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*Denison's Royalty Plays*

*Too Many  
Crooks*


*by*

*Paul Prester Temple*

*T. S. Denison & Company*

*Publishers · Chicago*

*Price 50 Cents*





# **Denison's Royalty Plays**

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## **AND HOME CAME TED**

By Walter Ben Hare. Comedy in 3 acts; 6 males, 6 females; 2¼ hours. Royalty, ten dollars. Price, 50 Cents.

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By Walter Ben Hare. Comedy in 4 acts; 6 males, 6 females; 2½ hours. Royalty, ten dollars. Price, 50 Cents.

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By Frederick G. Johnson. Farce in 3 acts; 5 males, 5 females; 2¼ hours. Royalty, fifteen dollars. Price, 50 Cents.

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By Edith Ellis. Farce-comedy in 3 acts; 5 males, 5 females; 2½ hours. Royalty, fifteen dollars. Price, 50 Cents.

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**T. S. Denison & Company, Publishers**

623 S. Wabash Ave.

CHICAGO



133  

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1892

# TOO MANY CROOKS



# TOO MANY CROOKS

A Comedy in Three Acts

BY  
PAUL PRESTER TEMPLE



CHICAGO  
T. S. DENISON & COMPANY  
PUBLISHERS

25 10232

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OCT 25 1923

# TOO MANY CROOKS

THE RT. REV. MANFRED CHADSEY, D.D., LL.D.

PS 3539

E45T6

1923

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CHARACTERS.

THE RT. REV. MANFRED CHADSEY, D.D., LL.D.

.....*The Bishop*  
NED SHELDON.....*His nephew*  
RAFFORD.....*The man-of-all-work*  
LOCKE.....*The constable*  
MISS TATE.....*A neighbor*  
KITTY PENROSE.....*Her niece*  
MRS. CHADSEY.....*The bishop's wife*  
JENNY.....*The maid*

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PLACE—*A country town in Connecticut.*

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TIME—*The present.*

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TIME OF PLAYING—*About two hours.*

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## SYNOPSIS OF ACTS.

ACT I. *Morning room in the bishop's home.*

ACT II. *The same scene; that evening.*

ACT III. *Living room in Miss Tate's bungalow;  
later in the evening.*



## COSTUMES.

The costumes and characteristics of the respective persons in the play are indicated in the text. The period represented is that of the present day, so everything should be modern. Details of costumes are immaterial, so long as they are consistent with the characters represented.

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## PERSONAL PROPERTIES.

BISHOP—Desk key; several other keys; pocket knife; telegram.

NED—Pair of muddy shoes; cigar; matches.

RAFFORD—Pair of muddy shoes; emerald necklace in red leather case; tray of food and dishes; piece of wire.

LOCKE—Pair of muddy shoes; warrant.

MISS TATE—Handkerchief; bunch of keys.

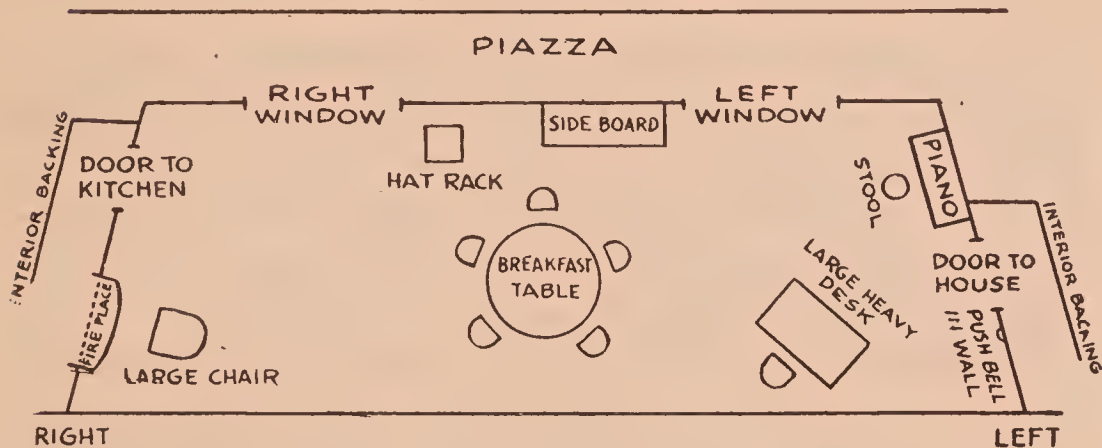
JENNY—Dust pan and broom.

Manuscript in desk drawer. Pad and pencil on desk.

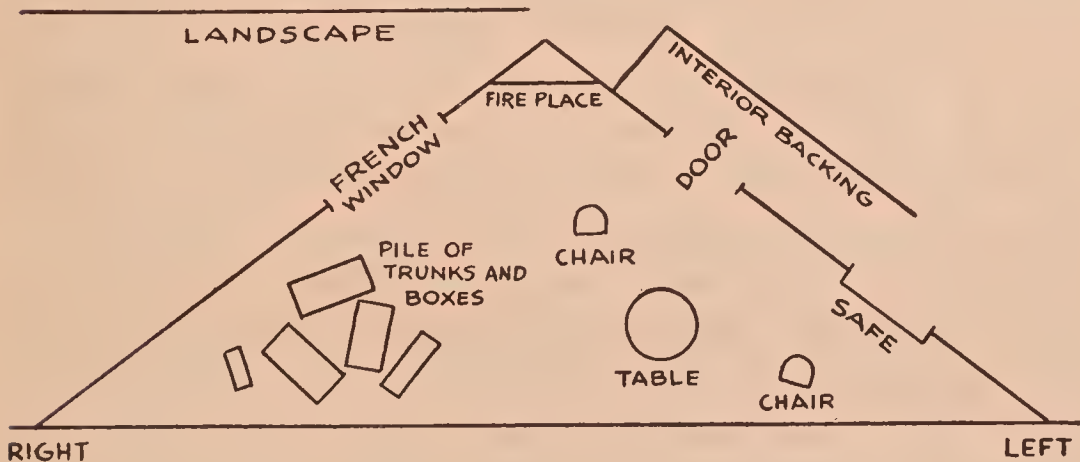
STAGE PLOT.

ACTS I AND II.

AUTUMN LANDSCAPE



ACT III.



STAGE DIRECTIONS.

*Up stage* means away from footlights; *down stage*, near footlights. In the use of *right* and *left*, the actor is supposed to be facing the audience.



# TOO MANY CROOKS

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## FIRST ACT.

SCENE: *Morning room of Bishop Chadsey's country home, with substantial furnishings for permanent residence. In the rear wall are two large windows, opening to the floor, which lead to the piazza and the garden. There is a view of Autumn-tinged trees in the background. The windows have sliding curtains. Between the windows is a large hat tree on which are hung several hats, coats, walking sticks, etc. A door in the right wall, up stage, leads to the kitchen, and a door in the left wall, down stage, leads to the rest of the house. In the right wall, down stage, is a large fireplace, with a low fire burning. Before the fire is a large easy chair, and upon it an ample black overcoat is spread out to dry before the fire. On the hearth beside the chair is a pair of very muddy shoes. A little left of center is a large breakfast table with five chairs. A sideboard, with dishes, stands against the rear wall between the windows. Down left is a substantial writing desk, with chair, so placed that the desk drawers are toward the audience. Up left in the corner is a piano with stool. There is a push-button in the left wall. Other furniture and decorations are in keeping with the atmosphere.*

*When the curtain rises the light is subdued. The heavy curtains on the windows are closed, and a glow comes from the fireplace. It is early morning.*

MRS. CHADSEY *enters from left door. She is a small, delicate, nervous woman of refinement, about*

*fifty years old. She is dressed plainly, but in good taste. She looks about inquiringly and then presses push-button in left wall. Bell is heard to ring off right. She goes to left window and throws back the curtains, and the room grows lighter.*

JENNY enters from right door. She wears maid's attire, but her hair and dress indicate plainly that she has not "got herself up" for the day.

MRS. CHADSEY.

*(Greeting JENNY as she enters.)*

Good-morning, Jenny.

JENNY.

*(Tying her apron.)*

Good-morning, ma'am. Sorry I'm late, ma'am, but I didn't have a wink of sleep all night.

MRS. CHADSEY.

Nobody could sleep in such a thunderstorm. *(Anxiously.)* Did you happen to hear the bishop come in?

JENNY.

Yes, ma'am; somewhere about two o'clock. *(She goes and throws back the curtains of the right window. The stage is now fully lighted.)*

MRS. CHADSEY.

I must have dropped asleep when he came in. Poor man, I think I will let him sleep. Keep the breakfast back for an hour. *(As she says this she has arrived at the chair by fireplace, and sees the coat and shoes. She feels of coat.)* His overcoat. Soaking wet. *(Points to shoes.)* And his shoes. Look at the mud. Take them to the kitchen, Jenny. *(JENNY picks up shoes and is about to take the coat. MRS. CHADSEY checks her.)* No, you may leave the coat. That will dry very nicely.



JENNY.

*(Puts her hand on coat.)*

What a wetting the bishop must have got.

*(While they are talking, with their backs to the right window—)*

NED SHELDON, *with a pair of muddy shoes in his hand, enters the window part way. Seeing them, he draws back out of sight.*

MRS. CHADSEY.

*(Anxiously.)*

I'd no idea of it. I do hope he'll not be ill. He's not very strong. I'll go at once and look after him. *(She goes hastily out, left. JENNY goes out at kitchen door, then comes back with broom and pan and begins to sweep up mud tracks between window and chair.)*

NED *enters right window with muddy shoes in his hand. He looks about inquiringly, and is coming down stage when JENNY, startled, looks up and sees him.*

JENNY.

Oh, Mr. Ned! How you frightened me. *(She stands.)*

NED.

*(He looks rumpled and weary.)*

Hello, Jenny. Good-morning. *(Shows some embarrassment.)* What a night!

JENNY.

Wasn't it awful? The poor bishop never got home till two o'clock. *(She goes and sets broom and pan outside door, right.)*

NED.

The bishop? Oh, yes. I remember. He was to get back late from the city. He must have got lost in the

woods as I did. Such a storm; black as night. And the rain—phew! Torrents! (*Suddenly changes to anxious inquiry.*) Where's Rafford?

JENNY.

(*Stiffens up, as with a grievance.*)

Out all night. Not home yet. I ain't seen him. When I do, he'll catch it.

NED.

(*Inquiringly and with surprise.*)

Sure he isn't home? Perhaps he came in while you were asleep.

JENNY.

(*Sharply.*)

Not much. (*She shows signs of crying.*) Oh, Mr. Ned, if he should go back again to his old trade!

NED.

(*Agitated in his turn.*)

Burglary? Nonsense. Rafford will never burgle any more. I'll stake my life on it. He's the model character of the settlement house.

JENNY.

I can't forget the old days. He *was* a bad 'un. It 'd break my heart if he *should* go crooked again. I didn't like his looks when he went out. He'd the same bulldog face on him he used to have when he was going out on a "big job."

NED.

(*Laughs nervously, but assumes a confident air.*)

Oh, nonsense. Rafford's all right. (*Goes towards door, left.*) But I must get cleaned up a bit. Tell me the moment he comes in.

JENNY.

Yes, sir.

NED.

*(Starts to go out, left; then turns back.)*

Oh, by the way, I wouldn't speak about Rafford's being out all night. *(Indicating the rest of the household.)* They might not understand.

*While they are talking, RAFFORD, with a pair of muddy shoes in his hand, comes to window, right, looks in, then draws back.*

JENNY.

All right, Mr. Ned. The breakfast'll be late on account of the bishop.

NED.

Very well. *(He goes out, left. JENNY goes over left, then to sideboard, takes up some dishes, comes to table.)*

RAFFORD *enters from right window, at first unseen by her, and is stealing out toward kitchen door, up right, when JENNY turns and catches sight of him.*

JENNY.

*(Speaks sharply and bangs the dishes on the table for emphasis.)*

Well! So there you are!

RAFFORD.

*(Turns, embarrassed; drops his shoes and stands with air of a criminal caught in the act.)*

Eh? Oh. *(Pause.)* Good-morning.

JENNY.

*(Frigidly.)*

Good-morning! What you been doin', out all night? Pick up them shoes. Gettin' my floor all mud.

RAFFORD.

(*Picks up shoes, still embarrassed.*)

Oh. I went for a walk—caught in the storm.

JENNY.

(*Contemptuously.*)

Caught in the storm! (*Goes up to him. They meet at center.*) I should think so. (*Sarcastically.*) “Went for a walk.” (*Talks fast, with indignation.*) Look here, Mr. Percy Rafford. Have you been at it again? Have yer? ’Cause if that’s yer game, I’ll have nothin’ more to do with yer. After all Mr. Ned an’ th’ bishop have done for the two of us! (*Turns and goes on setting the table.*)

RAFFORD.

Wait a minute. Let a man speak, can’t yer? (*Aggressively.*) Why d’yer lock the back door?

JENNY.

’Cause I wanted to catch yer like this, sneakin’ in! Ain’t yer ashamed of yerself? Just when yer gets nicely reformed—(*indicating the rest of the household*) what’ll *they* think of yer? (*Contemptuously.*) Went for a walk, indeed!

RAFFORD.

(*Growing angry.*)

My business is my business. I ain’t goin’ back to the old trade. Hear that? (*Morosely.*) Not if I ain’t *drove* back by you and yer suspicions. (*Commandingly.*) Where’s Mr. Ned, eh? Is he home? I want ter see him quick!

JENNY.

Yes, he’s home. But you go and get yourself ready to help with the breakfast. Humph! Nice picture you are. Lucky for you everybody’s late this



morning. (*She flounces out at right. As she goes, RAFFORD moves after her.*)

NED enters, left.

NED.

(*In cautious whisper.*)

Rafford! (RAFFORD turns and comes towards him. They meet at center.)

RAFFORD.

(*In a hoarse whisper, emphatically, anxiously and mysteriously, looking about for listeners.*)

Where was yer, governor?

NED.

Where was I? Where were you?

RAFFORD.

(*Still in sharp whisper.*)

Huh! On the job, jest as yer told me. (*In a grieved tone.*) I never goes back on a pal.

NED.

On the job? Where?

RAFFORD.

(*In a tone of surprise, apostrophizing the world in general.*)

Huh! He says "Where?" Say, wasn't you to be on hand when the trick was done?

NED.

Yes, I *was* there, in the woods—at two o'clock. There was so much thunder and lightning I couldn't hear or see a thing. I thought you'd given it up. I got lost in the woods on the way home, and only just got in.

RAFFORD.

Lost in the woods? I should think so. So was I.



(*Looking round apprehensively.*) So was others beside us. (*In a tone of contempt.*) That fat constable, Locke, for one. I had the devil's own job ter dodge him and get home.

NED.

(*Laughs easily.*)

Well, never mind. We've got a wetting, that's all. We'll try it again some night before long.

RAFFORD.

(*In anxious puzzlement.*)

Try it again? Wot fer? Huh! Not I. Not if I gets out o' *this* trap. (*Looks anxiously round.*)

NED.

(*Still amused at RAFFORD's fears.*)

"Trap"? What trap? Don't talk nonsense. You've lost your nerve.

RAFFORD.

(*Growing sullen and a little insolent, deliberately sets down his muddy shoes and folds his arms.*)

Say, look here. Did you and me make a frame-up ter get Miss Tate's emeralds, or didn't we?

NED.

(*Still pleasantly.*)

Yes, Rafford, we did. And we'll get them yet, if you don't get chicken-hearted. (*Turns away as if to dismiss him.*) You'd better go and get cleaned up.

RAFFORD.

(*Has drawn back in bewilderment, then renews the attack, now rather anxiously than insolently he speaks with emphasis.*)

Hold on. I says again—did you and me make a deal to get them jools over at Miss Tate's bungalow—and did we frame it up that when I'd pinched

'em, you was ter rush up and nab me with the goods on? We was ter make a fake fight, wasn't we? Shoot off a gun or two? I was ter get away and beat it fer home. You was ter hand back the jools and get the credit of the rescue—you hopin' ter get Miss Tate's consent to marry Miss Kitty? Was that the game?

NED.

*(Still amused but a little nettled by RAFFORD's persistency; he looks around anxiously while*

*RAFFORD is speaking.)*

Yes, yes. That was the plan. But don't tell everybody. The plan *failed*. Better luck next time, I say. That's all there is of it. *(He turns away as if to dismiss the subject.)*

RAFFORD.

*(Silently and with determination, looking around for fear of witnesses, pulls out of his pocket a large, bright red case and opens it; speaks in a tense and half-threatening way.)*

Oh. That's all there is of it, eh? Well how about these?

NED.

*(Turns and sees the case and is utterly horrified; goes and hastily covers contents with his hands.)*

Good heavens! *(Looks about apprehensively.)* You haven't got them?

RAFFORD.

Got 'em? I sh'd think I had. *I never goes back on a pal. (Opens the case and shows gems.)* Look at 'em! *(His eyes sparkle with old-time joy.)* Ain't they beauties? Worth a couple o' thousand if a cent!

NED.

*(Is stupefied for a moment, then hastily recovers.)*

Good gracious, Rafford—this is awful! What on

earth did you keep them for? (*Paces up and down in agony.*) You'll land us both in prison! Man, man, what have you done? (*Clutches his hair desperately.*) Oh, Kitty, Kitty!

RAFFORD.

(*In indignant remonstrance.*)

Done? Huh! I done what yer told me. I never goes back on a pal. (*Begins and runs hastily and graphically through the action.*) I goes to the bungalow. I waits till quarter of two. I gets in. (*Contemptuously.*) Them windows is dead easy—wouldn't keep out a hungry cat. (*As he goes on his professional pride gets the better of his fear and indignation and he describes the scene with great unction.*) Here is the safe—(*indicating a side of the wall*) right in full sight. An infant in arms could find it. Huh! (*Contemptuously.*) One of these lady-like safes—with a combination as easy as a nickel-in-the-slot machine. I has it open in five minutes. I pinches the emeralds—(*reassuringly*)—not another thing in the safe, s'help me! Not a thing else. I closes the safe again. Well. Then I goes to the window and gives yer the whistle. I sees that my mask is all right and gets my gun ready fer the fake fight. Then I waits a minute ter give you time to come up. Then I rouses the house—by rattling the winder an' talkin' gruff-like. (*Laughs with grim glee.*) Sure enough, in a minute or two in comes th' old lady, Johnny on the spot. She yells out. I sees the young lady behind her in her nightie, an'—(*resumes his indignant and injured manner*). Well (*shrugs his shoulders*) nothin' doin'. (*Ironically.*) Yer wasn't there! (*Now hurries on.*) Well, I waits on the piazza as long as I dares. Then I sees our little mellydrama



is all off, an' I hooks it to the woods. An' lucky I did, fer I almost bumps into his nibs, the fat constable.

NED.

*(Who has listened with varying emotions.)*

Well *(anxiously)*; what then?

RAFFORD.

*(In deep disgust.)*

Why, then I slops round that blessed woods until daylight—lookin' fer you, an' dodgin' th' constable.

NED.

*(In despair.)*

Oh, what an infernal mess. What's to be done now?

RAFFORD.

*(Anxiously.)*

Yes. So *I* says. If we're caught—you a settlement house worker, nevvvy of a bishop, an' me a reformed cracksman a-hopin' ter marry a respectable woman—here we are, caught with the goods. Well, it's twenty years at hard, if it's a day, fer the two of us.

NED.

*(Agonized.)*

Don't. Don't, Rafford! You're too horribly realistic. I can't stand it. Oh, why did I go into this crazy scheme?

RAFFORD.

Yes. That's wot *I* says. Why did yer, if yer was goin' back on yer pal? It'll go hard with *you*. I'm an old hand—I kin put up with the jug—but I hates ter lose Jenny. *(He begins to snivel. At this NED gets back his nerve a little.)*

NED.

Oh, well. We're not caught yet. We'll get out of it, somehow. At all events, *you* shan't suffer.

RAFFORD.

*(Holds out the incriminating gems.)*

But what'll we do with these? They can't get us if they don't find the goods. It's a pity ter throw 'em away. *(Cunningly.)* Say, I kin make a get-away with 'em, neat as a pin. Wot d'ye say? *(Starts toward window.)*

NED.

*(Hastily.)*

No, no! *(Sharply.)* Here, give them to me. *(He takes them.)* Go and clean up. *(Sees the muddy shoes as RAFFORD turns.)* Here, take them away. Hurry, now. You must serve at breakfast. *(RAFFORD goes out door, right. Just as he is disappearing—)* The sound of KITTY's voice is heard on the piazza. Ned hastily conceals the case in his pocket.

KITTY.

*(Back right, calls.)*

Ned, are you here? *(Enters right window.)* Oh, Ned! *(She is out of breath.)* So glad I found you. I came the moment I thought you'd be up. You'll never guess what has happened. We've had a real burglary over at the bungalow. *(She quite enjoys the excitement.)* Gracious! You ought to hear aunty. She's a nervous wreck. I got here first, so you wouldn't think I was murdered. But aunty's having the time of her life. She's been cruising around the woods with that sleepy-headed constable for hours, hunting up mud-tracks. *(Laughs, then notices that NED does not respond as he should.)* But you don't seem at all interested.

NED.

*(Gathers himself together.)*

Oh, yes, I do. Yes, I do. But I was thinking—



KITTY.

*(Poutingly indignant.)*

Thinking? Well! Here I am, just escaped from the arms of a great big terrible burglar—(*stamps her foot pettishly*). I came to be comforted. (*She looks up shyly. He takes her in his arms and kisses her.*) There. That's what I expected. Now let me tell you all about it. When aunty arrives I won't get a word in edgewise.

NED.

*(Leads her down stage.)*

There, there. Don't get so excited—

KITTY.

I *shall* get excited. The idea! Do you suppose I'm going to make light of the only real excitement I ever had? (*Commandingly puts her hands over his mouth.*) Now, you just listen. (*Hurries on breathlessly.*) You remember that emerald necklace of aunty's? Well, it's to be mine—when I'm engaged. (*Laughs ruefully.*) Or, rather, it *was* to be mine. Aunty brought it down here against her better judgment, so that I could wear it at the dance. Then she got frightened, and had a safe put in. Oh, such a darling of a safe, with a combination and all—(*laughs*) only aunty can never remember the combination. Well, the safe was put in. The emeralds were in it. Last night, during the thunderstorm—(*NED is abstractedly pacing up and down and looking apprehensively around. KITTY notices his abstraction.*) But you're not listening.

NED.

Oh, yes, I am. I wish I weren't. I see it all; your aunt fainting—you trying to revive her—the man escaping—oh!

KITTY.

Yes! (*Breathlessly rushing on.*) And aunty was ever so long coming to. And then that old fool Locke, the constable, came—(*Suddenly stops and thinks*)—but how did you know so much about it? (*Then pettishly playful, as she thinks he has only guessed at what he has pictured.*) Humph! One would almost think it was *your* burglary instead of mine.

NED.

(*Who has grown gradually serious.*)

Well, so it is. (*Turns and takes her in his arms.*) Kitty, Kitty—can you ever forgive such a blundering fool? But I meant it for the best. I really did!

KITTY.

(*Bewildered.*)

Meant it for the best? What *can* you mean?

NED.

Kitty, *I* planned the whole thing.

KITTY.

(*In bewilderment.*)

Good heavens! Am I dreaming? Why—how—what for?

NED.

To get you! I was desperate. I've been trying all summer to get your aunt's consent to our engagement. I couldn't go back to the city until I was sure of you. She wouldn't listen to me. She thinks this settlement work that I'm doing is all rubbish; said she wanted a man who could "do things" for you. Then I heard of the safe and the emeralds and I made a plan with Rafford. He's one of my reformed characters—used to be a burglar. He'll do anything for me—because he wants to stay down

here and marry Jenny. He was to rob the safe. I was to appear on the scene and rescue the emeralds. Rafford was to put up a fight, shoot off his pistol and escape. I was to say that I was coming home late and saw the affair. Then I was to restore the emeralds, and so—(*With gesture of despair.*)

KITTY.

(*Who has listened astonished and then delighted.*)

Oh! Oh!—(*clapping her hands*) how perfectly bully! It was simply great! (*Rushes up and kisses him, then draws back.*) But where were you? What became of the rescue? Rafford did his part. Where were you?

NED.

(*Beating his brow.*)

Just what Rafford said. Only he said (*imitating RAFFORD*) “Where was yer?” (*Gesture of despair.*) I’m an idiot! A fool! Well, I ought to have taken a course in amateur cracksmanship. I wasn’t on hand. The thunderstorm came up. I was soaked to the skin and nearly frozen. I thought Rafford had given it up. I couldn’t hear anything but the thunder. The lightning blinded my eyes. I was thoroughly wretched and disgusted—

KITTY.

What did you do?

NED.

Wandered about all night in the woods; crept home this morning. Found Rafford had done his part. He actually had the confounded emeralds, and—well, the fat is in the fire. (*Takes out the case of emeralds and waves it about.*) Here are your emeralds. And I am an accomplice—a criminal. Rafford says we’ll get twenty years apiece. He’ll



lose Jenny—and I'll lose you! (*Throws himself in chair and clutches his hair.*)

KITTY.

Well, this *is* a pretty muddle! (*Emphatically.*) If aunty ever finds it out she'll be frantic. She'll never, never, *never* forgive you. Oh, oh, why *did* you do it?

NED.

(*Reproachfully and a little angrily.*)

Just a minute ago it was perfectly bully—great—and all that.

KITTY.

(*A little savagely.*)

Well, so it was. Only (*imitating RAFFORD*) "Where *was* yer?"

NED.

(*Groans and writhes in distress.*)

Oh, don't rub it in!

KITTY.

(*In a panic.*)

But—good heavens!—aunty will be here in a minute. She must never know. Quick; give me those wretched emeralds! (*He hands the case to her.*) There *must* be some way out of it. (*As she is speaking—*)

LOCKE, the constable, comes lumbering clumsily upon the piazza, looking round for footprints, and is seen through the right window. He has a pair of muddy shoes in his hand. He is a large, fat, red-faced, sleepy man, who suffers from asthma and has a peculiar grunting wheeze with which he punctuates his talk. Altogether he is the very opposite of a real detective—though he prides himself upon his slyness and softness of foot. He has an air of professional secrecy. NED sees him.

NED.

(To KITTY, who conceals the case of emeralds behind her back.)

Sh-h-h! (Nods his head towards window.)

KITTY.

Locke! He mustn't see them. (Tries first to put them in the neck of her dress; then makes an ineffectual flutter as if for pocket in her dress.) Oh, for a pocket! What shall I do with them?

NED.

(Whispers loudly.)

Here. Give them to me. (As KITTY runs over near the fireplace.) Throw them into the fireplace.

KITTY.

(Who has got to the overcoat upon the chair.)

This will have to do! (She slips the case into the pocket of the overcoat just as LOCKE comes into the room through the right window.)

NED.

(Aloud.)

Come in, Locke. What's up? You look mysterious.

LOCKE.

(Advances into room with the muddy shoes in his hand.)

Beg pardon, sir—(stops to wheeze). Been a robbery over to Miss Tate's. (Wheeze.) Found tracks in the woods. (Wheeze.) Curious thing. Them footprints all lead to this house. (Wheeze.) Took off my shoes (holding them up) so's I could tell my own tracks. (Wheeze.) Seen any suspicious characters round here? (Wheeze.)



KITTY.

(*Nervously, trying to compose herself.*)

Why, Mr. Locke. In a bishop's house! Aren't you ashamed of yourself? I've just been telling Mr. Sheldon about the robbery.

NED.

(*Trying to cover his confusion.*)

And she says that you acted with great bravery and presence of mind—after the thief had got away. Ha, ha! How about it, Locke?

LOCKE.

(*With pompous and offended dignity.*)

Huh! Don't know 'bout no presence of mind; (*wheeze*) but I do know Miss Tate an' me found plenty of *tracks*. (*Wheeze.*) An' I do know all of 'em leads to that there winder! (*Wheeze.*) Sorry to suspect any one in th' bishop's house, but I've got ter do my duty—(*wheeze*).

NED.

Right you are. Track the tracks. Don't let the thief escape.

LOCKE.

I ain't a-goin' ter. Not if it incriminates th' bishop himself. Another thing I know. This ain't the work of no professional. He wouldn't *make* no tracks (*wheeze*)—not if I knows my business (*wheeze*). (*Grows confidential.*) This here's the work of an amatoor. He opens that safe of Miss Tate's (*wheeze*). She seen him doin' it. He must 'a' had the combination. An' then, so far as I can see, he makes straight fer this house. But I'll *get* him—no matter *who* he is!

KITTY.

*(Nervously.)*

But there's nobody up yet at this house, except Mr. Sheldon. You'd better come round again. *(Flatteringly.)* Nobody is likely to escape *you*, you know.

LOCKE.

*(With aggressive pomposity.)*

Not much. I don't want ter be nasty about it. There's plenty of time. *(He yawns broadly.)* I got ter get a little sleep. I'll look in later. *(Goes off wheezing and mumbling; just as he gets to the window—)*

RAFFORD, *in sober black clothes, comes in from the kitchen with a tray of food and dishes. He nearly stumbles over LOCKE. They look at each other and LOCKE goes out the right window. RAFFORD goes to table and sideboard and lays out the breakfast.*

NED.

*(Sidles up to RAFFORD, as LOCKE disappears.)*

All right, Rafford. *(Pointing to KITTY.)* I've told her.

RAFFORD.

*(First rather puzzled and then reassured, comes down stage and is about to explain.)*

Look here, Miss Kitty, I hope you'll understand—  
*(As he begins to speak—)*

MISS TATE *comes bustling in through right window, all excitement and nervous haste. She is a tall, commanding old maid, with quick, nervous manner; but at heart full of affection and sentiment. She is given to hyperbole. RAFFORD draws back and busies himself with breakfast things, watching and listening, then goes out right door.*

MISS TATE.

Ah! Here you are, Kitty. Oh, what a night! And what a morning! I'm mud up to my knees (*lifts her skirts*). I never saw that fool constable show so much energy. He dragged me through all the mud holes between here and the bungalow. Good-morning, Mr. Sheldon. I suppose Kitty has told you about our appalling tragedy?

NED.

Yes, Miss Tate. Kitty has told me all.

KITTY.

(*Deprecatingly.*)

Now, aunty. Do put on the soft pedal. There was no tragedy.

MISS TATE.

She says no tragedy, Mr. Sheldon! Well, what do *you* call it, when a gang of bandits and assassins attack the house of a lonely woman, and—

KITTY.

Now, aunty. Not a gang; only one.

MISS TATE.

Well, I've just seen hundreds of tracks in the woods. Locke says there's only one man. He's a fool! There must have been twenty desperadoes, at least. (*Sharply and nervously to KITTY.*) Now, my dear, don't interrupt me. (*To NED.*) What do *you* call it when a pack of abandoned cut-throats forcibly enter my house—

KITTY.

Now, aunty. Bungalow.

MISS TATE.

(*Much annoyed.*)

Well, bungalow, then. Forcibly enters my bungalow—and no doubt they would have murdered us—

KITTY.

If it hadn't been for Locke—

MRS. CHADSEY *enters, left door.*

MISS TATE.

*(Sniffs with disgust.)*

Locke! Of all the fools. But here is dear Matilda. (MRS. CHADSEY *comes in but is at once overwhelmed by MISS TATE's vehemence, and remains gasping and speechless.*) Matilda! A tragedy! Don't be frightened, my dear, but we—that is, Kitty and I—were nearly slaughtered in our beds last night—

KITTY.

Oh, aunty.

MRS. CHADSEY.

*(Looking apprehensively at door, left.)*

Oh, how dreadful!

MISS TATE.

May I speak? Burglars, Matilda, in my house! Gory assassins! My emeralds stolen before my very eyes—

MRS. CHADSEY.

*(Whose alarm for the BISHOP gives her courage to interrupt.)*

My dear Sarah—if you don't mind—the bishop is not at all well. I've delayed breakfast to allow him to sleep. I wouldn't have him hear of anything exciting for worlds.

RAFFORD *enters, right door.*

RAFFORD.

Shall I serve breakfast, ma'am?

MRS. CHADSEY.

Yes, Rafford. *(To MISS TATE.)* Now do stay to breakfast, and afterwards we'll talk it all over. You



know, I'm sure, how sorry I am. (RAFFORD *places the chairs at table, etc.*)

MISS TATE.

Stay to breakfast? Of course I will. I intend to do so. Do you think I could go back to that horrid bungalow? I shall pack up this very day. You'll have to put us up to-night—and I'm ferociously hungry. Locke—you know Locke, the fat constable—he's a fool, too, by the way—he has led me through all the quagmires in that atrocious piece of woods looking for tracks. What comfort he thinks I can find in mudtracks I'm sure I don't know. But I *must* tell the bishop. Nobody understands me like the dear bishop. I'll wait until he's had his coffee and rolls, the dear man. So sorry he's not well. I won't alarm him. Now don't be afraid, my dear Matilda, I'll try not to say a word until after breakfast.

MRS. CHADSEY.

Oh, thank you. After breakfast you shall tell us all. You know how nervous he is. (*The BISHOP is heard clearing his throat outside the left door.*) Sh-h! there he is.

*The BISHOP enters, left door. He is a small, thin man, of most mild and benevolent innocence. He wears large, powerful glasses, and evidently has to peer through them sharply to get any view of the world at all. He enters briskly and in great good nature.*

NED.

Good-morning, uncle.

KITTY.

Good-morning, bishop.



MISS TATE.

(*Rather effusively.*)

Good-morning, my dear bishop.

(*The BISHOP pauses and peers at each one respectively as he is addressed, and speaks first to MISS TATE.*)

BISHOP.

(*Rubbing his hands and peering closely as he comes to her and holds out his hand.*)

Ah, Miss Tate, so glad to see you. Ha! Just in time for breakfast. (*Turns to MRS. CHADSEY.*) Is breakfast ready, my dear?

MRS. CHADSEY.

Quite ready. Rafford, you may serve us.

(*RAFFORD, who has been hovering about and listening discreetly, bustles now to seat the people. All seat themselves, the BISHOP at the head, facing the audience.*)

BISHOP.

(*Genially.*)

We're unconscionably late this morning. (*To RAFFORD, as he uncovers a dish.*) What's this, Rafford?

RAFFORD.

Fish, sir.

BISHOP.

Ah; good. Will you serve it, please. (*RAFFORD goes to serve the people. MRS. CHADSEY busies herself with the coffee.*) I hope you're all as hungry as I am. Ha! Such a night. I quite expected to be laid up with rheumatism. Out in all that dreadful storm. Ha-ha! What do you think of that for your old bishop, Miss Tate?

MISS TATE.

Out in the storm? Good gracious, how shocking!

I hope no one had the impertinence to be *dying* in such unseasonable weather.

KITTY.

Oh, aunty.

NED.

We can't always choose the weather for our important engagements, Miss Tate.

MISS TATE.

*(In a freezing tone.)*

Ah, indeed, young man? Engagements seem to be on your mind. Some engagements require more seasonable weather than others, as you'll find. (NED, snubbed, relapses into silence. There is a moment's awkward pause.)

MRS. CHADSEY.

*(To MISS TATE, with a significant assumption of innocence and to avert a quarrel.)*

I trust, Sarah, that you had a peaceful night?

MISS TATE.

A peaceful night? Humph! Haven't I told you—  
*(She starts out to tell her story, but is checked by the mingled voices of the three others, whose rudeness shocks the BISHOP.)*

NED.

Sorry to interrupt, Miss Tate, but—

KITTY.

Aunty, you're not eating!

MRS. CHADSEY.

Oh! I forgot the thunderstorm!

*(The above three speeches are given all together, and hastily.)*

RAFFORD.

*(To MISS TATE.)*

Have you a napkin, Miss? (MISS TATE waves him away.)

BISHOP.

(*After pausing and looking around reprov-  
ingly, smiles benignantly.*)

One could hardly have had a peaceful night, my dear, with so much thunder and lightning. I was out in the worst of it. Missed my train from town. Got out here about one o'clock. Well, I thought I knew that wood from end to end. The thunder and lightning were most extraordinary—a marvelous exhibition of the unrestrained powers of nature. (*Genially.*) But there. It's all over, and here we are, snug and warm, and (*to MRS. CHADSEY*) my dear, you will be glad to know that I accomplished my errand. I have found a publisher for my book.

KITTY.

(*Interrupts.*)

Oh, have you written a book? I hope it's a love story.

MISS TATE.

(*Horried.*)

A love story by a bishop? Good heavens! What should bishops know about love stories?

KITTY.

Then I hope it's a ripping good detective story.

NED.

Ha! That's good; with Locke for hero.

MRS. CHADSEY.

The bishop, my dear, thinks about more serious things—

MISS TATE.

(*Interrupts.*)

Speaking about Locke, of all the stupid men. Why, this morning, as I was telling you before the dear bishop came in—when I was nearly distracted after—

*(All interrupt her again, as before, much to the annoyance of the BISHOP.)*

RAFFORD.

*(Putting a platter before her.)*

More fish, Miss Tate? *(She glares at him and pushes the dish away.)*

NED.

How about the book, bishop?

KITTY.

Aunty, you interrupt the bishop.

MRS. CHADSEY.

I know your coffee is cold, Sarah.

*(The above three speeches are given together. The BISHOP again looks round reprovngly, then smiles as before.)*

BISHOP.

Ah, the book. *(Pointing to his wife.)* Matilda knows. Ha-ha!

MRS. CHADSEY.

Yes, the bishop has put into a book his ideas about psychic phenomena.

BISHOP.

*(Correctingly.)*

So-called psychic phenomena, my dear. You all know that I do not approve of a great deal of the careless theorizing that is being done upon the subject. Many occurrences which are ascribed to occult influences are merely the sequelae—the results, my dears—of coincidence. I consider that it destroys a proper sense of personal responsibility to insist that hypnotism, telepathy, auto-suggestion and the rest play any considerable part in our ordinary experience. It is against this that my book is directed. I



call the book "Natural Coincidence the Explanation of Supernatural Phenomena."

MISS TATE.

I hope, bishop, it's not like one of those cheap French dinners—big names and little to eat.

BISHOP.

*(Good-naturedly.)*

Ha-ha! Very good. But you shall hear. Take, for instance, the subject of the supposed relationship between premonition and tragic occurrences, such as a great crime—

MISS TATE.

*(Who has been restless.)*

Ha! Burglary, for example! Bishop, what would you think of a frightful robbery? Such as—

*(They all interrupt again.)*

NED.

Oh, make it a murder at least, bishop.

KITTY.

Oh, aunty; do let us hear about the bishop's book.

MRS. CHADSEY.

Is there a draught on your back, Sarah?

RAFFORD.

*(Has been hovering round, and now pushes a dish of rolls before MISS TATE.)*

Fresh rolls, miss? *(She pushes the dish away.)*

BISHOP.

*(As before, glares about dumbfounded at the lack of manners, then smilingly resumes.)*

A great crime following a distinct premonition of danger on the part of the victim. Now, I maintain



that in most cases the premonition which is associated with a particular experience is a common experience of the person in question. He is in the habit of having premonitions. He has had hundreds of them—and nothing has happened. But the one instance when something does happen stands out in his mind as the single striking phenomenon.

NED.

*(Half aside, to KITTY.)*

Sounds like he was counting out for a game—eeny, meeny, miney mo—

KITTY.

*(Laughs.)*

Sh! You'll be "it" in a minute, if he hears you.

BISHOP.

*(Has paused to drink his coffee.)*

It works this way. One has the habit of premonition. Habit produces expectancy. He is looking for that particular happening. Something like it does happen, and he thinks the whole universe, natural and supernatural, has conspired to visit him with that calamity.

KITTY.

*(With a tone of scarcely complimentary surprise.)*

Why, it's real interesting!

MRS. CHADSEY.

Of course, my dear.

NED.

Well, bishop, how about people who have premonitions to whom nothing ever happens?

BISHOP.

*(Glowing with enthusiasm.)*

Ah! I knew you would ask that. I have in prep-

aration a chapter upon that very point. The answer is—they make it happen! Indeed, it was because I was at the library looking up data for that chapter that I missed my train last night. But (*shaking his head in mild regret*) the recorded material for that chapter is very meagre. But I shall find enough. Yes, people of nervous temperament and vivid imagination are quite capable of making things happen.

KITTY.

Dear me, bishop, do you really think so? Real things? Crimes? Tragedies? How creepy!

MISS TATE.

(*Sniffs with incredulity.*)

Nonsense. How *can* they be real?

BISHOP.

(*Impressively.*)

They are real to the people who imagine them.

MISS TATE.

Something like a dream, I suppose.

BISHOP.

Yes. A sort of waking dream.

MISS TATE.

Anything as real as a burglary, for instance? (*Rushes on.*) Now, I have always had a premonition that I should be robbed, and—

(*Next three speeches are given together.*)

NED.

It's like somnambulance, hey?

KITTY.

How delightfully gruesome!

MRS. CHADSEY.

Dear Sarah, you have a thousand premonitions.

RAFFORD.

(*Has spied MISS TATE'S handkerchief on the floor, and now hands it to her.*)

Your handkerchief, miss.

BISHOP.

(*Glares, then goes on unctuously.*)

Then there are real dreams—when one is actually asleep. Quite real experiences to the dreamer, but having no basis in fact. Now *I* often dream things that are most realistic—especially when I'm very tired. Some day I shall wake up and hear of something just like my dream. But I shall not for that reason consider that my dream has anything to do with it except as a coincidence. (*Laughs indulgently.*) Now, last night, for instance, when I went to bed tired out I had a most outlandish dream—but surprisingly realistic!

KITTY.

Oh, tell us; tell us, bishop.

BISHOP.

(*Laughs in half-apology.*)

Why, it was not a very creditable kind of dream for a bishop, I must confess.

NED.

All the more exciting. What was it? Did you dream that you were shooting dice with a millionaire?

MRS. CHADSEY.

Ned!

BISHOP.

(*Laughs indulgently.*)

Worse than that, Ned.

KITTY.

Good gracious! Not that you eloped with a chorus lady?

BISHOP.

Oh, dear me, no. But I won't say, "worse than that."

MISS TATE.

Well, I should say not.

NED.

*(In a sing-song of mockery.)*

Oh, I don't know. There *are* worse things.

KITTY.

Ned! You are particularly disgusting. But do tell us, bishop.

NED.

Yes. Get it off your chest, uncle.

MRS. CHADSEY.

Don't indulge these ribald children, bishop!

MISS TATE.

Well, for mercy sakes. Do let the bishop tell his awful dream. His dreams are the only chance the dear man ever has to be really wicked.

NED.

Ha! Sort of safety-valve for high pressure consciences.

MISS TATE.

Young man, you are flippant.

NED.

Well, bishop, confess it all. I always knew you were a man who could do things—if you had half a chance.

MISS TATE.

Huh! More than you will ever be.



NED.

Sh-h-h! He's about to tell. (*Looks round.*) I hope Locke isn't about.

BISHOP.

Well, you'll all laugh—but it was a robbery!

MISS TATE.

Merciful powers!

KITTY.

Who was the robber?

BISHOP.

I was.

NED.

(*In mock admiration.*)

Pshaw. That's nothing for uncle. Didn't I tell you he was a wonder?

BISHOP.

Well—it seems hardly credible—but I dreamed that I had a sudden, uncontrollable passion for precious stones. Then I thought I must possess myself of Miss Tate's emeralds. (*RAFFORD begins to be interested.*)

NED.

Good old uncle. He's a regular rascal when he does let himself go.

MISS TATE.

(*Breathlessly.*)

My emeralds!

*When the BISHOP has begun his next speech, JENNY enters quietly from right door, and assists RAFFORD.*

BISHOP.

Yes. I suppose it came from hearing you express your anxiety about them. Well, it was quite real. I simply couldn't help it. I disguised myself and crept through the woods, in just such a storm as last night.



I seemed to glory in the noise and confusion, and was glad of it. I got easily past the window into the living-room where the safe is. Then with some unaccountable deftness and skill I made short work of the combination of the safe. Why, I can almost tell you the numbers now. (*All are interested. NED, nervously anxious and watchful; MRS. CHADSEY anxious about the BISHOP; RAFFORD uneasy; KITTY absorbed; MISS TATE, gradually stiffening with excitement.*) I opened the safe, put the case of gems in my overcoat pocket, closed the safe and prepared to leave the room. Then in some strange way I got afoul of the windows; made a frightful racket. The household was roused. I saw Miss Tate come into the room. She screamed and fainted—then I ran off and hid myself in the woods—

(*RAFFORD here stands motionless, staring at the BISHOP. NED rises and twitches him aside. From this time on RAFFORD shows keen interest in everything that is said and done, while he busies himself in clearing away the breakfast things, helped by JENNY, who also plays her part in the business—now listening to the story, now watching RAFFORD. Both RAFFORD and JENNY exeunt into kitchen just before LOCKE comes in. KITTY also begins to rise. MRS. CHADSEY is admiringly absorbed in the BISHOP'S story and does not notice the rest. MISS TATE grows more and more excited and finally jumps up. The BISHOP also rises.*)

MISS TATE.

(*Exclaims sharply.*)

Bishop! This is positively miraculous.

KITTY.

Aunty, the bishop hasn't finished.

MRS. CHADSEY.

Don't excite yourself, bishop.

MISS TATE.

(*Explosively.*)

The very thing as it happened!

NED.

(*Half-jokingly.*)

Uncle, you'd better not tell the neighbors.

MISS TATE.

Astonishing! Do you know, bishop, this is exactly what happened—

ALL.

(*Trying to hush her.*)

Sh.

MISS TATE.

Do let me alone. I simply *can't* keep it in any longer. Bishop, the emeralds were stolen last night, just as you have described it!

MRS. CHADSEY.

Don't allow yourself to get excited, bishop. (*The BISHOP listens with close attention.*)

MISS TATE.

(*Hurries on.*)

Just exactly as you have told it. The storm kept me awake. That new safe and the emeralds got on my mind. I got up several times and glanced into the living-room. Everything was all right. I grew more nervous. About two o'clock, when the lightning was most vivid, I saw a man with a mask and a slouched hat working at the safe. In a few moments he had it open. He took the case of emeralds and shut the safe again. I was fascinated by him, he worked so skillfully and coolly. Finally, I got courage to creep

upstairs, more dead than alive, and awakened Kitty. She tried to telephone, but the lightning had burned out the fuse. Then we both went down-stairs. There was a noise of rattling and gruff voices. I stole up to the door and there was the man, in the window, apparently waiting for someone. I think he heard me, for he made off and—and—I fainted—

MRS. CHADSEY.

Now, bishop, don't excite yourself.

BISHOP.

*(In uncontrollable delight, forgets MISS TATE'S anxiety.)*

Don't worry about me, Matilda. I am so glad. Why, it's splendid, superb! It's just what might have been expected. It's perfect! Miss Tate, you couldn't have done me a better turn. It's an ideal case. I am delighted!

MISS TATE.

*(With astonishment.)*

Delighted!

MRS. CHADSEY.

What?

BISHOP.

*(Enthused.)*

Pleased beyond expression. Nothing could be better.

NED.

*(Nervously humorous.)*

You see? He's a criminal to the core.

KITTY.

*(Also nervous.)*

Ned, don't. He's gone dotty.

MRS. CHADSEY.

Bishop, you *have* excited yourself too much. I knew you would. I warned you, Sarah.

KITTY.

He seems to think it's a joke.

NED.

No. He's gone off his head. Better go and lie down, uncle.

MISS TATE.

*(With considerable dignity.)*

I don't see anything so delightful about the affair, bishop. I hope I'm too old a friend for you to make game of me. I didn't expect this from you. *(She is overcome with indignation and distress and begins to wipe her eyes.)*

BISHOP.

My dear Miss Tate, it is really delightful. Do go over the whole story again. I must have every detail.

MISS TATE.

I think *not*. This is too much. Matilda, the dear bishop *must* be ill. Kitty, I think we should go at once. *(She prepares, with dignity, to go.)*

NED.

If the bishop were a drinking man, now—

KITTY.

Ned!

BISHOP.

*(To NED.)*

Do you mean to be disrespectful, sir? Can't you see that you are in the presence of a wonderful revelation of nature?

NED.

No, but I see that we're all in the fog somehow.

MISS TATE.

*(Having moved toward right window.)*

Come, Kitty, this is no place for us. I did hope to find sympathy here. Come; we must pack up and leave before night.



BISHOP.

*(In an agony of enthusiasm, and trying to make himself understood.)*

Miss Tate, I beg of you, listen. I owe you a debt of gratitude. You have practically completed my book. I wanted just one such convincing example. And for the author himself to be able to quote his facts at first hand is invaluable.

MISS TATE.

*(With great asperity.)*

Quite so. Good-day! *(Moving toward right window.)*

BISHOP.

*(Following her, beseechingly.)*

Really, Miss Tate, you misunderstand me. Let me explain!

MISS TATE.

*(Coldly, as she pauses and turns back.)*

Well, perhaps our old friendship does deserve that. I should be sorry to think you were making light of such a calamity. Explain, if you can.

BISHOP.

Your premonitions; your habit of expectancy; your strong imagination. Don't you see? You, and you only, have committed this robbery!

*(All show their several sentiments. RAFFORD is dumbfounded; KITTY amused and wondering; NED gives it up with a shrug of the shoulders and turns away. MRS. CHADSEY is in tears; MISS TATE speechless from indignation.)*

MISS TATE.

I—I—rob myself? My poor Matilda! The dear man is clearly distracted.

BISHOP.

*(Striving against the fates to be understood.)*

Most assuredly. You robbed yourself in your own imagination.

MISS TATE.

Nonsense. Are my own eyes and ears nothing? Didn't I *see* the man?

BISHOP.

*(Eagerly.)*

Yes. *You* saw him. *You* saw him. But did anybody *else* see him? Kitty, did you?

KITTY.

Why, no, not exactly. But I heard the racket.

BISHOP.

Excellent! You see? *(To MISS TATE.)* The thunderstorm was all she heard. All the rest was your imagination. Why, it's the most perfect thing I ever heard!

MISS TATE.

*(Ironically.)*

Except, perhaps, your dream.

BISHOP.

Ah! There again, perfect! Two cases in one. Marvelous coincidence, the whole thing. My dream, your presentiment. Everything works together. You thought you saw your safe robbed. I dreamed I did the robbery. *(Rubs his hands with glee.)* It'll make my last chapter a clincher for the critics. We'll have all the people involved write out their statements. Does anyone else know about it, Miss Tate? We mustn't omit one person—

*While BISHOP is talking, LOCKE appears aggres-*

*sively at right window. All see him except the*  
BISHOP.

NED.

*(Interrupts ruefully.)*

Yes. Here's another witness. Come in, Locke.

*(LOCKE comes into the room.)*

BISHOP.

*(Turns and sees LOCKE.)*

Ah, Locke, my good man, good-morning. Ha! So you have had a burglary, eh?

LOCKE.

*(With wheeze.)*

That's what they call it. Up at Miss Tate's.

BISHOP.

Did *you* see anything of it?

LOCKE.

Well, I see enough to make me want to see more.  
*(Wheeze.)*

BISHOP.

What did you actually see?

LOCKE.

Why, I see lights a-movin' about Miss Tate's bungalow early this mornin' (*wheeze*). I see a dark suspicious figger a-sneakin' through the woods (*wheeze*). I goes an' finds there's been a robbery (*wheeze*). Then I finds tracks in the mud—hundreds of 'em (*wheeze*) trompin' 'round—(*wheeze*).

BISHOP.

But you did not see the burglar himself, eh? Eh?

LOCKE.

Well, mebbe I did—mebbe I didn't. I see enough.

BISHOP.

(*Exasperated.*)

But, Locke, you yourself did not, with your own eyes, see the robber in Miss Tate's living-room, opening the safe and taking something from it?

LOCKE.

Well, no (*wheeze*). Not likely. Burglars don't make an appointment with the constable to watch 'em (*wheezes, then laughs at his own joke*).

BISHOP.

(*Triumphantly.*)

There! I thought so. Not a single witness! Miss Tate, the emeralds are in the safe, just as certainly as you are in this room.

LOCKE.

What? (*Wheeze.*) You don't mean it's all a mistake?

MISS TATE.

Of course not, Locke. But don't cross the bishop. He's been too much excited as it is.

MRS. CHADSEY.

Yes, Locke, the bishop is not well.

KITTY.

Run along, that's a good Locke.

NED.

We'll send for you if we want you, Locke.

BISHOP.

Good-morning, Locke. You're a faithful officer. It's not your fault if you saw nothing. Good-day.

LOCKE.

(*Stands doggedly in his tracks.*)

All very well (*wheeze*). But, as you say, I'm a faithful officer. 'T all events, I'm th' only constable



in this town (*wheeze*) and I got my duty to perform (*wheeze*). Now (*comes down deliberately and ponderously and takes centre of stage*), there's a burglary been done—as ye may say, right under my nose. I almost *see* the robbery (*wheeze*). Anyhow, I get to the scene of the crime in time ter see a man run past me into the woods. Then, at sun-up (*wheeze*) I find tracks in the mud. I follered them tracks, at considerable personal inconvenience (*wheeze*). Now you may be surprised to learn, bishop, as I was, that them tracks end up at your house—(*wheeze*) right here!

BISHOP.

(*With indulgent patience.*)

Well, Locke, what do you infer from that?

NED.

Yes. What do you mean?

MRS. CHADSEY.

Please come another time, Locke. The bishop is not himself.

BISHOP.

Nonsense. What is it, Locke?

LOCKE.

(*Very ill at ease, but striving to be dignified; wheezes at intervals.*)

Well, you see, I *have* ter foller up what clues I can get. Them clues leads to this house. I'll have ter find out if there's anything suspicious happened here. They may lead to nothin', 'r ag'in they may lead to somethin'.

BISHOP.

(*In amused good-nature.*)

Locke, you're a good man, but you're mistaken. What do you want us to do?

LOCKE.

(*Wheeze.*)

Well, I reckon it'll be about th' right thing to question th' whole household.

NED.

What? Here and now? The idea!

KITTY.

The whole thing is absurd!

MISS TATE.

(*Indignantly.*)

Locke, you are ridiculous.

MRS. CHADSEY.

Why, Locke! You don't suspect any of *us*, do you?

LOCKE.

Well, I dunno. (*Cunningly.*) I must foller up my clues—(*wheeze*) an' them footprints, ye know—

KITTY.

(*Nervously.*)

Oh, "them footprints" are getting on my nerves.

NED.

(*Trying to throw the thing off as a joke.*)

I tell you what it is, Locke, if you want to do the thing right, you must get a magnifying glass and go all over the house inch by inch.

LOCKE.

(*Unconscious of the sarcasm.*)

Well—(*wheeze*) mebbe 'twould be a good idee—

BISHOP.

Well, Locke, we'll humor you. Shall we summon the servants?

LOCKE.

If ye please, bishop.

BISHOP.

Will you ring, Ned?

NED.

*(Goes and rings.)*

Better have the dog in, too.

MISS TATE.

Well, I don't suppose you'll need *me*, Locke. We were just going. *(Sarcastically.)* With all your cleverness, I don't suppose it has occurred to you, as it has to others *(glaring at the BISHOP)* to suspect me of robbing myself.

RAFFORD and JENNY enter from kitchen. They stand and listen.

KITTY.

*(Eagerly and sweetly.)*

And you surely don't suspect *me*, Locke. *(She and MISS TATE prepare to go.)*

LOCKE.

Well, I dunno. *(Obstinately.)* You're here now *(wheeze)*. I kinder think I'd like ye ter stay 'til I get through *(wheeze)*. Somethin' might transpire.

MISS TATE.

*(Pettishly.)*

The fool! *(KITTY begins to grow nervous and looks appealingly at NED. MISS TATE walks back from window and sits down.)*

BISHOP.

Well, the household is assembled. Go on, Locke. But I tell you, the emeralds are in the safe. *(Seats himself, then thinks of the servants and addresses*

*them.*) Oh, I forgot. Rafford, Jenny—Locke thinks there's been a robbery. You must have heard us talking about it at breakfast. Locke wants to ask some questions.

JENNY.

All right, sir. (*Looks anxiously at RAFFORD, who is very much disturbed.*)

RAFFORD.

Askin' questions is no good. Besides, we ain't bound to answer. That's the first principle of the law.

NED.

Good old Rafford! Of course not. Eh, Locke?

LOCKE.

(*Doggedly, but cunningly.*)

Mebbe so. But them as don't answer, I shall have my own ideas about. (*Wheeze.*)

MISS TATE.

The old fool! (*Moves about in her chair in a nervous pet.*)

BISHOP.

Go on, Locke.

LOCKE.

(*Wheeze.*)

Well, fust of all, I'll question Miss Tate. (*MISS TATE turns towards him aggressively.*) Miss Tate, would you reckonize the robber you saw opening your safe?

MISS TATE.

Of course not. He had a mask and slouch hat.

LOCKE.

Good. (*Wheeze.*) Then it might be most anybody.

MISS TATE.

(*Tartly.*)

Yes, most anybody with two legs and a little brain.



Not *you*, certainly, Locke. (KITTY *laughs nervously and irrelevantly.*)

LOCKE.

Did he look like anybody here?

MISS TATE.

Look here, Locke. Don't you, of all men, try to be funny. I tell you, I don't know. (*Peevishly.*) The bishop thinks it was all a dream; that I robbed myself. I refer you to him as an authority on dreams. (*Rises resolutely and walks about.*) As for me, I shall be at the bungalow all day, packing, if you feel moved to arrest me for robbing myself. I shall await you with interest. Ned Sheldon, I wonder you allow your uncle to be made ridiculous.

KITTY.

(*Playfully.*)

Locke, perhaps you dreamed the robbery yourself. That would be perfect. I'm sure you have imagination enough.

LOCKE.

(*Ponderously.*)

I never dream.

BISHOP.

(*Peering at him through his glasses, with interest.*)

Dear me, Locke, you're a curiosity. I must have you in my book.

LOCKE.

(*Stubbornly.*)

Am I to examine th' household or not, bishop?

BISHOP.

Of course; go ahead.

LOCKE.

(*Turns to MRS. CHADSEY.*)

Mrs. Chadsey, someone came to this house during the storm last night. I want them tracks explained.

MRS. CHADSEY.

To be sure. The bishop got home late from the city.

LOCKE.

*(Knowingly.)*

Huh! Well, them tracks came right from the woods—

BISHOP.

*(Simply.)*

Of course. I got lost in the woods during the storm.

LOCKE.

Huh! Well, perhaps you kin tell us somethin' about the robbery.

BISHOP.

*(Laughs innocently.)*

Not unless you take my dream into account.

LOCKE.

*(Persistently and incredulously.)*

Huh! So you had a dream. Well, p'raps ye won't mind tellin' me that dream.

BISHOP.

Certainly not. I—

MISS TATE.

Locke, this is too absurd and disrespectful. The bishop shall not tell you a word.

MRS. CHADSEY.

Certainly not. The bishop is not at all well. He must not be troubled by such things.

NED.

Really, Locke, this is too serious a matter for us to talk about dreams.

KITTY.

Locke, if you ever did dream, you ought to have a nightmare in which some fiend would split open

your stupid head with an axe and put in a little common sense.

LOCKE.

I don't know nothin' about nightmares. But if th' bishop really refuses—

BISHOP.

Not at all. I was about to tell you. It's most interesting—

NED.

*(Interrupts.)*

The long and short of it is that the bishop, by an odd coincidence, dreamed that he robbed Miss Tate's safe and got the emeralds.

BISHOP.

Precisely. A most curious coincidence. I—

LOCKE.

*(With stubborn persistence.)*

What did you dream you done with the emeralds, bishop?

NED.

Why, you fool, what difference does that make?

KITTY.

I move that we all postpone this meeting until Locke gets sober.

MISS TATE.

Locke, I discharge you from this case. You shall not pester the bishop.

MRS. CHADSEY.

Come, Locke. Remember the bishop is not well.

NED.

Locke, if you don't go, I'll throw you out.

BISHOP.

Now, my dears, don't be foolish. Nobody here is afraid of Locke. He's trying to do his duty. Locke, in my dream, I put the jewels into my overcoat—

KITTY.

(*Agitated.*)

Oh, bishop! You forget. You *said* you threw them away in the woods.

RAFFORD.

(*Hurriedly.*)

That's so. I heard him say it.

NED.

Of course.

BISHOP.

(*Innocently.*)

Did I? Well, that was a mistake—

LOCKE.

Where is that overcoat?

NED.

(*In desperate straits.*)

Look here, Locke. I am ashamed of you. This has gone far enough. If you take this ridiculous stand upon your authority as constable, the bishop will stand upon his rights as a citizen. You can't insult this family any longer. Unless you have a search warrant you shall not go on with this absurd farce. There's no thief in this house. Now, get out before I put you out!

BISHOP.

Ned, don't be violent. If Locke wants to examine my overcoat, he shall do so. (BISHOP *takes coat gingerly from the chair, holding it by the collar.*) Here it is. You see? It's still quite damp.

NED.

(*In great alarm.*)

I beg your pardon, uncle, but you must be beside yourself to submit to any such indignity. Aunt



Matilda, Miss Tate, Kitty—I appeal to you. Shall this go on?

KITTY.

Certainly not!

MISS TATE.

Of course not!

MRS. CHADSEY.

It's ridiculous.

*(The above three replies are given together.)*

NED.

*(To LOCKE.)*

Now, out you go. *(To RAFFORD, who is only too eager.)* Rafford. *(They approach LOCKE threateningly.)*

LOCKE.

Well, I've got my own ideas about my duty. I know what I know. If you insist upon a search warrant, I'll get one. *(He begins to retire clumsily.)* But I warn ye, if I *begin* to search, I won't stop fer no talk, nor no threats of personal violence!

NED.

All very well. I hope you won't. Good-day. We'll see you off the grounds now, anyway. *(He and RAFFORD hustle LOCKE out of the right window, and follow him out.)*

BISHOP.

*(Much agitated.)*

This is most disorderly. Why not permit the man to examine the overcoat?

MRS. CHADSEY.

Because we know there's nothing in it. *(She takes the coat from him by the collar.)* Here, give it to me. *(Feels of it.)* It's not dry yet. It's most imprudent for you to handle it. *(She throws the coat carelessly on the chair and stands near it until BISHOP has gone.)*

MISS TATE.

After all, they are *my* emeralds, and you are *my* bishop, and I won't have any such tomfoolery. I'd rather lose the miserable things, anyhow, than to give that fool Locke the satisfaction of finding them.

MRS. CHADSEY.

(*To JENNY and RAFFORD.*)

You needn't wait.

(*JENNY and RAFFORD exeunt into kitchen.*)

MISS TATE.

Kitty, I think better of that Ned of yours. He's beginning to *do* things. He's worth looking after. You may go and see that he gets no harm.

KITTY.

All right, aunty. (*Looking anxiously at overcoat, she goes hastily out.*)

BISHOP.

I'm really sorry about all this, Miss Tate. But you'll find I'm right about your premonition. It's extremely interesting—

MRS. CHADSEY.

Bishop, you've been altogether too much excited. Do go and lie down.

BISHOP.

Not at all. I am delighted. I must do some writing at once. (*Goes towards desk at left, takes out key from his pocket, opens drawer in desk and takes out manuscript, closes drawer but leaves key in drawer.*) I'll take my manuscript and make a few notes for that last chapter. You'll excuse me, Miss Tate.

MISS TATE.

Certainly, bishop. I shall be gone in a moment, so that you may write at your own desk. (*BISHOP exits,*

*left door. As soon as he is gone, MISS TATE and MRS. CHADSEY come together at center.)* Matilda! Did you ever hear anything so dreadful as that consummate fool Locke suspecting the bishop?

MRS. CHADSEY.

I am afraid it will make the bishop ill.

MISS TATE.

I wish he hadn't told about his dream. It makes me nervous.

MRS. CHADSEY.

You don't think, Sarah, there's anything in it?

MISS TATE.

Anything in it? How?

MRS. CHADSEY.

That the bishop could have been walking in his sleep, or anything like that?

MISS TATE.

Nonsense! He's got his head muddled by those crazy notions about premonitions and dreams. Could anything be more unlike the dear bishop than for him to insist that I robbed myself? I never came so near quarreling with him in my life. I tell you, the bishop is not himself.

MRS. CHADSEY.

*(Glancing toward the overcoat.)*

That overcoat has got on my nerves. *(She hesitates, then laughs nervously.)* I shall have no peace until I look in the pockets.

MISS TATE.

How utterly absurd. *(Then changes to irrelevant curiosity.)* Well, let's look at it, anyway. *(MRS. CHADSEY goes close to the chair.)*

MRS. CHADSEY.

*(Anxiously.)*

Sarah! Do you suspect the dear bishop?

MISS TATE.

*(Indignant.)*

If I did, would I want to incriminate him? Come, let's have it over and look at the coat.

MRS. CHADSEY.

*(Takes it and comes down stage.)*

I'm trembling all over. What if the emeralds should be here?

MISS TATE.

*(Hastily taking the coat.)*

Here, Matilda, let me look. We are acting like a couple of silly schoolgirls. *(Puts her hand at random into one of the pockets and brings it out empty.)* There. You see? Nothing. *(Puts her hand in again and stops with a puzzled and surprised expression.)* Well, of all the marvels. *(She still keeps her hand in the pocket.)* Matilda!

MRS. CHADSEY.

*(Hastily seizes MISS TATE's hand and pulls it out with the case in it; takes the case.)*

Sarah! *(They look at each other.)* I shall faint!

MISS TATE.

The poor bishop! His mind must be failing. If I had only known. *Why* didn't you stop my foolish tongue? I'm thankful that fool Locke isn't here. Now what's to be done?

MRS. CHADSEY.

*(Who has recovered somewhat.)*

You don't think the bishop—



MISS TATE.

I don't know what to think. But I'm sure the dear bishop is incapable of such a thing.

MRS. CHADSEY.

But here are the emeralds—(*Holds out case.*)

MISS TATE.

(*With great energy.*)

What of it? I wouldn't believe he'd stolen them even if I'd seen him with my own eyes. But don't stand there trembling and blinking, Matilda. Hide them! Someone will be coming. Hide them until we can think what to do. (*She goes and hangs up the overcoat on the rack, up center.*)

MRS. CHADSEY.

I believe I hear the bishop coming back. (*They have drawn near the desk.*)

MISS TATE.

Quick; the desk. (*She opens the drawer.*) Quick! (*MRS. CHADSEY puts case in desk, locks it and takes out the key.*) The key; the key! The bishop will ask for it. Give it to me—quick!

MRS. CHADSEY.

(*Has gone up near right window.*)

He shan't have it. I'll throw it away first. (*Throws the key out of window, as—*)

BISHOP *enters from left door.*

BISHOP.

Ah. I find I have left some pages of my manuscript. (*The women stand in silence as he goes to the desk and tries to open the drawer.*) Strange. I must

have locked the drawer. (*Searches his pocket for the key.*) Did you see what I did with the key, Matilda?

MRS. CHADSEY.

(*Faintly.*)

Oh—er—the key?

MISS TATE.

Now, bishop, *do* let your writing alone for a few hours. You must rest.

BISHOP.

(*Shakes his head in bewilderment.*)

Not at all; not at all. Never felt better—(*Stops and thinks.*) Now, where did I put that key? (*Goes out left door, feeling in his pockets.*)

(MISS TATE and MRS. CHADSEY embrace sympathetically.)

MRS. CHADSEY.

Sarah!

MISS TATE.

Matilda!

CURTAIN.

# TOO MANY CROOKS

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## SECOND ACT.

SCENE: *The same as the First Act; that evening.*

*When the curtain rises, the stage in semi-darkness; but there is enough light for everything to be clearly visible to audience. The BISHOP sits at his desk, with the overcoat thrown over his shoulders. On the desk are manuscript, books, etc. He is writing and reading, evidently worried by the fading light. He tries ineffectually to open the locked drawer. Finally he gathers up papers, makes one more peevish attempt to open drawer, then goes to hat rack and is awkwardly removing overcoat when—*

NED enters, left door.

NED.

Am I disturbing you?

BISHOP.

Not at all. (NED has advanced to help him with overcoat, but the BISHOP has hung it up before he gets there.)

NED.

You make a good long day of it.

BISHOP.

(*Moving toward left door.*)

Yes, yes; a good day. Got on famously—(with an annoyed glance at desk) except for those notes!

(*He goes out left door. NED looks through door after him, then glances around, then goes hastily to left side of hat rack, and begins rummaging in overcoat. As he does so—*)

KITTY enters right window, hurries to overcoat opposite NED, and fumbles in coat. They do not see each other until their hands meet. Both exclaim.

NED.

(Savagely seizing her hand.)

Aha! Who's that?

KITTY.

(With suppressed scream.)

Oh! (Recognizing him.) What a fright you gave me!

NED.

Kitty! (Embraces her while she half cries and half laughs hysterically.) Sh! Not so loud. (They come down center.)

KITTY.

(Having recovered somewhat, in excited tone.)

Were they there? (Pointing to overcoat.) The emeralds? In the coat?

NED.

I didn't find them. Did you?

KITTY.

No. We must find them. (Both rush to the hat rack, seize the coat, begin to rummage in pockets, turning the coat upside-down, and, half-laughing and struggling, bring it down center. KITTY gives up in despair.) Nothing! (Leaves the coat in NED's hands.)

NED.

Nothing! (He throws the coat down in disgust.)

KITTY.

Where *can* they be? I've been trying all day to come and look. Aunty's been packing up. I had to go to the village and buy pepper.



NED.

Pepper? What for? She doesn't need any.

KITTY.

Oh, you silly. Pepper to pack her things in.

NED.

Good Lord, what an idea! (*Reflecting.*) Who *could* have taken those emeralds?

KITTY.

We've simply got to find them. We can't have that fool constable nosing about here.

*As they are speaking, JENNY hurriedly enters, right door. She is in hysterical tears and is about to rush across the stage toward the left door. NED and KITTY see her and turn.*

KITTY.

Jenny. What on earth is the matter?

JENNY.

I *must* see the bishop! (*Weeps; is going on; NED stops her.*)

NED.

(*Hurriedly.*)

Wait a minute! What *is* the matter?

JENNY.

(*Comes down center between them.*)

Oh, Oh, Mr. Ned. It's—Percy!

NED.

Percy? Who's Percy?

JENNY.

(*Explaining with comic and tearful sentiment.*)

Rafford. I call him Percy, since he reformed. It's more refined-like. (*Relapses into despair.*) But

what's the use? It don't make no difference! (*Blubbers.*) I knew it would happen—I knew it—I told you! Oh, oh! (*Overcome by her emotion.*)

NED.

(*Irritably.*)

Well?

KITTY.

(*Impatiently.*)

For mercy sakes, woman, be quiet and tell us.

JENNY.

(*Wiping her eyes tragically.*)

He has confessed all!

NED.

What has he confessed?

JENNY.

The robbery; Miss Tate's emeralds.

NED.

Now the fat *is* in the fire. (*To JENNY, nervously.*)  
Well, well, go on; go on!

KITTY.

Yes, yes. What has he said?

JENNY.

Told me the whole thing! (*Accusingly, to NED.*)  
Oh—how *could* you set him on to do it?

NED.

(*Conscience-smitten.*)

Oh, bother! Heaven knows I'm sorry enough. Stop that blubbering and don't tell the whole family.

KITTY.

Yes. We'll get him out of it—only be patient.

JENNY.

*(Still with suppressed sobs.)*

P-p-p-patient? Oh-h! It'll ruin the two of us. He'll go back again to his old trade and I'll have to follow him.

NED.

Nonsense.

JENNY.

He *says* he will. Says he's tired of bein' reformed. Says he's *sick* of the whole business of goin' straight. An' I don't blame him. *(She weeps silently.)*

KITTY.

*(Soothingly.)*

Come, come, pull yourself together. Things can't be so bad. *(Points to the overcoat.)* Hang up that coat, that's a good girl, and dry your eyes and light the lamps. Suppose someone should come.

NED.

*(With decision.)*

And send Rafford here at once. *(JENNY, still weeping, takes the coat and goes and hangs it up, lights a lamp or two and goes out, right. NED and KITTY come down center, look meaningly at each other and speak in whispers.)* Rafford! I never thought of him. He's got them!

KITTY.

*(Alarmed.)*

He's desperate. He'll be off with them!

NED.

Good Lord! Suppose she *had* told the bishop. We must fix Rafford somehow.

RAFFORD *enters from right door.*

RAFFORD.

Well, governor?

NED.

Ah. I say, Rafford, hand over those emeralds. Quick—and no nonsense! This thing is getting serious.

RAFFORD.

(*Morosely.*)

Huh! I like that! “Hand over the emeralds,” says you. If I *had* ’em, d’ye think I’d be hangin’ ’round here? Not likely.

NED.

What’s got into you? Do you mean to say you didn’t find them in that overcoat?

KITTY.

(*Desperately anxious.*)

You *must* have found them. Oh, say you did.

RAFFORD.

(*Sarcastically.*)

Sorry to disappoint you. Only wish I *had*. I ain’t had no chance. The bishop’s been a-writin’ here all day. I’d a beat it afore this, if I *had* found ’em. I’m sick o’ this reform racket. (*To NED.*) Nice way to treat a pal, governor. You gives me all the trouble, I does all the work, an’ you laughin’ and jokin’ about it. I’m *sick*, I am.

NED.

(*With serio-comic grimace and ironic laughter.*)

Oh, yes. You *are* a wizard if you can see *me* laughing and joking. It’s long past a joke now.

RAFFORD.

I should say so. I’m the goat, all right. I’ve been in two minds all day to blow th’ whole thing to Miss Tate. And then I thinks, wot’s the good? She won’t



believe me. You'd go back on me. I'd only send myself up. So I made up my mind I'd pinch the emeralds if I could find 'em and get away. (*Gloomily.*) When it's blown over, Jenny *might* come with me.

KITTY.

(*Who has been thinking.*)

Well, you haven't got them yet, at all events—

NED.

(*To RAFFORD.*)

And look here. It's no good to "beat it" without them. You might as well stand in with us until you see what happens.

RAFFORD.

(*Still obstinately and emphatically.*)

Well, I don't *like* it, I tell yer. If I find them shiners, it's me fer th' woods—quick. (*He goes out suddenly, right door.*)

KITTY.

He's in a nasty temper. What's to be done?

NED.

I don't know. It looks bad.

KITTY.

(*Desperately.*)

Let's make a clean breast of it and tell aunty.

NED.

Horrors, no! No, she'd never forgive me for getting her "dear bishop" suspected.

KITTY.

(*In desperate agreement.*)

Oh, dear. (*In serio-comic mimicry of LOCKE.*) Them mudtracks. (*Gesture of despair.*) But I must go. Aunty'll wonder where I am. (*Starts toward right window.*)

NED.

*(Makes as if to follow.)*

Let me go with you.

KITTY.

*(Checks him with a gesture.)*

No, no. You mustn't leave the house with Rafford in such a state.

NED.

*(Persistently.)*

I'll see you a little way.

KITTY.

*(Reluctantly.)*

You mustn't get out of sight of the house. *(They go out right window.)*

*After a moment, MISS TATE enters, right window. She comes in hurriedly, looks about and then goes to the desk, pulls out a big bunch of keys, tries several, and is standing puzzled when MRS. CHADSEY comes in, not seeing her at first. MRS. CHADSEY makes for the desk also. They meet and exclaim.*

MRS. CHADSEY.

Good gracious—you here!

MISS TATE.

*(Holds out keys.)*

Don't lose your head, for mercy's sake. *(Laughs sardonically.)* I was only going to steal my own emeralds. Have you found the key? If I get hold of that necklace I'll sink it in the nearest pond.

MRS. CHADSEY.

No, I haven't found it. I suppose the emeralds must stay in that desk until the bishop finds them.

MISS TATE.

Matilda! You're out of your mind.

MRS. CHADSEY.

(*Wearily.*)

Twenty times while he's been writing at that desk I've come in and tried to tell him—(*weeping*) but I couldn't!

MISS TATE.

Well, I should say not. Of course he's innocent. I don't know how it's explained, but I won't have the bishop told. They're *my* emeralds—and I won't have it.

MRS. CHADSEY.

(*Embraces MISS TATE tearfully.*)

Oh, thank you. You're so kind.

MISS TATE.

(*Wiping her eyes surreptitiously.*)

Nonsense. I'm a silly old fool. (*Then with solemn conviction.*) This is a visitation for being so selfish about Kitty and Ned. They love each other. Ned's really a good chap. But I just couldn't bring myself to lose her. (*Weeps quietly.*) She's all I have.

MRS. CHADSEY.

(*Rousing up.*)

But what's to be done? The bishop wants his papers. He's pestered everybody—borrowed all the keys in the place. He'll have that drawer open, and then what?

MISS TATE.

I don't know. (*Suddenly pushes MRS. CHADSEY toward the left door.*) Here. You keep watch. I'll finish trying these keys. (*Pushing her out left door.*) Go, now—quick! (*MRS. CHADSEY goes out, left door. MISS TATE begins to fumble at the desk with keys.*)

NED comes in right window without her seeing him. He stands in surprise for a moment at center, and then speaks.

NED.

(*In amused tone.*)

Aha! (*She turns and glares at him.*) Trying to suppress the bishop's book?

MISS TATE.

Nonsense, young man. Not at all. But I'd burn it up if I could. It's his absurd theories that have got him into this scrape.

NED.

(*Alarmed.*)

Scrape?

MISS TATE.

(*Confused.*)

Why—why—this beastly suspicion of Locke's.

NED.

(*Apparently about to explain.*)

Yes, but—(*Hesitates.*) there may be some explanation. (*Hesitates.*) If I thought you wouldn't be angry, I—I—

MISS TATE.

(*Impatiently.*)

Well, well, what are you sputtering about? Speak out, can't you? (*Hurries on.*) Ha, I know one thing. I'd like to get my hands on the *real* burglar!

NED.

(*Choked off just as he is about to confess.*)

Oh; humph! (*He whistles, then mutters.*) Lucky escape.

MISS TATE.

(*Turns upon him.*)

Don't mumble. Speak out. What is it?

NED.

Oh, nothing.



MISS TATE.

*(Going back to her real grievance.)*

The dear bishop! Of all the outlandish absurdities, to suspect *him*.

NED.

*(Laughs with an attempt at jocosity.)*

And the worst of it is, it does look fishy—that dream of the bishop's.

MISS TATE.

*(Flashes out indignantly.)*

Fishy? Not at all.

NED.

Why—*(Embarrassed.)* I thought that you—

MISS TATE.

Never mind. I won't have the dear bishop's name coupled with this ridiculous affair. *(She grows so indignant that she begins to cry nervously.)*

NED.

*(In astonishment.)*

Why, Miss Tate.

MISS TATE.

*(Wiping her eyes defiantly.)*

I can't help it. You think I'm an old cat. So I am! *(Cries.)* But when the dear bishop—*(Bursts into tears.)*

NED.

*(Approaches her with show of comfort.)*

My dear Miss Tate.

MISS TATE.

*(With peppery inconsequence.)*

Don't touch me! I'm all unstrung. *(Desperately.)* Oh, *why* can't you find that scoundrel of a burglar?

NED.

*(Confused.)*

Yes—er—but what can I do?

MISS TATE.

(*Turns upon him with emphasis.*)

Ned Sheldon, this is more serious than you think!

NED.

Ah, is it?

MISS TATE.

(*Running on.*)

Think of it. The dear bishop may actually be arrested!

NED.

Ah, the bishop? Oh, pshaw. Absurd!

MISS TATE.

Not absurd at all. And you'll believe me, perhaps, when I tell you—(*with exact emphasis*) the emeralds are there—in the bishop's desk.

NED.

Good Lord! What? How—you—

MISS TATE.

Matilda and I found them in that overcoat. (*Points tragically to it.*)

NED.

(*Significantly.*)

Oh. Ah. I see.

MISS TATE.

Oh, you see, do you? It's more than I do. Do you realize it's the very place the bishop *said* he put them? What a mercy Locke didn't find them.

NED.

But the emeralds? In that drawer, you say?

MISS TATE.

(*Impressively.*)

In that drawer. If Locke finds them the bishop will be hopelessly compromised. I wish the miserable things were in the bottom of the sea.

NED.

(*Groans abstractedly.*)

So do I.

MISS TATE.

Eh? What do you say? But here, what's to be done? I can't get that desk open. Matilda threw the key out of the window in her fright. There's no locksmith. We *must* get the things out of the way before Locke comes back.

NED.

(*Who has been thinking.*)

Miss Tate, you have a poor opinion of me. I don't know that I have very much of myself just now. But—

MISS TATE.

(*In nervous anxiety.*)

Yes, yes, yes! I know. You mean Kitty! Well, never mind her now. We've more important things to think about.

NED.

Not to *me*, Miss Tate. (*In a rapture of devotion.*) Kitty is—why, Kitty is—

MISS TATE.

Yes, I know, I know. Kitty is all the world to you, and all that. But the dear bishop is all the world to me, and I won't talk about Kitty until the bishop is out of this horrible muddle.

NED.

(*Suddenly and hopefully in earnest.*)

Then if I can find a way to get him out you'll give your consent?

MISS TATE.

Oh, you silly, inconsistent boy. I don't know. (*Meaningly.*) But do something—*do* something—and then we'll talk.

NED.

My dear Miss Tate!

MISS TATE.

There, there. Remember—you must *do* something—(*The BISHOP is heard, off left, clearing his throat.*) Oh, dear, here he comes. I must guard this desk with my life.

NED.

(*Going toward right window.*)

All right. I'll *do* something. You'll see. (*Goes out right window.*)

BISHOP comes in left door.

BISHOP.

(*With two or three keys in his hand.*)

Ah, Miss Tate. So glad to see you. (*With diffidence.*) You're not feeling hard toward me? Just between you and me, I am afraid I'm making too much of an idol of my new book. Do you know (*looking innocently about*) I nearly lost my temper several times to-day, because I couldn't open this drawer. (*He goes to drawer, takes a key and tries it in lock, then laughs.*) Ha-ha!

MISS TATE.

(*Hovers about him anxiously as he tries keys.*)

Indeed? It's just as well. You are working too hard. Now, my dear bishop, do stop fussing with those keys and talk to me.

BISHOP.

(*Turns away from desk.*)

Well, if I do, (*playfully*) I shall talk about my pet idea—coincidence, you know; this robbery—which I am sure never took place except in your own imagination.



MISS TATE.

(*Begins with some asperity.*)

Indeed? (*Checks herself as she thinks.*) Oh, you're right, of course.

BISHOP.

(*Delighted.*)

Ah, you give in? Good, good! My dear lady! Well, well. Now we shall get on famously. (*Cunningly.*) Now, you know, there's one way to settle it.

MISS TATE.

(*Puzzled.*)

Oh, is there?

BISHOP.

It's for you to trot over, like a good woman; open that safe; and find the emeralds precisely where they have been all along.

MISS TATE.

Oh, you think so.

BISHOP.

I know it.

MISS TATE.

Well, you and I agree that they are there. Isn't that enough?

BISHOP.

But I want Locke to agree, too. I want his testimony.

MISS TATE.

(*Gets an idea.*)

I'll tell you what. If you'll promise not to write one word until I come back—not even to look at the papers in that drawer—I'll *try* to open the safe.

BISHOP.

Really. Well, it's a hard bargain. (*Hesitates.*) But I promise. I'll not touch pen to paper until you get back. There; that's fair enough.

MISS TATE.

Then, I'll *try*.

BISHOP.

(*Puzzled.*)

Try? But where's the difficulty?

MISS TATE.

I'm a frightful donkey at figures. I believe I've completely forgotten the combination.

BISHOP.

Well, here *is* a dilemma. But, come, let's see if you and I can't think it out. Can't you recall a single figure?

MISS TATE.

Oh, yes, I remember too many. The moment I begin to think about it my brain fairly boils with figures.

BISHOP.

Indeed? Curious. Now try and concentrate, and give me the figures. (*Sits at desk; takes a pad and pencil.*)

MISS TATE.

(*Sits near and puzzles.*)

Let me see. There's a three, I know.

BISHOP.

Good. (*Writes.*) Three. Well?

MISS TATE.

Then there's another three.

BISHOP.

Good.

MISS TATE.

(*Puzzled.*)

But I can't tell whether it's the number three on the dial, or three turns to the right.

BISHOP.

Well, let us suppose it's three turns to the right. It sounds reasonable.

MISS TATE.

No, I think it must be three turns to the left.

BISHOP.

But you know it can't be both ways.

MISS TATE.

*(Brightening up.)*

That's it. That's it. It is both ways.

BISHOP.

*(Desperately.)*

Impossible.

MISS TATE.

*(Throws up her hands.)*

There, you see? That's always the way. I can't even begin to get it right.

BISHOP.

*(Good-naturedly.)*

Well, well, never mind. Perhaps you'll remember when you are actually working at the safe. At all events, if you don't, you can telegraph to the safe company. But I do wish you would make one trial this very evening. I am so impatient to prove my theory. Would you be so kind? Come, I'll run over with you. *(He rises impulsively.)*

MISS TATE.

No, no, don't think of coming with me. I'll go at once. *(She prepares to go.)*

BISHOP.

I must go a few steps.

MISS TATE.

Just a little way, then—and remember your promise.

BISHOP.

*(Laughing.)*

Yes, yes. It's a hard bargain. But—not a line of writing. *(They go out right window. Just as they disappear—)*

RAFFORD *comes in from kitchen, right, looks about, searches one or two places, gets to desk, tries drawer, finds it locked and starts trying it when the BISHOP enters, right window. RAFFORD turns quickly.*

BISHOP.

Ah! *(As with a happy inspiration.)* Just the man we want. *(RAFFORD starts.)* You know how to work the combination of a safe.

RAFFORD.

*(Alarmed and sullen.)*

Naw, I don't know nothin' about it!

BISHOP.

Oh. I thought—*(Hesitates.)* Your old profession, you know—*(Checks himself.)* Ah, I beg your pardon. I've hurt your feelings. I wouldn't do that for the world—

RAFFORD.

*(Morosely.)*

Yer *might* let a man forget! 'Tain't so easy to forget, I can tell yer. *(Resentfully.)* Not when the very guys as is reformin' yer chucks yer old trade at yer—an' even leads yer into it.

BISHOP.

*(Very gently and kindly.)*

Dear me. I am very sorry, my dear fellow. Now, now—*(Goes up kindly to RAFFORD and puts his arm*



*round him.*) You really must forgive a thoughtless old fellow. I'm afraid I spoke roughly. There, now. Will you forgive me?

RAFFORD.

*(Touched.)*

Well—yes. I s'pose I must.

BISHOP.

Well, now, that's very handsome of you. You're a gentleman. Do you know, to forgive an injury is the mark of a gentleman? It's one way to do good to them that despitefully use you. *(Laughs apologetically.)* But, come, come. I'm preaching.

RAFFORD.

*(Softened, he laughs in sheepish good-nature.)*

Well, I kin stand short sermons. Wish they was all like that. *(Softens towards the BISHOP.)* Kin I do anything for yer?

BISHOP.

Well, yes; two things, in fact. One is to get the drawer of that desk open. I can't do a line of writing until it's open.

RAFFORD.

*(Most willingly makes a move toward the desk.)*

Sure. Here goes. *(Suddenly changes his mind and looks cunningly at the BISHOP, and is evidently afraid of a trick.)* Yer ain't got such a thing as a knife about ye, have yer?

BISHOP.

Certainly. *(Takes out knife and hands it to RAFFORD. Rafford makes by-play to indicate his cunning and fear of a trap; takes the knife; goes clumsily to work. The BISHOP adjusts his glasses and watches him admiringly, RAFFORD all the while pretending.)* Well, now, that is most skillful and ingenious!

(*With a clumsy heave of intentional mistake RAFFORD breaks off the blade.*)

RAFFORD.

(*Laughs clumsily.*)

There! Humph! It's no use. I ain't no good any more. My hand's as clumsy as a horse's hoof.

BISHOP.

(*Checks him.*)

Never mind, my dear fellow. (*Laughs playfully.*) It's just as well. The fact is, I just remember I promised Miss Tate I wouldn't look into the drawer. But there's another thing I want you to do. And I'm afraid my eagerness made me very unkind just now. It's to help Miss Tate open her safe. (*Laughs.*) She's the best of women, but she has no head for figures. She's forgotten the combination. (*Laughs innocently.*)

RAFFORD.

(*Stiffens up.*)

Well, I can't help yer! I ain't cracked a safe these five years. They've changed th' whole game. Sorry, I can't do it.

BISHOP.

There, I've offended you again. Well, never mind. She'll have to get a man from New York.

RAFFORD.

(*Sharply.*)

She's goin' ter do that, is she?

BISHOP.

(*Innocently.*)

Of course. We must prove that the emeralds are still there.

RAFFORD.

(*Sullenly.*)

Oh! Well—sorry, but I can't help yer.

BISHOP.

There now. I'm just as well pleased. In fact, it is a great satisfaction to know you *have* forgotten your—your (*embarrassed*) technical skill, shall we say? (*Laughs and pats RAFFORD on the shoulder.*) You see, you couldn't be tempted now. It's a great blessing.

RAFFORD.

(*Sullenly.*)

Huh! I dunno s'much about that.

BISHOP.

But I must not bother you any longer. (*Yawns and shows signs of weariness.*) And as I can't do any writing, I find I am really quite tired. I think I'll go and lie down and have a little nap. You'll—you'll excuse me. (*Goes out left door.*)

(*RAFFORD, left alone, goes and looks after the BISHOP, then to window, then looks around. Then he goes quickly to desk and is working at it when—*)

NED comes in at right window.

NED.

Ah! Keeping your hand in?

RAFFORD.

(*Startled.*)

Oh, it's you, is it?

NED.

Yes, it's I. And I've found a way out of the woods.

RAFFORD.

(*Sullenly.*)

Huh! Fer you—or fer me?

NED.

For both of us.

RAFFORD.

(*Morosely.*)

Well, I know *my* way out.

NED.

(*Sternly.*)

Now, look here. Don't cut up rough! This plan is a good one.

RAFFORD.

(*Still sullenly.*)

Huh! Better'n yer last, I hope! I'm a-listenin'.

NED.

You can have the emeralds—provided you get far enough away with them, so that neither Locke nor anyone else shall ever find you or the stones—

RAFFORD.

(*Has put his hand unconsciously upon the desk over the drawer.*)

Huh! Easy said. But where are the stones?

NED.

Right under your hand. (RAFFORD *starts as if the drawer were on fire.*)

RAFFORD.

Ah, none o' yer kiddin'. Why, the bishop just—

NED.

(*Interrupts.*)

I tell you, the stones are there in that drawer.

RAFFORD.

All right. (*Looks about for something to open the desk with.*)

NED.

(*Checks him.*)

Now, now—no hurry. (*Meaningly.*) Locke may come in any minute. It wouldn't be healthy for you to have the emeralds in your hands.



RAFFORD.

*(Draws back reluctantly.)*

Well, what then? There won't be no chance when he does come. Get 'em now, *I* say. *(Starts to study the drawer again.)*

NED.

No, no! Now, listen. I'm going to show you how to get the emeralds, and at the same time keep Locke off your trail until you are clean away.

RAFFORD.

*(Grins with glee.)*

Say, you must have a good one up yer sleeve.

NED.

I have.

RAFFORD.

*(Suspiciously.)*

How about the old girl?

NED.

Don't worry about her. I'll fix her, too.

RAFFORD.

*(Grins again.)*

You're a wonder, you are.

NED.

You'll say so, when I tell you. But first you must promise you'll get away for good and get those emeralds out of the way, too. Do you understand?

RAFFORD.

Sure. I understand. But what about Miss Tate?

NED.

Well, I'll let you into a secret. Miss Tate thinks more of the bishop than she does of the emeralds. She knows the stones are in that desk, and she is

afraid Locke will make it unpleasant for him. So she has agreed that if I can get them out of the way, she will be satisfied.

RAFFORD.

Huh! Good enough fer *you*. How about *me*? If I'm caught, it's burglary.

NED.

That's the point. It's not burglary. It's just a personal gift from Miss Tate.

RAFFORD.

(*Laughs sardonically.*)

Oh, come off. That's too good.

NED.

Not at all. You'll take the gems right before Miss Tate's eyes, and she will consent. That's no burglary.

RAFFORD.

(*Puzzled.*)

Well, all I can say is, it needs some explainin'.

NED.

That's the point. And you will have to do exactly as I say, and act quickly, too. (*Stops and listens.*) Ah! Somebody coming. Go and wait for me in the garden. (RAFFORD *goes out right window.*)

MRS. CHADSEY *enters left door.*

NED.

(*To MRS. CHADSEY.*)

Ah, how's the bishop?

MRS. CHADSEY.

Asleep. I hope he won't be disturbed. He's tired out worrying about his manuscript.

NED.

Aunty, Miss Tate has told me. (*Taps the desk significantly.*)

MRS. CHADSEY.

Oh, isn't it dreadful? What can we do? That stupid Locke will search the house.

NED.

Now, don't worry. I've promised Miss Tate I'll protect the bishop. I've got a plan—(*He is interrupted when—*)

KITTY *enters hastily through right window. She rushes to them at center.*

KITTY.

Ned! Mrs. Chadsey! Locke is coming—

MRS. CHADSEY.

(*In nervous flutter.*)

Oh, what shall we do?

NED.

You stay here and wait for Locke. I must see Rafford. I'll be back in a minute. Don't ask any questions until I come. (*He rushes out right window.*)

KITTY:

Well, of all the tangles I ever saw, this is the worst. I wish aunty *had* dreamed the emeralds were stolen.

MRS. CHADSEY.

(*Sadly.*)

I am afraid the dear bishop is in serious trouble.

KITTY.

Oh, nonsense. If worse comes to worst, I can save the bishop.

MRS. CHADSEY.

(*Impressively.*)

What? Hasn't Sarah told you?

KITTY.

What?

MRS. CHADSEY.

That she and I found the emeralds in that desk.

KITTY.

Good heavens, no! How did they get there? No wonder Ned and I—

MRS. CHADSEY.

What?

KITTY.

Oh, nothing. (*She has turned toward right window.*) Here comes aunty. Now for an explosion.

MISS TATE *enters through right window, in great excitement.*

MISS TATE.

My dear Matilda—(*she is out of breath*). That man Locke—I just left him. (*She sees KITTY.*) Kitty, you here? Go home at once. I must speak with Matilda privately.

MRS. CHADSEY.

Oh, she knows all about it.

MISS TATE.

(*Amazed.*)

Well, if that isn't like you! But never mind. (*To KITTY.*) See that *you* don't tell. (*To MRS. CHADSEY.*) Locke's coming. He'll search the house. How shall we explain?

MRS. CHADSEY.

It's a frightful situation.

MISS TATE.

Frightful? It's worse. It's disgraceful. Well, he shall only find those jewels over my dead body—or



his. (*Goes to the desk and rattles drawer in despair.*)  
Oh, (*to* MRS. CHADSEY) *why* did you throw away that key?

KITTY.

Now, aunty, you must be quiet. If Locke sees you like that he'll *know* something is wrong.

MISS TATE.

(*Tragically.*)

I don't care *what* he sees. He'll see bloodshed right here if he tries to touch this desk. The dear bishop!

KITTY.

Ned says he's got a plan—

MISS TATE.

(*Contemptuously.*)

Ned, Ned! I wonder you can want to marry such a nincompoop. He promised me to get those accursed emeralds out of the way. He's done nothing. Pshaw. Ned!

MRS. CHADSEY.

Now, Sarah, give the boy a chance. Let's hear his plan.

*NED is seen entering through right window as MISS TATE speaks. He waits by the window for a moment.*

MISS TATE.

To think of such a useless creature for a son-in-law—

KITTY.

Son-in-law?

MISS TATE.

Well, nephew-in-law—or whatever it is that he wants to be. Here we are, three perfectly wretched and hopeless women—trying to protect the dear bishop from an outrageous suspicion—and *he*—

NED.

(*Comes down.*)

He is on hand to do the trick. (*To MISS TATE.*) I know I deserve the richest epithets even in *your* large vocabulary. But, nevertheless, I think I see a way out, if you and aunty and Kitty—

MISS TATE.

Talk fast, young man. Locke will be here any minute—

NED.

Good; good! I *want* him here. I haven't time to tell you the details, but remember this. You must all keep quiet. Back me up in all I say. And don't be surprised at anything you see.

MISS TATE.

Good gracious, you give me the creeps. What is it?

NED.

It's just a sort of a stunt, got up for Locke's benefit. We've no time for a rehearsal—but we must set the stage at all events. Kitty, will you turn down those lamps?

KITTY.

(*Goes and does so; stage dim.*)

Shall I play some creepy music? (*Goes to piano and plays.*)

NED.

Good. Now, aunty, are you sure the bishop is asleep?

MRS. CHADSEY.

Yes.

NED.

Then you stand near that door, and if you hear him moving, go at once. Keep him away from this room until I tell you.

(MRS. CHADSEY goes and opens left door, goes out and comes back, closing door gently.)

MISS TATE.  
(Nervously.)

Well, I hope all this will come to something. It ought to impress that fat fool in some way. Humph! He'll think we're holding a spiritualistic seance. I'm as nervous as a witch. (To NED.) Can't you give me something to do?

NED.

(While speaking arranges the chairs, etc., to his liking.)

Yes. Back me up in all I say. And remember—all of you—not a word of surprise at anything you see.

KITTY.

(Is playing softly on piano; speaks in a kind of warning singsong in keeping with music.)

He comes. I hear his velvet footfall! (LOCKE is heard with heavy steps outside. KITTY runs on in a rapid recitation.) If you've got any more stage directions you'd better hurry.

(There is a sound in distance of a dog howling at intervals.)

NED.

No, there's nothing more—only remember, it all depends upon your being perfectly quiet. (KITTY keeps on playing.)

LOCKE appears at right window. NED goes over and rings the bell in left wall, then turns and sees LOCKE.

NED.

Hello, Locke. Come in. But don't make any more noise than you can help. The bishop is asleep.

LOCKE.

(*Enters in a pugnacious fashion.*)

Ha!—Bishop sick?

RAFFORD *enters right door.*

RAFFORD.

Did you ring for me, sir?

NED.

Yes. That dog has been chained up all day. I don't want him to disturb the bishop. Take him for a walk, that's a good fellow.

RAFFORD.

Very good, sir. (*Goes out to kitchen.*)

NED.

(*To LOCKE.*)

Won't you sit here by the fire? (*Holds the big chair ready. LOCKE looks round a moment questioningly.*) You don't mind sitting in the dark? We were having a little music. Oh, never mind the ladies. We know you have business here. You'll have to wait until the bishop finishes his nap—(*LOCKE sits.*)

RAFFORD *appears outside right window, coming from right; looks in for a moment, then cautiously departs, going left.*

LOCKE.

(*Interrupts obstinately.*)

I can't wait all night. I can do what I came to do without the bishop.

NED.

(*Sweetly.*)

And that is?

LOCKE.

Look for them emeralds!



NED.

Well, you won't mind waiting a few moments. Your footsteps are not of the lightest, you know, and we're all keeping very quiet to let the bishop sleep. (*Pulls out a cigar.*) By the way, have a cigar. (*LOCKE takes it ungraciously and bites off the end. NED lights it for him and then sits down near LOCKE, composing himself as for a long wait.*) We were talking, when you came, about dreams and ghosts. Are you interested in such things?

LOCKE.

(*Stolidly.*)

I never dream.

NED.

Ah, I remember. So you said. It's a pity. How about sleep-walking?

KITTY.

(*Still softly playing; speaks over her shoulder, laughing.*)

Don't be personal, Ned. Some people are sensitive. Remember, the worm will turn.

MISS TATE.

Humph! Sleep-walking, indeed! He doesn't know anything else.

LOCKE.

(*Stupidly.*)

I don't see how.

NED.

(*Laughs ironically.*)

No? Sleep-walkers never do. But, to be serious, what I've been saying opens the way for a painful and humiliating confession. I'm going to tell *you* because, with your delicate sensibilities, you are sure to appreciate the connection between what I am

about to say and the mysterious affair of Miss Tate's emeralds.

LOCKE.

'Tain't no mystery to me.

NED.

No? Well, it was for a while to *us*. But we're beginning to see light now. In fact, Miss Tate has come to the conclusion, as we all have, that the emeralds have never left the safe—that they are there now—

MISS TATE.

(*Interrupts.*)

Yes, the bishop is right. I must have *dreamed* the whole thing. I can't remember the combination of the safe—so I can't prove it—

LOCKE.

(*Grimly.*)

We'll prove *that*, all right.

NED.

Yes; your man from New York. But meanwhile, if what I am about to tell you should explain the bishop's apparent implication in the affair, I suppose you would be willing to accept Miss Tate's word that the safe has not been opened.

LOCKE.

I ain't committin' myself in *no* way. I believes what I sees—nothin' else.

NED.

(*Rises and picks up a book from table.*)

My excellent Locke! Splendid! Well, as I was saying, I am about to confess something to you which we all feel you will respect as a confidence—and which I tell you only in order to clear your mind about this emerald business—

LOCKE.

Well, what is it?

NED.

*(As if in embarrassment.)*

It's this. It's quite painful for me to tell you. My uncle, the bishop, does now and then walk in his sleep. (*KITTY strikes a lugubrious chord upon the piano.*)

MRS. CHADSEY.

Ned! How can you?

NED.

*(Quickly.)*

My dear aunty! (*Significantly.*) I thought we agreed that you would allow me to tell this in my own way.

MISS TATE.

*(Follows NED's lead.)*

Yes, Matilda. It's much better he should know the truth. His keen intelligence will at once penetrate our purpose.

NED.

*(Banteringly, to LOCKE.)*

Eh? You see? Well?

LOCKE.

No—no! I don't see. An' I ain't a-goin' to be bamboozled by no *talk*.

NED.

That's good. I'm delighted to deal with a man of penetration. (*He throws upon the table the book he has been holding and, unseen by LOCKE, looks anxiously at left window. At the same time he makes a warning gesture to all of them—especially to MRS. CHADSEY—to whom he speaks warningly.*) Now, Aunt Matilda, don't get nervous. I'm only doing what is necessary to convince Locke of the bishop's innocence. (*Sits composedly and resumes his speech.*)

Now, when one is given to sleep-walking—(RAFFORD, *back left, clears his throat in imitation of the BISHOP*)—but I do believe the bishop is coming. That's too bad. I hadn't finished. Now, silence, for heaven's sake; not a word to him of what I've just said.

RAFFORD, *disguised as the BISHOP, comes in through left window, as if walking in his sleep. He has his eyes open and is walking very slowly. MRS. CHADSEY is much agitated. NED goes over and whispers to her. She subsides quietly. All the rest show restrained surprise.*

LOCKE.

Evenin', bishop. (*Begins, ponderously, to rise.*)  
Now we kin get to 'business. All this fool talk.

NED.

(*Puts his hand, in alarm, upon LOCKE's shoulder, and holds him down.*)

Sh-h-h! You mustn't speak to him. I believe he's asleep now. (*Goes across and passes his hand in front of RAFFORD's face.*) Yes, he *is* asleep. Sh-h-h. Not a word to him. It's dangerous. But he doesn't hear us talking among ourselves. See. His eyes are open, but he doesn't see us. (*NED goes back to guard LOCKE.*)

(*RAFFORD moves to the desk, goes to the drawer and begins deftly to unlock it with a piece of wire.*)

MISS TATE.

(*Entering into the affair.*)

The dear bishop! He's worried about his manuscript even in his sleep. He's been trying all the keys in the house to get that drawer open—



(RAFFORD *has the drawer open. He takes out a big bundle of manuscript, and hiding the action from LOCKE, who sits amazed, he takes the red case also out and puts it out of sight among the manuscript; then closes the drawer, and goes quietly out left window, still walking as if in a trance.*)

NED.

There! You see? Lucky we didn't speak to him. I didn't expect the bishop himself would prove what I just said, but you see that it's true.

LOCKE.

(*Stupidly amazed.*)

Yes, I see. But you don't expect me to think th' bishop walked in his sleep over to Miss Tate's, an' opened that safe, an'—

MISS TATE.

Of course not, you stupid man. But we expect you to have sense enough to believe that when the bishop told you his dream, he really *had* a dream—

NED.

And perhaps he did actually walk some distance—into this room for instance—and perhaps he went through the motions of robbing a safe, so that it was very strongly impressed upon his mind—

(*At this point MRS. CHADSEY shows signs of alarm and goes out at left door.*)

MISS TATE.

(*Quickly backing up NED.*)

And I suppose you will also admit that *I* might have had a dream—walked in my sleep—and imagined that I saw a burglar at my safe.

LOCKE.

(*Confounded, but obstinate.*)

Well, no: I *don't* see. If you go so far as that, I don't see but what I've got to suspect th' bishop jest as much as before. Th' *law* don't take no account of sleep-walkin'—

JENNY *rushes in excitedly from the kitchen.*

JENNY.

Oh, Mrs. Chadsey!

NED.

(*Frightened and half-aside.*)

Good heavens—Jenny! I forgot her. (*Goes over to her.*)

JENNY.

Mrs. Chadsey! Percy!

NED.

(*Seizes her hand and puts his hand over her mouth.*)

Sh-h! You mustn't talk so loud. The bishop—

JENNY.

(*In distress.*)

But Percy—he's gone!

LOCKE.

(*Suspiciously, rises and watches NED and JENNY.*)

Who's Percy?

NED.

(*Laughs with quick readiness.*)

It's only the dog. Don't be foolish, Jenny. Percy has just gone for a walk. (*Hurries on, and as he does so pushes JENNY toward right door and says significantly to her.*) Don't you see Locke, the constable? Run along, that's a good woman.

JENNY.

(*Looks at LOCKE; becomes quiet.*)

Oh! (*Goes out right door.*)

MISS TATE.

(*Coming hastily to the rescue.*)

Now, (*to LOCKE*) I suppose you are satisfied that the bishop's dream was a *real* dream?

LOCKE.

(*Puzzled.*)

I dunno. No, I ain't satisfied. I never dream.

NED.

(*Seeing the left door open; the bishop is heard clearing his throat.*)

Ah; the bishop again. (*All look.*)

*The BISHOP enters left door, presumably talking to MRS. CHADSEY, who follows him in.*

BISHOP.

(*Speaks in sprightly tone.*)

Now, my dear Matilda, I really must see my good friend Locke and try to persuade him—(*Sees LOCKE.*) Ah, good-evening. (*Laughs playfully.*) So you're really determined to search the house for those emeralds, which I tell you are at this moment reposing quietly in Miss Tate's safe?

LOCKE.

Well, I dunno' *what* to think after what I've just seen!

NED.

(*In consternation, to LOCKE.*)

Now, remember—as a gentleman, you *must* not.

MISS TATE.

(*Also in much distress.*)

Yes; if you have any particle of consideration for the bishop.

KITTY.

(*To LOCKE.*)

You *beast*, keep still!

BISHOP.

(*Amazed.*)

Really! (*Looks around in mild reproof.*) I am astonished at your manners to a guest.

MISS TATE.

Guest? Pig!

BISHOP.

Well, well, well; you, too, Miss Tate! But what is it all about? Surely I may have an explanation.

LOCKE.

Well, you see, bishop, these folks don't want *me* to explain, an'—

NED.

(*Bracing himself.*)

Uncle, it's rather unfortunate that Locke happened in just at this time. And it is equally unfortunate that you were awakened from your nap. (*Laughs uneasily.*) You see, you've been walking in your sleep.

BISHOP.

(*Amazed.*)

I? Walking in my sleep? Not at all, I do assure you. What an astounding statement! (*Half-amused and half-indignant; to LOCKE.*) Have they been palming off this cock-and-bull story upon you?

LOCKE.

(*Sullenly.*)

They don't want *me* to tell. Let them.

BISHOP.

Well? I'm waiting. (*All remain silent for a moment.*) Most bewildering. Walking in my sleep. (*To LOCKE.*) They seem to be dumb.

LOCKE.

I seen you doin' it—right here.



BISHOP.

(*Appealing to NED.*)

Really, Ned?

NED.

Now, uncle, we didn't want you to know. But you really did come into this room a few moments ago, and take some papers from the desk—

BISHOP.

My notes! (*Goes over to the desk.*) How singular. (*Growing interested.*) And did I really do that? (*Appeals to MISS TATE.*) Miss Tate?

MISS TATE.

Yes, it's true.

KITTY.

It's quite true, bishop.

MRS. CHADSEY.

(*Reluctantly.*)

I can't dispute what Ned says.

BISHOP.

(*Grows quite excited and interested.*)

Well, well! This is even more remarkable than my dream. I *must* believe you, since you all agree upon it. But I am dumbfounded. Well—(*to LOCKE, laughing in innocent amusement*), I suppose you'll believe almost anything about me now.

LOCKE.

I dunno what to believe. But there's one thing I kin find out—(*rises to go*)—if them jools is still in Miss Tate's safe, as you and she says.

BISHOP.

(*Pleased.*)

Oh, Miss Tate says so, eh? Of course it's the only solution, as I have said all along.

MISS TATE.

*(With an air of concluding the matter.)*

Of course. I have just told him so. I *hope* he's satisfied now—and we can go peaceably to our beds. I'm glad the silly affair is settled at last.

LOCKE.

*(Has arrived at right window; looks at his watch.)*

Well, I've just got time to go to th' station to meet that man from the safe company. *He'll* find out. Miss Tate, perhaps you'd wish to be present?

MISS TATE.

*(In consternation.)*

Good heavens! You don't believe me yet. You shall do no such thing. Beware how you invade my home! *(In collapse.)*

LOCKE.

*(Holds out paper.)*

I've got my warrant. *(Goes out right window.)*

BISHOP.

*(Goes and takes overcoat and hat in haste from rack.)*

Of course; it's the only way. Miss Tate, I'm sure you'll be reasonable. You won't regret it—

MRS. CHADSEY.

*(Interrupts.)*

What are you going to do?

BISHOP.

I'm going to the station.

NED.

What good will that do?

KITTY.

You really ought not.

MRS. CHADSEY.

You'll surely catch your death.

MISS TATE.

*(Tragically.)*

You are going to something worse than death—I  
eseech you!

BISHOP.

*(Puzzled but determined.)*

This really is most strange. Why should I not witness the proof of my own theory? I shall certainly go. *(He goes out after LOCKE. All look at each other in a daze, each exclaiming after his own emotions.)*

MISS TATE.

*(In a state of exaggerated collapse.)*

Well, I give it up! *(Turns upon NED.)* Now what have you to say for yourself? After putting us through all this heartrending mockery—we are worse off than before!

MRS. CHADSEY.

The poor bishop!

KITTY.

Ned, what a mess you've made of the whole thing! I could just cry. *(Sits down in despair.)*

NED.

*(With assumed confidence and bravado.)*

Well, there's one thing certain. They won't find the emeralds! Rafford is good enough for that.

MISS TATE.

So, young man, I have given away my necklace to that reformed burglar of yours, just to make a scapegoat of the bishop. Not if I can help it! *(Rises with determination.)* I did hope the affair was settled and I might go to my bed like a civilized woman. I shall defend that safe with my life. I'd rather be

murdered by that fat constable than to have the bishop suspected. A woman has some rights, I should suppose, in her own—(*hesitates, then finishes explosively*) bungalow! (*Goes out right window.*)

KITTY.

(*In weary resignation.*)

Well; I suppose I must go, too. (*Makes ready.*)

MRS. CHADSEY.

(*In a flutter of nervousness.*)

You'll have to take me. I'm so anxious about the bishop.

(*NED and KITTY are down center.*)

NED.

(*In despair, as they prepare to go out.*)

Oh, Kitty, Kitty, what will come of it all?

(*As they all stand about the right window, ready to go out—*)

JENNY enters from kitchen in tears. All turn and look at her. She has on her hat and coat.

JENNY.

(*Speaks tragically.*)

Mr. Ned, I can't find Percy. What have you done with him?

NED.

(*Throwing up his arms in desperation.*)

Oh, (*exasperated*) Percy! (*Laughs ironically.*) He's all right. I wish we were all as well out of it as he is.

(*They all go out right window. JENNY stands wringing her hands and looking after them.*)

CURTAIN.



# TOO MANY CROOKS

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## THIRD ACT.

SCENE: *Living room of Miss Tate's bungalow, the same evening. A generous corner of the room is seen. Up right is a large double French window, opening on to porch. In the corner, which is up center, there is a large rough fireplace. In the middle of the left wall is an inside door. In the same wall, or in front of it, is a small steel safe. A table and two chairs are left of center. The room shows evidence of being dismantled. The furniture is disarranged, and right of center, well down stage, there is a pile of trunks and suitcases, closed and strapped, and several packing boxes. There is a lamp on the table, and another on the mantel. A box of matches is on the table.*

*At rise, the only illumination is by the moonlight outside. No lamps are lit. JENNY is seen outside the window. She comes in stealthily, looks about nervously, bumps against furniture, also against pile of trunks, and finally strikes a match from box which she finds on table. She is seen to have the red case in her hands. She goes to the safe and tries the combination, with confidence at first, then hastily, then with nervous alarm, looking frequently at the window. She gives up in despair, turns and looks about the room. MISS TATE and KITTY are heard talking off stage. JENNY is alarmed, runs about with the case and finally throws it behind the pile of trunks. This must be very clear to the audience. JENNY then runs to corner up stage, and stands motionless while—*

MISS TATE and KITTY enter at the window. Then JENNY cautiously goes out the window, unseen by them.

MISS TATE.

(Nervously pausing at center, evidently out of breath, heaves a sigh of weariness and disgust.)

Ah!

KITTY.

(Lights a lamp and looks about.)

There. You see? Nobody here.

MISS TATE.

I'm sure I saw a light.

KITTY.

(Lights another lamp.)

It's nerves.

MISS TATE.

(Seating herself upon a low trunk.)

We should have brought a lantern. I didn't suppose I'd have to stumble about that dreadful woods again.

KITTY.

(Laughs mischievously.)

You'll have to stumble back again.

MISS TATE.

I'd rather sit on this trunk until morning. (*Sighs dolorously.*) I never expected to visit this scene of tragedy again. Ugh! What a beast that constable is. The idea of his refusing to take my word.

KITTY.

(Laughs.)

I don't wonder. At first you were cocksure they had been stolen. Then you were equally positive they had not.

MISS TATE.

(*Peevishly.*)

What business is it of his if I change my mind? Oh, why couldn't we get that desk unlocked?

KITTY.

You couldn't put them back in the safe if you had them. Don't worry. The safe company will never send a man up here at this time of night.

MISS TATE.

Oh, if I could be sure of that. (*Nervously irritated.*) But where on earth are Matilda and Ned? What did *she* come for, anyway?

KITTY.

Don't be peevish, aunty. Poor Mrs. Chadsey! She's having her punishment, toiling through the woods. (*Goes to window.*) Here they come!

MRS. CHADSEY and NED enter from window. MRS. CHADSEY is very much exhausted. NED removes her wraps and places a chair for her at left.

NED.

(*As they enter and cross.*)

Here we are at last. Sit down and rest.

MRS. CHADSEY.

(*Sits, exhausted.*)

What a walk! I never could have done it but for the bishop.

MISS TATE.

(*Peevishly.*)

I don't mean to be hard-hearted, Matilda, but I really don't see why you came.

MRS. CHADSEY.

(*Helplessly.*)

I must know the worst!

MISS TATE.

(*With asperity.*)

I don't see the necessity. But here we are chatting. What's to be done?

NED.

Oh, things aren't so desperate. Rafford and the emeralds are miles away. Locke can't implicate the bishop if he doesn't find them.

MISS TATE.

He *has* implicated him. He'll talk all over the place. And then—the newspapers! (*Gesture of despair.*)

MRS. CHADSEY.

(*Sneezes gently.*)

I beg your pardon.

MISS TATE.

(*Glares at her.*)

What's the matter? Don't sit in a draught.

MRS. CHADSEY.

(*Protestingly.*)

It isn't a draught. It's something irritating in the air.

MISS TATE.

Nonsense. Hay-fever, perhaps.

NED.

(*Sneezes.*)

No. I've got it, too.

KITTY.

(*Laughs.*)

Aha—it's the pepper!

MRS. CHADSEY.

(*In mild surprise.*)

Pepper? Why pepper?



KITTY.

Aunty's been packing her things with it.

MRS. CHADSEY.

I never heard of such a thing.

MISS TATE.

*(Rises and answers in half-abstracted explanation.)*

It's better than moth-balls. My mother used it, so did my grandmother. Things don't smell when you unpack. *(Wanders nervously over to the safe.)*

NED.

*(Suppressing a sneeze.)*

It's far more unpleasant when you pack. *(Sneezes.)*

MISS TATE.

*(Turns upon them in indignant protest.)*

Good heavens! When the bishop's reputation is tottering can you talk of *pepper*?—*(She rattles the knob of the safe, scolding it.)* Oh, *why* did I ever have you brought here?

NED.

*(Has wandered over to window and looks out.)*

Perhaps Locke has given it up. Here comes a car along the road. *(Sound of car.)* It's the bishop.

MISS TATE.

*(Anxiously.)*

Alone? *(They await his coming nervously.)*

NED.

Yes!

BISHOP *dejectedly enters through window.*

BISHOP.

*(Apologetically.)*

So sorry to bring you here for nothing. Locke's man isn't coming.

ALL.  
(*Together.*)

Good!

BISHOP.  
(*In mild surprise.*)

Good? It's a great disappointment to me. Locke seems to have given it up. While we were at the station he thought he saw Rafford—said he wanted to speak to him. I told him he was mistaken.

NED.  
(*Anxiously.*)

Did he catch him? I mean—did he speak to him?

BISHOP.  
I don't know. He went off in the dark half an hour ago and left me to wait for the train. The train was late—

MISS TATE.  
(*In sprightly tone.*)

Well, I suppose we really may all go back now. I'm tired out.

BISHOP.  
(*Mildly protesting.*)

We can hardly do that. It would look very odd—as though we were afraid. Locke will wonder—

MISS TATE.  
Oh, let him wonder!

BISHOP.  
(*Persuasively.*)

Now don't let us be foolish. You ought to be willing to wait if I am. As Locke hasn't come, I'll just run back in the car and tell him his man didn't show up. I won't be long. (*Starts to go.*)

MRS. CHADSEY.  
(*Protestingly.*)

Is it necessary?

BISHOP.

(*Explaining.*)

Yes; unless you would rather wait here until he comes.

NED.

(*Agreeing.*)

Oh, let's have it over. I'll go with you, uncle.

BISHOP.

Not at all. You must stay with the ladies and explain to Locke if he comes. (*Going out.*) I'll be back directly. (*Goes out window.*)

KITTY.

(*Wearily.*)

Well, that helps some. (*Yawns.*) But, goodness, I'm sleepy.

NED.

But what about Rafford? He promised to get away. Do you suppose Locke's caught him? (*They are all at center in weary dejection when—*)

RAFFORD *enters hurriedly and anxiously through window. All turn in astonishment.*

NED.

Good Lord! You here? You ought to be miles away.

RAFFORD.

(*In anxious yet rather exultant explanation.*)

Couldn't do it, governor. I tried. But I guess Jenny's worth more than the emeralds. I couldn't do it.

MISS TATE.

(*Impatiently.*)

Well? Well? What have you done with them?

RAFFORD.

(*Grins knowingly and confidently.*)

They're all right. I seen to that.

KITTY.

Why so mysterious? Come, come, out with it. Where are they?

RAFFORD.

*(In great exultation and irony.)*

Where they was all along, as the bishop says, in the safe.

*(All look at the safe.)*

MISS TATE.

In the safe?

NED.

*(In great glee.)*

Good old Rafford! Ha, I hope Locke *will* come, now.

MISS TATE.

But I don't understand in the least. What do you mean by in the safe?

RAFFORD.

*(Eagerly.)*

What I says. D'you want to see 'em?

MISS TATE.

Well, I should think I do.

RAFFORD.

Right you are! *(Goes to safe.)* I'll soon show you! *(All cluster eagerly about him. He gives a few quick turns and opens the safe.)* Ah! Here we are, right as—*(Puts in his hand and finds nothing.)* Well, I'm—*(Checks himself, confused.)*

NED.

*(Severely.)*

Look here, my man, this is a poor sort of a joke. What do you mean by it?

RAFFORD.

*(Confused.)*

Why, why—I—*(Just then he is seized with a*



sneeze. *He is answered by a ferocious sneeze from behind the trunks. All turn toward the pile of trunks.*) It can't be Jenny!

MRS. CHADSEY.

*(Nervously.)*

Good gracious, I shall faint!

MISS TATE.

*(With tragic manner.)*

Another tragedy! I shall collapse. *(To NED.)* Now, sir, let me see what stuff you are made of. *(Points to trunks.)* Look behind those trunks!

RAFFORD.

*(In some trepidation.)*

I don't like the looks of it, governor.

NED.

*(Commands him with a gesture.)*

Come! *(He and RAFFORD pull apart the pile of trunks, which are so arranged as to disclose, when pulled apart—)*

*The figure of LOCKE, seated upon a low trunk, with his back against another, sound asleep. Upon his stomach, clasped by his unconscious hands, is the red case. LOCKE slowly, stupidly and sleepily rises and mechanically grasps the case, coming down stage, followed by the others in silence.*

LOCKE.

*(Not more than half-awake.)*

Ah! I fell asleep. I was watching the safe—  
*(Becomes conscious of the red case, starts, opens it clumsily, looks amazed; all cluster about him.)*

KITTY.

*(In sharp suspicion.)*

The emeralds!

(RAFFORD and NED draw up stage, away from the others, in hurried consultation.)

MISS TATE.

(*In desperate bewilderment.*)

Well, more mystery!

MRS. CHADSEY.

How did *he* get them?

LOCKE.

(*Who has partly recovered.*)

Why, I—I—(*Holds out case to MISS TATE.*)  
Are them your emeralds?

MISS TATE.

(*Sardonically and with hysterical laugh.*)

I like that! You booby! Merciful powers! What else should they be? (*She takes them from him.*)

(NED and RAFFORD come down stage, evidently with a purpose.)

NED.

(*With great severity.*)

Well, Locke, what have you to say for yourself?

RAFFORD.

(*Laughs with malicious sarcasm.*)

Yes, so *I* says. 'Tryin' to get innocent folks into trouble!

NED.

(*To LOCKE, sardonically.*)

I really didn't think you were clever enough for this. (*In mock deference.*) I take my hat off to you.

LOCKE.

(*Sullenly puzzled.*)

Wot d'ye mean?

NED.

(*Solemnly.*)

Good heavens! (*Accusingly and with savage em-*

*phasis.*) You villain! (*Laughs.*) Oh, come, don't try to brazen it out any longer. It's as plain as day. You robbed the safe—found it was getting too hot for you—so you came and tried to put them back—

KITTY.

(*With quick wit.*)

So that's the end of your clues? I *thought* there was too much of the mud tracks business.

MISS TATE.

(*To LOCKE, in great indignation.*)

And you *dared* to pretend you suspected the bishop!

LOCKE.

(*Ponderously.*)

I only done my duty. I—

NED.

(*In raillery.*)

Oh, come off! You've played the stupid long enough—

LOCKE.

(*Gradually begins to understand.*)

Wot? Ye don't really think that I—

KITTY.

Come. You've had *your* fun out of this. Now we'll have *ours*—

RAFFORD.

(*Laughs sardonically.*)

Huh! It's twenty years hard labor if it's a day. (*Waves his hand around to indicate the others.*) And with all these witnesses. (*Shrugs his shoulders.*) Huh! I don't see what chance you got.

LOCKE.

(*Ponderously indignant.*)

I'm the only constable in this town—

KITTY.

(*Mimicking him.*)

“An’ every one o’ them footprints leads straight to th’ bishop’s house!” (*Mockingly.*) Oh-h-h, Locke—shame!

MRS. CHADSEY.

Kitty; you really must not pester the man.

MISS TATE.

Pester? I’d roast him alive, if I could! (*To LOCKE, freezingly, and with an air of finality.*) But you’d best go now. I don’t want the bishop to be disturbed. I’ll see what the *law* says to this later.

LOCKE.

Well, I’ll go—but—(*Turns as if to go, then pauses.*)

NED.

By the way. Speaking of the bishop, it reminds me—(*to all the others*) what about his book?

MISS TATE.

Ah, to be sure. He’ll be broken-hearted—

MRS. CHADSEY.

His theory exploded just when he thought it would be proved.

NED.

I tell you what! This fat constable is getting off too easy. He shall help us prove the bishop’s theory. It would be too bad to spoil that last chapter.

LOCKE.

(*Who has turned to go.*)

What d’ye mean?

NED.

It’s plain enough. We’ll put the emeralds back in the safe and let the bishop find them.



LOCKE.

(*Obstinately.*)

I ain't a-goin' to agree to no such deception—

RAFFORD.

(*Mockingly.*)

Huh! "Deception." That's a good one fer you!

(KITTY *has gone near the window.*)

NED.

(*To LOCKE.*)

Yes, you will, (*Menacingly.*) And see that you back us up when the bishop comes.

MISS TATE.

If you don't—I'll put you in state's prison, if it costs a million!

RAFFORD.

(*Exultantly.*)

O-ho! "Th' only constable in town," eh?

KITTY.

I hear the car coming!

(*Sound of car outside. NED takes the emeralds from MISS TATE, puts them into the safe and closes door of safe, turning the knob just as—*)

*The BISHOP comes in through window.*

NED.

Now let me manage it.

*Following the BISHOP, who is quite excited, comes JENNY, who is worried, but sees RAFFORD and goes to him.*

JENNY.

Percy! (*JENNY and RAFFORD confer, up stage.*)

LOCKE.

(*Puzzled and trying to remember.*)

Huh? Percy?

NED.

(*Meaningly, to LOCKE.*)

Locke—remember—“If it costs a million!”

BISHOP.

(*Pointing to JENNY.*)

I found her searching for Rafford—(*Sees LOCKE.*) Ah, so you're here. Too bad your man didn't come. (*Remembers and puts his hand in his pocket.*) By the way, here's a telegram, Miss Tate. (*Takes out telegram.*)

MISS TATE.

A telegram? Oh, do read it for me, bishop. (*BISHOP proceeds to open it.*) I know it's some bad news.

BISHOP.

(*Has read and shows his delight.*)

Aha! It's the combination of the safe.

NED.

Well, just in time, eh, Locke? (*LOCKE is uneasy and sullen.*)

BISHOP.

Ha, now we shall see! (*Rubs his hands.*) Miss Tate, won't you open the safe?

MISS TATE.

(*Maliciously.*)

Better let Locke do it. He's the only skeptic. The rest of us *know* they're there.

BISHOP.

(*Innocently.*)

Good. (*Studying the telegram.*) I'll read off the numbers.

LOCKE.

(*Obstinately.*)

I ain't a-goin'-to be no party to—

NED.

Locke! (*Meaningly.*) You won't be discourteous to the bishop, I'm sure.

MISS TATE.

(*Maliciously.*)

Especially since you have suspected him.

(LOCKE *struggles against it, but after a pause goes to safe.*)

LOCKE.

(*Nervously, to BISHOP.*)

Well?

BISHOP.

(*Excited, reads.*)

"Start at three."

LOCKE.

(*Working the dial.*)

Well?

NED.

(*Mischievously.*)

He loves this work.

KITTY.

(*Mischievously.*)

Yes. It's even better than mud tracks.

BISHOP.

"Three turns to right."

LOCKE.

(*Working the dial.*)

Well?

NED.

Do it cheerfully, Locke.

MISS TATE.

He'd better!

BISHOP.

(*Puzzled by this speech.*)

Of course he will. And he'll see I'm right.

NED.

Of course he will. (*All laugh except BISHOP and LOCKE.*)

BISHOP.

“Back to left, half a turn to fifty-three.”

LOCKE.

Yes. Wot next?

BISHOP.

“Three to right, ending at thirteen.”

KITTY.

That’s for good luck, Locke. (*All laugh except BISHOP and LOCKE.*)

LOCKE.

(*Working at dial.*)

Well?

BISHOP.

(*Eagerly.*)

That’s all. Open it.

LOCKE.

(*Opens the safe and stands aside.*)

I ain’t a-goin’ to be made fun of no more.

NED.

Oh, just a little more.

BISHOP.

(*Goes and pulls out case.*)

Ha, I’ve got it! You see? Just as I said—just as I said! This is superb! (*Waves the case in glee. LOCKE stands morosely at one side.*)

MISS TATE.

Of course. I knew they were there all along.

BISHOP.

(*Exultant, gives the emeralds to KITTY.*)

Ha, this is splendid! Now I can finish my book. Locke, I’m greatly indebted to you.



LOCKE.

I ain't a-goin' to be made no fool of. I'm a-goin'.  
(*Starts to go.*)

BISHOP.

Superb! Now, Locke, you shall give me your full statement.

LOCKE.

(*On his way to window.*)

Not much, I won't!

NED.

(*Menacingly.*)

Oh, yes you will. You'll make any statement the bishop wants. You see if he doesn't, uncle.

BISHOP.

(*About to follow LOCKE out, looks back and speaks in innocent craft.*)

He's a little obstinate; but I feel certain I can persuade him. (*He follows LOCKE out the window.*)

MISS TATE.

(*Who has been puzzling since her last speech.*)

Well, I believe I shall have to apologize to that fat constable, after all. I'm a bigger fool than he is. (*Turns to MRS. CHADSEY.*) Matilda, were we dreaming when we found the emeralds in the bishop's overcoat?

MRS. CHADSEY.

(*Wearily.*)

I don't know. We must have been.

MISS TATE.

(*Ruminating.*)

All the same, I really would like to know.

KITTY.

(*Has been conversing with NED.*)

Now, Ned. (*To MISS TATE.*) Aunty. (*Goes up to her affectionately; holds out emeralds signifi-*

*cantly.*) Dear aunty. I'm sure you'd rather I had the emeralds than Rafford. (*Turns playfully toward JENNY and RAFFORD.*) He'd rather have Jenny, I know.

RAFFORD.

(*Hugs JENNY.*)

Sure. (*JENNY giggles.*)

MISS TATE.

I don't understand—

KITTY.

Come now, aunty, be kind to the poor boy. (*Puts her arm about MISS TATE.*)

MISS TATE.

(*Peevishly inquisitive.*)

Kind to whom? What on earth are you driving at? You don't mean Rafford?

KITTY.

(*Laughs nervously.*)

Yes; Rafford, too.

RAFFORD.

(*Laughs explosively.*)

Hah!

MISS TATE.

(*Exasperated.*)

I'm too tired and nervous to be pestered with riddles. If you've got anything to tell me, for heaven's sake speak out, before I explode.

NED.

(*Apprehensively.*)

You wouldn't let me have Kitty. You wanted a man who could "do things." I—

MISS TATE.

Well, of all the inconsequential twaddle! What is it?

RAFFORD.

(*Chuckles; comes down to center, then speaks to NED.*)

Guess I'll have to squeal on yer, governor, after all!

NED.

(*Groaning.*)

Go ahead. I can't.

MISS TATE.

(*Almost speechless with curiosity.*)

Well—will somebody talk sense?

RAFFORD.

(*To MISS TATE, quite enjoying it.*)

Well, the governor here, he wants the young lady. You gives him the frozen face. So he puts up a job with me. I robs the safe. He was to rescue th' sparklers—give 'em back to you—an' *you*, thinkin' he was th' real thing, was to come in at th' end of the rumpus an' give him your blessing.

MISS TATE.

(*Beginning to comprehend.*)

Oh.

KITTY.

(*With half-playful and half-anxious humor.*)

Now, aunty, remember the bishop's book. Don't spoil that last chapter.

MISS TATE.

Humph! Much you care about that. (*Turns to NED.*) So I was to give you Kitty because you frightened me half to death?

NED.

(*With comical penitence.*)

Oh, no. Because I saved your life, and your emeralds.

MISS TATE.

Well, I don't wonder. I know I'm a fool. But I don't relish being found out. (*Turns upon him in high indignation.*) But why on earth didn't you tell all this before and stop this outlandish trouble?

KITTY.

(*Pleadingly.*)

He was afraid.

MISS TATE.

Am I such a fright? (*Breaks out in great good humor.*) Well, if I am, I'm no fit guardian for you. (*To KITTY.*) I give in. (*To NED.*) Young man, you may have her, if it's only for your colossal cheek!

KITTY.

(*Significantly.*)

Then—then—the emeralds are mine?

MISS TATE.

Good heavens, yes. Get them out of my sight!

MRS. CHADSEY.

(*With innocent regret.*)

And the poor bishop's book is spoiled, after all.

MISS TATE.

(*In prompt decision.*)

What? Not for worlds! (*Sound of car.*)

MRS. CHADSEY.

(*Innocently.*)

But we must tell him.

MISS TATE.

(*Vigorously.*)

I won't have him told.

BISHOP, *in high glee, enters through window.*



BISHOP.

Aha! Congratulate me. I've won over Locke. He's not a bad fellow. He'll give me his statement. (*Laughs.*) Ha! ha! To think of his suspecting me, and the emeralds in the safe all the while. (*After rubbing his hands and chuckling a moment, he notices some confusion among the others.*) But what has happened? (*Noticing RAFFORD and JENNY.*) Ah! Rafford? Jenny? Anything the matter?

NED.

(*With quick cunning.*)

Oh, no. Rafford has just got Jenny's consent to marry him.

BISHOP.

(*Genially.*)

Well, well, I'm delighted. (*Goes and takes both RAFFORD and JENNY by the hand.*) So we shall have you with us all the time. You'll be very happy. (*Drops JENNY'S hand and pokes RAFFORD playfully.*) Aha, you're a clever fellow!

MISS TATE.

Humph! I should think so.

RAFFORD.

(*Grins.*)

I only tries to "do good to them that spitefully uses me."

BISHOP.

(*Sighs and shakes his head.*)

But you couldn't open my desk for me.

RAFFORD.

Well, I'll try it again. (*Humorously.*) Mebbe I kin get back enough technical skill for that.

BISHOP.

*(Innocently pleased.)*

Do you really think so? That's capital.

NED.

And, uncle, Miss Tate has given Kitty the emeralds. *(He holds KITTY in his arm significantly.)*

BISHOP.

*(Peers at them for a moment, then laughs delightedly.)*

Splendid. *(To KITTY.)* Come here, my dear. *(She goes to him. He kisses her and looks at NED.)* Ned, you have found a jewel.

MISS TATE.

Humph! Trust him. He and Rafford both know how to find jewels. Eh, Ned? *(RAFFORD kisses JENNY. NED impulsively goes and kisses MISS TATE. KITTY laughs. MISS TATE is confused for a moment, then takes it in good part and looks defiantly at KITTY.)* Well? Why not, I should like to know? That isn't half so impertinent as to steal my—

MRS. CHADSEY.

*(Interrupts.)*

Sarah!

MISS TATE.

*(Ends her sentence with defiant emphasis.)*  
—to steal my Kitty. *(She kisses KITTY and puts KITTY's hand in NED's.)*

BISHOP.

*(Innocently puzzled.)*

There's some secret here?

MISS TATE.

*(Coming to the rescue.)*

Yes, bishop, there is a secret. *(Mysteriously.)*  
But it belongs to these young people.

BISHOP.

(*Playfully curious.*)

Can't I know it?

KITTY.

Not until your book is published. (*All laugh but*  
BISHOP.)

BISHOP.

(*In a rapture of innocent glee.*)

Ah! My book! (*Laughs.*) Ha-ha! You see?  
You all had to admit I was right. (*Rubbing his*  
*hands and peering at them in joy.*) It's perfect!  
Premonitions—dreams—coincidence! All fit in to-  
gether. Aha! *What* a chapter I'll write for the  
critics!

CURTAIN.

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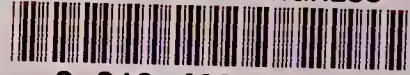








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