. I try, Thomas; but your cabbages put their heads together to prevent my seeing them.

Tom. You are trifling with my horticultural aspirations.

Lina. Where do they grow? They must be rare plants to have such stupendous titles.

Tom. O, I won't talk with you (*stands his rake against side of door next window, and goes to window*).

Lina (sings). "Nobody axed you, sir, she said."

Tom. I detest you.

Lina. Do you? Then we shall never be separated on account of incompatibility of temper.

Tom. I wish somebody would carry you off and marry you.

Lina. I mean to be married first, and carried off afterwards.

Tom. You're a goose!

Lina. You're a donkey!

Tom (grimacing). Ya! Ya! Ya!

Lina (grimacing). Bray, donkey, bray!

(*Tom flings himself into chair at window. LINA seats herself by work-basket, and busies herself with worsted. ABNER looks at his watch.*)

Abner. Ten o'clock. I must be getting up to town. Can I bring you anything, Lina?

Tom. Yes, uncle, bring out a muzzle.

Lina. Do they muzzle donkeys, uncle? By all means, let Tom have the proper harness.

Tom. I spoke for you, Miss Impudence.

Lina. Indeed! Don't rob yourself on my account (*lifting her dress*). There's muslin enough here for me.

Alice (*outside c.*). All aboard. All aboard. Boat's at the landing; bait's in the boat; skipper's looking for a crew (*appears in doorway with bag swung at her side, fishing-pole in hand*). And I'm the skipper, thank you. O, here you are. It's a glorious day for sport. Who'll go? Come, Tom, forsake your favorite earth

“For the deep, blue, boundless sea.”

Tom. No, I thank you. Fishing's cruel sport; I don't like it.

Lina. You'll never be accused of cruelty, Tom.

Tom. Do you mean to say I can't fish?

Lina. Indeed you can.

“With perseverance worthy of a better cause,”
all day, and never a nibble.

Tom. O, I've hooked something in my day.

Lina. It must have been in your schooldays, when you hooked Jack.

Alice. Don't tease him, Lina. Come, Tom; I'll let you take off my fish.

Tom. No, I thank you; I've other fish to fry.

Alice. Then I won't interfere with your cooking. Come, Nunky, you try the rod with me.

Abner. I should be delighted, but I must go to town.

Alice. Lina?

Lina. Don't ask me; you know I am not a lover of *manly* sports.

Alice (*with a mock courtesy*). Ahem! The flower

of the family has spoken. By the way, shouldn't flirtation be classed as a manly sport? Ha, ha! Lina, you're no lover of manly sports, O, no. *You* are an accomplished young lady, skilled in drawing, painting, music, and all those *art-ful* ways which make charming girls; while I — I love to race across the green; to drive the black horses at their topmost speed; to pull a boat; and, when nobody's looking, to climb a tree. I want exercise, freedom, a brisk breeze upon my cheek, blue waves dancing about me. O, that's just glorious!

Abner. Yes, yes, that's all well enough, Alice; but you're too boisterous. A woman's place is inside the house; she should be gentle, devoted to household affairs, soft of step, sweet-voiced. These are the qualities that beautify woman, and what every man hopes to find in a wife.

Alice }
Tom } (*together*). Hear, hear, hear!
Lina }

Alice. O, Nunky, when do you expect to find yours? I know you've a poor opinion of little wild me. But don't be discouraged; one of these days I may turn about and be an honor to you. I hope I may, for you have always been a kind —

Abner. There, there, stop that.

Alice. I'm off. Wish I could drum up a recruit. By the way, I had a dream last night.

Lina. A dream?

Tom. That's nothing. I had the nightmare.

Lina. How natural. "Birds of a feather," Tom.

Tom. You be hanged !

Mrs. H. Children !

Abner. Don't interfere, Mary.

Alice. Yes. I dreamed I was in my boat on the lake, and a pickerel — such a beauty ! — took my hook. He weighed fifteen pounds.

Tom. What a whopper !

Alice. *He* was. Tom, don't interrupt. I drew him into the boat ; and what do you think he did ?

Tom. Died, of course.

Lina. No ; died of exposure.

Alice. He raised himself erect, and, with a tear in his eye, a tremor in his voice —

Tom. And a hook in his gills.

Alice. — Asked me to marry him.

Lina. Poor fellow. Knew he was to be cooked, and wanted a mess-mate. Did you accept him ?

Alice. No, Lina. I served him as you do your admirers (*points to bag*). I sacked him.

Lina. What a lucky escape from becoming a mermaid.

Alice. Now I'm going to catch him in earnest ; and if I succeed, and he asks me to marry him, I'll send him to you for your official sanction.

Abner. If he comes to me, I'll eat him.

Alice. Ha, ha, ha ! And serve him right. Good-bye to you, and good luck to me ! (*goes up to door c.* — *POLICY NEWCOMB enters ; pole strikes his eye ; he ejaculates " Oh ! " claps his hand to his eye ; hits the rake and sends it down upon TOM'S head ; then comes B. C. holding his hand to his eye. TOM jumps up,*

rubbing his head. ALICE stands in door, looking at POLICY an instant). I really beg your pardon, sir, but you should keep your eyes open. [Exit.

Policy. Don't apologize, it's all right. What is the loss of an eye or two to the happy possessor of a ten thousand dollar accident policy, who draws a weekly stipend of fifty dollars for the time he is disabled. That eye ought to be good for six weeks (*rubs it*). No, confound it, it's all right.

Abner. Does your eye pain you?

Policy. No. I wish it did. I've had the worst kind of luck with that policy in a railroad smash-up twice; not a hair of my head injured. Blown up in a steamboat explosion, and landed safe in a rival boat. Run away with by a furious horse: he went over a precipice; I went safely into a tree. An unfortunate investment; it's on its last day, and I've not a scar to show.

Lina (aside). Crying because he's not hurt. The man's a fool.

Abner. And you came here to tell us of your misfortunes?

Policy. Eh. I beg your pardon (*gives letter*). Read that, if you please. (*Aside*) Nice snug quarters; luxury and comfort. Policy, my boy, you're in luck this time.

Abner (after reading letter). Ah, I understand. Mr. Newcomb, I believe.

Policy (bombastically). Policy Newcomb, agent for the "Live-for-Ever Life," the "Never-say-die Endowment," and the "Blow-up and Bust-up Accident" insur-

ance companies; three of the noblest institutions in the country, sir; with marble buildings in every large city, sir; high-salaried officials, sir, who ride in their carriages, sir; liveried coachmen, and servants at their beck and call, sir. Institutions which draw in millions of the savings of all classes, sir, and pay out nobly, sir (*aside*), when they can't help it.

Abner. From this letter, I understand we are to have the pleasure of your society for a few days.

Policy. Exactly. Sheriff Thorne —

Abner (interrupting). I understand. Let all business matters be settled in private. Mrs. Howland, Mr. Newcomb will stop with us.

Mrs. H. I'm sure any friend of yours —

Abner. Will be heartily welcome, of course. Will you find a room for Mr. Newcomb? He may wish to change —

Policy. Nothing at present. My superfluous linen will follow me (*aside*) wherever I go. Still a little soap and water might be of service —

Mrs. H. O, certainly. (*Rises. ABNER steps up to her.*)

Abner. Mary, what I feared has come. This man is a keeper. Keep it from the girls.

Mrs. H. I will be careful (*crosses to R.*). Mr. Newcomb, will you follow me? [*Exit R.*]

Policy. With pleasure. (*Aside*) I've seen that lady's face before (*going*).

Abner. Mr. Newcomb, make yourself at home here. I will see you again. Just now, I must go to town.

Policy (returning). To town? How? may I ask.

Abner. Behind a pair of fast trotters (*goes up stage*).

Policy. Fast trotters (*runs after him and brings him down*). Mr. Howland, one word (*emphatically*). Are you insured?

Abner. Insured?

Policy (tragically). Pause, reflect, ponder. Fast trotters are sleek-coated demons. There is frenzy in their eyes, madness in their hearts, delusion in their heels. In their company your life is but a hair's-breadth, a horsehair's-breadth from destruction. Pause ere it is too late. Let me write you for ten thousand in the Bust-up and Blow-up Accident Company. The outlay is small; the profit, should you be mangled or crippled, large; should you perish by accident, immense.

Abner. Mr. Newcomb, I've no time —

Policy. Think of those infuriated steeds in a moment of frenzy forsaking the peaceful, macadamized road, dashing with you at headlong speed to the brink of a frightful precipice. What supreme delight would animate your breast, as you hung over that frightful abyss, from which nothing could save you, to know you had in your pocket that priceless policy for ten thousand dollars.

Abner. Ha, ha, ha! Not to-day, thank you Mr. Newcomb. I know my horses better than I know your company. I'll take my own risk. Good-bye, Lina. I'll be back to tea.

Lina. Good-bye, uncle; a pleasant ride!

Abner. Good morning, Mr. Newcomb. Mrs. Howland is waiting for you, and she'll *insure* you — ha, ha, ha! — good accommodation. [Exit c.

Policy. He don't bite. Laugh away; but a jocular vein won't save the jugular (*going R. sees LINA*). What a pretty girl (*stops and looks at her work*). Ah, fancy work. Do you like that, miss?

Lina. O, yes; don't you?

Policy. Me? I think *croquet* is one of the most fascinating employments of the fair sex.

Lina. Indeed! What excellent taste! Henceforth my *work* will be a *pastime* (*laughs*).

Policy (*aside*). She's making game of me. (*Aloud*) But don't you think it's a little bit wearing on the eyes?

Lina. It must be, especially after contact with such a hard substance as a fishing-pole.

Policy (*aside*). Hem! sharp's the word there. (*Aloud*) Good morning (*walks off R. 1st E. very stiff*). TOM *watches him off, then runs down to LINA, kneels, and puts his arm about her waist*).

Tom. Darling, we are alone once more.

Lina. Yes, Tom, "the cruel war is over" again.

Tom. Yes, sweetheart, we can now dismiss the frown from our brows, the venom from our tongues, and be again a happy pair of lovers.

Lina. O Tom, you can't imagine how hard it is for me to speak so sharply to you, whom I love so dearly.

Tom. Yes, I can. "A fellow feeling," you know. Forgive me for all the hard words I have spoken.

Lina. As I hope to be forgiven.

Tom. It's our only course, Lina. War before others; love and peace in secret. If Uncle Abner knew I dared to love you —

Lina. He would lock me up, send you away, and, O, dear! I tremble at the thought; but, fortunately, Mr. Spofford, *my* Spicer, is the suspected party, and not Tom Howland.

Tom. Spofford! Lina, I hate that man. To see him with his infernal eye-glass ogling you; to hear his silly speeches; to watch his confident assurance that he has captivated you. Lina, I try to be patient; but I know some day I shall pound that chap.

Lina. And ruin your prospects. No, Tom, be patient still. The other will soon appear, and then I'll change my tactics.

Tom. Indeed; and be as deeply interested in him as you now seem to be with Spofford. That's consoling.

Lina. Well, where's the harm? If I can fascinate him, will not my powers of attraction be enhanced? Shall I not be a richer prize for you to win?

Tom. And I shall win you? Assure me of that, and I care not how many suitors flicker about the flame that burns for me alone.

Lina. That's very pretty, Tom. Be comforted; my hand is yours when you shall dare to claim it.

Tom (seizing her hand). 'Tis the dearest little hand in the wide, wide world (*kisses it frantically.* POLICY enters R. 1 E. *wiping his hands with his handkerchief.*)

Policy. Ahem! (*LINA screams and bends over her work. TOM jumps up and goes to table with his back to LINA. POLICY looks from one to the other, then steps to C.; looks at each again slowly, then*)

Policy. If I had only known — but I didn't. You

see I am a new-comer; not used to the ways of the house; but it's all right. I'm blind (*pointedly to LINA*), color-blind. I shall take occasion to congratulate Mr. Howland —

Tom (*turning to NEWCOMB*). Not for the world. Open your lips to speak of what you have here seen, and we are ruined.

Policy. You don't say so!

Tom. I cannot explain the circumstances under which we are placed; but, as you say, it's all right. And I am ready to buy your silence, if it is necessary.

Policy (*indignantly*). Buy? Buy me? Young man, are you insured?

Tom. No.

Policy. No? Young man, look at that fair, blushing face bending in happy confusion over her work-basket. She loves you; you love her; you love and live together. You would draw her from her secluded and happy home to share your fortunes. You would do this, rash youth, knowing the uncertainty of life, with a full knowledge that in your daily walks a brick from some towering chimney might fall upon your head to crush you; two bricks, perhaps, with but a single thought — to mash you. Be wise; secure her future before you attempt to secure her. Let me write you for ten thousand in the Never-say-Die, and then you may laugh at fate, and, beneath a pile of bricks, triumphantly smile to know the loved one rejoices in the possession of that policy.

Tom. Yes; I see what you want. If I take a policy, your mouth is sealed.

Policy. We never go back on our policy-holders.

Tom. Well. (*Aside*) Confound this fellow! (*Aloud*) I'll reflect upon it.

Policy. There's no time like the present (*takes circular from his pocket*). Here, look at our statement, — surplus enormous.

Tom (aside). O, bother (*takes paper, and goes up to window. POLICY follows, and talks in pantomime*).

Lina (laughs). Poor Tom! his troubles have commenced. If he hadn't been quite so handy with his kisses, this miserable man would never have had it in his power to make us tremble in his presence.

Tom (pointing to window). O, yes; those are mine; raised them myself. I'm something of a gardener. Stroll out, and look over the beds. I'll join you presently.

Policy. Thank you, I will (*comes down with TOM, and takes his hat from table*). I'm a conner sure in garden sass. I'll look up your mammoth cabbages. I don't care much for roses, but among the green 'uns (*at door*) I'm at home (*Exit. TOM watches him off*).

Tom. Lina!

Lina. Tom!

(*Re-enter POLICY, c.*)

Policy. By the way, you'll want an accident policy to go with —

Tom (angrily). Mr. Newcomb, I want nothing but to be rid of your inf— delightful society for ten minutes.

Policy. Don't get mad. It is your interest I have at heart. You are a gardener, in hourly danger of

having your foot split open with a hoe, or your head scraped with a rake; or — or — of being stung by some poisonous reptile — a toad, or a bull-frog. What a salve would it be to your wounded anatomy, should you —

Tom. Another word, and no policy for me. I'd sooner take the consequences.

Policy (aside). That policy wouldn't suit this policy. (*Aloud*) O, very well. I leave the matter to your calm consideration; but remember, there are vital interests at stake. [*Exit c.*]

Tom. There's a martyr at the stake, that's sure. O, Lina, what's to be done?

Lina. Don't ask me; you've brought this upon yourself.

Tom. Brought this upon myself? Well, I like that!

Lina. And I don't like it. You've compromised me, sold yourself to that hateful insurance thing, and ruined our prospects.

Tom. Well, you had a hand in it — a very pretty one, too. Don't be angry, Lina; I'll find some way to insure our safety.

Lina. Indeed! Haven't you had enough of insurance yet?

Tom. Don't be cruel (*bending over her tenderly, with clasped hands*). Nothing shall part us.

Alice (outside c.). Come right in; never mind the water.

Tom. The deuce! (*runs to table; picks up a book; sits in chair L. of table, and reads.* *Enter c. ALICE.*

She comes down to table. OSCAR appears in doorway ; stops there.)

Alice (as she enters). Nobody will mind your appearance. A shipwrecked mariner finds sympathy all the world over.

Oscar. You are very kind ; but people are not fond of having shipwrecked mariners deluge their carpets with briny tears. I think I'll stop outside.

Alice. Come in ; I insist. Nobody will eat you.

Tom (aside). I should say not ; a less tempting morsel I never saw.

Oscar. O, very well, if you insist (*comes down*). And now I am here, will you be good enough to tell me where I am, and to whom I am indebted for hospitality.

Alice. This is the residence of Mr. Abner Howland.

Oscar (starting). Abner Howland !

Alice. That lovely young lady yonder is Miss Lina Howland.

Oscar (bows to LINA). (*Aside*) My guardian's choice. Well, well ! he told but half the truth.

Alice. That studious young gentleman there is Mr. Tom Howland.

Oscar (bows and shakes hands with TOM). Glad to meet you, sir. Br-r-r (*shivers*).

Tom (aside). A chilling reception.

Oscar (to ALICE). And you ?

Alice (laughs). O, I'm — I'm — nobody.

Oscar. Indeed ! Then I am indebted to Nobody for my life, for which I am truly grateful (*bows to ALICE.* *She acknowledges*). Miss Howland, and you,

Mr. Howland, will, I trust, pardon this damp intrusion, when I inform you that (*sneezes*) I've caught a cold. Where was I? O, having arrived last night at the cosy little hotel at Mayburn, and catching — (*sneezes*)

Tom (aside). Hope it is not catching here.

Oscar. — Catching a glimpse of the lake this morning, I was seized with — (*sneezes*)— a desire to have a pull — (*sneezes*)

Tom (aside). That's a pull back.

Oscar. — On its placid waters. I equipped myself in this rather unfashionable suit, obtained a boat, and for a time — (*sneezes*)

Tom (aside). That's for the fifth time.

Oscar. — Enjoyed myself hugely, until seeing this young lady, Miss Nobody — (*sneezes*)

Tom (aside). Must have had a delightful duet.

Oscar. — Fishing, I made a quick turn to see what she was catching.

Alice. Caught a crab, and capsized the boat, that's all.

Oscar. No, that's not all; for you at once rowed to my assistance. Just in time, too, for these heavy boots were fast dragging me to the bottom (*sneezes*).

Tom (aside). I'm glad he's touched bottom.

Lina. O, Ally, has your dream come true?

Alice. Lina, don't you dare speak of that.

Oscar. A dream! That's good. What was it? Dreams are so delightful — (*shivers*)

Tom (aside). He shivers with delight.

Oscar. — When young ladies tell them.

Lina. O, this was the queerest —

Alice. Lina Howland! if you tell —

Lina. I will. You must know, Mr. — By the way, you have not introduced yourself!

Oscar. No? (*Aside*) I don't mean to, either. (*Aloud*) O, certainly, I must introduce myself (*claps hand to his breast*). I've left my cards at the hotel (*shivers*); and then I'm so flustered by being in the water so long (*shivers*); and this costume is not exactly fitted for a ceremonious call; so, if you please, for the present I will be — Mr. Nobody (*sneezes*).

Tom (aside). Nobody! He must be the great Julius Sneezer! But, my dear fellow, you must be very damp and miserable, soaked with water; fortunately, I can furnish you with a change of raiment. I won't answer for the fit.

Oscar. Anything will answer, thank you (*sneezes violently*).

Tom. You couldn't have a worse fit than that.

Oscar. But I'm anxious to hear about the dream.

Alice. That story will keep. Attend to your comfort, I beg.

Tom (comes R.). Do, old fellow, make yourself comfortable and presentable; for you certainly are not making a favorable impression, either upon the ladies or the carpet. Come.

Oscar (comes to R., turns and bows). Excuse me, ladies. (*Aside*) I have fallen unawares into my guardian's cosy nest. Unknown, I will learn more of my promised bride, and Miss Nobody. (*Follows TOM off, R. 1st E.*)

Lina. So you have fished to some purpose to-day.

Alice. Have I? I've always been told that there is as good fish in the sea as ever was caught; but let's wait until mine is properly dressed.

Lina. His address is that of a gentleman.

Alice. He is a gentleman. You should have heard his talk in the boat. Such expressions of gratitude! such a glow! such a — really, it almost upset me.

Lina. No wonder; your boat is so small.

Alice. Then, his eyes! Did you ever see finer?

Lina. Ha, ha, ha! the dream is certainly coming true.

Alice. Nonsense, Lina! Do you suppose he will give a second glance at such an insignificant romp as I?

Lina. No doubt of it! and with as much expression in those eyes — did you ever see finer, Ally? — as endangered your safety in the boat. Ha, ha, ha!

Alice. I won't give him the chance. I'll keep out of his way until he leaves the house.

Lina. Do, Ally. That will make him crazy to return. That's strategy, Ally.

Alice. Lina, you are provoking.

Lina. It is the smitten heart that feels the smart. (SPOFFORD appears in door c. with eye-glass to his eye.) The wounded bird that flutters.

Spofford (comes down c.). Yah, yah, yah! * that's me!

Alice }
Lina } Mr. Spofford!

Spofford. Yah, yah, yah! Spofford's the wounded bird that flutters wound the candle.

* Meaning "Yes, yes, yes!"

Alice. Ha, ha, ha! 'Tis the moth that flutters round the candle.

Spofford. Ith it? Yah, yah! I didn't know what kind of a bird it was. But I'd just as lives be a moth-bird as any other.

Lina. And where's the candle, Spicer dear? (*takes his R. arm and looks up into his face.*)

Spofford (aside). Spicer dear! She weally loves me. (*Aloud, looking down at her tenderly*) And can you weally ask, Lina dear?

Lina. Ha, ha, ha! So I'm a candle!

Spofford. No, no, no! Not a weal candle, you know; but something bwilliant!

Alice. Gas-light, for instance.

Spofford. Yah, yah, yah! But the candle's — wax candle, you know — not a bad idea, because you're so finely moulded.

Alice (aside). And have a stiek to support you.

Lina. Mr. Spofford, that was really a fine compliment.

Spofford. Yah, yah, yah! I thought you'd like it — the candle — made it out of my own head.

Lina. O, Spicer dear, how lonesome we should be without your daily visits!

Spofford. Yah, yah, yah! Fisher says to me this morning — Fisher, you know, is the landlord at the hotel over at Mayburn. Rough fellow, Fisher; but he amuses me, Fisher does. Eats with his knife, you know — Yah, yah, yah! Fisher says, "What will the young ladies do without you over at Squire Howland's? They can't play croquet on the lawn when you are gone." Then I said a good thing — a deuthid bright thing.

Lina. You?

Spofford. Yah, yah, yah! I said they'll be more for-lawn than ever! Yah, yah, yah! Wasn't that good?

Lina (wonderingly). More for Lawn?

Alice (slowly). More — for — lawn?

Spofford. Yah, yah, yah! Don't you thee? You won't go to the lawn; but you'll be more for going to the lawn; that is, you'll wish that you could go for more lawn; and you'd be lawn for — Death take it, I've got mixed somehow; but that forlorn idea was good; made it out of my own head.

Alice (sighs). High-ho!

Spofford. What's the matter with Mith Alice?

Lina. Low spirits, I guess.

Spofford. What the death makes folks say *high-ho*, when they're in low spirits?

Lina. You haven't said a word to her.

Spofford. O, she's jealous. (*Aside*) She's in love with me too, poor thing! (*Aloud*) Mith Alice, can you tell me why my left arm is stronger than my right?

Alice. Your left arm stronger than your right?

Spofford. Yah, yah, yah!

Alice. No; I'm sure I cannot.

Spofford. Because, you see, while there's more on my right arm it's Lina, and my left has something to spare.

Alice (locking her arm in his, L.). I see, something to spare me. Now that was very good.

Spofford. Yah, yah, yah! I thought you'd like that; made it out of my own head.

Alice (aside). There's nothing to spare there (*they promenade to left*).

Spofford. Now, what shall we do this morning; play croquet or ride? (*Turn to R. and promenade back.*)

Lina. Croquet, of course.

Alice. Ride, by all means.

Spofford. Yah, yah, yah! Croquet and ride.

Lina. No; croquet will be sufficient. I don't care to ride.

Alice. And I don't care to play croquet.

Spofford (stopping in c.). Yah, yah, yah!

Lina. I insist upon croquet.

Alice. The mallets are locked up in my room, and will not come out this morning.

Lina. I will not ride, and you cannot go without me.

Alice. O yes, *we* can. Can't we, Mr. Spofford?

Spofford. Well, now, weally —

Lina (goes R.). I understand you prefer Ally's company to mine!

Alice (goes L.). Two is company, and three is none. I understand!

Spofford. Yah, yah, yah! But, the deuce! Take two from one, and nothing remains. What am I?

Alice. A cipher, of course.

Spofford. Yah, yah, yah! I *sigh-for* company! Now that's a sudden thing, but it's good — that cipher — made out of my own head (*looks at each*). Poor things! I've fascinated both; but I can't marry but one. Why wasn't I born a Mormon? (*Enter Mrs. HOWLAND, R. 1 E.*) Ah, good morning, Mrs. Howland.

Mrs. H. Good morning, Mr. Spofford. I am glad you called. I wish to speak with you alone.

Spofford. Yah, yah, yah! Certainly. (*Aside*) Alone! What the deuce is the matter now? (*Enter Tom, R. 1 E.*)

Tom. I've induced our unknown friend to crawl into bed, after rattling down my meerschaums and other ornaments with his confounded shivering and sneezing; and I'm going over to Mayburn to get him a dry suit.

Mrs. H. Take the girls with you, Tom; they'll enjoy the ride.

Alice. Not I, mother. I'll take the opportunity of your entertaining Mr. Spofford — alone, to divest myself of my fishing-skirt. Don't be alarmed. I'll not disturb your delightful tête-à-tête. [*Exit door L.*]

Lina. And I'll go with Tom, mother. I don't think I shall enjoy the ride in his society; but to oblige you —

Tom. O, humbug! You're dying to go; you know you are; but I won't have you. You'll scare the horse.

Lina. What a pity that would be! You're such a poor driver. Now I will go, just to spite you. There's a short cut to the stable across the dahlia bed (*going*).

Tom. If you dare cross that, you'll catch it.

Lina. Stop me if you can, booby (*runs off c.*).

Tom (running after her). Stop, I say! Plague! torment! nuisance! [*Exit c.*]

Mrs. H. (seating herself L. of table). Mr. Spofford, please take a seat.

Spofford (seating himself R. of table). Yah, yah, yah!

Mrs. H. As a friend of my late husband, you were kind enough to search me out, and tender your sympathy.

Spofford. Yah, yah, yah! Mr. Howland, your late departed, was a nice man, he was. Used to lend me small sums, and didn't dun me. I always liked Mr. Howland. 'Twas mighty inconvenient, his dying.

Mrs. H. Your sympathy was very kind; and were I in my own house —

Spofford. Now, don't apologize. It makes no difference to me. I'm just as glad to see you here as if it was your own house.

Mrs. H. Yes; but still there is a difference —

Spofford. Not the least. I can call anywhere. I have a way of making myself at home at all times and in all places.

Mrs. H. Still, I am compelled by circumstances to thank you for your kindness, and ask you to cease your visits here.

Spofford. Circumstances! Yah, yah, yah! Neighbors talk about it! But who cares? Mere gossip. Not to be thought of.

Mrs. H. (*rising*). Mr. Spofford, I am very sorry you will not understand my meaning; it compels me to speak plainly. Your society is no longer agreeable to me, or the master of this house (*crosses to R.*). I shall give orders that you are not to be admitted to the house or the grounds. Good morning.

[*Exit R. 1 E.*

Spofford (*still seated*). Yah, yah, yah! Kicked out! that's the English of it! Now, now, now! what

the deuce is the matter with her? Somebody's been meddling. Heard something. And I'm to be cut off in the flower of my youth! Yah, yah, yah! Guess not, Mrs. Howland. Spofford hasn't set his head to work for this conclusion — just as both of those girls are so captivated that they would follow me to the end of the earth. Yah, yah, yah! I've got it. An elopement! Denced good idea. A ride over to the parson's what's his name at Mayburn to-night; a word in the parson's ear — a marriage! And then they won't give orders to keep me out of the house, or the grounds. They'd have no gwounds on which to do it then. That's good — no gwounds; made out of my own head, too. Yes, Miss Lina is the one; she's pretty, and silly; just suits me. The other — I'm afraid of her. I'll try it (*takes paper and pen, and writes*).

(*Enter C. NEWCOMB; he stops and looks at SPOFFORD, whose back is half turned to him.*)

Newcomb. Hallo! a new arrival? Chance for a speculation here. Strike while the iron's hot (*comes down L.; sits in chair and slaps the table with his hand*). Stranger, are you insured?

(*SPOFFORD looks up with a start; NEWCOMB starts; falls back in his chair. SPOFFORD does the same.*)

Newcomb. Spicer Spofford.

Spofford. Policy Newcomb.

Newcomb. What is your little game here, Spofford?

Spofford. Yah, yah! What's yours? You lead, and I'll follow suit.

Newcomb. There's no mystery about my presence here. The old gentleman, Mr. Abner Howland —

(ALICE steps in from door L., which should be well up stage, so that the parties at table have their backs to her; she sees them, and is about to retire, but stops) — is in difficulty. He owes a large sum to certain parties. He is unable to pay; so I am here.

Spofford. Yah, yah, yah! A keeper!

Alice. A keeper in uncle's house! [*Exit door L.*

Newcomb. Yes, a keeper. Now for your play.

Spofford. Yas! Play? You've hit it, Policy. I'm on a pleasure trip.

Newcomb. You've tripped already. Won't do. Try again, Spicer. The Boweliffe Insurance Company give their clerks no pleasure trips. Try again.

Spofford. Well, then, call it a diplomatic mission.

Newcomb. A diplomatic mission from the office? They'd as soon trust a baby.

Spofford. Ah, you don't know everything, Policy. I've found out something; a grand, universal discovery — all out of my own head, too.

Newcomb. Well, if you've found you've got a head, that is something no one has ever yet discovered.

Spofford. Yah, yah! Something royal — a fortune! This is a secret, Newcomb.

Newcomb. Of course.

Spofford. Yah, yah, yah! Well, you see, about three months ago, I was looking over the policy-book, and I came across a paid-up policy for twenty-five thousand dollars, taken out, ten years ago, by one Gordon Howland.

Newcomb. Gordon Howland? Yes. I wrote his myself; and 'twas a good day's work for me.

Spofford. Yah, yah, yah! Well, he's dead and gone, poor man; and the policy has never been paid.

Newcomb. Not paid! How is that?

Spofford. No claim has ever been made. Don't you see, he did it to surprise his family when he should die. Hid the policy. Couldn't tell when he was struck down; and there is the money unclaimed.

Newcomb. It was written in favor of his wife; and she —

Spofford. Is now in this house.

Newcomb. O, ho! I see! I thought I'd seen that face before. Good! And you, Spicer, like a good friend, have come down here to communicate the joyful news.

Spofford. Yah, yah, yah! I guess not, Policy. That's not my little game. O, I'm a deep one, Newcomb. I don't look it, but I am.

Newcomb. You don't look deep, Spofford, that's a fact.

Spofford. But I am. She's got 'two daughters — one too many — but they're both in love with me. Do you see? I'll marry one; you shall marry the other.

Newcomb. Well, that's kind of you, Spicer, to remember me in this; especially as you can't marry both. Why, Spicer, what a head you have!

Spofford. O, I'm sharp! I've worked my cards well; only just now — I'm kicked out!

Newcomb. Kicked out?

Spofford. Yes; forbidden the house by Mrs. Howland. Perhaps she's an idea that all is not right. But I'm going to play my trump card now.

Newcomb. Let's see the little joker.

Spofford. I've just written a line to Miss Lina. She's the favorite (*looks at paper*). "Meet me at the arbor to-night, at seven. I am forbidden to see you. They shall not part us. I'll bring a vehicle; the parson at Mayburn will expect us," &c., &c. She'll come. A little persuasion, and an elopement. See, Newcomb?

Newcomb. Short notice. Do you imagine she will consent?

Spofford. Don't I tell you she's in love with me? She'll come (*rises*). I'll tuck the note into her basket (*comes to r. and places note*). She'll be sure to see it. It's a deuced deep scheme; made out of my own head, too. Good-bye (*going*).

Newcomb (*runs after him and brings him down*). Stop! You are about to undertake a deed fraught with danger. You will drive over to Mayburn. The road is rocky, precipitous, dangerous. You may be pursued; perhaps overturned; shot at; killed! Let me write you an accidental policy.

Spofford. Yah, yah, yah! You do it well, Newcomb — deuced well; but a good cook makes pies and eats bread. Now that's good; sudden, but good. Made it out of my own head. [*Exit c.*]

Policy. Bread made out of his own head! Why shouldn't he — dough-head? What a fool! Marry the girl if you like; but I'll go to the fountain-head (*at door*). I'll try for the old lady. [*Exit c.*]

(*Enter ALICE, door L. She runs up to c. door and looks after them.*)

Alice. Ruin threatens my uncle; and my dear father has somewhere hidden the power to save him. It must be found. Be mine the task. Heads may scheme, but hearts, through faith and love, oft work and win (*stands at door with right hand raised*).

[*Curtain.*]

ACT II. — *Scene same as ACT I.* MRS. H. seated in easy-chair l. of table, winding yarn from a skein which NEWCOMB holds on his hands. He is seated r. of table, very stiff, with a marked look of admiration on his face. ALICE seated r., reading a book.

Mrs. H. I'm so sorry to trouble you, Mr. Newcomb. This must be an irksome task to you.

Policy. Not a bit of it, Mrs. Howland. I — I like it; 'tis a pleasure to sit and see one's self wound into the fingers of lovely woman. There's a positive feeling of attachment in it.

Mrs. H. Ah, you look at it in a business light; attachments, I believe, are in your line.

Policy (aside). That's a hit at the keeper. (*Aloud*) No; quite a romantic episode. To feel that with every twirl of your fingers I am being drawn into your domestic rounds, being drawn nearer and nearer to — (*bends towards* MRS. H.).

Mrs. H. Sit straight, Mr. Newcomb; you'll tangle the skein.

Policy (straightening up quickly). Thank you. (*Aside*) Hang the skein! (*Aloud*) How can I help unbending in your society? I have seen so little of female society, that I desire to grasp (*bends forward again with hands stretched towards* MRS. H.).

Mrs. H. Keep your hands apart, Mr. Newcomb; do, please!

Policy (*straightening up and stretching his hands apart*). Thank you. I must be very awkward.

Mrs. H. That is to be expected at a new employment. I think you told me, Mr. Newcomb, you are unmarried.

Policy. At present. Yes; a poor, forlorn bachelor. O, Mrs. Howland, I trust you may be spared the miseries that are the portion of such as I. No one to love; no one to sew on a button, or care a button.

Mrs. H. Be careful, Mr. Newcomb; my yarn.

Policy (*straightening up*). Thank you. (*Aside*) She's not interested in my yarn. (*Aloud*) Yes, Mrs. Howland. I am an unwritten policy, waiting for some one to take the risk; but a policy, Mrs. Howland, destined to enrich the taker with large dividends of affections during life, and a rich endowment when time shall break the brittle thread (*gesticulates*).

Mrs. H. You'll break my yarn. Do be careful, Mr. Newcomb.

Policy (*straightening up*). Thank you. (*Aside*) Confound the yarn!

Mrs. H. So rich a prize, Mr. Newcomb, will not long remain unsought.

Policy (*Aside*). Ah, ha! There's speculation in those eyes. (*Aloud*) Do you think so? — really, truly think so? Make me happy by repeating that prophecy.

Mrs. H. Your time will come, depend upon it.

Policy. "Fly time, and bring the joyful day." I have singled out the object of my adoration. As yet she knows not the deep love she has inspired; but she

holds the threads of my destiny in her two lovely hands — in her lovely two — O, pshaw! I feel I am rapidly being drawn nearer and nearer to —

Mrs. H. (*winding the last of the skein*). The end at last, Mr. Newcomb.

Alice (*laughs*). Ha, ha, ha!

Policy. Eh! What amuses you, Miss Alice?

Alice. Only my book, sir.

Policy. And your book is —

Alice. “The Fortune Hunter.” Have you read it?

Policy. No. Blood-and-thunder adventures in the mines do not interest me. I wonder they should you.

Alice. You are mistaken. The fortune-hunter that interests me is no daring desperado; but a smooth, calculating rascal, who is endeavoring to secure a good woman’s hand, that with it he may snatch her little fortune, and enjoy it.

Policy (*confused*). Ah — yes — indeed! Quite another character. Well, does he succeed?

Alice. I think not. He deserves to be defeated; but domestic dramas are such masquerades, we must wait patiently, until, like you and mother just now, we have reached the end.

Policy. O, yes, yes; exactly. (*Aside*) I don’t like this. Can she suspect? (*Aloud*) Shall I hold another skein, Mrs. Howland?

Mrs. H. That’s all, thank you. I am going to the garden (*goes up stage*).

Policy. May I go with you? I’m very, very fond of roaming among the lilies and daffo down dillies.

Mrs. H. I shall be very glad of your company, and will take pains to show you the sweetest and prettiest. [Exit c.]

Policy. Thank you. (*Aside*) And the richest is yourself. Newcomb, my boy, you're in favor here. Policies are looking up. [Exit c.]

Alice (*rises, and passes to chair L. of table*). Poor mother! She little dreams that she is the object of adoration, sought by uncle's keeper! I dare not tell her my discovery, lest I awaken hopes that may not be realized. I must begin my search at once. That policy, of such priceless value now, must be hidden somewhere in the old house. I have no clue to its hiding-place. I must find an excuse to visit our old home alone; and once within its walls, I will not give up the search until it's mine.

(*Enter OSCAR, R. 1 E.*)

Oscar. May I come in?

Alice. If you are the unskilful oarsman who was put to bed, like a naughty boy, as a punishment, and if you are ready to say you will never, never do so again, you may.

Oscar. I am ready to say anything that will give me an opportunity to speak with you.

Alice (*aside*). What a handsome fellow!

Oscar. I believe I am a little more presentable; and, thanks to our friend Tom's accommodation, fully recovered from the effects of my bath.

Alice. I am very glad to hear it. What a queer adventure!

Oscar. Very. It cannot be called romantic; for by

all the rules of modern fiction, it's the heroic young man who, at the peril of his life, saves the beautiful maiden from a watery grave. We have transgressed those rules, for a beautiful maiden has saved —

Alice. The heroic young man who couldn't manage his boat. Ha, ha, ha!

Oscar. Laugh at me if you will; but I shall always bless the awkward turn that made us friends.

Alice. Friends! Do you think so? I fancy that when you have left this place, you will laugh in turn at the unwomanly hoiden who caused the accident.

Oscar. If you think so, then I shall never leave this place.

Alice. Indeed! So, having caught my fish, I must preserve it. Ha, ha, ha!

Oscar. Preserve the recollection of how you caught it. I am content. I shall remember it as one of those chance occurrences which are turning-points in life.

Alice. So serious as that?

Oscar. You do not know me. For years I have been a wanderer in the old world, with wealth at my command; every wish gratified. I have enjoyed all the delights of travel. I have met many beautiful women; but I came back to my native land, heart whole. But now —

Alice. Excuse me; but this language from a stranger to a stranger —

Oscar. You will pardon. It may be presuming, but 'tis honest and earnest. Now, though we have never met until this day, I've found my fate. There is but one desire in my heart — to become nearer and dearer to you.

Alice. Sir — Mr. — you forget —

Oscar. It is that one word, forget, which has made me speak. But that you had said I should forget you, my voice would have been silent.

Alice. You have no right to speak thus to me.

Oscar. I have the right of every honest man to tell a woman of his love —

Alice. No more of this, I beg. My uncle and guardian will be pleased to see you, should you call during your stay at Mayburn.

Oscar. And you?

Alice. Will be glad to meet any friend my uncle shall present.

Oscar. And he will present me in form, and then we shall become —

Alice (giving her hand). Friends, if you desire it.

Oscar. Yes, dear friends. And that I may hasten the time, the good time coming, I will now take my leave. For the debt of gratitude I still owe you, let me slip this ring upon your finger, to remind you it will never be forgotten (*slips a ring upon her finger*). Ah! some one has been before me! A fair exchange —

Alice. — Would in this case be a robbery. I can never part with that.

Oscar. Ah! a favored suitor!

Alice. Yes, my father. You see it bears a motto.

Oscar (taking her hand, and examining the ring). A curious one. "Search the Scriptures." A wise precept.

Alice. My father, in apparent health, was stricken down suddenly, a year ago. He was brought home

and laid upon his bed, from which he never rose again. He was a kind and noble father, and we all loved him dearly. He could not speak or move. I noticed that his eyes moved towards that ring on his finger which I had never seen before. Believing that I understood his wish, I took it from his finger and placed it upon mine. The satisfied look that beamed upon me I shall never forget. I thought I understood his meaning, and morning and evening since he died I have followed its precept: I could not part with it. To me it seems a happy talisman.

Oscar. I would not take it from you. Let mine repose near it. It has no motto. I will give it one. "Search the giver." When you may come to know him better, you will find among the tokens of human frailty he must possess one redeeming virtue — a deep respect and a growing love for one to whom this new proof of goodness lends an added charm. Good-bye. We shall, we must meet again (*kisses her hand, and goes towards door.* *Enter* MRS. H. and NEWCOMB).

Mrs. H. You are going to leave us?

Oscar. Yes, Mrs. Howland, with many thanks for the kind treatment I have received.

Mrs. H. I hope you suffer no inconvenience from your accident.

Policy, R. Accident?

Mrs. H., c. This gentleman was capsized upon the lake this morning.

Policy. Ah, ha! Another fearful warning!

"Life; 'tis a strife, 'tis a bubble, 'tis a dream,

And man he is a little boat a-floating down the stream."

But the little boat will get upset, and the angry waves lash the frail craft, and drag —

Oscar, L. Excuse me, sir, but your boat is pitching rather heavily on a calm lake.

Policy. Are you insured?

Oscar. I'm in doubt; consult my agent.

Policy. Be warned; be wise. You are a waterman, a skimmer of the seas. You trust your skull to the mercy of a pair of sculls — mere spoons. Water is a deadly fluid when taken into the system in too copious draughts. You must see the folly of trusting yourself on the angry deep without a life-preserver.

Oscar (looking at ALICE). I was fortunate enough to find one in the hour of adversity.

Policy. The only real preservers are the Burst-ups and Blow-ups. I'm their accredited agent. Let me write you for ten thousand —

Oscar (laughs). Not to-day, thank you. I'll take my chances with the preserver I have already secured, and like so well that I am anxious to give it another trial. Good afternoon (*bows, and exits c.*).

Policy. He don't bite; after such an escape, too. O, he must listen to reason. Here, Mr. — what's your name? — one word — [*Exit c.*

Mrs. H. I declare! Mr. Newcomb is the most persevering man I ever met. It's a wonder he hasn't attempted to induce me to take a policy.

Alice (laughing). He will, mother, take my word for it; and such a policy!

Mrs. H. What do you mean, child? I haven't a cent to invest in such a venture.

Alice. He only requires your assent to write you, as he terms it, for life.

Mrs. H. Let me catch him trying it, that's all. I always did detest insurance.

Alice. Don't say that, mother; it may yet prove a blessing to us.

Mrs. H. That was the only subject your father and I disagreed upon.

Alice. Indeed! (*Aside*) That accounts for the hiding.

Mrs. H. It's tempting Providence — that it is; and I'm glad your father took my advice, and let it alone. I had my way in that.

Alice. Indeed! (*Aside*) If I cannot disprove that, I shall be no true daughter of a noble father. (*Exit L. as LINA enters c. hurriedly.*)

Lina (*throwing off shawl and hat on chair by window*). So — so — Mr. Spofford has been forbidden the house, and by you, mother! It's a shame to treat a gentleman in this manner!

Mrs. H. Lina!

Lina, R. I *will* speak. What right have you to do this?

Mrs. H., R. I acted on your father's wishes, Lina.

Lina. Indeed! Am I to be treated like a child? I like Mr. Spofford, and I will not allow my admirers to be driven away in this manner. When I am tired, I know how to rid myself of them.

Mrs. H. Mr. Spofford came here as *my* friend, Lina. You will certainly allow me the privilege you claim, of ridding myself when I am tired?

Lina. O, pshaw! You know very well that was but an excuse.

Mrs. H. Then I acted rightly. No gentleman would seek to gain admission here by a subterfuge. I am sorry you are not satisfied, *Lina* (*crosses to R.*), but your father's wishes must take precedence with me. I hope you will think better of my action. [*Exit R. 1 E.*]

Lina (*stands looking after her*). Mother, mother! don't go! — I've driven her off! Just like me. But she has spoiled all my pleasure. He won't come here again. (*Enter TOM C., runs down and puts his arm about her waist.*)

Tom. Here you are again, darling.

Lina (*slipping away from him to R.*). You here again, booby?

Tom. Hallo! What's the matter? We are alone.

Lina. How can two be alone?

Tom (*running to her and clasping her in his arms*). Only when they are one — one in heart — in soul.

Lina (*pushing him away*). Twaddle, Mr. Howland — borrowed from the pages of the last new novel.

Tom (*c. staring at her*). Twaddle! Borrowed! Mister Howland! Somebody must be listening (*creeps on tiptoe up to door c.*). Nobody there! (*In same manner to door L.*) Nobody there! Ah! (*runs and lifts the cloth on table; looks under*). Nobody there! What can be the matter — *Miss — Miss Howland?*

Lina. Well, Mr. Howland?

Tom (*angrily*). Will you just tell me the meaning of this confounded — (*LINA looks at him sternly*) ah — I mean, darling — explain — explain —

Lina. Attend to your geraniums — your mammoth cabbages — your prize poppies — and let me alone.

Tom (looking round). Confound it, somebody's ear must be at a keyhole! (*Aloud*) I shall do nothing of the sort. My attention at this moment is bent on attending a fairer flower — the flower — (*holding out his hand*). Come, pet —

Lina (slapping his hand). Go, pest!

Tom. We are unwatched; it's all right. You are alone with me who loves you. (*Gets angry.*) Confound it, Lina, this has gone far enough. I demand an explanation: why are you so cold — so distant? (*She turns upon him suddenly; he runs behind table.*) I see it all. You are not a pet, but in a pet, because Spicer Spofford has gone. You grieve at his absence: I don't. I rejoice that he has at last been made to see his place — outside the door.

Lina. You rejoice! — you! — at this insult to a gentleman in every way your superior?

Tom. Lina!

Lina. Silence, sir. I will not listen to you. I doubt not you are the cause of his dismissal — you, with your absurd jealousy!

Tom. Well, I like that. I jealous? That's good! I'm a martyr. Give me another shot!

Lina. I give you what he has received — a dismissal.

Tom. You don't mean that, Lina?

Lina. I do. From this moment, all is at an end between us. Henceforth we are strangers.

Tom. Yes, I understand — before company. (*Aside*)

She can't mean it. (*Enter ALICE, L.*) O, no, I see. (*Aloud*) Very well; henceforth we are strangers. That suits me. I shan't be the first to ask an introduction.

Alice. Quarrelling again. You children should be locked up in separate apartments.

Lina. O, no. Tom and I have come to an understanding at last; we shall never quarrel again — shall we, *darling*?

Tom (aside). Confound it, I don't understand this skirmishing. Never mind; I'll keep up the excitement. (*Aloud*) No, baggage, we shall never, never, never be friends. You, the flower of the family? Bah! you're a quarrelsome, disagreeable, disappointed old maid, and I'll never speak to you again — never!

[*Exit c.*

Lina. Ally, do you know Mr. Spofford has been forbidden the house?

Alice. Yes, dear.

Lina. Yes, dear? And can you calmly brook tyranny? Such interference with our rights and liberties —

Alice. Liberty to flirt and mitten! Is that what you mean, Lina? For my part, I am glad he has been retired. He is very amusing for a while; but one soon tires of a man like him, whose wit is all out of his own head. You understand? Yah, yah, yah! (*laughs*).

Lina. I think he's splendid; and I, for one, shall not drop his acquaintance in this summary manner.

Alice. Not when your father wishes it?

Lina. My father's wishes can be easily made to give place to mine.

Alice. And you desire to continue this acquaintance?

Lina. I certainly do, and shall (*goes to basket, seats herself, and takes work.* ALICE *goes L.*).

Alice (aside). She must have a deeper interest in this man than I imagined. Shall I disclose his true character? Would she believe me? (*LINA discovers note.*) Ah! the note — I had forgotten that. She reads it.

Lina. Poor fellow! (*To ALICE*) You see he has not forgotten me. Even now he is waiting for me at the foot of the garden (*rises; drops note into basket*).

Alice. You will not meet him, Lina?

Lina. Not when the poor fellow is dying to see me?

Alice. Lina, you must not. He is an adventurer — a worthless fortune-hunter.

Lina. Whom you, if I mistake not, were pleased to be noticed by. Ah! Alty, beware of jealousy.

Alice. Lina, I detest that man!

Lina. And I like him. I shall go. And if I should not return before father arrives, tell him I have gone to comfort a slighted guest. [*Exit door L.*]

Alice. Am I awake? Will she elope with that man? (*Runs to basket and takes note.*) 'Tis plainly proposed, and she — (*tosses note on table*). No, no, this must not be. She is wild, giddy, and in her wilfulness may throw herself away. Triumph he cannot. He is deceived, believing us to be sisters. Drive to

Mayburn. Ah! happy thought! I can save her, and serve myself (*runs to door L. and turns key*). She has left her shawl and hat here (*runs to chair and takes them*). I do like a frolic; and I will mystify Mr. Spicer Spofford (*puts on shawl*), balk his matrimonial designs (*unwinding veil from hat and putting it on*), and gain an entrance to the old house at Mayburn. It's a wild frolic; but, with so much at stake, the end must justify the means (*throws veil over her hat, and exits c.* MRS. H. enters R. 1 E.).

Mrs. H. Where are you going, Lina? Poor child, she is still angry (*goes to door, c.*). Lina! (*Enter POLICY c.*).

Policy. It's no use calling, Mrs. Howland. I tried to stop her, hearing you call; but she sped across Mr. Tom's flower-beds in the most reckless manner. Won't I do as well? I'm awful lonesome.

Mrs. H. (*coming down c.*). Ah! a little homesick.

Policy. O, no; perfectly comfortable here, Mrs. Howland. How could I be homesick when I am near the object of my hopes?

Mrs. H. Ah! somebody wants a policy.

Policy. I hope so; I think so; I flatter myself somebody does. Ah! (*sighs, and clasps his hands, looking tenderly at Mrs. H.*).

Mrs. H. I'm glad of it for your sake, though I detest anything that bears the name of policy.

Policy (*crestfallen*). Oh! (*Aside*) There's a damper. (*Enter TOM, c.*)

Tom. Hallo! Where are the girls? Uncle has arrived, and is in a towering passion. Something's

gone wrong. Look after his tea. O! here he is (*comes*
L. *Enter* ABNER; *stops in doorway*).

Abner. O, Mary, Mary, Mary!

Policy (*coming* R.). O, Mary's her name. I'll call her pet names. Mary — Molly — Polly!

Mrs. H. (R. C.) Why, Abner, what's the matter?

Abner. After your promise to me — your solemn promise to me, that man Spofford is still allowed the liberty of my house!

Mrs. H. I obeyed your wishes; spoke with Mr. Spofford; and he has left the house, never to return.

Abner. Left it! Yes; in company with my daughter!

Policy (*aside*). His daughter? Ho, ho! Spicer has made a slight mistake!

Tom. Lina gone!

Mrs. H. You must be mistaken, Abner.

Abner. Do you suppose I do not know my own daughter? I met them on the road, with that man driving like mad. O, this is unendurable! (*comes to table and picks up note*).

Mrs. H. I do not understand it.

Abner. This explains all. The villain has eloped with Lina!

Tom. Gone — eloped — my Lina?

Abner. Your Lina?

Tom (*aside*). O Lord! I've let the cat out of the bag. (*aloud*) No, no. Our Lina. She is ours, you know; the flower of the family. Let's drive after them with the blacks; we can overtake them. Come, come! there is no time to be lost.

Abner. Not a step. She has made her own choice. Henceforth she is no daughter of mine.

Lina (*outside L., knocking at door*). Uncle, mother, let me out!

Tom. Ah, that dear, dear voice (*runs, unlocks door, and throws it open*). She's here! My — our Lina! (*Enter LINA. TOM is about to embrace her; she pushes him one side.*)

Lina. Uncle, welcome home (*kisses him*).

Abner (*with his arm about her*). My child, my child! I thought I had lost you!

Lina. Because I was not here to greet you?

Abner. No. Because I thought I saw you riding towards Mayburn with Spicer Spofford. I'll swear 'twas your hat and shawl.

Lina. My hat and shawl? I left them here (*goes to window*), and they are gone. It must have been Alice.

Abner and Mrs. H. Alice!

Lina. It's one of her wild frolics. She must have turned the key upon me, and gone.

Abner. With this shame-faced adventurer. I see it all. This note was hers.

Lina (*coming down L.*). That note —

Mrs. H. 'Tis false, Abner Howland. My child could not stoop to a disgraceful act.

Abner. Yet she has gone — stolen from my house in disguise. It could be no other. This note; the locking of that door. She has disgraced us all.

Policy (*aside*). Spicer's head is level after all. He'll win.

Mrs. H. False, all false. She will return to prove her innocence.

Abner. Not to my house. My child must not be contaminated by her influence.

Lina (aside). What shall I do? I dare not tell the truth.

Tom (extreme L.). Darling, I knew you could not be false.

Lina. Hush!

Tom. Certainly, before company.

Abner. She has forsaken my roof; henceforth to us she is lost.

Mrs. H. No; she is my child. Though all the world turn against her, my heart tells me she is innocent. My arms shall be open to receive her. My child, my child, my child (*sobs, and falls into ABNER'S arms*).

TABLEAU.—ABNER supporting MRS. H., c. TOM and LINA looking on. POLICY, R. with a red handkerchief to his eyes. Curtain.

ACT III.—SCENE: *Same as ACT II.* MRS. HOWLAND seated R. of table, handkerchief to her eyes.

Mrs. H. A long, weary night of watching; the morning speeding fast, and still no signs of Alice. Her sudden disappearance, that suspicious note, may be to Abner's fretful nature sufficient proofs of guilt; but to me, her mother, they are nothing. She would never forsake me for a lover without my full consent. No, no; I know my girl too well for that; and though her absence may alarm me, I trust her fully. She can do no wrong.

(*Enter NEWCOMB, c. Stops in doorway.*)

Newcomb. There she is; seventy-five thousand virtues, neatly packed in bombazine and crape. A fortune just for the asking. Now's the time; the promise of her hand must be mine ere the return of the victorious Spicer. I wish she was a trifle younger; but, hang it! where money is the mark, it won't do to stick at trifles (*comes down R.*). Ahem! Mrs. Howland.

Mrs. H. Well, Mr. Newcomb.

Newcomb. Mrs. Howland — can — will — that is, do you — (*Aside*) Hang it, where's my tongue? This business is not so easy as I imagined; not a bit like insurance. (*Aloud*) Are you insured? No, no, — engaged? Are you engaged?

Mrs. H. Not at present, Mr. Newcomb. I will listen to you with pleasure. You were saying —

Newcomb. Yes, thank you. I was saying — thank you (*takes out handkerchief and wipes his face*), it's very warm —

Mrs. H. Yes, and you have been walking, and become heated. You should keep cool, Mr. Newcomb.

Newcomb. O, I do — I am. Just now, I'm absolutely shivering. Took a long walk this morning over to Mayburn. Saw your house. What a cosy little nest!

Mrs. H. Do you think so?

Newcomb. — O, splendid; fit abode for gods and goddesses, *satans*, and those other *paragorical* things, you know; quite poetic. Of course, it's insured — I mean comfortable.

Mrs. H. Very comfortable, Mr. Newcomb, but not insured. (*Aside*) He wants to make a penny by insuring it, I see that.

Newcomb. O, yes, yes; pity it is tenantless.

Mrs. H. It will be so no longer; indignant at Mr. Howland's suspicions, I propose this very day to quit this roof, and take possession of my own house.

Newcomb. Right. Mistress in your own house, you may laugh to scorn the suspicions of the world. But then you need a protector, Mrs. Howland, against the storms of —

Mrs. H. A protector? Nonsense! with a lightning-rod at every corner.

Newcomb. Lightning-rods! thunder! I — I — beg pardon.

Mrs. H. (*aside*). It's the old story. He wants to insure it.

Newcomb. Ah, Mrs. Howland, there are storms which surpass the fury of the elements. You in that lonely dwelling will require a protector that shall be like the sheet-anchor of hope in the convulsions of life, a protector that shall defy the threats of fate, the torch of incendiary —

Mrs. H. Ah, Mr. Newcomb, you have fire in your eye.

Newcomb. Both of them, Mrs. Howland; I can't help it. I blaze with excitement at the thought of you, a lonely woman in that lovely dwelling — no, a lovely dwelling in that lonely — pshaw! —

Mrs. H. I understand you perfectly, Mr. Newcomb. You want to protect me?

Newcomb. I do, I do, I do!

Mrs. H. Do you really think there is need of it?

Newcomb. Let your own heart answer that question, Mrs. Howland.

Mrs. H. And the terms, Mr. Newcomb?

Newcomb. On your own terms, Mrs. Howland. I am ready, willing, and eager to write you — ah, protect you.

Mrs. H. That's a very liberal offer. I never received such a one before.

Newcomb. Ah, Mrs. Howland, you flatter me.

Mrs. H. But my judgment has always been opposed to such proceedings. I dare not tempt Providence.

Newcomb. (*Aside*) Opposed — proceedings — and she's buried one husband! (*Aloud*) Ah, Mrs. Howland, fear not; lightning never strikes twice in the same place. 'Tis a safe investment.

Mrs. H. And you would advise me to take a policy?

Newcomb (on his knees). I do; dear woman, I do. Take a policy — this Policy — and bid defiance to the storms of adversity, the billows of fate, the — the — O, I will be your sheet-anchor, your — your —

Mrs. H. (rising). Mr. Newcomb, are you beside yourself?

Newcomb. No, I am beside you, waiting for your lovely hand to lift me to happiness; your lovely voice to insure, — ahem, — assure me you will take this fond and loving Policy —

Mrs. H. No more, sir. I thought that in your enterprising zeal you wished to insure my dwelling. I have been mistaken. Never address me in this manner again; if you do, you may find I have a protector in Abner Howland, who would not hesitate to horse-whip you for insulting his brother's widow. [*Exit L.*

Policy (still on his knees). Yes; thank you.

“She has gone from my gaze like a beautiful dream.”

Thus vanish my hopes of fortune, and Spicer is victorious (*rises*).

(*Enter SPOFFORD cautiously, c. very dejected.*)

Spofford. Sh — sh — Are you alone, Newcomb?

Newcomb. Ah, he's here. Welcome, victorious Spicer.

Spofford. Don't, Newcomb, don't; it's deuced unpleasant, you know, in my present crushed and forlorn condition.

Newcomb. What's the matter? Where's the bride?

Spofford. Don't, Newcomb, don't! I weally can't stand it! I'm a martyr, you know.

Newcomb. You're a noodle! Speak out, man. You eloped, didn't you?

Spofford. Yah, yah, yah! Splendid beginning, you know. I came in a buggy; she came in a shawl and hat, with a deuced veil over her lovely face. Awful shy she was; wouldn't speak a word, you know. So romantic. But she jumped into the buggy, and we drove to Mayburn.

Newcomb. Ah, like Cæsar, "you came, you saw" —

Spofford. You keep still, Newcomb. I didn't seize her; she went willingly. But I'd forgotten one important item — to find out where the parson lived! Wouldn't do to ask her, you know — so I drove to the hotel, jumped out to inquire, leaving her in the buggy. When I came out, Miss Lina was gone!

Newcomb. Yes; and in her place you found Miss Alice, the heiress. You're a lucky dog, Spicer.

Spofford. Miss — Miss — I don't understand, Newcomb.

Newcomb. Miss Alice is the daughter of Mrs. Howland, the other only the adopted child of Abner Howland. They were both in love with you, and by stratagem Alice gained the place you designed for the other. So, you see, fate, and not your infernal head, has placed the winning card in your hand.

Spofford. Yah, yah, yah! I see. But where is she?

Newcomb. Where you left her, of course.

Spofford. In the buggy? No, Newcomb; you're

wrong. When I returned, the vehicle was empty. I've not seen her since.

Newcomb. You surprise me. She left with you. She has not returned.

Spofford. Not returned! Good gracious, Newcomb, don't tell me that. I shall be arrested for kidnapping, you know. What's to be done?

Newcomb. Nonsense; put a bold face on the matter. She left with you — eloped, and thus has compromised her fair fame. You're in luck again. Boldly ask Uncle Howland's consent to your marriage. He'll be glad enough to give it; and she'll be glad to marry you. You say she loves you?

Spofford. Of course; she couldn't help it, you know.

Newcomb. Then be resolute, and she is yours. Here comes Mr. Howland. Attack him boldly.

Spofford. Attack him? What for? I wouldn't harm a hair of his head.

Newcomb. Pshaw! Boldly ask her hand.

Spofford. He'll break my head.

Newcomb. No matter; it hasn't been of much use to you. No doubt you'll get along better without it. (*Enter ABNER, C.*)

Abner. How — you here, villain? (*seizes SPOFFORD by the throat R. and shakes him*). How dare you enter my house again? A pretty scandal you've raised (*shakes*), rascal!

Spofford. Don't, Mr. Howland — please don't; it hurts, you know.

Newcomb. Spare the repentant prodigal, Mr. Howland, he comes to make reparation.

Abner. Reparation! What reparation can you make for this dastardly outrage?

Spofford. I have come to ask your consent to our marriage.

Abner (releasing him). That's something like. It's a pity you hadn't taken the straight road in the first place.

Newcomb. He feared you would frown upon his pretensions; so, like a skilful general, has taken possession of the town before he makes terms. Ah, Mr. Howland, love, young love will dare much — (*aside*) for money.

Abner. So you wish to marry Alice. (*Aside*) It's the only course left after this elopement, and it will remove him from Lina's path. (*Aloud*) You will marry her at once?

Spofford. Yah, yah, yah! I love her to distraction. Give your consent, and I can gain hers.

(*Enter MRS. HOWLAND, L.*)

Abner. Very well. I've no doubt you're a very nice young man; and you have my free consent to marry Alice Howland, — the sooner the better.

Mrs. H. And I forbid the banns.

Abner. Mary, you are crazy. (*Aside*) She eloped with him. She must and shall marry him, to save her reputation and our honor.

Mrs. H. You have no right to plan and plot in her absence. (*To SPOFFORD.*) Sir, where is my daughter?

Abner. Hiding until her lover there wins our consent to their marriage.

(Enter ALICE, C.)

Alice. 'Tis false! She is here to answer for herself.

Spoxford (R. C. to NEWCOMB, R.). O, it's all up.

Newcomb. It's all right; stick to your text. Don't give up the girl. Seventy-five thousand reasons against it.

Mrs. H. (running up to ALICE in door). O, Alice, child, where have you been?

Alice (clasping her in her arms). On an errand, mother, full of promise. Good morning, nunky; are you very, very angry? (Enter LINA, R.) Lina, darling, here I am, safe and sound.

Lina. Where have you been? (going towards ALICE.)

Abner (stepping before her). Stop! There must be no communication between you and that misguided girl until this serious business is settled.

(ALICE goes down to L., followed by her mother. NEWCOMB, R., SPOFFORD with him. LINA, R. C. ABNER, C. ALICE, L. C. MRS. H., L. ALICE HOWLAND.)

Alice. Now, nunky, don't be angry; it's only one of my frolics, you know.

Abner. Look at this gentleman — Mr. Spicer Spofford.

Alice. How do do, Spicer? (Laughs) Ha, ha, ha!

Abner. Silence! This gentleman has asked your hand in marriage of me, your guardian, since you are a member of my household. What is your answer?

Alice. What, was yours, nunky? He didn't ask me.

Abner. I gave my full consent.

Alice. Then he must be perfectly satisfied.

Abner. And you will marry him?

Alice. Let me look at him (*crosses; goes round SPOFFORD, eying him from head to foot, SPOFFORD turning and facing her as she goes. She then returns to R. C.*). I'd rather not, if you please, nunky.

Spofford. And that is your answer?

Alice (imitating). Yah, yah, yah! Made it out of my own head, Spicer.

Spofford (to NEWCOMB). She's laughing at me.

Newcomb. They laugh who win. You wait.

Abner. Alice, it grieves me that you refuse to take the only course that can justify your absence from my roof the past night. It is my duty to guard my daughter from intercourse with one so reckless of reputation.

Alice. One moment, uncle. Lives have been ruined, hearts broken, by the poisonous breath of suspicion. Pause, ere you make the child of your dead brother a mark for the unmerciful to assail with slanderous tongue. I can justify my absence.

Abner. Only by consenting to become that man's wife.

Alice. Never! Never!

Abner. Then you must quit my house.

Lina. O, father!

Abner. Peace, my child; your fair fame must be protected. She must quit this house at once.

Mrs. H. Let us go, my child. The old house is still left us.

Abner. No, no; not you, Mary. I cannot spare you.

Mrs. H. Nor I my Alice. Better so; mother and child will not be parted.

Abner. Alice, would you rob your mother of her good home?

Alice. Uncle, would you rob me of my good name?

Abner. 'Tis your own fault. Marry Spofford.

Alice. Never! Never!

Abner. Then go, ungrateful child, go!

Alice. No; I will not leave this place until I have justified my actions. Uncle, you must—you shall hear me.

Abner. Will you marry that man?

Alice. Yes.

Abner. How?

Mrs. H. Alice!

Newcomb. It's all right, Spofford: I told you so.

Alice. On one condition.

Newcomb. O, hang it!

Alice. You shall hear my story. If you then desire it, I will marry him.

Abner. H'm! Well, go on.

Alice. I do confess I left this house in Mr. Spofford's company.

Abner. The truth at last.

Alice. Every word, nunky. By him I was driven to Mayburn.

Spofford. Yah, yah, yah! I'll swear to that.

Alice. He left me in the carriage while he entered the hotel. Left alone, I leaped from the buggy, and vanished from his sight.

Abner. Indeed! Who will swear to that?

(Enter OSCAR, c.)

Oscar. I will, guardy.

Abner. What? Oscar Loring!

Alice. Oscar! (He goes L.)

Lina. Oscar!

Newcomb. Now, who the deuce is Oscar?

Abner (grasping his hands). Welcome, welcome home, my boy! Lina, here he is. Alice — Ah, I forgot.

Oscar (crosses to LINA). Have I been properly introduced? (shakes hands.)

Lina. Welcome, welcome home!

Oscar. Thank you. (Crosses to ALICE.) And what says Miss Nobody? (shakes hands.)

Alice. I knew you was a prince in disguise.

Abner. Oscar, Oscar, one moment. That young lady at present is in disgrace.

Alice. No, nunky — on trial.

Oscar. Then I am here to be her advocate. I've heard queer stories of an elopement, and think I can help on the *denouement*.

Alice. You?

Oscar. Yes, I.

Abner. That young lady eloped last night with that gentleman, Mr. Spicer Spofford.

Oscar. Did she? Then it must have been the runaway couple I saw drive up to the hotel at Mayburn, where the young lady left her gallant and took refuge in the little house opposite.

Mrs. H. Our old home at Mayburn!

Alice. Where I passed the night alone.

Oscar. Not quite alone, for I was her companion.

ALL. You!

Oscar. Her unseen companion. You must know I am rather inquisitive; and on seeing this young lady — whom I recognized — desert her companion and enter the tenantless house, I was very curious to know what it all meant. So, leaving our spectacled friend searching for her, I lighted my cigar, strolled over under the trees, and watched. Soon I saw a light in one of the lower rooms; then it passed to another; then up stairs; in short, I saw that slender flame appear and disappear, first in one place, then another, for two mortal hours; finally, it disappeared. Still I watched. I must have smoked a dozen cigars, and I've had no breakfast. An hour ago the door opened, the young lady appeared, started in the direction of your house, guardy, and I have followed her.

(*Enter TOM, c.*)

Tom. I'll swear to that. How are you, old fellow?

Oscar. Ah, glad to see you again, my boy.

Abner. Oscar Loring! Tom!

Tom. I know. I've been in the secret.

Lina. You have? and didn't tell me?

Tom. No; spoiled your little flirtation, Lina.

Lina. O, you nuisance!

Tom. Ah! you baggage!

Mrs. H. Children!

Abner. But here's mystery piled on mystery. Is anybody sane enough to tell me what it's all about?

Alice, c. Let me speak, uncle, for I alone can

clear it. You see I have a witness to my disappearance and reappearance.

Abner. Yes, that's all right. But why were you in the house?

Alice. For your sake, nunky. Yesterday morning I overheard two individuals in this house — who shall be nameless — concocting a villanous plot —

Spofford. The game's up, Newcomb.

Newcomb. It does look hazy.

Alice. — By which I learned that you, nunky, are embarrassed, and that a keeper had been placed in your house. I further learned that my father had left, somewhere, the power to save you. I took advantage of a note which was not meant for me.

Abner. Not meant for you? (*looks at her, then at LINA, who turns away her head.* *ABNER whistles.*)
Go on.

Alice. I reached the old house by stratagem, and commenced my search. For hours I ransacked every accessible hiding-place, and had about given up the search, when, in closing a drawer, this ring, my father's gift, was caught, and attracted my attention; the motto, "Search the Scriptures," seemed at that moment an inspiration, for I flew to father's room. There on the bureau reposed his inseparable companion — a pocket-bible, — this — (*produces book*). I opened it; and there, neatly folded, was this (*opens book and unfolds policy*).

Newcomb. The policy for twenty-five thousand dollars?

Spofford. On the Boweliffé office?

Alice. Right. A paper which, presented at that office, will place in your hands, nunky, a sum sufficient to free you from embarrassment.

Abner. And you would give this to me?

Alice. With mother's consent.

Mrs. H. Do with it as you please; I detest policies.

Abner. I'm an old fool. You'd have done this for me, and I would have turned you out of doors. O, child, child! you have made me ashamed of myself! (*claps her in his arms*).

Alice. Shall I marry Mr. Spofford? 'Tis to him we are indebted for all this good fortune. He came all the way from the Bowcliffe office to let us know of it —

Spofford. Yah, yah, yah! I'll swear to that.

Alice. — After he should have succeeded in marrying a daughter of Mrs. Howland!

Abner. The villain! I see it all. No, no, Alice, I was wrong. The old selfish feeling got possession of me; but now, he must not only be a bold man but a noble one who could gain my consent.

Oscar. What say you to me, guardy?

Abner. You? Why, you are promised to another; she'd break her heart — The Flower of the Family!

Oscar. Ah, guardy, who is The Flower of the Family?

Abner. Why, my — (*looks at LINA; hesitates, looks at ALICE*). She of course who at another's need would dare all to become an angel of mercy (*takes ALICE in his arms*). She's here.

Alice. And you will use the policy to free you from

that debt which makes it necessary to keep that man Newcomb in the house.

Abner. No, child, for Oscar has returned; he will aid me until the arrival of the White Squall.

Oscar. The White Squall has arrived. She was signalled when I left Mayburn.

Abner. Then I have no need of help.

Spofford (to NEWCOMB). Hadn't we better be going? I've made an ass of myself.

Newcomb. So you have; all out of your own head. (*Coming forward.*) Mrs. Howland, I rejoice at your good fortune. Here you have another proof of the inestimable benefits of insurance. The man is taken off; but when he leaves behind such solid comfort as that policy will give, the widow's heart must leap for joy.

Abner. Your further services can be dispensed with, Mr. Newcomb. I will settle with your employer this very day. As for you, Mr. Spofford —

Spofford (alarmed). Spare me. I'll see the policy paid at once. It was only a joke, you know. Made it out of my own head. Come, Newcomb, let's be going.

Abner. Go, fools; and learn by this experience that Honesty is the best Policy.

Newcomb. Honesty! What's that? The best policies are put out by the Burst-up and Blow-up, the Never-say-Die, and the —

Abner (takes him by the ear and leads him up to door). I am sorry to be obliged to put out a very bad Policy.

Newcomb (at door). Thank you. I'll call again

when you're at leisure. I want to ask a very important question.

Abner. What is that?

Newcomb. Are you insured? . . . [Exits c.]

Abner. Now, Mr. Spofford, shall I attend you?

Spofford. Don't trouble yourself (*backs up to door, holding on to his ears*). I can find the way out. Yah, yah, yah! (*turns and runs off c.*)

Abner. Good riddance! (*Comes down.*) Now, my dear boy, let me present you in due form to the fair being I have pictured to you, whom I have reared to become your wife. Lina, my child!

Lina, R. c. Not me, uncle! I do not deserve him. I have deceived you.

Abner. You deceived me!

Lina. Yes; my heart has long been given to another.

Abner. And that other? •

Tom, R. (taking LINA'S hand.) Your unworthy nephew.

Lina. Yes, uncle; I love Tom, and Tom loves me.

Tom. Heart and soul.

Abner. What! you two? Why, you fight like cats and dogs!

Lina. Only before company.

Tom. Preparatory lessons in connubial bliss.

Lina. Tom, you wretch!

Tom. Lina, you — darling!

Abner. I see it all. I've been humbugged. But what's to become of you, Oscar?

Oscar. I leave my fate in these dear hands which once saved me from a watery grave.

Alice. A very shallow one — two feet of water. Ha, ha, ha!

Abner. More mystery. When shall we get at the bottom of it?

Mrs. H., c. When I understand how Gordon Howland could have insured his life without my knowing it.

Tom. When Lina is my darling wife.

Lina. And we shall begin to quarrel in earnest.

Oscar. When I become the sole owner of this charming life-preserver.

Alice. And my dream shall come true after all.

Abner. All for self. Well, have your way. The old man plotted and failed. The young romp, whom nobody dreamed had the power, has outwitted a pair of scoundrels.

Alice. For which she takes no credit. The ring with its precious motto has been the talisman to success.

Abner. And the genius of the ring proved herself, after all, The Flower of the Family.

ABNER, c. MRS. HOWLAND.

R. LINA, TOM.

OSCAR, ALICE, L.

(Curtain.)

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