



BUBBLES

A. COMEDY IN THREE ACTS

BY

JANE SWENARTON

DICK & FITZGERALD

PUBLISHERS

18 Ann Street, New York

PLAYS FOR FEMALE CHARACTERS ONLY

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DICK & FITZGERALD, Publishers, 18 Ann Street, N. Y.

BUBBLES

A Comedy in Three Acts

By JANE SWENARTON

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NEW YORK
DICK & FITZGERALD
18 ANN STREET

86577
52054
12298

TMP 96-006827

40 ²⁵/₁

©Cl.D 43939

MAY 18 1916

no. 1

NOTE.—The professional acting rights of this play are expressly reserved by the publishers to whom theatrical managers who wish to produce it should apply. Amateur representation may be made without such application and without charge.

BUBBLES.

CHARACTERS.

JAMES EVANS.....	<i>An American father</i>
LINDA EVANS.....	<i>His wife</i>
PATRICIA	} <i>Their children</i>
BARBARA, familiarly known as "BARBIE" }	
PETER.....	<i>An old friend of Patricia</i>
CHESTER FIELDS.....	<i>A suitor of Patricia</i>
GRANDFATHER.....	<i>known to "BARBIE" as "GRANDA"</i>
JONATHAN.....	<i>A boy doll</i>

TIME.—*The present.*

LOCALITY.—*Suburb of any city.*

TIME OF PLAYING.—*One and a half hours.*

SYNOPSIS.

ACT I.—SCENE, garden of EVANS' home. TIME, afternoon.

ACT II.—SCENE I, same as ACT I. TIME, late afternoon of the following day. SCENE II, nearly midnight.

ACT III.—SCENE, same as ACT I. TIME, evening of next day.

COSTUMES.

Modern and appropriate to characters portrayed.

INCIDENTAL PROPERTIES.

ACT I.—Tennis rackets and balls on bench. Magazines, papers, books. Basket of daisies on table. Spectacles for GRANDFATHER. Tennis racket for PETER.

ACT II.—Cane for CHESTER. Tennis racket for PETER. Book. SCENE II.—Pebbles for CHESTER. Lighted candle and shoe for BARBIE.

ACT III.—White table-cloth, teacups and saucers, plates, loaf of bread, bread knife, and bowl of berries for MRS. EVANS. Newspaper and plate of butter for MR. EVANS. Pitcher of cream for PATRICIA.

STAGE DIRECTIONS.

As seen by a performer on the stage facing the audience, R., means right-hand; L., left-hand; C., center of stage; R. E., right entrance; L. E., left entrance; R. C., right of center. UP, towards back of stage; DOWN, towards footlights.

BUBBLES.

ACT I.

SCENE.—*A garden backed by house front; practical door (C. D.) center with two steps; three windows visible, two on lower floor and one (practical) on upper floor. If available a vine-covered arbor may be arched over C. D. Entrances UP right (R. E.) and UP left (L. E.) R. C. a tree with circular bench at base and a seat aloft. The tree can be readily constructed of one piece of painted scenery with two or three rather large openings to represent the partings between branches. Natural leafy branches may be wired or nailed to the tree so as to give the impression of a low leafy tree. The top step of a step-ladder of the usual height placed in back of and concealed by the tree will furnish the seat aloft for BARBIE; the steps are sufficiently apart to give the illusion of one climbing a tree. On the bench are tennis rackets, balls, etc. DOWN L. a table with one or more arm-chairs and two or three ordinary chairs around it. On table, magazines, newspapers, books, etc., and a basket of flowers. An air of unconventional ease and well-being should predominate, as both garden and house should represent the marks of a comfortable suburban home, the garden being the general loitering place of the family. TIME, afternoon of a day in early summer.*

DISCOVERED BARBIE on the bench with JONATHAN propped against the tree-trunk. Throughout the scene she supplies JONATHAN'S remarks in a deep bass voice and manipulates his arms for gestures.

BARBIE. Jonathan, I caught a little fish this morning. I caught him on a pin too; mother won't let me have fish-hooks like Pat. She says Pat. knows how to take care of herself 'cause she's older than I. I guess I know as much as Pat. does, if she is eighteen. Do you want to hear what that fish said to me? He

was a talking fish, Jonathan, and he lives down in the bottom of that brook; but he knows all about us, he does. Well, he said, "Your big sister Patricia (he even knows her name, Jonathan) is an awful silly;" he said. I had to interrupt him then, because you see, I have to stand up for Pat. 'cause she belongs to my family. Father said we ought to. But I agreed with the fish inside. The fish said I didn't know much; he was rather rude and sassy, Jonathan. He said Patricia's going to get into trouble if she isn't careful. I s'pose he meant about Chester Fields. Mother says I must call him *Mr. Fields*; but I don't have to, to you, Jonathan; do I? I'd rather call him "Chessie"; he looks like a chessie. Pat. thinks he's grand; I guess she thinks she's in love with him. I like Peter better, if his hair does stand on end. Peter doesn't treat me as if I was a *worm*! Granda doesn't like Peter though. But I guess Granda doesn't like any young men; he doesn't want them to know he is deaf. You see, Jonathan dearest, they don't know how very *companionable* Granda is. I learned that word yesterday; father said it about Peter. I'll tell you what, Jonathan! Let's pretend we're Pat. and Chessie. You sit here and hold my hand. He hasn't done that yet, but I know he wants to. You begin. (MRS. EVANS *appears in the doorway and stands watching with smiling face*)

JONATHAN. Miss Evans, how long have I known you?

BARBIE. Three weeks, I think, Mr. Fields. (*She glances at JONATHAN coyly and sighs*)

JON. It seems an eternity.

BARBIE (*mincingly*). Oh, does the time seem so long when you are with me, Mr. Fields?

JON. Oh my dear Miss Evans, you know I did not mean that. It is only that I feel we have always known each other.

BARBIE. Do you believe in *infinity* of souls, Mr. Fields?

JON. I have believed in it for three weeks,—Patricia.

BARBIE. Oh Mr. Fields, you are such a flatterer!— You ought to kiss my hand there, Jonathan; but I'll do it for you. "Chessie" hasn't done that yet, but I can see he is dying to.

MRS. EVANS (*advancing to table*). What's the game, dear?

BARBIE. 'Tisn't a game, mother. It's real life. We're doing Pat. and Chester Fields.

MRS. EVANS. *MR. Fields*, dear. (*She takes up a magazine*)

BARBIE. But mother, I don't think he acts like a Mister.

MRS. EVANS (*her eyes on page of magazine*). How does he act, Barbie?

BARBIE. Granda says he acts like a nincompoop.

MRS. EVANS. Barbara, you must not use such expressions!

BARBIE. Granda does and I think he uses lovely language.

MRS. EVANS (*hastily, to avoid an embarrassing issue*). Tell mother about Pat. and Mr. Fields. (*She lays down the magazine and sits beside BARBIE*)

BARBIE (*innocently*). I think Pat. is in love with him, mother.

MRS. EVANS. Good heavens, child, don't say such things! (*She grasps BARBIE'S arm*) Does the child know what she is saying, I wonder?

BARBIE. Of course I do, mother. Aren't people in love when they look at each other like this, and sit ever so close, and read books and then hide them?

MRS. EVANS. Barbara, don't tell mother stories. Is this true?

BARBIE. Do you want to know the name of the book, mother? It's a pretty name, I think. "*One Heart's Struggle*." Shall I recite some of it for you? I learned it 'cause it was so pretty. (*She draws herself up, hugs JONATHAN, and begins in a childish voice but with a tone that shows her appreciation of the romantic*)

"The night air thrills with the scent of a thousand roses. A balmy breeze wafts incense through all the dreamy gardens. The moon casts a troubled light on the everlasting laurels that rim the lake. Aurelia, seated on the marble bench amid the sleeping flowers, looks, in the moonlight, like a very queen of night. Her beautiful form is as still as the night itself and betrays not the bitter agitation that possesses her heart and mind. A light foot-fall sounds on the walk. She heeds it not at all. Lord Beauchamp steals upon her ere she is aware.

'Ah! dreaming, Miss Herrington?' he asks gayly.

Dim as is the light, he can see that it is only with the utmost effort that she speaks.

'Almost,' she murmurs faintly."

Isn't it beautiful, mother? (*With a giggle*) I asked Pat. how to pronounce *Aurelia* and *Lord Beauchamp* and she looked queer. The next day I couldn't find the book in the hiding-place. And I do so want to read some more! (*MRS. EVANS looks worried; she is about to speak, when MR. EVANS and GRANDFATHER appear in the doorway. GRANDFATHER stands on the top step, making unsuccessful attempts to get down*)

EVANS. Shall I help you down, father?

GRANDA. Eh?

EVANS (*louder*). Shan't I help you down?

GRANDA (*crankily*). Good Gad, can't you open your mouth when you speak? Can't hear a word.

EVANS (*exasperated, but amused, about to shout again, when BARBIE runs forward*). Oh Barbie to the rescue again.

BARBIE. I'll help you down, Granda. (*She takes his hand; his manner changes instantly*)

GRANDA (*patting BARBIE on the head*). Bless the child; she's a mighty help to the old man.

BARBIE (*screaming*). Here's your chair, Granda, under the tree. I'll sit here on the bench with Jonathan.

GRANDA (*sits, puts on his spectacles, takes up paper and disappears behind it*). Ah! (MR. and MRS. EVANS sit down at table)

EVANS (*prepares to read newspaper*). Well, my dear, how has the day's work gone? Hello! Anything gone wrong? You look worried.

MRS. EVANS. I am worried about—oh, about everything! Here's Barbara using all of father's expressions and—

GRANDA (*looking up suddenly*). Eh?

MRS. EVANS. Nothing, father.

GRANDA (*sharply*). What, speaking to me? Can't you do anything but mumble, Linda?

EVANS (*mildly*). She wasn't speaking to you, father.

GRANDA (*with growing irritation*). Yes, yes, I heard her speaking to me. But what did she say?

MRS. EVANS (*patiently*). I didn't say anything to you, dear.

GRANDA. Didn't say anything! Nonsense, I heard you. Mumbling, always mumbling. (*In a paroxysm of rage*) Everybody in this house mumbles! Good Gad, if you want me to talk to you, you'll have to *speak!* (*Retires behind his paper in high dudgeon. BARBIE plays contentedly with JONATHAN*)

EVANS (*humorously*). Old chap's off again, isn't he? Go on, Linda. What's this about my Barbie?

MRS. EVANS. The child adores her grandfather and naturally she thinks she is at liberty to say whatever he does. And you know father!

EVANS. Pshaw! It can't hurt the child. What has she picked up now?

MRS. EVANS. This morning it was nincompoop; (*Laughing in spite of herself*) she applied it to Chester Fields.

EVANS (*chuckling*). Good enough too!

MRS. EVANS. And when I reproved her, she had her answer ready—"Granda says it."

GRANDA (*stirring*). Eh? What?

MRS. EVANS. Nothing, father.

GRANDA. Nothing again, is it? Is that the only answer I am to get in this house? I say, if you want to talk to me, you'll have to—

MRS. EVANS (*whispering*). Barbie dear, won't you take Granda for a walk.

GRANDA. Speak!

BARBIE (*springing up*). Come on, Granda! Let's hunt grasshoppers!

GRANDA (*rising*). Eh? In the grass? God bless the child! If I sat down in the grass, I'd never get up again.

BARBIE (*screaming*). I said grasshoppers, Granda! Like this. (*She illustrates; they pass out L. E., each holding a hand of JONATHAN*)

MRS. EVANS. Poor old father. He's the least of my troubles.

EVANS. Well now, what is it, dear?

MRS. EVANS. James, these children will be the death of me. I don't believe we give half enough thought to their bringing-up.

EVANS (*slyly*). Don't you think you give enough for two?

MRS. EVANS. Please don't poke fun. I was reading an article the other day on *The Responsibility of Twentieth Century Parents*—

EVANS (*chuckling*). I met Burton on the train this evening; he says Mrs. Burton reads so many articles these days that he is thinking of locking her up. Lord! what a face the poor fellow turned on me as he said, "Evans, what in thunder are the women folks coming to?" I told him they were coming to their own. (*More chuckling*) And now it seems *my own* is coming to! Linda, has it come to this? (*With humorous sternness*) Shall I have to lock you up, woman?

MRS. EVANS (*stifling the inclination to laugh; then determinedly*). Now see here, James Evans. You keep still. I've something to say and I *will* say it. You just do as the kiddies say—you "shut up." (*She shakes her finger in his face winningly*)

EVANS (*with mock resignation*). Come on, Macduff!

MRS. EVANS (*sternly*). Not another word! This is what I want to say. Here we are with these children to bring up. It is our responsibility. I shan't be selfish and say that most of the care is mine. But *I* must think if you won't. Do you realize that Patricia is eighteen, almost a woman grown? And do you

know that lately she has been mooning about with that young Chester Fields?—actually a case of calf-love, I'm afraid.

EVANS (*raising a hand*). Please, may I speak?

MRS. EVANS. One word.

EVANS. Can't do it in one. Please, Patricia is my daughter; therefore she has too much good sense to fall in love with that young monkey. I know my Pat.

MRS. EVANS. But it is true! Barbie sees everything, you know. And the child says she has seen them billing and cooing. She was having it all over with Jonathan a minute ago,—holding Jonathan's hand and all that. Oh, laugh if you will!

EVANS. My Pat. and that jackanapes!

MRS. EVANS. The question is—shall I speak to her, gently of course, and risk defiance, or shall I stand by and let things run their natural course and risk a tragic ending. (*Appealingly*) James, do help me.

EVANS. My dear girl, do you remember certain theories we evolved when the children were little tads? How you said you intended to let them grow up naturally? That you would do the necessary guiding—wait a minute—and leave the rest to them? No, this isn't necessary guiding,—not in our Pat.'s case. Didn't you ever have a case of calf-love yourself? Linda, look me in the eyes and—

MRS. EVANS (*spitefully yet humorously*). Yes, when I fell in love with you. Oh dear, I think I married you for my sins!

EVANS. Now you "shut up"; it's my turn. And didn't you say then that fathers and mothers did entirely too much jawing and didn't give their children credit for the sense they were born with? Didn't you? Eh?

MRS. EVANS. Yes, but—

EVANS. Hold on! Not yet! Linda, I'd bet my hat on Pat.'s common sense. Let her have her foolish time and then she'll wake up and see how young she is. Remember Kipling's advice: Let the puppy eat the soap in the bathroom so that when he is an old dog, he won't make a fool of himself. By the way, I haven't seen Peter lately. I thought he and Pat. were great pals.

MRS. EVANS. That is the worst of it. She won't have anything to do with Peter now, and Peter is such a good all-round boy, that she couldn't be silly with him. Barbie says, in her comical way, that Peter and Pat. are out.

EVANS. Barbie, the little minx. I bet on her too! She's another of my daughters. Well, here is my advice, my last word,

mother. When you get an idea, once fairly have it, and are sure it is a good one,—*stick to it.*

MRS. EVANS (*rather timidly*). But don't you think we have to change our ideas and our theories with time and growth?

EVANS. Hang time and growth! That's the trouble with folks—they grow up. Look here, my dear, you are a wise little, foolish little girl of twenty-five. You never grew up at all. Do you hear it? Again I say—once you have an idea, call it a theory if you like, make sure it is a good one, and *stick to it.*

MRS. EVANS (*still doubtful*). But Barbie says too—

EVANS. Let the kiddie speak for herself. Here she comes.

MRS. EVANS. She will. Be sure of that!

ENTER BARBIE L. E., *running, swinging JONATHAN by one arm. She cuddles up to her mother. MR. EVANS reads newspaper.*

BARBIE. Mother, sometimes I wish Jonathan was a donkey.

MRS. EVANS (*faintly amused*). Why, dear?

BARBIE. 'Cause—sometimes he isn't very 'sponsive and then I wish he had long ears so he could hear better. (*After a pause*) Pat. is luckier than I am; she doesn't have to wish Peter was a donkey. He is one already.

MRS. EVANS. Barbara, how dare you say such a naughty thing. You are not a nice little girl to-day. (*EVANS becomes interested*)

BARBIE. Well, mother, Granda said so.

MRS. EVANS. Said what?

BARBIE. He said just yesterday that Peter is a donkey. He says that lots of people are, not only Peter. And I knew at once what he meant. Poor Granda can't be a donkey because *he* can't hear very well. (*EVANS and MRS. EVANS exchange glances; EVANS amused, MRS. EVANS anxious but unable to suppress mirth*)

MRS. EVANS (*throwing up her hands with a comical little gesture of despair*). What under the sun shall I do? She is with him continually and picks up all his choice expressions. I can't exactly refuse to allow her to associate with my own father, can I?

EVANS. My dear woman, I never saw any one so devoted to the role of Martha as you are. "Leave them alone and they'll come home, wagging their tails behind them." It's the only way to treat humans—leave 'em alone. (*Chuckling, he takes up his paper*)

MRS. EVANS (*provoked*). Yes! How many reforms would be wrought in the world if folks were all like you? That's fine advice to give to a twentieth century mother. If I don't guide my children, how will they ever turn out good women? (*She looks expectantly at EVANS who remains buried in his paper*) James, I do think you might give me a little support occasionally!

BARBIE (*breaking in*). Oh father, isn't mother's mouth exactly like Granda's when he says "Good Gad, child, don't mumble." (*Picks up JONATHAN and is preparing to climb to her seat in the tree*)

MRS. EVANS (*blushing and looking sharply at BARBIE. Crosses to MR. EVANS looking rather sheepish and pats him on the head repentantly*). Well, you are all too much for me. (*Sighs and starts toward house*)

EVANS (*rising to go with her*). Foolish girl, can't you see that you work more reform by setting the good example that you do, than any other woman could work in a hundred years by continual lecturing. How can I worry about the kids when you are their mother. (*As they go into the house MRS. EVANS is seen to slap him playfully. BARBIE, alone in the tree sings a pretty arrangement of Stevenson's "I Have a Little Shadow" or any other available song*)

JON. (*clapping, under BARBIE'S management*). That's beautiful, sweetheart.

BARBIE (*quaintly*). I do sing rather well, don't I, Jonathan? (*She stops and appears to listen*) Hush, Jonathan! "A light footfall sounds on the walk." Goody! Here comes Peter!

ENTER L. E. PAT. and PETER *evidently in the throes of a quarrel.*

PAT. *sits down and turns her back on PETER pettishly. PETER walks distractedly back and forth swinging his tennis racket and looking anxiously at PAT. BARBIE peers down and listens eagerly.*

PETER (*after a long silence*). I do think you might at least speak to a fellow!

PAT. (*haughtily*). I have nothing to say.

PETER. But what have I done?

PAT. (*coldly, with meaning*). You have *been*.

PETER (*not understanding*). Wh—at? Is that any reason to turn a fellow down? Great Hat! You can't please some girls!

PAT. If you know one you can please, pray go to her. (*Acts as if about to go into house*)

PETER (*exasperated*). Yes, there you go. Get me all mixed, and then leave me in a muddle! That's a girl for you!

PAT. Oh, do say something original. (*Turns*) I can't see that I got you into a muddle—you got yourself into it. I really wish you would not use such vulgar words. Muddle!

PETER. Pshaw! You used it yourself.

PAT. I was only quoting you. (*Stands gazing pensively into the distance*)

PETER. Huh! But what in Cat's name have I done to you? I don't deserve to be treated as if I were the lowest—

BARBIE (*with a squeal of delight*). Oh! It's just like *Balaam and the Ass*! Oh Jonathan, it is! (*PAT. and PETER stand gazing up horrified and ashamed*)

PAT. Barbie, you disgusting child, come down this minute. How dare you hide up there and listen to things.

BARBIE (*almost in tears*). I didn't hide. Father says it isn't honorable to hide and hear eavesdroppings. This is my place. Father made it for me.

PAT. It's a pretty thing if a girl of eighteen can't have a place of her own to receive her friends in without—

BARBIE. You don't look much like friends.

PETER (*bursting into a laugh in which BARBIE joins with a squeal*). Come down, Barbara Fritchie, and tell us about Balaam and the Ass. I've forgotten that yarn.

BARBIE. I'll come down if Pat. asks me.

PAT. Oh for goodness sake, Barbie, don't be absurd. Come down this minute.

BARBIE. Is that a command or a request, Peter?

PETER (*solemnly*). I should call it an emphatic invitation, Barbie.

BARBIE. All right. Here I come. (*Descends from tree*)

PETER (*sits down comfortably*; PAT. *listens scornfully*). Now for old Balaam.

BARBIE (*she draws herself up and hugs JONATHAN as before*).

"And Balaam rose up in the morning and saddled his ass and went with the princess. And God's anger was kindled against Balaam because he went, and the angel of the Lord stood in the way for an adversary against him. Now he was riding upon the ass (and his two servants were with him) and the ass saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way and his sword drawn in his hand: and the ass turned aside out of the way and went into the field; and Balaam smote the ass to turn her into the way. But the angel of the Lord stood in a path of the vineyards, a

wall being on this side and a wall on that side. And when the ass saw the angel of the Lord, she thrust herself unto the wall, and crushed Balaam's foot; and he smote her again. And the angel of the Lord went further and stood in a narrow place, where there was no way to turn either to the right hand or to the left. And when the ass saw the angel of the Lord, she fell down under Balaam: and Balaam's anger was kindled, and he smote the ass with a staff. And the Lord opened the mouth of the ass, and she said unto Balaam, What have I done unto thee, that thou hast smitten me these three times."

That's all. And that is just like what you said to Pat. And Granda said yesterday that you are a donkey!

PETER (*roars with laughter*). Heavens! what a young one! Good enough, Barbara Frietchie.

PAT. The child reads everything under the sun. What will it be next.

BARBIE (*innocently*). I hope it will be *One Heart's Struggle*. (*Looks coquettishly at PAT.*) "Ah, dreaming, Miss Herrington?"

PAT. (*sharply*). Barbara, if you don't go into the house at once, I'll—

BARBIE (*running off R. E., singing*). I like Peter better than Chessie Fields, anyway.

PETER. Say, Pat., honest—can't you tell a fellow what's the matter—where he's wrong? You haven't spoken a civil word to me for three weeks. Ever since this Fields chap—

PAT. Not another word, Peter. I am glad to say "that Fields chap" is a gentleman and never presumes to call me by a vulgar nickname.

PETER. I'd like to hear him try it!

PAT. He has as much right as you have.

PETER. Oh, so I have a right, after all. (*Whistles*) Very well, Madam Pat., will you or won't you play me a set of tennis after supper?

PAT. (*languidly*). It will really be too hot for tennis to-night. And besides, I have an appointment with Mr. Fields.

PETER (*enraged*). By George, you needn't! You needn't!

[EXIT *rapidly* L. E.]

CURTAIN.

ACT II.

SCENE.—Same as Act I. Late afternoon of same day. A bright afternoon sun floods the scene. A book under the cushion on wicker chair. PATRICIA is DISCOVERED at the base of the tree, looking pensively off into the distance. BARBIE sits disconsolately on the top step. JONATHAN is lying under bench, protruding slightly.

BARBIE (*chanting dismally*). My father's gone away, and my mother's gone away, and Jonathan has lost himself, and my sister doesn't love me any more! (*Looks expectantly at PATRICIA, who continues her pensive perusal of the distance. BARBIE continues, singing a little louder*) My mother's gone away, and my father's gone away, and my Granda's gone away, and my sister doesn't love me any more! (*Tries the effect of a smothered sob. As there is no noticeable effect on PATRICIA, BARBIE begins again with a more pronounced sob*) And Jonathan lost himself! (*As there is still no effect, she now almost howls*) My father's gone away, and my mother's—

PAT. (*sharply*). For goodness sake, Barbie, stop! You've said that six times now.

BARBIE (*in an injured tone*). Mother says it isn't honest to pretend you don't hear when you do. I did it one morning when mother came in to wake me. I wasn't asleep but I was thinking and I didn't want to be 'sturbed—just like you now, only I wasn't thinking about Chester Fields. I kept just as still, stilly, and mother went out again. I told her all about it later 'cause I was ashamed. Are you ashamed, Pat.? (*No answer. PATRICIA has lapsed into the pensive mood again. BARBIE continues plaintively*) I'm terribly lonesome without Jonathan. (*Standing on top step and playing her last card*) "The night air thrills with the scent of a thousand roses. A balmy breeze wafts its incense through all the dreamy gardens. (*PATRICIA stirs slightly*) The moon casts a troubled light on the everlasting laurels that rim the lake. Aurelia, seated on the marble bench amid the sleeping—"

PAT. Barbie, you tiresome child! (BARBIE *begins to sob loudly*. PATRICIA, *ashamed, goes to her*) Barbie dear, sister did not mean it. There, darling, please don't. Sister didn't mean it; she does love you too.

BARBIE (*recovering quickly*). I wasn't crying about you, Pat. I was thinking of Miss Herrington amid the sleeping flowers. (*Begins again tragically*). "She betrays not the bitter agitation—" (PATRICIA, *cold and scornful, goes back to her former position*) I think it is very sad, don't you, Pat.? (*No answer*. BARBIE *continues, under her breath, testing PATRICIA'S mood*) Jonathan is lost, Pat.

PAT. (*indifferently*). Have you looked for him?

BARBIE. No indeedy! I never look for *him*. (*Assuming air of hauteur*) It's *his* place to look for me. Would you look for Chessie if he lost himself?

PAT. (*sternly*). Barbara, I forbid you to speak in that disrespectful tone of Mr. Fields.

BARBIE (*saucily*). Fiddlesticks! (*Before PATRICIA can frame a reproof*) Granda says it! (PATRICIA *casts a wrathful glance at her, then outwitted, turns her back on her*. BARBIE, *finding herself in danger of being neglected again, runs to PATRICIA with a soft cry*) Pat., please—I'm awful sorry. I'll never again—Pat.—please!

PAT. (*relenting, puts her arm about BARBIE*). Barbie, sometimes you aren't very kind to sister.

BARBIE. I'm going up there to my place now and be good, Pat. dear.

PAT. (*hastily*). Oh no, Barbie, I shouldn't go up there now, if I were you.

BARBIE (*assuming an impish, knowing look*). Huh! I guess you don't want me to be up there when Chessie comes.

PAT. (*thoroughly exasperated and looking meaningly at BARBARA*). Barbara, one of us had better go into the house, I think.

BARBIE (*sweetly*). I guess it had better be you 'cause I'll have to be here if Jonathan comes back.

PAT. (*defeated, retreats in disgust. On step, turning majestically*). Barbie, you will call me when Mr. Fields comes.

BARBIE (*cooingly*). Uh-huh. (EXIT PATRICIA *into house*. BARBIE *sits in the wicker chair and falls into a reverie in comical imitation of PATRICIA. No sound for several minutes*) I wish Peter would come, he always talks to me. Oh dear, I want my Jonathan.

ENTER L. E. CHESTER FIELDS, *in immaculate flannels.*

CHESTER (*goes softly behind BARBIE'S chair and raps it smartly with his cane*). Ah! crying, Miss Barbara?

BARBIE (*springing up*). I'm not!

CHESTER (*attempting to be playful*). Oh yes you were, young lady. I know; I've seen girls cry before.

BARBIE. I guess you never saw my sister Patricia cry. My father calls her a Spartan.

CHESTER. As to that—By the way, Miss Pepper-tongue, perhaps you'll be so good as to call Miss Patricia?

BARBIE. All right, I'll call "Miss Patricia." (*Goes slowly toward C. D.*)

CHESTER (*sits down carefully on bench; strikes his foot against something protruding slightly from under it; leaning down he draws out JONATHAN*). Pshaw! Here's the ridiculous doll the spoiled child plays with.

BARBIE (*screaming and running back, snatching the doll from CHESTER*). Don't you dare touch Jonathan. Jonathan's very particular about his friends! (*Hugs JONATHAN and murmurs endearing words to him. Turns her eyes upon CHESTER, who is visibly embarrassed*) Is your name Chester, (*She purrs the word*) Mr. Fields?

CHESTER. Yes, that's my name.

BARBIE. I think it sounds just like you. But "Chessie" sounds more like you. Would you mind if I called you "Chessie"?

CHESTER (*stiffly*). I certainly should mind.

BARBIE. All right. I won't then—'cept to Jonathan.

CHESTER. See here, child, will you please tell your sister that I am here.

BARBIE (*with her eyes still fixed upon him*). Do you know Peter? Peter's an awfully good friend of Pat's. When they were as little as me, they used to play together and Pat. told me once that Peter used to braid her hair when they were out playing and the ribbon came off. (*CHESTER wriggles*)

CHESTER. Who is this Peter?

BARBIE. Don't you know Peter? Why everybody knows Peter. My father likes him. Does my father like you, Mr. Chessie—Mr. Fields? It's very nice to have my father like you. He only likes nice people.

CHESTER. I suppose this Peter is a boy—

BARBIE. UH-huh,—just about as old as you are, I think.

Only he's big and ever so strong. He can carry me on one shoulder. *You* couldn't do that.

CHESTER (*stiffly*). I don't know that I should want to.

BARBIE (*genially*). I don't think I should like it either.

CHESTER (*getting up impatiently. Aside*). Impudent kid! (*To BARBARA*) Really my dear, I want to see your sister. Don't you think you had better go and call her?

BARBIE. Are you in love with my sister Pat.?

CHESTER (*muttering*). How I'd like to get my hands on this youngster!

BARBIE. But you can't; can you? My father and my mother don't believe in spanking.

CHESTER. It's easily seen that they don't. You act like the product of one of these new systems of education.

BARBIE. Peter isn't in love with Pat., but he likes her heaps.

CHESTER. Does she— Well, young lady, I see I shall have to call your—sister, since you won't.

BARBIE. Oh, I'll go! (*Runs up steps, colliding with PAT. in door-way*)

PAT. (*is about to scold when she catches sight of CHESTER. Her expression changes immediately; she shuts the door on BARBIE and goes DOWN*). Good morning, Mr. Fields, have you been here long? Barbie was to call me.

CHESTER (*huffily*). Barbie chose not to.

PAT. (*sitting in the wicker chair*). Oh dear, don't you think, Mr. Fields, that one's family is apt to be trying at times? Barbie has been a perfect imp this morning. They all seem to take the greatest delight in teasing me lately. Even father who has always been so good. And grandfather is *so* annoying. He is always talking about when he was young and telling mother that she doesn't know how to bring us up. I really believe he has put some queer ideas into her head lately. I try to bear it with patience, but it is very discouraging, Mr. Fields.

CHESTER. Poor little girl, I wish I could make you forget it all.

PAT. (*she turns her eyes upon him*). *You* do more than anyone else.

CHESTER. Ah, thank you. I wish I could believe that.

ENTER R. E. PETER *with tennis racket; he sees his mistake, acts as if about to go, then changes his mind and stands behind tree.*

PAT. (*coquettishly*). Can't you?

CHESTER (*gloomily*). Not when I hear tales of a certain Peter who used to braid your hair and all that.

PAT. Barbie! How I'd like to— (*Breaks off and continues sweetly*) You silly fellow, Peter is only a clumsy boy with whom I used to play when I was a child. I never see him now. (*PETER acts as if about to say "Oh, ho!"*)

CHESTER (*leaning a little nearer*). Then I feel better. (*Slight pause, in which PATRICIA gazes dreamily into space and CHESTER looks embarrassed*) Miss Patricia, do you like my name?

PAT. Yes, I think it's a very pretty name.

CHESTER. Why don't you use it then? I've always thought it a very good name, myself. Suits me, don't you think? Your young sister seemed to think so too. (*Remembers other words of BARBIE'S and frowns. Then tracing letters on the ground with his cane*) Look here—can you follow this? (*PETER moves cautiously nearer. PAT. leans but is unable to see*) Do come over here and sit, won't you?

PAT. Why? This is very comfortable, Mr. Fields.

CHESTER. Oh, I think it would look more—*friendly*. (*PAT. rises languidly and slouches daintily over to the bench. PETER mimics her derisively*) Oh, but you can't follow unless you sit closer. (*PAT. moves timidly closer*) Now what does this spell?

PAT. Oh! C—h—e—s—t—Chester.

CHESTER. I love to hear you say it. And this?

PAT. P—a—t—r—i—oh!

CHESTER. Say it.

PAT. (*shyly*). Patricia.

CHESTER. Now say them together.

PAT. Oh no.

CHESTER. Please.

PAT. Chester and Patricia. They sound very prettily together.

CHESTER (*moves impulsively nearer*). Dearest! (*PETER shakes his fist at CHESTER*)

PAT. Oh! How dare you! (*haughtily*) Don't ever say such a thing to me again. (*PETER applauds noiselessly*)

CHESTER (*tragically*). I see it is all over! You want me to go. (*He stalks away majestically. PETER runs quickly behind tree*)

PAT. (*gasping*). Oh! no! Please don't go—*Chester*.

CHESTER. Sweet girl. You didn't mean it.

PAT. (*shyly but firmly*). No. I couldn't bear to have you go; but you mustn't—you know. (*She pauses in embarrassment*)

CHESTER. Then we'll say, I'm addressing your little finger. I

really think you have the *dearest* little finger. (*Looks at her significantly*) But—the next one is prettier. (*PETER tears his hair between fury and amusement. PAT. giggles and looks up at CHESTER coyly. Emboldened, he takes her hand; she makes an effort to release it*) Ah, don't you remember how we settled it the other day? It is the clasp of true friendship, Patricia. (*PETER makes a slight gutteral sound; PAT. turns quickly; PETER disappears behind tree*)

PAT. Yes, I remember. (*She sighs*) You make everything so clear, Chester.

CHESTER (*drawing a long breath*). Do you feel it too, sweet girl? How good it is to find some one who understands you, who feels with you and for you. Ah, we have begun now, Patricia. All that has gone before was only small talk. Now there is real flow of soul. *This is real, this is earnest!* You are of a rare and sensitive nature, Patricia. You understand me thoroughly, I feel. But you are young, too. What is your age, Patricia? (*He speaks with an air of benignity which accords badly with his youthful appearance. PETER mimics him*)

PAT. (*meekly*). Eighteen last week. (*PETER holds his sides*)

CHESTER (*sighs*). Young! Young! To be sure *I* am only nineteen: but I have had experience—experience. Yet it is your innocence that charms. If the glass of your nature were rendered dim with the dust of experience, you would not cast such limpid reflections. Ah, that—

PAT. (*in a discouraged tone*). Please—(*She struggles to withdraw her hand*) I'm going to sneeze! (*She sneezes. PETER roars and is obliged to retreat. CHESTER moves away in disgust*)

PAT. (*despairingly*). Oh, are you offended? I couldn't help it really, Chester!

CHESTER. It certainly was most untimely. An odious little contraction that one should control!

PAT. (*leaning toward him with a melting air*). But you'll forgive me, Chester? I'll never sneeze again. (*PETER looks disgusted*)

CHESTER. Oh I forgive you, dear child. I am of a generous nature. I can say that to you, Patricia, for I feel that you, out of all the world, understand me. (*A delicious pause in which there is expressive play of eyes; then a space which threatens to prove embarrassing—in which there seems to be nothing to say*)

PAT. (*despairingly*). Chester, do you play tennis? (*PETER swings his racket*)

CHESTER. Tennis. Dear me, no! A vulgar, violent game!

There is no chance for soulful feeling there. I believe with Emerson that a gentleman is not noisy: a lady is serene. (*Turns and looks at her curiously*) Is it possible that you play tennis, Patricia?

PAT. (*hastily*). Oh I used to when I was young—(*Feels the absurdity of her adjective*)—er. I gave it up a long time ago.—After I met you, Chester, I seemed to lose interest in such things. You taught me how much soul there is in books. (*A sudden thought strikes her and she begins impulsively*). Oh, say, let's read! (*Suddenly recalls her new character and finishes demurely*) Shall we read together, Chester?

CHESTER. You begin; I love the sound of your voice, sweet Patricia. (*Settles back comfortably and looks at her with an air of proprietorship*. PAT. *drags the book out from under the cushion of the chair*)

PAT. Where did we stop? Um—here it is. (*Begins to read*)

“His face, always so expressive, is alive with agony now. He moves away from her with an ejaculation of keenest sorrow. ‘Oh love! How heartless!’ he murmurs, brokenly. His voice thrills her with its poignancy; it fills her with the burden of its tragic despair. In another moment he is gone. (EXIT R. E. PETER *holding his head as if overcome*) She stands for a time immovable upon the balcony where he has left her, beautiful as ever she is. She clasps her hands convulsively to her breast. Is it a last farewell, she cries inwardly.” (*Ecstatically*) Isn't it perfectly beautiful?

CHESTER (*dreamily*). Beautiful—beautiful.

PAT. But oh, I love that part we read yesterday. Shan't I read it again?

CHESTER (*still dreamily*). Read it again— (*His voice floats off into space*)

PAT. (*reads*). “A sullen cloud has concealed the beauty of the moon. They stand together on the darkened walk; he a handsome, mysterious figure, beside Miss Herrington in her filmy laces, caressed by the amorous breeze.

Anon the cloud blows by and the full splendor of Diana's orb glows tenderly upon them.

Lord Beauchamp stands motionless beside Aurelia——”

CHESTER (*sitting up suddenly*). *W'e* have never talked and walked by moonlight, Patricia. I think we should understand each other even better by moonlight.

PAT. There will be a moon to-night.

CHESTER. Can I hope that you will go?

PAT. (*eagerly*). Oh yes! (*Then hopelessly*) But it doesn't rise until eleven to-night. I heard father say so last night. And I couldn't go then.

CHESTER. But why?

PAT. I'm sure mother wouldn't think of letting me go.

CHESTER. Why ask her?

PAT. (*in indignant amazement*). What! Not ask her! I'd like you to know, Chester Fields, I never do what my mother doesn't approve of!

CHESTER (*indulgently*). Foolish girl. How can your mother know how much we mean to each other. Ought we not to make the most of our opportunities; ought we not to see as much of each other as possible? Has any third soul, do you think, the right to interfere with our communion? Patricia, say I am right.

PAT. (*frowning, at first unconvinced; then stamping her foot*). They *have* teased me disgustingly! I have seen father wink at mother when I mentioned your name. And Barbie has been so tiresome.

CHESTER. Patricia, the child is insufferable. Only an angelic nature like yours could endure her—

PAT. (*positively glaring at him*). What! My darling Barbie insufferable. Mr. Fields, do you realize that you are speaking of my sister!

CHESTER (*sadly*). Patricia, my dear friend, I love her because she belongs to you, but I cannot help seeing that she is very unlike you. You despise me because I speak the truth. (*His voice breaks and he looks at her so sadly that she softens at once, and comes to him impulsively*)

PAT. Forgive me, Chester! I was horrid. Oh, don't look at me so. Yes, I do know you are right. I *do* know it. (*She says this as if trying to convince herself*)

CHESTER. And you will go?

PAT. Yes,—but I'll ask mother and if she says no—(*impulsively*) I'll go anyway!

CHESTER (*seizes her hand and holds up her little finger*). Dearest—little finger! (*Voices off stage are heard*)

ENTER L. E. EVANS, MRS. EVANS and GRANDFATHER *in traveling clothes*.

EVANS. Well, father, you stood the trip pretty well.

GRANDA (*testily*). Humph! Stood what?

ENTER C. D. BARBIE. *She rushes to her mother and flings herself into her arms; embraces her grandfather also.*

BARBIE. Mother! Granda!

EVANS. *I seem to be left out of this.*

BARBIE (*assuming a comical air of dignity*). How do you do, Mr. Evans? (*She extends her hand graciously. This is evidently an old game of the two, for all seem to enjoy it immensely. They all laugh and BARBIE dances around them joyously. PATRICIA comes forward slowly and kisses her mother*)

MRS. EVANS. Glad to see us back, dear? Ah, Mr. Fields, how do you do?

CHESTER (*stiffly*). How do you do. How do you do, sir. (*Shakes hands with MR. EVANS. CHESTER seems uncomfortable and moves about vaguely. Finally with a glance at PATRICIA EXITS L. E.*)

BARBIE. Come on, Granda and father and everybody, I'll show you what we're going to have for supper. (*Drags them along. As they reach C. D. EVANS turns*)

EVANS. Hello! Where has the young chap gone?

PAT. He was just going, father.

EVANS. Too bad. You might have asked him to stay for tea.

BARBIE. Chessie isn't the stay-for-tea kind, father. (*ALL make another start, but halt again*)

GRANDA (*caustically*). And who was the young gentleman, pray? Doesn't your mother teach you to introduce your guests, Patricia? Am I never to meet anyone who comes to this house?

MRS. EVANS. Oh, father, I'm so sorry.

PAT. (*irritably*). He was just going, I said.

BARBIE (*cheerily*). Come on, Granda; I don't think you would mind not meeting Chessie.

GRANDA (*patting her head*). The child is always right. (*EXEUNT C. D. MR. EVANS, GRANDA, and BARBIE clinging to her father*)

MRS. EVANS (*sits in chair*). Well, dearie, has it been a long day? Have you been lonely?

PAT. (*pettishly*). No, I wasn't lonely, mother.

MRS. EVANS. What's the matter with my girl? You don't look happy, dear.

PAT. (*a little irritably*). I'm perfectly happy, mother.

MRS. EVANS (*sympathetically*). Has Chester Fields been boring you?

PAT. Boring me! Mother, I wish you wouldn't speak so of my friends.

MRS. EVANS. Do you really like that boy?

PAT. (*vehemently*). Yes, I like him very much. I think it's perfectly horrid of you all to talk of him as you do.

MRS. EVANS (*laughing*). But, Pat., don't take it so to heart. Why, you used to bear teasing beautifully. Whatever has come over you? I don't recognize my dear, naughty tom-boy these days. Come and kiss mother and don't pout. (*She tries to take PAT. into her arms*)

PAT. Yes! Treat me like a child, mother, I'm past eighteen and I'm tired of being babyed and treated as if I never had a sensible idea of my own.

MRS. EVANS (*a little sadly*). Pat., when you have lived as long as I have, eighteen years won't seem so many to you.

PAT. (*sulkily*). I'm sorry, mother, if I've hurt your feelings; but I don't think you realize how a girl of my age feels. I don't pretend to be as wise as you and father; but I think I have a *few* ideas. And I think I have enough sense to know how to choose worth-while friends.

MRS. EVANS. Why, my dear, of course you have ideas. (*Aside*) This is what comes of "leaving them alone." (*To PAT.*) And of course you know how to choose friends. You chose Peter when you were only a little girl. And you know how we all like and admire him.

PAT. (*impatiently*). Oh, Peter! It's always Peter.

MRS. EVANS (*on the point of losing her temper. She feels it going and rises to go into the house. Gently*). Pat., I'm afraid I'm a little ashamed of you. I'll leave you to get over your sulky mood. (*Goes toward C. D.*)

PAT. (*waits until her mother reaches the steps, then afraid her chance is going*). Mother!

MRS. EVANS. Yes?

PAT. Mother, please, I'm sorry. I want to ask you something. (*She feels that this is not the time for a request, but rushes on*) Chester wants me to go walking to-night—in the moonlight. Please let me.

MRS. EVANS. Why, Pat., the moon doesn't rise until almost midnight.

PAT. Well? What difference does that make?

MRS. EVANS (*losing her temper entirely*). Patricia Evans, I *did* think you had some common sense, but I doubt it now. Will

I let you go skylarking off by moonlight with a sentimental boy at that time of night? I certainly will not!

PAT. (*throwing up her head*). Very well, mother. (*Walks rapidly toward house*)

MRS. EVANS (*losing her anger almost immediately*). Pat., come back, child. (PATRICIA EXITS C. D., *without turning her head*. MRS. EVANS *continues a little sadly*) They do twist one's heart a little sometimes. And yet I find it almost a sweet pain. I wonder why it is we women seem to like to be hurt by the folks we love. Poor Pat. The child's in a bad way. Bless her! She thinks "she has a few ideas". So she has—a few too many for me, I'm afraid. I suppose it's only to be expected that she should want to assume a little dignity now that she is eighteen. (*Breaks into a laugh*) Why, I believe *I too* had some such ideas when I reached that ripe old age! (*Walks about with bent head*) Sometimes I think the only stable thing in this world is a mother. Everyone else wants to be up and away. Father dashes away to catch his morning train. And then Barbie goes dancing out to play with Jonathan. And now it has come to this—that Patricia wants to run off to meet her beau. And I stay in my house and think about them all. Only the other day, when Barbie and I were looking up at the robin's nest in the tree, she asked me how the baby robins learned to fly, and when I told her that the mother taught them, she gave me such a quaint look and said, "Mother, you never taught *me* how to fly! It gave me a queer feeling then and now it seems to take on a double meaning. No, we don't have to teach our young ones how to fly; they take wing of themselves when the time comes. And father says "leave them alone". How can I? Oh a man doesn't understand! If I leave them alone, they'll fly all the sooner. (*Pulls herself together with an effort*) Come, come! Linda Evans, I believe you'd like to cry. You are positively growing maudlin, you silly old woman. Shame on you! Run in and get your family something to eat.

CURTAIN.

SCENE II.

SCENE.—*Same as ACT I. Evening of the same day. The garden is in darkness save for a faint glimmer that foretells the rising of the moon. The only sound to be heard is the musical chirruping of tree-toads. DISCOVERED CHESTER moving cautiously and noiselessly toward the house. When he reaches a spot directly under the second-story window on the right, he is seen to crouch and grope about for a minute or two. Then there is heard the sound of pebbles striking the house. A short pause.*

ENTER PATRICIA C. D., *clad in a long hooded cape. Not until she has closed the door carefully does she speak.*

PAT. (*whispering*). Are you there, Chester? Isn't it great fun!

CHESTER. Patricia! I knew you would come! Let us go at once.

PAT. Why, where is the moon? Isn't it coming up?

CHESTER. It is only half-past ten; I couldn't wait another minute. We'll walk about until it rises. You are not afraid?

PAT. Oh no-o! But isn't it unusually dark out there? (*They move slowly away; suddenly PATRICIA gives vent to a stifled scream and stumbles back toward the house*) Oh! What was that! It struck my face. Oh, it was horrible!

CHESTER (*soothingly*). Only a bat, Patricia.

PAT. (*another scream*). A bat! Oh, I know it is in my hair! Chester, take it out! Take it out!

CHESTER (*loftily*). My dear child, that old idea is quite dead. The theory that bats have an affinity for hair is ridiculous, absurd, *prepos*—

PAT. Oh! I know it's there. I can feel it flying—ugh! Chester, take it out!

CHESTER (*touches her head condescendingly, then steps back with dignity*). Foolish girl, you have on your hood. Let us go now.

PAT. (*shakily*). Please,—let's not go yet, Chester. We'll sit

here on the step and wait for the moon. Perhaps bats can't see by—

CHESTER. Patricia, this is foolishness. Surely you trust me to take care of you.

PAT. (*hastily*). Yes—surely. But are you very strong, Chester? In case anything should happen, you know—

CHESTER. Are you going to spoil our walk just for a little foolish fear. If you had no trust in me, I wonder that you agreed to go. (*Moves over to the bench and sits down moodily*)

PAT. (*nervously*). Chester, please don't sit so far away. Come back, please. I'm ready to go.

CHESTER (*approaching her with outstretched arm*). Come then. (*PATRICIA holds back*)

PAT. (*hysterically*). Just a minute, Chester. How still everything is! Is it always so quiet at night, Chester?

CHESTER. Of course. That is the mystic wonder of the night. Noise would make it hideous.

PAT. (*plaintively*). Then I wish it could be hideous for a few minutes. (*BARBIE in her nightgown, with a lighted candle in one hand, appears in window at the left. She throws out a large shoe which falls with a heavy thud*)

BARBIE (*whispers loudly*). Good luck! (*BARBIE disappears*)

PAT. (*in a frightened tone*). Oh go, Chester! Run! It's Barbie; she has wakened the whole house. I must go back. Go! (*Pushes CHESTER vehemently and turns back, calling softly*) Barbie, oh Barbie!

BARBIE (*appears at the window; in a cheerful tone*). Haven't you gone yet?

PAT. SHH! Barbie, come down. For Heaven's sake, don't wake anybody up!

BARBIE (*disappearing*). All right. (*Reappears in the doorway with the candle, which she places on the top step. Looking about with a disappointed air*) Where's Chessie?

PAT. (*seizing BARBIE's arm*). Barbie, did you hear anybody stirring?

BARBIE (*cheerfully*). Only Granda snoring.

PAT. SHH! Not so loud. Oh Barbie, I depend on you. Promise me you won't tell father and mother about this. I could never live if they knew. (*She wrings her hands and clasps BARBIE distractedly*) Promise me, Barbie!

BARBIE. I won't tell them, Pat. Peter says I'm the only woman he knows that can keep a secret. But aren't you going to elope after all?

PAT. (*almost in tears*). Oh no, no, not to-night. I mean we're never going to. We were only going for a walk.

BARBIE (*in a tone of deep disappointment*). Oh Pat.! I've been waiting three weeks for you to elope. And now you aren't going to! I threw father's old shoe out to wish you good luck. Oh dear! (*As if struck by an idea*) Was Chessie afraid to elope, Pat.?

PAT. Barbie dear, don't—don't talk. Let's go in. Heavens! there's that candle. Oh blow it out. (*She wrings her hands helplessly as BARBIE bends to blow out the candle. Then she speaks in a sudden, passionate whisper*) Oh, I hate Chester Fields! I hate him!

BARBIE (*huskily as the door closes on them*). So do I, Pat.; I hate him too.

CURTAIN.

ACT III.

SCENE.—Same as ACT I. *Early evening of the next day.*

ENTER R. E. BARBIE, *running and laughing merrily, closely pursued by PETER, who chases her around the tree several times, finally catching her and seating her fairly in the chair before which he stands holding her arms to prevent her escape.*

PETER. Now then, Barbara Frietchie, will you run away from your uncle again!

BARBIE (*breathlessly*). Let's play Barbara Frietchie, Peter!

PETER. Up to your window then, old woman! (*BARBIE clambers up to her seat in the tree*)

BARBIE. "Up rose old Barbara Frietchie then,
Bowed with her fourscore years and ten.

In her attic window the staff she sat,
To show that one heart was loyal yet.

PETER. "Up the street came the rebel tread, (*Marches around*)
Stonewall Jackson riding ahead.

Under his slouched hat left and right (*Pulls hat down*)

He glanced; the old flag met his sight.

Halt! the dust-brown ranks stood fast.

Fire! out blazed the rifle-blast. (*Pantomimes shooting*)

BARBIE. "It shivered the window, pane and sash;
It rent the banner with seam and gash.

Quick as it fell, from the broken staff
Dame Barbara snatched the silken scarf.

She leaned far out on the window-sill, (*BARBARA leans forward*)

And shook it forth with a royal will.

"Shoot if you must, this old gray head,
But spare your country's flag," she said.

PETER. "Who touches a hair of yon gray head,
Dies like a dog! March on," he said.

BARBIE (*ecstatically*). Didn't we do it beautifully, Peter? Oh Peter, you look just like Stonewall.

PETER (*feigning anger; in a terrific voice*). What! I look like a stonewall! I like that, young lady!

BARBIE (*giggling*). Let's do it again, Peter.

PETER. Heavens to Betsey, Barbie, you'll kill me. A little more of this active life, and I'll pine away. (*Sits on the bench and feigns exhaustion*)

BARBIE. No you won't, Peter. You're lots stronger than that old Chester Fields. (*At mention of the name, PETER looks up thoughtfully*)

PETER. I say, Barbie, come down and talk to your uncle.

ENTER C. D. MRS. EVANS *with a white cloth; she goes to table.*

BARBIE (*sweetly*). You must ask me very politely.

PETER (*leaves bench, bends on one knee, and looks up with mock entreaty*). Madam, I implore you to descend!

BARBIE (*graciously*). I obey, sir. (*Comes down and sits beside him*)

MRS. EVANS. Barbie, child, you make a perfect slave of Peter. You mustn't wear him out.

BARBIE. He can't wear out, mother, he's a stonewall. Aren't you, Peter?

MRS. EVANS. Make yourself useful, Peter. Clear that table, sir, and I'll ask you to stay to tea.

PETER (*springing up*). "At that, he sprang to his feet."

BARBIE (*gleefully*). I'll help.

MRS. EVANS. Don't be too eager. We shan't have anything but strawberries and bread and butter. [EXIT C. D. *into house*.

PETER. Think I can last over night on that? (*Off stage sound of piano is heard. The tune is carried well for a minute or two; then discords are heard, and the performance ends with a loud crash as if the keys were struck in anger*)

PETER. Hello! What's that, Barbie?

BARBIE. Oh, that's Pat. That's the fourth time she has done that to-day. (*PETER removes magazines, books, and flowers from the table and lays the cloth*)

PETER. Whew! In a bad temper, is she?

BARBIE. Uh-huh, ever since last night— (*Realizes her mistake and stops*). Oh! but Peter, (*Very seriously*) I can't tell you about it.

PETER. Can't be done, eh, Barbie? (*Looks very curious, but is unwilling to probe her*)

BARBIE (*clapping hands*). Yes, I can tell you! I only promised not to tell father and mother.

PETER. Fire away, then!

BARBIE. It's awfully exciting, Peter. Last night— (*Leans toward him with mystery in her tone and look*) SHH!

ENTER C. D. MRS. EVANS, *carrying teacups, plates, knife, and loaf of bread.*

MRS. EVANS. Every man has his share of work in this establishment. Peter, cut the bread as usual.

BARBIE. And I'll put it on the plate. [EXIT MRS. EVANS C. D.

PETER. On with the dance, Barbie! My ears are flapping. (*The child looks up curiously to see whether this is true. PETER cuts the bread carefully, stopping often to catch points of the tale*)

BARBIE. Last night—Pat almost eloped with Chester Fields!

PETER (*standing, knife in hand*). The dickens! Eloped!

BARBIE. I said *almost*. I threw a shoe after them and that

scared poor Chessie away—like Little Miss Muffet! (*Giggles*)

PETER. Do you mean to say that Pat. Evans actually meant to run off with that fellow! (*In his indignation, he throws down the knife and walks angrily back and forth*)

BARBIE. I said *almost*. You didn't listen. Pat. said it wasn't an elopement—only a *walk*.

PETER (*drawing a long breath*). Barbara Frietchie, if you weren't my best friend, I'd never forgive you. You gave your uncle a terrible fright. Frights aren't good for stonewalls; don't you know that, little girl? (*Takes up the knife and begins to cut methodically, all the while muttering to himself*. BARBIE, *in the meantime, picks up JONATHAN and climbs to her perch, where she sits holding converse with the doll*) Pat. Evans out at midnight with that fool! He ought to be strung up by the thumbs! A fellow that would ask a girl to steal out at that hour of the night! Pat.—just a kid too. But she ought to know better. The Lord help that fellow the next time I meet him!

ENTER C. D. MRS. EVANS, *with bowl of strawberries*; EVANS *with newspaper under one arm, plate of butter in hand*; PAT. *looking peevish, with pitcher of cream*. GRANDA *brings up the rear*. They all take places at the table except EVANS, *who sits on the bench*.

MRS. EVANS (*beaming upon her family*). Isn't this fun, children? Father, put away your newspaper and we'll begin. Why, where is Barbie?

BARBIE (*still in the mood of the game*). I'm here! But I have to be asked to come down.

PETER (*bending before her*). Madam, the board is spread. Will your Majesty deign to favor us with your presence?

BARBIE. Sir, I obey you. (*She descends*. PETER *takes her arm and leads her to her place*. PAT. *sulks*; PETER *eats with gusto*; MRS. EVANS *serves strawberries*; EVANS *is still deep in his paper*)

PAT. Mother, I do wish you would make Barbie stop that nonsense.

MRS. EVANS. Why, Pat., how can you be so childish.

BARBIE. Mother, when I play games with Peter, it's nonsense; but when Pat. plays games with Chessie, it's—what is it?

PETER (*sotto voce*). Romance!

MRS. EVANS. Sh-h, dear. Won't you pass the bread to Peter. Strawberries, Peter?

PETER (*facetiously*). In the language of the vulgar, you bet your life. (BARBIE *passes the bread with a pretty air of responsibility. On being offered the plate, PETER rises and bows with elaborate gallantry*) My dear Miss Evans, won't you allow me to assist you in your arduous labors?

BARBIE (*with young ladyish dignity, somewhat spoiled by a giggle*). No, I thank you, sir. (*Passes plate to PAT., who takes no notice of her. Mischievously*) "Ah, dreaming, Miss Herrington?"

PAT. (*glaring*). I think, young lady, I've had enough of your jokes.

MRS. EVANS. Have I two grown-up daughters who are going to spoil this pleasant party?

BARBIE. Mother dear, I'll be good. I'm ashamed. So is Pat. Aren't you, Pat.? (*No answer. BARBIE passes to her father, who drops his paper*)

EVANS. Well, well, begun, have we? How's the Lady Barbara this evening?

BARBIE (*playing the game*). Oh, I'm pretty well, Mr. Evans.

EVANS (*respectfully*). And your friend Jonathan? Has he come back or are you still lamenting his loss?

BARBIE. Father, you can't guess who found him.

EVANS. You did.

BARBIE. No.

EVANS. Peter.

BARBIE. No.

EVANS (*rapidly*). Pat.? Mother? Granda?

BARBIE. No, no, no!

EVANS. What! none of those? I've run through the whole establishment.

BARBIE (*gleefully*). But he *doesn't* belong to the establishment—I think he'd like to though. Chessie Fields found him, father.

EVANS. Oh, the young chap.

BARBIE. Father, what do you think? Pat. and I both hate Chessie; we talked it all over last night. Didn't we, Pat.? (PAT. *starts perceptibly; PETER looks terrified*)

MRS. EVANS. Barbie child, come and eat your berries.

GRANDA (*suddenly*). James, I repeat, you ought to have padlocks on all the doors of this house. I am sure that something unusual took place in this house last night. I was awakened by a light shining on my window; I was just about to investigate when it disappeared. I can't say that I actually *heard* anything,

but I am sure there was some scoundrel prowling about. (EVANS and MRS. EVANS exchange amused glances; PAT. gives BARBIE a startled look; PETER winks covertly at BARBIE) But, of course, you won't take my advice. I am absolutely ignored in this house.

EVANS (good-naturedly). You must have been dreaming, father.

GRANDA. What say?

MRS. EVANS. He says you must have been dreaming.

GRANDA (snappishly). Eh? Good Gad! Everybody in this house mumbles.

BARBIE (coming round to GRANDA's side and screaming in his ear). Granda, I know you were dreaming! I heard you!

GRANDA (beaming). You heard me. That's my pet. Of course you heard me. (Pats her head) Nobody ever has any trouble hearing me. (Subsides and eats again. PAT. draws a long breath)

PETER (cheerfully). Play you a set after supper, Pat.?

PAT. (witheringly). Don't you ever think of anything but tennis?

PETER (comically). I try not to.

BARBIE. Pat., why didn't Chester Fields ever ask you to play tennis?

PAT. (rising with sudden passion). I don't see why I should be taunted with that name every minute of the day! I think you are all perfectly odious! (Bursts into tears and runs c. d. into house leaving the party in consternation)

PETER. I've done it now. All my fault.

BARBIE (wailing). No, I've done it now. (She runs into house after PATRICIA)

MRS. EVANS (rising with decision). James, this can't go on any longer. Pat. is wearing herself thin over this foolish affair. I've "left them alone" too long. I won't have my dear girl make a fool of herself over a sentimental young—

PETER (joining in indignantly). Idiot!

EVANS. Once you have an idea, that is a good one, stick to it. "Leave 'em alone," my dear. (MRS. EVANS attempts to speak) Wait a minute. Leave 'em alone, Peter and Pat., this time. Peter, you bring my little girl back to her sweet senses, and I'll—oh, I'll give you a seven dollar tennis racket.

PETER. Done—racket or no racket! (They shake hands. The family c. d., leaves the garden. PETER sits down on bench, picks up JONATHAN and handles the doll nervously)

ENTER C. D. PATRICIA, *making final use of her handkerchief and flings herself into the chair.*

PAT. Oh, are you still here?

PETER. As usual, Pat. (*Seriously*) We've been friends a long time now, haven't we, Pat.?

PAT. (*peevishly*). Oh, use another word. I'm sick and tired of friends.

PETER. Well, pals, then.

PAT. That's better. It's more vulgar. I'm in a vulgar mood to-day.

PETER. And don't you think, if one pal sees the other getting into a hole, it's his business to come to the rescue? (PAT. *pretends not to hear*) Gee! it hurts a fellow to see a girl he likes making herself sick about a moon-faced—

PAT. (*exhaustedly*). Oh don't, Peter.

PETER (*warming to his task*). I'm not going to begin by saying that I'm older than you and therefore have better sense. Wish I could, but there's only six months between us. You stand for it anyway.

PAT. (*sarcastically*). Oh, don't spare me, Peter. I am quite used to that sort of thing.

PETER. But I don't think age has anything to do with sense. Gee! you know a lot more than I do about most things.

PAT. Then is there any need of continuing?

PETER (*not noticing*). Girls are uncanny creatures. They have a sort of sense of things that takes a fellow's breath sometimes.

PAT. (*wearily*). If you have anything to say, for heaven's sake, say it.

PETER (*bursting out*). I have this to say. You like that fellow, Fields. I *don't*. But that doesn't make any difference. If you like him, go and have a good time with him. But you're not having a good time so far as I can see. Pat., I'll tell you what it is. I hate that fellow! And—darn it! I'll be honest—I'm jealous of him! I can't for the life of me, see why a girl can't be nice to two fellows at once. That isn't what I meant to say. Hang it all! There must be something wrong about a friendship that makes a girl turn down all her old friends, and put on a sour disposition, and have hysterics for nothing at all. I suppose you think you are in love with that chap. You take my word for it; if that's being in love, you don't want anything to do with it. Do you know what you need? You need a good game of tennis. (*Coaxingly*) Come along, girl. Will you?

PAT. (*rising hysterically*). Peter, don't. If you say another word, I'll cry. And I can't do that because Chester Fields is coming in a few minutes. (PETER *stiffens*) I sent for him. I had to. (*With a change of tone*) Peter—I—I'll be nice to you again, if you'll only leave me alone now. (PETER *slowly* EXITS R. E. PATRICIA *sinks into the chair and seems on the point of bursting into tears*).

ENTER CHESTER R. E.

CHESTER (*advancing to PATRICIA and speaking very haughtily*). Patricia, I think you owe me an apology.

PAT. (*stonily*). I owe you an apology. May I inquire for what?

CHESTER. For your ridiculous behaviour of last night.

PAT. My ridiculous behaviour of last night!

CHESTER. You promised me solemnly that you would walk with me by moonlight. I believed you, fool that I was. And you betrayed my trust. A girl that doesn't keep her appointments is not worthy of my notice.

PAT. (*rising slowly and speaking deliberately*). I seem to see you now for the first time. I suppose this is all my fault.

CHESTER. It most certainly is!

PAT. You don't understand. I mean it is my fault that we ever were friends. I thought you were wonderful—a hero. You, (*Looks at him scornfully and breaks into a laugh*) I thought I liked the sentimental stuff we talked. I was a silly little fool and you were another. But it was my fault; I own it. The girl is always to blame in such cases. (*Talks with a mature air, of which one can see she is rather proud*) Well, our friendship is at an end.

CHESTER (*pompously*). I have already said so.

PAT. (*flaring up*). Then it has been said twice and that is enough!—Oh, I wish you would go! I am sick and tired of seeing you and hearing you. Do you know what I think you are?—I think you are a milksop! Go away! (*Sinks into her chair and watches him as he walks rapidly away. He turns and speaks with choked dignity*)

CHESTER. I trust, Miss Patricia Evans, that you will live (*Trips over a clump of grass and finishes ignominiously*) to regret this. [EXIT R. E.]

ENTER PETER R. E.

PETER. What have you done to the Field's chap? I met him just now looking pretty sick and hot.

PAT. He's gone, Peter! Gone for good. Oh, I'm so happy. (*Spins round on one heel*)

PETER. You don't mean to say you've dropped him? Good for you, Pat.! Shake! (*Shake hands heartily like two boys*)

PAT. (*with winning frankness*). Peter, do you know what I've been? I've been a perfect goose.

PETER (*heartily*). You certainly have!

PAT. (*miffed*). Well, you needn't be horrid about it. I admitted it. Oh Peter, he *was* nasty; he said such impudent things.

PETER. The cad! I'll settle him. (*Starts off*)

PAT. Peter, who's the goose now? Come back.

PETER. Ah, let me give him one good jab, Pat. I've been itching to get my hands on him for a long time.

PAT. Oh, don't bother. (*Holds up her little finger, looks at it, and begins mincingly*) Peter, don't you think I have a pretty little finger?

PETER (*pretending to be bewildered*). Always thought you had a good-looking fist. (*Aside*) I've got to be careful now!

PAT. "A good-looking fist!" Oh Peter, I fear you are not so poetical as Chester. He said it was the "*dearest little finger*."

PETER. The chump! (*Both laugh. Aside*) I wonder whether she would laugh if she knew I heard the whole thing?

ENTER C. D. EVANS, MRS. EVANS and BARBIE who stand in the doorway and watch smilingly. BARBIE holds a hand of each.

PAT. "Richard's himself again!" Peter, I'll play you three sets and beat you! (*Claps her hands*)

PETER. Just try it! A crotcheted tie to a box of Huyler's! Is it a go?

PAT. It's a go! (*They snatch up tennis rackets from the bench and run off R. E. together*)

BARBIE (*seizing JONATHAN and running after them*). We'll be the "empire," Jonathan.

EVANS (*coming down into the garden*). If you have a good idea, stick to it. "Leave 'em alone". Eh, Linda?

MRS. EVANS (*smiling*). Yes—it has worked this time. The question is,—will it another time?

EVANS. Oh thou Martha!

CURTAIN.

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