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FOR THE OLD FLAG

BY

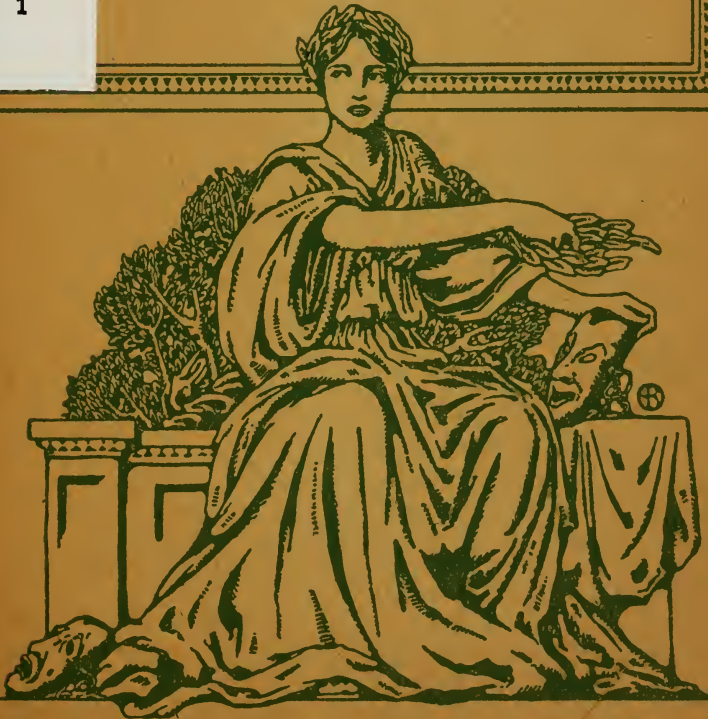
ARTHUR LEWIS TUBBS

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THE PENN PUBLISHING COMPANY
PHILADELPHIA

For the Old Flag

A Patriotic Play in Three Acts

By

ARTHUR LEWIS TUBBS

Author of "Farm Folks," "Home Ties," "The Village Lawyer," "The Finger of Scorn," etc.



PHILADELPHIA
THE PENN PUBLISHING COMPANY

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For the Old Flag

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For the Old Flag

CAST OF CHARACTERS

PHILIP RANDALL	- - - - -	<i>of the U. S. Army</i>
TOM RANDALL	- - - - -	<i>his brother</i>
RODNEY HUNT	- - - - -	<i>from New York</i>
HEZEKIAH WILKINS	- - - - -	<i>an "Old Vet"</i>
OLIVER MOON	- - - - -	<i>a young patriot</i>
LUCY GARRETT	- - - - -	<i>tried and true</i>
JESSIE RANDALL	- - - - -	<i>sister of Philip and Tom</i>
MRS. RANDALL	- - - - -	<i>their mother</i>
SOPHIA ASH	- - - - -	<i>who is "mediumistic"</i>
IVY	- - - - -	<i>the "help"</i>

TIME OF PLAYING.—About two hours and a half.

The action of the play takes place in a small village in New York State, near which is located a United States Army training camp. The first act occurs on an afternoon in August, 1917; the second act, about the same time the next day, and the third act in the evening, the following February.

THE STORY OF THE PLAY

Philip Randall, a United States soldier, is in love with Lucy Garrett. She refuses him, her love and faith having been pledged to his brother, Tom Randall, who is in prison, accused of a theft Lucy believes he did not commit. Tom returns, and confronts Philip. "You took that money." Philip begs mercy for the sake of their mother and "for the old flag," and Tom agrees to keep silent for a time. Philip sails for France, and when wounded makes a confession that clears his brother's name. Then Tom in turn, with Lucy's promise to wait for him, enlists under the old flag.

NOTICE TO PROFESSIONALS

This play is published for the free use of strictly amateur companies only. Professional actors or organizations wishing to produce it, in any form or under any title, are forbidden to do so without the consent of the author, who may be addressed in care of the publishers.

COSTUMES AND CHARACTERISTICS

PHILIP RANDALL. About twenty-five years of age. A sturdy young country fellow, of good appearance, considerable polish and attractive manner. He should by no means be indicated as a coward, but rather as one "not wholly convinced." A vein of possible villainy should be hinted, not offensively depicted. He wears the khaki uniform of a private in the U. S. Army.

COSTUMES AND CHARACTERISTICS

TOM RANDALL. About three years younger than Philip. Upon his first appearance he is pale, emaciated, of dejected and somewhat desperate mien. Cheap suit, considerably the worse for wear. Second act, same suit, but much more tidy in appearance, also improved in spirits and manner. Third act, well dressed, in plain dark suit. He has fully recovered his health and looks robust and athletic.

RODNEY HUNT. Young "city fellow"; not dudish, but well dressed in summer flannel or outing suit, with straw hat; same for first two acts. Third act, uniform, same as worn by Philip in first act, with heavy overcoat, etc.

HEZEKIAH WILKINS. Little, wizened old man, about seventy. Thin, wrinkled face, with sparse gray hair and beard. May have slight limp. First act, baggy old trousers, with colored shirt, wide-brimmed straw hat, etc. Wears G. A. R. badge. Last act, neat but cheap winter suit; overcoat, cap, tippet, etc. Still wears badge.

OLIVER MOON. Boy of fifteen or sixteen. Regular mischievous "kid," full of pranks. First act, short trousers, waist, cap or straw hat. Last act, heavier suit.

LUCY GARRETT. Pretty, winsome girl of eighteen or thereabouts, of cultured manners. First act, light, dainty summer costume, with hat. Second act, same or similar. Third act, becoming winter dress, with furs, etc.

JESSIE RANDALL. About same age as Lucy. Equally attractive, though not so richly dressed. First act, neat summer dress, with hat. Second act, similar attire. Third act, neat winter dress.

MRS. RANDALL. Motherly woman of about fifty-five or sixty; white hair; very gentle and loveable. First act, neat dress, with bonnet and light shawl or wrap. Second act, house dress of calico or some such material. Third act, dark house dress.

SOPHIA ASH. A quick, "fussy" and self-important "old maid," distinctly a comedy part, but by no

PROPERTIES

means a caricature. She is about forty-five or fifty years old. In first two acts she is attired in somewhat fancy summer dresses, with ribbons, a gay hat, parasol, fan, etc. Third act, equally "dressy," but appropriate to season, with shawl, etc.

Ivy. Typical country "help," fourteen or fifteen years of age. First two acts, short dress, with large gingham apron; not too neat, but should not be noticeably untidy. Hair combed straight back, with braids, or hanging in ringlets. Third act, neater attire, with ribbon on hair.

PROPERTIES

For MRS. RANDALL: Fan; partly knitted sweater, needles, wool, etc.

For IVY: Pan of apples; paring knife; glass of water; several cucumbers or substitutes; tray with dishes, covered with napkin; broom; checker-board and checkers.

For LUCY: Knitting-bag and two partly knitted sweaters (these should be alike except that one is a little more advanced than the other); hand-bag.

For JESSIE: Partly knitted sock, needles, etc.

For SOPHIA: Knitting bag, partly knitted sock, needles, etc.; newspaper in a wrapper.

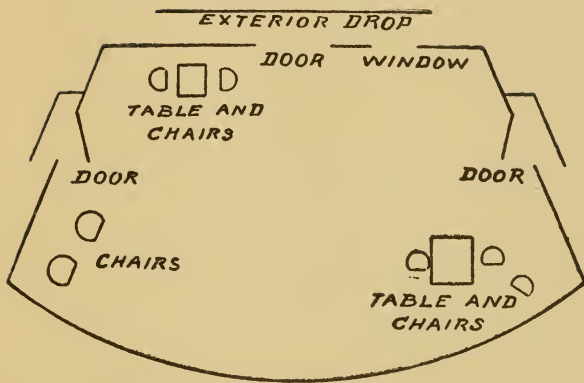
For OLIVER: Basket with packages, supposed to be groceries.

For HEZEKIAH: Large American flag on a pole; G. A. R. badge.

For RODNEY: Letter in an envelope, addressed, but not stamped.

OTHER PROPERTIES: A phonograph to be heard off stage, with military march record. A cabinet organ, to be heard off stage playing "Keep the Home Fires Burning," or some sympathetic war music. Later, heard playing "America." Salt, to represent snow.

SCENE PLOT



SCENE.—Sitting-room of the Randall home. Door in flat, c., and window in flat L. c. (window may be omitted). Back drop shows village scene, fields, or yard. Doors R. and L. also. Up R. small table or stand, and two chairs or stools. Down R., two large chairs. Down L., table with table spread, papers, books. One chair R. and two L. of table. Bookcase or some other article of furniture up L. Other furnishings to make a plain but comfortable room.

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ACT I

SCENE.—*Sitting-room of the RANDALL homestead, plainly but neatly furnished. There is a door up c. in flat and window up L. in flat, also doors R. and L.; table, with spread, papers, a book or two, etc., L. C.; several chairs. It is an afternoon in August and the window and door up c. are open, showing yard, the fields or village street in background. At rise, a band is heard off R., playing a military march. After a pause, during which the band is supposed to pass in the distance, the music gradually dying away, OLIVER MOON enters, march step, door c. to L., carrying basket containing several packages; down c., just as IVY enters R. She carries pan containing apples. He sets down basket, stands "at attention" c. IVY crosses down L., turns and sees OLIVER.*

IVY. Oh! that you, Oliver? 'Bout time you brung them groceries.

OLIVER (*standing erect, arms at side; salutes*). Here!

IVY. Oh, come on, you ain't no soldier. Can't fool me.

(*Sits, down L., and commences to pare and cut up apples.*)

OLIVER (*assuming natural manner*). Oh, that you, Ivy?

IVY. Who's it look like—Mis' President Wilson 'r anybuddy? Brung our things, did y'?

OLIVER. Yep. Where'll I put 'em?

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IVY. Well, mebbe you'd better take 'em in and put 'em on the pi-anner. That's gen'rally where we keep our groceries.

OLIVER. Pi-anner? You ain't got none.

IVY. Well, then s'pose you go 'n' put 'em on the kitchen table. I'd take 'em, only I got t' peel these apples. Phil's got leave 'n' is comin' home t' supper 'n' I got t' make a lot o' apple sauce.

OLIVER. Give me a piece? (*Crosses L.*)

IVY. How c'n I give you a piece o' apple sauce, you silly? 'Sides, it ain't made yet.

OLIVER. Aw, I mean a piece o' apple.

(*About to help himself from pan.*)

IVY. Go 'way; th' ain't none t' spare—'cept a little piece, mebbe. Here!

(*Hands him small piece of apple.*)

OLIVER. Thanks. Regular Eve, ain't y'?

(*Sits near her, L.*)

IVY. Eve who?

OLIVER. 'N' Adam. Don't you go t' Sunday-school?

IVY. Oh, ain't you knowin'? Sure I do. 'N' you'd better go 'n' put them groceries in the kitchen and get back t' that store, 'r Mr. Bates'll give you more 'n apples.

OLIVER. Huh! no danger. He never gives a feller nothin'. Y' see the soldiers?

IVY. No. Heard the band, but Mis' Randall 'n' Jessie wanted t' go 'n' see 'em 'cause Phil was with 'em, so I had t' stay home and watch the house. She's all broke up over his 'nlistin'.

(*He keeps helping himself to pieces of apple, unnoticed by her; eats them almost as fast as she pares them.*)

OLIVER. I s'pose she is. Jest like a mother. But it's the best thing ever happened t' Phil Randall. Mebbe it'll make a man of him.

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IVY. You hadn't better let her hear you say that. She thinks he's the hull thing, almost, 'n' of course he's all she's got, sense — (*Notices him eating apples, jumps up, slapping him.*) Here, you! Ain't you got th' cheek? Well, of all things, if you haven't et all I've peeled!

OLIVER. The woman tempted me and I did eat —

IVY. Well, I should say you did! Now you take them things in the kitchen, 'n' then you clear out o' here. You're the limit.

OLIVER (*going R., with basket*). Oh, all right! But mebbe you'll be sorry you spoke t' me like that some day—when I'm over 'n France, 'n' you hear I'm shot 'r somethin'.

IVY. You! Huh, I guess they ain't much danger. A pretty soldier you'd make —

OLIVER. Who wants t' be a "pretty" soldier? But you jest bet I'd 'nlist t'day if they'd take me. Ain't it a shame I ain't old enough? You jest bet I'd 'nlist if I was.

IVY. I guess you wouldn't be s' anxious 'f you was. It's easy enough to talk, but I guess when it come to the pinch — You goin' t' take them things in there?

OLIVER. Sure—sure! Y' see, Ivy dear, you're such a clingin' little vine, I can't tear m'self away from y' —

IVY. You git out —

(*Runs at him, giving him a cuff; he exits R., with basket. She looks at pan, disgusted; goes up, looks off door C. to R., then, carrying pan, comes down R., as she sees MRS. RANDALL and JESSIE, who enter from R. They wear hats; MRS. R. has a plain fan. They come down L.*)

MRS. RANDALL (*sitting L., fanning self*). I'm so tired. It's very warm.

JESSIE (*by her*). Yes, Mother, and I'm afraid the walk was too much for you. Do you feel faint?

MRS. R. Oh, no; just a little exhausted, that's all. I'll be all right in a minute.

FOR THE OLD FLAG

IVY. Shall I get you a glass o' water, Mis' Randall?

MRS. R. Why, yes, Ivy, if you will, please.

IVY. Yes, ma'am. Oliver Moon's in there. He jest brung them things you ordered from the store b'fore you went to th' p'rade. They're the slowest things down t' that store. I'll bring the water.

(Exit, R., with pan.)

JESSIE. It was very hard, wasn't it—seeing Phil in his uniform and knowing he has to leave us? But we must be brave, you know.

MRS. R. Yes, dear, of course we must; and I mean to be. But it is hard, especially when I think of—of ——

(Covers eyes with hand or fan, weeping gently. JESSIE puts arm about her.)

JESSIE. Don't, Mother, please don't. We mustn't think about him—about that—you know. It doesn't do any good. We must only think of Phil, and that he is a soldier now and is going to be a hero—and fight for his country—and—oh, Mother, didn't he look fine in his new uniform? I was so proud of him. Weren't you?

MRS. R. *(recovering)*. Yes, yes, of course I was. I'm so glad he has leave and can come to supper and spend a whole day with us.

(Enter IVY, R., with glass of water; gives it to MRS. R., who drinks nearly all of it. OLIVER enters R. and stands R. C. with empty basket.)

IVY. Feel better now, Mis' Randall?

MRS. R. Yes, thank you, Ivy. How do you do, Oliver?

OLIVER. How d' do, Mis' Randall?

(He and JESSIE also exchange greetings. IVY goes out R., with glass.)

JESSIE. Wouldn't you like to be a soldier, Oliver?

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OLIVER. You jest bet I would, Miss Randall. 'T's only 'cause I ain't old enough 't I ain't one.

MRS. R. Some would be glad to escape, Oliver.

OLIVER. Them kind ain't real Americans. They're slackers. I ain't built that way—no more 'n your Phil is, Mis' Randall. I see he's 'nlisted.

MRS. R. Yes. We have just been to see him in his uniform, for the first time. It was a very fine parade. Did you see it?

(JESSIE goes up to door, c.)

OLIVER. No. Couldn't git away. Well, I must be gitt'n' back, 'r old Bates'll dock my week's wages.

JESSIE (*who is looking off to R.*). Oh, look! Here comes Mr. Wilkins, having a parade all to himself. (*Waves hand.*) Hello, Mr. Wilkins!

(OLIVER goes up, looks off; MRS. R. rises, goes up c. part way, also looks off; they stand aside, as HEZEKIAH WILKINS marches in, with good-sized American flag. JESSIE joins him on one side, OLIVER on the other; they march about; IVY looks in R., sees them, joins them and they parade around, all singing or whistling "The Girl I Left Behind Me." MRS. R. stands up L., watching them, smiling, then applauding. PHILIP RANDALL appears in door c., in uniform, stands and watches them, at first unnoticed. They finally pause and he claps his hands.)

PHILIP. Hurray! Hurray! Three cheers for the U. S. A.!

(*They all turn and see him. He comes down L. MRS. R. comes down L. to him; he kisses her, then kisses JESSIE. OLIVER, HEZEKIAH, IVY at R.*)

MRS. R. Why, Phil, dear, how did you get here so soon? We didn't expect you for some time yet.

PHILIP. They broke ranks soon after you left, and I came straight here.

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JESSIE. My, but you look fine, Phil! Aren't you proud?

PHILIP. M'm—yes, I suppose I am. It's all very fine, and I'm patriotic and all that, but—well, somehow I don't feel so very enthusiastic just yet. I suppose I shall, though, in time. How about it, Mr. Wilkins? You ought to know.

HEZEKIAH. Me? Guess I do. Be'n through th' mill! 'Thusiasm? 'M full of it. Gosh, wish I was a young 'un agin, y' jest bet I'd fall in line. It's me f'r Old Glory, every time!

(Waves flag; they all smile and applaud lightly.)

JESSIE. Good for you, Mr. Wilkins. I guess you know what war is, too?

HEZEKIAH. Guess I do. Fit f'r the Union. Was at Antietam 'n' Bull Run. Makes me fire up all over agin, all this marchin' 'n' music, 'n' all. I tell y' what, young man (*to PHILIP*), you ought t' be proud t' go 'n' fight for Uncle Sam.

OLIVER. Sure he ought to. Wish I could go.

PHILIP. I am. But there's another side to it, you know—going away, and leaving this dear little mother and sister, and—they have no one else now, and—— Oh, but we mustn't think of these things, I suppose. By the way, Mother, I asked Rodney Hunt to come and have supper with us. I thought you wouldn't mind.

MRS. R. Why, no, of course not, Phil, if you want him. But we are not very stylish, you know, and he—well, being from the city and living at the hotel and all——

HEZEKIAH. He's that city dude 't I've seen around with you s' much, ain't he?

PHILIP. I suppose you have seen him with me. He has been my friend for some time, and he lives in New York. But I don't know as I would call him a "dude." Wearing good clothes and having an education and polished manners doesn't necessarily mean that a man is what you call a "dude," Hezekiah.

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(*He goes up L., slightly annoyed. MRS. R. is down L.; JESSIE L. C.; HEZEKIAH up R.; OLIVER and IVY R.*)

HEZEKIAH. Didn't mean no offense, Phil, m' boy. But I've kind o' wondered why he ain't wearin' a uniform, too. Not that he'd make much of a soldier. He's th' kind that c'n carry a cane 'r a cigarette better 'n a gun, I take it.

MRS. R. Well, Phil, if your friend is coming, Ivy and I will go and see about getting a little something extra for supper. I guess there is time. Come, Ivy.

IVY. All right, Mis' Randall.

PHILIP. Now, Mother, you needn't go and fuss. Rodney isn't so particular, and he'll understand.

MRS. R. I know, dear; but we want to fix up a little, you know. I wouldn't want you to be ashamed of us.

(*Exit R., followed by IVY. JESSIE goes to R.*)

JESSIE. I'll go and see if there's anything I can do. Mother's all upset, I can see that. I shouldn't think you would have invited Mr. Hunt here to supper, Phil, without telling us in advance. He's used to style and all, you know he is.

PHILIP (*going to her, R.*). Pshaw! It won't hurt him, if he is. Besides, things are plenty good enough here for him. He was glad enough to accept, and you're glad enough to have him, you know you are ——

JESSIE (*in confusion*). Phil!

PHILIP. Now, now, little sly puss! You know you think he's the grandest thing ever was. And as for him—well, what he didn't say nice about you ——

JESSIE. Phil!—be still! How can you? They'll hear ——

(*Glances at HEZEKIAH and OLIVER, who are up C., in door, talking together, apparently not noticing others, who are up R.*)

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PHILIP. That's all right. They didn't notice. What do you care if they did? (*Turning up c.*) Going, Hezekiah?

HEZEKIAH. Wal, I wa'n't, jest yit. (*Comes down c.*) Reckoned I'd run in 'n' talk soldier'n' a few minutes, seein' you've got y'r uniform. Thought mebbe I c'd give y' a little advice. Glad t'.

PHILIP. That's very kind, Hezekiah, but I guess I'll get all the advice and instructions that are necessary, all in good time. What do you think about it, Oliver? They going to get you?

OLIVER (*up c.*). Would, if I had my way. Won't take me. Ain't old 'nough.

PHILIP. I guess that could be fixed. They might take you, one way or another.

OLIVER. Oh! think they would? (*About to go.*) Well, y' see, even so, I—I ain't sure I could go. Got some fambly ties, y' know, 'n'—— Say, it's gitt'n' late. Guess I'll have t' be gitt'n' back t' the store, 'r Mr. Bates'll give it t' me. Good-bye. See y' later.

(*Exit OLIVER through c. door to L. JESSIE goes to door c. and looks after him. PHILIP comes down L.*)

HEZEKIAH. Cold feet. Was jes' blowin' aboutt want'n' t' go.

PHILIP (*leaning on table, L.*). Well, I tell you, it's no pleasant thing to think of, after all, Mr. Wilkins. I can't say I'd go, if I had my way. I don't think I'm a coward. I want to be patriotic and do my duty, and I hope I will do it when the time comes. But a fellow might as well be honest with himself and own up that he doesn't hanker after war. It's a beastly thing to think of.

HEZEKIAH. You're right, m' boy, it is. I was there. It's a good while ago now, but sometimes it seems like it was yist'd'y. I c'n still hear the cannons roarin', 'n' see the boys runnin' int' the midst of the fight—'n' there I be, pitchin' in, day after day,

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fightin'—sometimes fairly droppin', but still keepin' at it—'cause y' can't stop, s' long 's y'r legs 'll hold y' up and there's a breath left t' fight with. Then one day I got a shot—here, in this leg—the bullet went in there—right here—and I was done f'r. (*He feels of right knee.*) I'm an old Vet. now, and hev been f'r years 'n' years, 'n' I'll soon lay down m' arms f'r good. But I would like t' live till you boys come marchin' home 'n' y' tell us you licked them pesky Huns. That'd be somethin' t' live f'r—'n' t' die f'r, if needs be, m' boy—t' die f'r!

PHILIP (*going and clasping his hand*). Thanks, Mr. Wilkins. You give me courage. I'll try to be as good a soldier as you were—as you are! I never can be—but I'll try!

HEZEKIAH (*patting him on shoulder*). That's the way t' talk, m' boy—'n' I'll go with y'—in spirit—'n' keep Old Glory wavin' here till y' come marchin' home.

(*They are down L. C. ; JESSIE in door c., looking off to R. HEZEKIAH again waves flag.*)

PHILIP. Oh, the flag will come flying home all right, Hezekiah, you can be sure of that, and when it does, the victory it has won will be worth all we have done to win it. That's the way to feel, isn't it?

HEZEKIAH. You bet it is. No man has ever died in vain if he's give his life f'r Old Glory.

JESSIE (*turning to them*). That's a fine sentiment, Mr. Wilkins. It's easier to say than it is to feel, however.

HEZEKIAH. Mebbe 'tis; mebbe 'tis. But we got t' feel it too, you know.

JESSIE (*coming part way down c.*). Oh, yes, I know, I know. But we've got to learn,—to learn how to smile when our hearts are breaking, and cheer when, if we did what we feel like doing, we would just sit down and cry. Oh, I'm not complaining.

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I love my country and I am patriotic and I shall bear up and act like a good soldier's true sister. But you needn't think it will be easy, for it's going to be hard—terribly, terribly hard!

PHILIP (*going to her and putting an arm about her*). Of course it is, little sister. That's why you will be doing something for your country—as much, in staying here at home, you and Mother, as I am in going. Why, it will be the mothers and sisters at home, loving us and thinking of us, that will help us, more than anything else, to win.

HEZEKIAH. My, but that sounds fine! You're a reg'lar orationer, Phil. But y' ought t' said "sweethearts" too, f'r here comes youn.

(*JESSIE wipes her eyes, smiling bravely. HEZEKIAH has gone up c.; looks off.*)

PHILIP. Well, of course, I meant sweethearts, too. But as for mine—I guess you're mistaken there, Hezekiah. I have none.

HEZEKIAH. So? Wal, wal, do tell! Thought y' had. 'T any rate, here comes Lucy Garrett, lookin' like she must be somebuddy's sweetheart. Who's that with her?

JESSIE (*looking out c. to r.*). Why, it's Mr. Hunt, Phil, with—Lucy Garrett.

PHILIP. Oh, is it?

(*JESSIE comes down, to r. c.; HEZEKIAH up l. PHILIP goes up, meets RODNEY HUNT and LUCY GARRETT, as they come in door c. to r.*)

RODNEY. Good-afternoon, Miss Randall.

(*He comes down r. and shakes hands with JESSIE, who seems a bit embarrassed. JESSIE welcomes LUCY, who has spoken to PHILIP cordially.*)

LUCY (*down r. c.*). I was on the way here, Jessie, to see you, when Mr. Hunt overtook me, so we came along together.

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RODNEY (*down r.*). Yes. I was in luck for once. Eh, Phil?

PHILIP (*up c.*). You surely were. You know Mr. Wilkins, Mr. Hunt? He's our star "G. A. R." A real representative of the U. S. A.

HEZEKIAH (*L.*). Glad t' know you, Mr. Hunt. What y' hunt'n' f'r—Huns?

RODNEY. M'm—well, not exactly.

(*PHILIP comes down c. As they all laugh, he seems somewhat annoyed. All well down stage, LUCY and JESSIE R. ; RODNEY C. ; PHILIP L. C. ; HEZEKIAH L.*)

LUCY. Well, I guess he wouldn't find any here, if he were. It was a fine parade, Phil. I felt quite proud of you as you went marching by —

PHILIP (*pleased*). Of me, Lucy?

LUCY. M'm—I meant of you all—the boys. But, of course, you too.

PHILIP. Oh!

JESSIE. Yes, I thought they looked splendid. (*Noticing bag on LUCY's arm.*) That your knitting, Lucy?

LUCY (*holding up bag*). Yes. Isn't it a beauty? I bought it in New York. Oh, you'll have to have one. They're all knitting. It's quite the thing. They knit in the street cars, and at the opera, the theatres—everywhere.

HEZEKIAH. Anywheres s' long 's it's in public, I s'pose. Do they keep it up t' home, when they ain't nobuddy lookin'?

RODNEY (*laughing*). Indeed, no! That would be quite superfluous, you know.

HEZEKIAH. Oh, would it? I thought it was some-thin' like that.

JESSIE. Come on, let's all go out in the yard. No use staying in here. I want you to show me your bag, Lucy, and what you are knitting.

LUCY. All right.

(*They go up—JESSIE first, followed by RODNEY, to*

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door c. They go off to R. HEZEKIAH in 'door c.,
LUCY up R.; PHILIP crosses to her.)

HEZEKIAH. Be out here, Phil. Want t' see y', when you git a minute. We're gitt'n' up a sort o' celebration 'n' I thought mebbe you'd help it along—you 'n' some of the boys. Drill 'r somethin'. Think you could?

PHILIP. Oh, I guess so, Hezekiah. Talk it over, anyway.

HEZEKIAH. All right. I'll be out by the barn, lookin' at the pigs.

(Exit HEZEKIAH, to L. LUCY is about to go out, but pauses as PHILIP speaks.)

PHILIP. Lucy—wait!

LUCY. What, Phil,—what is it?

PHILIP. I—I wanted to speak to you.

LUCY. But not now. Jessie is waiting for me, and —

PHILIP (*up c.*). No, don't go, Lucy. Wait. I may not have another chance. You must know what I mean—how I feel. Oh, Lucy, I've got to tell you, now,—if I don't it may be too late. (*She is about to go; he stops her.*) No, you must listen. Lucy—I love you—I'm going away. I can't go without telling you—without knowing that you are waiting for me here. It's going to be hard to go, but—but if I could have that to think about—to know that you —

(*She comes down c.; he follows her; she draws away from him, as he tries to take her hand.*)

LUCY. Phil—don't. You mustn't. It isn't right.

PHILIP. Why isn't it right? Hasn't a man a right to tell a girl he loves her—that she is the only one in the world for him, and that he has nothing to live for if she doesn't tell him she loves him?

LUCY. Stop, Phil. You know you shouldn't say such

things to me, and that I shouldn't listen to them. It isn't fair to—to him.

(Lays knitting bag on table.)

PHILIP. But why should we think of him?

LUCY. You ask me that—you?—and he your brother? Do you mean to say that you could respect me if I should turn to you now, while he is shut up over there? Don't you know I promised him I would wait for him? Oh, you know I did—you know I did!

PHILIP. But you can't, Lucy. You don't love him now. How can you? He is a convict, a ——

LUCY. Don't say it, Phil. He may be a convict, but that isn't saying he is guilty of the crime of which he was accused. There's many an innocent man behind prison walls, and many a guilty one outside of them. You ought to know that.

PHILIP. I? Why, Lucy, what do you mean ——

LUCY. Oh, perhaps I don't mean anything, except that I never believed Tom Randall took that money.

PHILIP. We needn't discuss that. It was proved against him.

LUCY. Yes, and it was your testimony that did it. Yours—his brother's. Oh, I know you pretended you were reluctant to tell what you did—that you saw him coming out of the bank that night, an hour after it was closed, proving that he had gone back. And when the money was missing, and those bills were found on him, you "let slip" something that made them ask what you knew about it, and you had to tell. I know all that, but I know, too, that, in spite of it all, I never believed Tom guilty, never did and never shall.

PHILIP. Well, you have a right to feel that way, and of course I hope you are right. I should like to see Tom vindicated, and I would do all I could to bring it about ——

LUCY *(close to him, looking straight into his eyes)*. Do you mean that, Philip Randall?

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PHILIP (*trying not to flinch, but unable to meet her gaze*). Why, yes, of course I do.

LUCY. Then why don't you tell?

PHILIP. Tell? Tell what —

LUCY. What you know. What you ought to tell—the truth!

PHILIP. I—I don't know what you mean. I can't imagine what you have got into your head.

LUCY. Well, it's something you can't get out of it. It's something that makes that uniform you have on mean nothing to me, so long as I think what I do.

PHILIP. Lucy!

LUCY. Oh, you needn't be afraid. I have never said this to anybody else, and I'm not going to do so. It's only my opinion, and it wouldn't do any good to express it. I may think things, but I can prove nothing, unless it is my faith in Tom Randall and my determination to stick to him and wait for him.

PHILIP. What! Do you mean to say you would marry him—marry him, after he comes out of prison, and face it out with him? I guess you don't realize what that would mean.

LUCY. It would mean I believe him innocent, no matter what all the rest of the world believe, and that there was one woman who didn't go back on a man just because things were against him.

PHILIP. Yes, but —

(*He walks up c., as MRS. R. enters R.*)

MRS. R. How do you do, Lucy? Why, Lucy—Phil—what is the matter?

PHILIP. Nothing, Mother. Lucy and I were just discussing something, and we—we couldn't quite agree, that's all. I'll be out here with Jessie and Rodney. Will you come, Lucy?

LUCY. Pretty soon. You needn't wait.

(*Exit PHILIP through door at c. and off L. LUCY is c. MRS. R. goes to her.*)

MRS. R. Why, Lucy, what is it? I am sure you and Philip have been having some words. I can't imagine—I thought you were such good friends.

LUCY. Why, we are, Mrs. Randall. We weren't quarreling. I don't want to tell you what it was about, because—well, I know it is a subject that it hurts you to discuss.

MRS. R. Lucy, do you mean—Tom? Was it Tom you were talking about?

LUCY. Yes, Mrs. Randall. Oh, you know how I feel! You know I never believed him guilty, even when everything was against him. I couldn't believe Tom a—a thief.

MRS. R. I know, dear. That was because you loved him, and your heart, like mine, told you that it could not be so.

LUCY. And it still tells me so. I still believe in him, I still love him, Mrs. Randall, and I'll wait for him. And when he comes out you and I will stick by him and comfort him—even if all the rest of the world turns against him.

MRS. R. You are a noble, true girl, Lucy, and Tom is blessed indeed in having such a heart as yours to beat for him. But, my dear, you forget—it can't be—there's your father—

LUCY. Oh, I know. Sometimes I almost wish he were not my father, he seems so hard, so cruel. He has forbidden me even to mention Tom's name. He calls him—those awful words that Mr. Stone, the District Attorney, spoke of him—oh, I shall never forget—and he, my own father, says he will have no more to do with me, that I shall no longer be his daughter, if I even speak to Tom again when he comes out. But do you think that will make any difference? Do you think even he can turn me against Tom?

MRS. R. No, no, my dear, of course not. But we must face the truth. Tom is my boy and, no matter what others think, I believe him innocent—I know he is. And it's oh, such a comfort to me to feel that you think so too. But we must face

the truth, dear. Your father is a rich man, he has power and influence, and it was in his bank that—that that theft took place, and he believes Tom is the one that did it. Everything was against him, you know, and your father had reason to believe him guilty.

LUCY. Oh, I know he had reasons. He was anxious to find them, it seemed to me, and so was that terrible, hard-hearted District Attorney Stone, whose name just suits him. Why, they wouldn't even give Tom the benefit of the doubt.

MRS. R. I'm afraid, Lucy dear, that they thought there wasn't any doubt. Poor Tom had to admit that he went back to the bank that night, and it was Phil, you know, who saw him coming out. Then all that money was found in Tom's room, more than he could ever have had of his own, and—— Oh, Lucy, everything was against him. Everything!

LUCY. Yes—even his own brother. His own flesh and blood convicted him.

MRS. R. Lucy! You mustn't blame Philip. You mustn't do that. That would be unjust. He had to tell. He tried not to, you know, but they questioned him, and got it out of him. Oh, I wouldn't want you to feel that way, Lucy. It would be terrible, now that Phil is a soldier, to have him go away with any such a feeling as that on your part. Is—is that what you and he were talking about? (*LUCY is silent; turns away.*) Lucy, was it? Did you make Philip feel that you blame him?

LUCY (*facing her, sadly*). I'm sorry, Mrs. Randall. I was excited, thinking of Tom. It hurts me so, —and I said more than I should. I am sorry.

MRS. R. Well, it was because you feel so about Tom, dear, and Philip will understand. He won't lay it up against you. There, there, we won't think any more about it. I want you to stay and have supper with us, Lucy. Mr. Hunt is here, you know, and it will be quite a little party.

LUCY. Thank you, Mrs. Randall, but I don't believe I can ——

MRS. R. Oh, but I won't take "no" for an answer. We don't know how soon Philip may have to go away, you know, and we may not all be here together again.

LUCY. But if Mr. Hunt is here, I—really, I don't think I can stay.

MRS. R. You don't like him, I know. But never mind. Stay for my sake, and Phil's.

LUCY. Oh, it isn't so much that I don't like Mr. Hunt. I distrust him. I can't understand what Phil sees in him to make such a friend of.

MRS. R. Why, they were chums when Philip was away at school, you know, and Philip visited him in New York for several weeks, a few years ago, and ——

LUCY. Yes. Just before Tom's trouble, wasn't it? Phil had just come back from New York, and Mr. Hunt had been here, and—I remember.

MRS. R. Why, Lucy, what do you mean? You mustn't keep dwelling on that. It doesn't do any good now, and we agreed not to talk about it any more, you know. We must think of other things—of the soldiers—of our country ——

LUCY (*trying to smile*). Yes, I know. And I must knit. Goodness, think of all the time I've wasted. I might have done a dozen rows or more. (*Gets bag from table, opens it, takes out knitting.*) I promised to show it to Jessie. I think I'll go out. She's waiting for me.

MRS. R. (*looking at knitting*). Oh, you're getting along nicely, aren't you? What is it?

LUCY. M'm—well, it isn't anything yet.

MRS. R. I see. Of course, I meant going to be.

LUCY. I hope it is going to be a sweater. That's what I want it to be. But seeing it's my first, and I'm just sort of feeling my way, it may turn out to be a tippet, or maybe only a pair of wristlets.

MRS. R. Lucy! I'm sure it will be a beautiful sweater.

LUCY. Thanks for those kind words. May your faith be fully rewarded—and my good intentions.

(*They are up to door c., about to go out, but draw back as JESSIE runs in from R.*)

JESSIE. Well, I must say it takes you long enough. I thought you were coming out with us.

LUCY. So I am. I was just showing your mother my knitting.

MRS. R. Yes, dear; she says she is knitting a sweater—for some soldier, I suppose. Maybe it is for Phil.

JESSIE. Oh! is it, Lucy?

LUCY. Mercy me, I don't even know it's going to be that. If it's only wristlets, he might not want them. (*She has gone up to c.; looks off to L.*) Here comes Sophia Ash.

JESSIE. Is it? Oh, dear! I wonder if we've got to have her wished on to us.

MRS. R. Jessie, I am surprised.

JESSIE. Well, you needn't be. You don't want to see her yourself. You dread her coming here, you know you do.

MRS. R. What I dread is having her go into one of those spells—"trance," she calls it. She just makes me creep when she goes into one of them, and it seems to me she is always and forever getting under the influence of her "control," as she calls it. It's an Indian girl, her "control" is, named—what is her name, Jessie?

JESSIE. "Prairie Flower." Some flower, I call her, if she can "control" Sophia Ash, especially her tongue. Did you ever see her when she was in one, Lucy?

LUCY. No, but I should love to. Do you think she could go into one this afternoon?

JESSIE. Could she? Just you wait. That's what she's coming here for.

LUCY. I have heard about her and her trances, but never happened to see her when she was in one. What does she do?

JESSIE. Acts like she had a fit, and tells you a lot of things you know already. But here she is. Now for it.

(Enter SOPHIA ASH, through door c., from L., clasping her hands, rolling her eyes, with a "far-away" expression and distracted manner. She does not notice the others, as she comes down c. MRS. R. places chair R. C. and SOPHIA sinks into it, moaning, with clasped hands, and swaying gently from side to side.)

MRS. R. Oh, dear, she's in one of 'em.

JESSIE. I should say she is. I guess we're in for it, this time.

MRS. R. Jessie, dear, don't make fun of her.

JESSIE. Oh, I can't help it.

(Enter HEZEKIAH through door c. from L. SOPHIA seated c.; MRS. R. is R. C.; JESSIE and LUCY L. C.; HEZEKIAH comes down L.)

HEZEKIAH. Oh, here's the mee-jum, is she? Thought I seen her comin' in. Phew! she's havin' 'em.

(Enter PHILIP and RODNEY through door c., from L.; they stand back, looking on, amusedly.)

LUCY. S-sh! She is going to speak.

JESSIE. H'm! that's nothing strange. Easiest thing she does.

MRS. R. Jessie!

(SOPHIA sways back and forth, moaning, then stops, with closed eyes. The others all keep very still. SOPHIA mumbles indistinctly for a moment, then begins speaking, mysteriously.)

SOPHIA. Prairie Flower say—Prairie Flower see—(stretching out arm, points) she see—— Oh, it is terrible—terrible—— She say—she see—she see troops, marching men, cannons, swords—hark! it's the guns, booming, booming! It's men—fighting—war, war—WAR!

(Moans again, rocking back and forth, wailing.)

HEZEKIAH. What d' y' think o' that? Prairie Flower, she see war. Kind o' b'hind the times, ain't she?

SOPHIA. I see beyond—there—far off—in the distance —

HEZEKIAH. 'S fur's the middle o' next week, I reckon.

(She waves her hands about.)

PHILIP *(looking on from back)*. She seems to be groping for something —

RODNEY. Visions, maybe.

HEZEKIAH. Acts more like she gropin' f'r flies 'r m'skeeters.

PHILIP. Or a husband. You'd better look out, Hezekiah.

HEZEKIAH. Gosh! Guess I had.

LUCY. I think it's perfectly ridiculous.

(She goes up, joining PHILIP and RODNEY. They are by door c., paying little attention to the others, talking, though occasionally glancing at SOPHIA, smiling.)

SOPHIA. All is dark again. Now I see—yes, there is a gleam of light. Hark! I hear Prairie Flower's voice again. She is calling to me. She has a message for some one. Who? Who is it you want, Prairie Flower? I am listening. Yes, I hear you. But it is so faint. Speak louder, Prairie Flower.

HEZEKIAH. Guess y' got a poor c'nection. Better call up central —

(Those at back laugh. SOPHIA straightens up, begins to "come out of trance," shuddering, moaning, etc.)

MRS. R. There, she's coming to.

HEZEKIAH. Two 'r three, looks like.

JESSIE *(shaking SOPHIA gently)*. Miss Ash! Miss Ash!

HEZEKIAH. Makes me tired, all that pretend'n' 'n' putt'n' on. War? Goin' t' have war? Guess I'd better go 'n' send word t' th' President. Mebbe he'd like t' know th' news.

SOPHIA (*looking about, in a dazed manner*). Where—where am I? Oh, it's—why, it's you, Mis' Randall! And Jessie.

MRS. R. Yes, Sophia, you're here with us. Do you feel better now?

SOPHIA. Yes, I am all right now. But I have been far away—far away—

HEZEKIAH. Can y' tell us when th' Kaiser's goin' t' git it in the neck, Miss Ash?

SOPHIA. Oh, you can make fun of me all you want to, Hezekiah Wilkins. But I guess if you had my powers, you'd have more respect for the mystic world. Sometimes I think it's almost an affliction to be so mediumistic, one gets so misunderstood and made fun of. But it's a gift—it comes without seekin'.

HEZEKIAH. Like the mumps 'r the lumbago.

(LUCY, PHILIP and RODNEY laugh, about to go out.)

LUCY. Come on, Jessie; we're going to take a little walk. Will you go?

JESSIE. Thanks, but I can't. I have to see about supper. Don't be long. It is nearly ready.

MRS. R. Yes, and you stay, Lucy.

JESSIE. Why, certainly she will. I'll put a plate on for her.

LUCY. All right, then. Thank you, I will. (PHILIP and RODNEY go off through c. door and to L., calling her. As she follows them.) Sorry you can't come, Jessie. But we won't be long.

(*Exeunt PHILIP, RODNEY and LUCY through door c. to L. JESSIE goes R.*)

JESSIE. I'll go and help Ivy, Mother.

MRS. R. Yes, dear, do. And have her call us as soon as it is ready.

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JESSIE. All right. It will be only a few minutes.

(Exit, R.)

MRS. R. I hope you are all right now, Sophia.

SOPHIA (*still seated, MRS. R. at her L.*). Yes, I'm all right. It does kind o' take my strength, though, when I have to go. Oh, Mis' Randall, it's terrible to be so misunderstood and made fun of. But I suppose it's my mission in life and I must accept it. My strange powers come to me and I must take what they bring. I try to use 'em for good. You believe that, don't you, Mis' Randall?

MRS. R. Why—a—yes, Sophia, I guess so. At any rate, I believe you mean to be sincere and think you get "messages," as you call them.

SOPHIA. Oh, you must believe me, Mis' Randall, you must. (*Rises, goes and looks up C., then R. and L.*) You must believe, for I—I have a message for you.

MRS. R. For me, Sophia? Why, what do you mean—from—not from your Indian girl?

SOPHIA (*mysteriously, in subdued tones*). Yes, from my "control." When she was speaking to me then, just now, I got your name—it was a message for you—but I didn't want them to know. They don't believe—they interfere with the influence—so I had to wait till I could see you alone.

(*She glances about.*)

MRS. R. Dear me, Sophia, you make me absolutely uncomfortable sometimes. I'd rather you wouldn't—I—really, I don't want your "message," as you call it. I don't mean to be ungrateful, but —

SOPHIA (*grasping chair*). I feel as if I was going again—she is calling me. Yes, Prairie Flower—I hear — (*Sinks into chair.*)

MRS. R. Oh, Sophia, don't—try not to—really, I don't want to know, and you make me nervous. I'll call Jessie.

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(Starts R.; SOPHIA grasps her hand, or dress, 'detains her.)

SOPHIA. No, no—stay! You must listen. It is about—about your boy——

MRS. R. Philip? About Philip?

SOPHIA. No—the other one.

MRS. R. Tom! It is something about Tom?

(SOPHIA is now again in a "trance," though less deeply than before. Her eyes are closed. She speaks softly, but distinctly.)

SOPHIA. I see high walls—stone walls. Iron bars—gates—men in—uniforms? No, not uniforms. They are not soldiers. But they are dressed alike—they are marching. There, now they break ranks. They—ah!—I see one—he goes—he is called. He says, "Tell my mother——" Yes, I hear. I see. The gates open—he comes out—he—a-ah!

(She sinks for a moment, as if exhausted. MRS. R. has become very much interested, as the import of what SOPHIA says gradually dawns upon her.)

MRS. R. Sophia! Sophia Ash! What do you mean? What were you talking about? You were making it all up. It isn't right. It is wicked—wicked!

SOPHIA (coming to). What! What have I said? Have I told you anything, Mis' Randall?

MRS. R. Told me anything? As if you didn't know. I am surprised at you, Sophia Ash, a good church member, that you should give yourself up to such practices. How can you?

SOPHIA. Oh, Mis' Randall, don't you go back on me too. Even the minister says it is my own imagination. He said if it wasn't it must be—yes, he actually said "the power of the—the Evil One." What do you think of that?

MRS. R. Well, of course, I wouldn't want to contra-

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'dict anything the minister said. I have great confidence in his opinion.

SOPHIA. Oh, yes, I suppose you agree with him. Well, I can't help it. I give my messages as they come to me, and if folks won't accept 'em, that ain't my fault. But when Prairie Flower calls, I have to answer.

JESSIE (*off R.*). Mother!

MRS. R. And when Jessie calls, I must answer. It means supper's ready. You'll stay and eat with us, Sophia?

SOPHIA. Thanks, but you got so many, I guess I'd better be getting along.

MRS. R. (*in door R.*). Oh, there's always room for one more. You might as well stay.

IVY (*suddenly appearing R.*). Say, Mis' Randall, Jessie wants t' know 'f we shall cut that raisin cake?

MRS. R. Certainly, Ivy. That will go nicely with your apple sauce.

IVY. Yes'm. I'll tell 'er.

(*Exit, R.*)

MRS. R. Come, Sophia.

SOPHIA. Well, mebbe I will. If I could help a little, or anything, I'd be glad to.

MRS. R. Oh, I guess we won't need any help. But you come.

SOPHIA. Well, seeing you insist —

MRS. R. Why, of course I do. You go right in and I'll call the others. (*Exit SOPHIA, R. MRS. R. goes up to door c., calls off to L.*) Philip! Lucy! Come—supper is ready! You all come in now.

(*She stands, waiting; there is a brief pause, then enter PHILIP from L., through door at c., with LUCY, followed by RODNEY, then by HEZEKIAH.*)

PHILIP. Here we are, Mother. Lucy didn't want to come, but I made her.

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MRS. R. Why, certainly. I'd feel it terribly, Lucy, if you didn't stay.

LUCY (*smiling*). Then I'll stay, of course. Besides, I'm just dying to, to tell the truth.

(*Enter JESSIE, R.*)

JESSIE. Come on, you folks. Supper's all ready.

(*Exeunt JESSIE and LUCY, R., looking back. PHILIP and RODNEY are L. C.; HEZEKIAH still has flag, which he now goes and lays on table. PHILIP places his soldier cap or hat on flag.*)

PHILIP (*crossing to R.*). Come, Rodney, now for some home cooking.

RODNEY. Delighted. I'm hungry enough to appreciate it, too.

PHILIP. Oh, you don't have to be hungry to appreciate Mother's things.

MRS. R. Phil! Don't mind him, Mr. Hunt. But I hope you do enjoy your supper.

RODNEY. Indeed I shall, Mrs. Randall. I can hardly wait.

(*PHILIP goes off to R. RODNEY follows him off. HEZEKIAH goes to door R.*)

HEZEKIAH. Nice of you t' ask me too, Mis' Randall. D' know when I've et one o' your meals.

MRS. R. Why, the party wouldn't be complete without you, Hezekiah—the "Old Veteran" and the "New Volunteer," you know.

HEZEKIAH. That's right—'n' the Stars 'n' Stripes f'rever!

MRS. R. Yes, Hezekiah—forever and forever! (*He exits R., chuckling happily. She stands a moment, in silent thought, then crosses to table, takes up PHILIP'S hat, looks at it fondly, proudly.*) My boy—my handsome soldier boy! And oh, how gladly I would send him, too—my other boy—if he could be here to go—free from the shadow that hangs over him. Oh, Philip—Tom—my boys!

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(Off R., the others have been heard laughing and talking; they have now started singing, not too loudly, "The Star Spangled Banner." MRS. R. caresses hat, takes up corner of flag and kisses it reverently, weeping, but smiling through her tears. She remains thus a moment, then sinks into chair, buries her face in flag on table, weeping, with the hat still clasped in her hand. There is a pause, then TOM RANDALL, poorly clad, pale and ill-looking, appears at window, looks in, sees MRS. R. His face quivers, as he stands there, then he disappears and shortly appears in door c., pauses again, then slowly comes down to c., near MRS. R., stands looking down at her. He seems about to speak, falters, then murmurs, "Mother!" She looks up, bewildered, at first does not seem to recognize him, then, with a broken cry of joy, holds up her arms; he sinks to his knees at her side, burying his face in her lap, sobbing. She thoughtlessly hangs on to flag, pulls it over his head, bending over him and murmuring "My boy! My boy!" The singing of the anthem, off R., continues as the curtain falls.)

CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE.—*Same as Act I, the next afternoon. The flag previously used is still on table, or standing against wall, near door at c. Curtain rises on empty stage, but MRS. R. at once looks in from R., cautiously, then enters, goes to L., then to door c., looking carefully about. Goes to R. and motions. Enter IVY, with tray, on which are several dishes covered with cloth. IVY shows wonderment, looking about curiously.*

MRS. R. All right, Ivy; bring it in. There's no one here.

IVY. I see they ain't, Mis' Randall, but I'm jest dyin' t' know what 's all about 'n' who this lunch is f'r. You've had yours.

MRS. R. Yes, Ivy, but there's some one who hasn't had any—up-stairs, in the spare room.

IVY (*so surprised she almost drops tray*). For the land's sake—in the spare room! Who is it, Mis' Randall—a tramp?

MRS. R. Why, no, of course not. It's—but I can't tell you yet; and you know you promised to help me and not say a word.

IVY. Sure I did, 'n' I won't. But I can't help wonderin'. Ain't you afeared, 'r anything? When did he come?

MRS. R. Last night, while they were all eating supper. I took him up-stairs, before they got through, and none of them knew. I had to tell you, so you can help me get his meals to him and other things, and I'll tell the others soon. But not just yet. I'll take the tray now and go up with it. And you keep watch, and mind you don't tell anybody.

(*She takes tray, goes L.*)

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IVY (*dumbfounded*). No'm, I won't tell. But—a man up-stairs in the spare room—be'n there all night. Mercy me! Is—is it anybuddy y' know, Mis' Randall, so 't you're sure he's safe?

MRS. R. (*in door L.*). Oh, yes—somebody I know—well. Some one I have known a long time and longed to see—some one——

(*Exit MRS. R., at L., with tray. IVY stands a moment looking after her, in dumb amazement, then starts R., but pauses as SOPHIA ASH appears in door c. and knocks.*)

IVY. Oh, 's that you, Miss Ash?

(*Enter SOPHIA, door c.*)

SOPHIA. Ain't there anybuddy here, Ivy? I want t' see Mis' Randall. I hurried all the way over in the hot sun, b'cause I've got somethin' important to tell her. I'm jest about melted, but I couldn't get here soon enough, with what's on my mind.

(*Sits, L. c., takes paper or fan from table, or uses fan which she carries, fanning herself.*)

IVY. I s'pose it's another one o' them visions, 'r whatever you call 'em. Y' goin' t' have another fit here 'n our sett'n'-room? If y' be, I'll be goin'.

SOPHIA. Oh, you don't know what you're talkin' about. (*Sits L.*) What d' you know about the other world 'n' communications, 'n' spirit-messages, and such? It's beyond your grasp. But you ain't the only one. What I endure 's enough t' try the patience of a Mrs. Job. There's that Hezekiah Wilkins. He never gives me a minute's peace. Taggin' me around, askin' 'f I've had any more spirits tell me I ought t' b'come Mrs. Wilkins number three. The idee! That old fossil! If I wanted a man, I'd get a hull one, not a mere remnant.

(*IVY, up c., looks off to L.*)

IVY. Here he comes now. Guess he's still on the trail.

SOPHIA (*rising, going up and looking off*). I declare, so 'tis. Follered me. I thought I'd dodged him. If that man's p'posed t' me once he has fifty times, 'n' it don't seem t' do no good t' refuse him. He jest won't take "No" for an answer.

IVY. Well, 'tain't every girl 't has fifty pr'posals.

SOPHIA (*simpering a bit*). N-no, of course not. But, then, I d' know's it's s' much, after all, bein' they're all from the same man. Here he comes. Guess I'll go 'n the other room, 'n' mebbe he'll go away. Don't you tell him I'm here.

(*She pretends to go, but lingers L., so that HEZEKIAH sees her, as he enters door C. from L. She pauses as he calls to her.*)

HEZEKIAH. Oh, you here, Sophi'? Afternoon.

SOPHIA. Jes' 's if you didn't know. You can't fool me, Hezekiah Wilkins. You saw me the hull time.

HEZEKIAH. Nothin' strange, is it, Sophi'? Don't see nothin' 'r nobuddy else, when you're 'round. Be'n tellin' y' that for the last eight 'r ten year, ain't I?

SOPHIA. Yes, 'n' I should think you'd 'a' made up your mind by this time that it ain't no use. I should think at your age, 'n' had two wives already, you'd have some sense.

HEZEKIAH. That's so. Mebbe 'f I had, I wouldn't want y'.

SOPHIA. Oh, indeed! Well, thank goodness I've got sense enough not t' take y', anyway.

HEZEKIAH. Now, Sophi', I didn't mean nothin'. You know you're the only woman in the world f'r me —

(*He goes to her, tries to pacify her, about to put arm about her; she gets away from him, though, with all her contrariness, still seeming to encourage him. IVY has gone to L. and keeps cautiously looking off.*)

FOR THE OLD FLAG

SOPHIA. Behave yourself, Hezekiah Wilkins! I'm astonished at your actions, after all the times I've told you —— (*Noticing IVY.*) Who you looking for, Ivy? What is it?

IVY. Nothin'. I was jest—I was thinkin' I'd go 'n' pick some cucumbers for supper, 'n' ——

SOPHIA. Land, they ain't no cucumbers in there, is they?

IVY. No, of course not. I—I was goin' in the garden. (*Up in door c.*) I'll go 'n' pick some.

(*Exit through door c. to R. SOPHIA is c., HEZEKIAH R. c.*)

SOPHIA. Don't she act funny? They's somethin' strange goin' on here. Did you notice anything last night, Hezekiah?

HEZEKIAH. I d' know's I did—'nless y' mean that "trance" o' yours. Wish you'd give 'em up, Sophi'. They make you ridic'lous.

SOPHIA. Oh, they do, do they? Well, I couldn't give 'em up if I tried. They come to me. As I was sayin', didn't you notice how queer Mis' Randall acted? She didn't come in to supper for ten or fifteen minutes after we'd started eatin', 'n' then she acted so strange-like. But I laid it to the message I'd give her. I sort o' didn't wonder it upset her.

HEZEKIAH. Oh! had a "message" for her, did y'? From the spirits?

SOPHIA. From the spirit-world. Quite direct. It was all perfectly clear.

HEZEKIAH. From that Injun gal?

SOPHIA. Yes—from my control, Prairie Flower.

HEZEKIAH. Pretty thing t' be controlled by—a Injun spook! What you need t' control y' is a husband, Sophi'.

SOPHIA. Oh, indeed! I'd like t' see the one that could do it!

HEZEKIAH (*straightening up, pompously*). Behold!

SOPHIA. Good land, an old broken-down, wizened-up

left-over like you! Looks more like I'd have you t' take care of.

HEZEKIAH. Wal, that'd suit me, Sophi'!

SOPHIA. I don't doubt it. But it wouldn't suit me, not a little bit. For the land's sake, think of something else. I'm wonderin' about Mis' Randall. Jessie noticed it, too, and spoke to me afterward. She said her mother acted as if she'd seen a ghost, 'n' I've b'en worryin' for fear I'd upset her. Then I got another message last night, in the middle of the night—direct from Prairie Flower—to come over here to-day and await developments. I think something's going t' happen.

HEZEKIAH. Mebbe they is, Sophi', mebbe they is. Mebbe you're goin' t' say "Yes."

SOPHIA. Huh! Mebbe I ain't, any such thing. (*Going up.*) I'm goin' on to the post-office, 'n' stop on my way back. I've got t' see Mis' Randall, but they's no use wastin' time.

HEZEKIAH. Want comp'ny, Sophi'? I've got t' go to the post-office, too.

SOPHIA (*in door c.; he c.*). No, I don't. (*About to go, then turning back.*) But, of course, if you want t' go to the post-office, it ain't none o' my business. I couldn't stop y'.

HEZEKIAH (*going up, with alacrity*). Guess that's so. Thanks f'r the hint.

SOPHIA. Hint! The idee! I guess when I hint t' you, Hezekiah Wilkins —

(*Exit through door c. to R. He follows her off, chuckling to himself. There is a slight pause, then JESSIE and RODNEY enter door from L. c. They look off to R., after HEZEKIAH and SOPHIA.*)

JESSIE. There go Hezekiah Wilkins and Sophia Ash. He's been courting her for the last ten years or more, and she is still holding him off.

(*They enter, come down R.*)

RODNEY. Well, there's nothing like persistency.

“Faint heart never won,” you know. Perhaps he may still win her.

JESSIE. Perhaps. He would, I think, if he would only let her do part of the courting. She feels too sure of him. Once she thought she was going to lose him——

RODNEY. Oh, that’s the idea! But it doesn’t always work, does it? Circumstances alter cases, you know, and I’m quite sure I wouldn’t want to try such tactics with—well, with the girl I am anxious to win. She isn’t that kind.

JESSIE. But I wasn’t thinking of you.

RODNEY. No, That’s just it. And I want you to. The way I think of you. Won’t you—Jessie?

(He is close to her; attempts to take her hand. She draws away.)

JESSIE. No—don’t. I—I can’t let you do that.

RODNEY. But why? Why shouldn’t you let me tell you I—I love you? Surely, it’s every man’s privilege to tell his love and every girl’s privilege to listen.

JESSIE. No, no—I——

RODNEY. You know how I feel toward you. You must know. I have been here two summers now, and you cannot have failed to see that I love you—that I want you—and——

JESSIE. Wait, Mr. Hunt——

RODNEY. “Mister”——

JESSIE. Well—Rodney. I—no, of course I can’t say that I haven’t noticed—that I have never thought of all this. But I have tried not to take it too seriously, because—because I felt—I know—that you mustn’t tell me, and I must not listen.

RODNEY. But why—why——?

JESSIE. You know—you must know. My world is not the same as yours. I am only a country girl—oh, yes, I am—nothing more. Of course, I don’t pretend to think I am not just as good, perhaps, as some of those who have had more advantages and

seen more of the world than I have. And I don't say you don't think I am as good as they. But you lead a different life. Your folks are—well, what would they think of me ——?

RODNEY. Think? Why, that you are the sweetest little girl in the world—and that I was the luckiest man there is in all that world, if I could win you. Oh, I know what you mean. You are afraid of me—afraid to trust me. You think I wouldn't keep on loving you—that I would change, and ——

JESSIE. No, no, it isn't that—not altogether. It is partly that, I'll admit, but—there is something else—more—oh, much more. Shall I tell you?

RODNEY. To be sure. I want to hear it.

JESSIE. Very well. You ought to be told. I guess you have been. But now I will tell you. You are nothing but a rich man's son—an idler—of no use—no good to—to any one—to your country!

RODNEY. Oh, you mean—(*turning away*) I—see.

JESSIE. I hope you do. I want you to see. I have no use for a young man now, one that is strong and able, who wears any suit but his country's uniform.

RODNEY. I—I thought that had something to do with it.

JESSIE. Something to do with it? It has everything. Now you are to me nothing but a young man who is needed by his country, but who shuns that need and hangs back. A "slacker." Yes, that's what you are. Do you think I could listen to you—let you tell me you "love" me—and not tell you how I feel? Why, I should think I was a traitor too, if I did.

RODNEY. "Traitor." I must say, you are putting it pretty strong. I guess if that's the way you feel, I might as well be going.

JESSIE. Yes, I guess so. Oh, Mr. Hunt—Rodney—you're not going to be a "slacker"! Tell me you are not.

(*He has gone part way up c. She is down r. c.*)

There is a pause. He goes up, stands in door c., looking off. Turns, comes down.)

RODNEY. I will tell you that there is not another person in this world I would let talk to me as you have done. You have called me a coward—a “traitor.” Well, I suppose that’s what you think I am. But you don’t understand. The truth is, I don’t want to go to war. I don’t believe in it. Oh, I suppose you will despise me worse than ever. I don’t call it cowardice or treason, or anything like that. I just don’t feel, yet, that we ought to be in this war—nor that, even if we are, I ought to go into it. There! Now tell me you hate me—that I must go and never see you again. Just because I have confessed to you—told you the truth.

JESSIE. The truth. That makes it all the worse, because you expect me to believe that it is the truth. But I hope you will come to your senses yet—that you will change your mind. But until you do—yes, you might as well go. I don’t think I care to see you again until I can respect you, at least.

RODNEY (*closer to her*). Don’t you think you are putting it pretty strong? Even you may go a little too far, you know.

JESSIE (*facing him boldly*). No, I can’t. I can’t go too far when it comes to telling a slacker and a coward what I think of him—and I begin to think that’s what I’m talking to now.

RODNEY. And I begin to think you are just talking for effect —

JESSIE. Then let me tell you that I hope it has the effect I mean it to have. My brother is a soldier, and —

RODNEY. Yes, but not from choice. He wouldn’t be wearing that uniform if he had his way about it.

JESSIE. You dare!—you dare call my brother a coward? Oh, now I do despise you—I do, I do! Go! Go away from here—from me—I don’t want to see you again, ever! I wish I never had seen you!

(She is in a fury of grief and anger. He is showing amazement and some anger, but is beginning to be sorry for what he has said. Would appease her, but she flares at him, and he goes up, just as PHILIP enters at door C. from R., putting out his arms and stopping RODNEY, who looks at him surprised, somewhat sheepishly.)

PHILIP. Why, why, what's all this? What's the matter? Are you two quarreling?

RODNEY. I have nothing to say except that I—I'm sorry, and I'm going.

(He tries to go, but PHILIP detains him.)

PHILIP. Wait. I want to get at this. What's it all about?

RODNEY. Nothing. Only we—we can't agree, that's all, and your sister told me to leave her, that she doesn't want to have anything more to do with me, and that—well, I'll let her explain. I'm sorry, Miss Randall, if I have offended you. Perhaps some day you will think better of me.

(He bows to her, with cold politeness and exits at door C. to L. PHILIP looks after him, in amazement, then comes down to JESSIE, who is R. C., standing with her back to him, between anger and tears.)

PHILIP. Well, well, I guess something is up, and no mistake. Come, now—'fess up. What's it all about?

JESSIE. Oh, it's enough. He said he doesn't feel that it's his duty to fight, and—I called him a coward, and—and told him I never want to see him again and —

PHILIP. And—and—a lot of stuff like that. You shouldn't have taken him quite so seriously, Jessie. Rod is no coward; it's the way he's been raised, that's all. Lived in luxury all his life, with a dotting mother and everything he wanted. You can't expect a fellow like that to be very keen about

wearing a uniform and putting up with what he'd have to.

JESSIE. Indeed! How much better is he than you, I should like to know? I agree with Mr. Wilkins about him. He's the kind that could be spared, instead of the real men that don't wait till they are compelled to go. I guess you wouldn't stick up for him quite so fast if you knew what he said about you.

PHILIP. Said I wasn't crazy about going myself, I suppose? Oh, he's said the same to me, and I guess maybe it's the truth—in a way. (*She shows signs of disapproval.*) There, there, now, little one, don't explode. I'm going, all right. Isn't that enough for you?

JESSIE. No, it isn't—not if you don't want to go, and feel it's a privilege. But I know you do, Phil. You're only trying to tease me. I couldn't bear to think you are not a real, true soldier at heart.

PHILIP (*putting an arm about her*). Well, then you just think I'm everything you want me to be, little sister, and I'll try to live up to it. And don't feel so put out about Rodney, either. He'll come out all right. He hasn't waked up yet, that's all. There, now do you feel better?

JESSIE. Y-yes, I guess so.

(*MRS. R. enters L., with tray, unnoticed by them. She quickly exits again, unseen, and at the same moment LUCY GARRETT appears at door C. from L.*)

LUCY. Oh, there you are—here, rather. Excuse me for not knocking——

PHILIP. Sure. "Don't knock." Had enough of that around here already.

LUCY. Why, what——

JESSIE. Don't mind him, Lucy. He's only teasing. Come in.

PHILIP. Yes. Take off your hat and stay a while. Stay forever.

LUCY. Thanks, but I have a home of my own. Well, and how's the handsome soldier boy to-day?

(Comes down c.)

PHILIP. Meaning—this one?

LUCY. Why, certainly. You're the only one around here, aren't you?

PHILIP. M'm—yes, the only soldier boy, I guess. But I'm not quite sure I answer your description——

JESSIE. Oh, stop fishing. Don't you humor him, Lucy. He's too stuck up for anything already. You might think he was a general.

PHILIP. General what? Not nuisance, I hope?

JESSIE. Sometimes you try hard enough to be. But the uniform saves you.

PHILIP. "'Neath the folds of the Stars and Stripes!"

LUCY. I hope they protect you from worse things than being a nuisance, Phil. How long are you staying here?

PHILIP. I have to get back to the camp soon—in half an hour or so. Can't even stay to supper. But you're going to stay, aren't you, Lucy?

LUCY. What—again? After last night? You must think your mother wants me for a boarder. No, thank you. I only ran over to see Jessie a minute.

PHILIP. Cruel one. Where do I come in?

LUCY. Why, you may come in for this sweater, if I ever get it done.

(*She has knitting-bag, which she now opens, taking out knitting, which has grown several rows since first act.*)

JESSIE. Oh, is that what it is, Lucy?

LUCY. Not is—going to be, I hope. At least, I've decided that's what I've started out to make. Let's see, Phil. Stand still. (*She measures length of knitting on his back.*) My, what shoulders you have! There's a lot to do yet!

JESSIE. Why, I think you're getting along real well.

PHILIP. Let's see. (*Examines knitting.*) Why don't you make a pair of socks of it? 'Twouldn't take so long. Save yarn, too.

FOR THE OLD FLAG

JESSIE. Aren't you ashamed of yourself, Phil Randall, after her saying it's for you? Come on, Lucy. Don't pay any attention to him.

(They have been well down c. JESSIE now goes up, motioning LUCY to follow her.)

PHILIP. Where you going?

JESSIE. Oh, just out in the yard. Come on, Lucy.

PHILIP. Can't I come too?

JESSIE. No, you can't. We have something to talk over.

PHILIP. Not over an hour or two, I hope. I can't wait.

(JESSIE and LUCY go up; he follows. Exit JESSIE at door c. to l. LUCY lingers in door c.)

LUCY. We won't be long. Mr. Wilkins has had us put in the committee for the parade and all, and we have to make plans.

PHILIP. But you might let me help. *(LUCY is about to go out, but he goes up and detains her.)* Lucy—aren't you going to change your mind? You didn't mean what you said?

LUCY. Yes, I did. I meant it—every word of it. *(He has hold of her hand or arm. She releases herself from him.)* Don't, Phil.

PHILIP. But, Lucy—

LUCY. No. It's no use.

(Exit LUCY hurriedly, at door c. to l. He stands looking after her, with a disappointed, then an angry expression. After a pause clinches his fist, with set teeth, showing rage. Walks a few steps down c., then turns and goes up rapidly, and at door c. collides with OLIVER, who enters from l., carrying two or three packages.)

OLIVER *(stepping quickly to one side, saluting)*. Hi! Make way for the U. S. Army. What'd y' take me for—Germans?

PHILIP. Oh, go to—thunder!

(Exit PHILIP, door C. to R., glancing off to L., angrily.
OLIVER goes up, looks after him, then to L.)

OLIVER. Phew! Hope he keeps up that gait when he gets t' the real war. Looks like he could kill the Kaiser 'n' a hundred Germans 's easy's nothin'. (Goes to door R. Calls.) Hey! Anybuddy there? Mis' Randall—Ivy—here's y' groc'ries!

(Enter IVY, door C. from R., with several cucumbers, or something to resemble them, in her apron.)

IVY. What's all y'r 'xcitement?

OLIVER. Oh, there you be! Here's the things you sent f'r.

IVY. Well, y' needn't tear the house down a-deliverin' 'em. Take 'em in the kitchen.

(She has come down L.; he crosses to her.)

OLIVER. Yes, little Ivy-vine. Come along 'n' cling.

IVY (slapping him). Oh, hush up, with that old chestnut! Can't you think of a new one?

OLIVER. Sure. "You be my poison Ivy 'n' I'll be your antidote!"

IVY. Nanny-goat? I guess you'd make a good one. Go on. Take them things in there!

OLIVER. Oh, I'm a-goin'.

(She runs after him; he exits quickly R., looking back. She is about to follow him, but pauses up C. as MRS. R. enters L., with tray.)

MRS. R. Ivy.

IVY. Yes, Mis' Randall.

MRS. R. Take this tray, please.

IVY (takes tray, looks under napkin, sees empty dishes). Oh, Mis' Randall, who is it?

MRS. R. Never mind, now. You will know soon. But for the present, remember what I told you.

FOR THE OLD FLAG

IVY (R.). Yes, Mis' Randall, but I—I'm jest 'dyin' t' know. I can't imagine——

MRS. R. Well, don't try. You'll know before long.

IVY. In the spare room! My!—I wonder who 'tis.

(*Exit R., looking at dishes under napkin. MRS. R. stands a moment, looks to L., with a tender, but sad, expression. Clasps hands, crosses to L., looking off, shaking head slowly, then bowing it, with an expression denoting a mingling of smiles and tears. Murmurs softly.*)

MRS. R. My boy! My poor, poor boy! My little Tom——

(*SOPHIA ASH appears in door c., from R. Stands for a moment regarding MRS. R. in silence, then speaks softly.*)

SOPHIA. Mis' Randall.

MRS. R. (L. c., *turning—startled*). Oh!—that you, Sophia? I—I didn't hear you.

SOPHIA (*up c.*). No, I noticed you didn't. You seemed lost. You was talkin' to y'rself.

(*Comes down R.*)

MRS. R. Was I? Oh, I guess I often do that. It's a sort of a habit. I can't seem to break myself of it. Won't you sit down, Sophia? (*Comes down R.*)

SOPHIA. Well, mebbe I will, jest for a few minutes. I'm pretty well het up, and some excited.

MRS. R. Excited, Sophia? What about?

SOPHIA. Oh, several things. Hezekiah Wilkins, for one.

MRS. R. Hezekiah? Oh, I should think you'd be used to him by this time.

SOPHIA. Used to him? Yes, I s'pose a person can get used t' anything in time—like a bunion, for instance—but I declare if I can get used t' Hezekiah Wilkins enough not t' notice him.

FOR THE OLD FLAG

(*She sits down R., fanning herself with newspaper in a wrapper which she has just procured from the post-office.*)

MRS. R. That's just it, Sophia. (*Sits R. c.*)

SOPHIA. Just what?

MRS. R. Why, there's a reason for it. If it meant nothing to you, you wouldn't notice him.

SOPHIA. That's jest what it does mean—nothin'. The idee—Hezekiah Wilkins, that old fossil with one leg 's good 's in the grave.

MRS. R. Yes, but a soldier's leg and a soldier's grave, Sophia. Think of that. Hezekiah is a good man and a soldier. You know how long he's been courting you; and he never gives up hope.

SOPHIA. Mis' Randall! Do you think I'd ever take Hezekiah Wilkins?

MRS. R. Why, yes, Sophia. Why not?

SOPHIA. Land! You must think I want to start a soldiers' home.

MRS. R. Well, why not? You've got a good home to take him to, and he has a nice pension to do his share with. Hasn't "Prairie Flower" ever revealed him to you, Sophia?

SOPHIA. Huh! I guess Prairie Flower's got bigger things to reveal 'n Hezekiah Wilkins. That's what I wanted to see you about, Mis' Randall. I've got something to communicate. (*Mysteriously.*)

MRS. R. Oh, Sophia! Another message?

SOPHIA. Yes. Real definite this time. (*Looking about.*) They ain't nobuddy listenin', is they?

MRS. R. (*she is still standing, now goes up, looks about, then comes back to c.*). No. Jessie and Lucy Garrett are out there, but they can't hear.

SOPHIA. And Phil?

MRS. R. He isn't around anywhere just now. If you really must tell me something, you are quite safe. Nobody will hear.

SOPHIA. All right. Set down, Mis' Randall. Pull your chair up close. (*MRS. R. puts chair near SOPHIA, sits.*) You know what I told you yes-

terday when I was here—about what Prairie Flower revealed to me?

MRS. R. Yes. You said she showed you—iron bars—gates opening—and—and some one coming out——

SOPHIA. And do you know who that somebuddy was? Oh, Mis' Randall, don't you know?

MRS. R. Do you know, Sophia?

SOPHIA. Yes, I—know. I saw him.

MRS. R. (*rising, excitedly*). Saw him? In one of your—trances, do you mean?

SOPHIA (*also standing*). Partly. That way first. That is—it came to me, in a way—so that I sort o' knew what it meant, and then—I saw—with my own eyes. I saw him—and knew him.

MRS. R. When?

SOPHIA. Why, it was yesterday—jest before I come over here. On the way over. I was comin' along, and he dodged back, sort of, b'hind some bushes, up there on the corner, by Garretts' place. I jest caught a glimpse of his face, but I knew him—leastwise I thought I did. But I didn't jest sense it, then. I seemed t' kind o' think it was a vision-like—'t mebbe I was half in a trance, and—I thought I hadn't better tell you, too plain. Jest give you a warnin'—as if it had come to me, from Prairie Flower, y' know. Jest enough so 't you'd be kind of prepared, in case it was him, really, 'n' he should come in on y'. I was afeared mebbe, if it was too sudd'n, it might be too much for y'. I meant well, Mis' Randall.

MRS. R. I know you did, Sophia. I suppose it was kind of you, too. I'm sure you meant it to be. But it wasn't necessary. I have been watching, waiting, never giving up hope that he would come. I have prayed—prayed and believed—that I wouldn't have to wait three years more. And oh, Sophia—Sophia, my prayer has been answered.

SOPHIA (*grasping her arm*). Mis' Randall! It was him? He's here?

MRS. R. Yes, Sophia. He came last night, while you

were all eating supper. I put him up in the spare room. He is there now—sick; so sick and weak, but free—free, Sophia! My boy, my Tom, is free and home again, here with me. Just in time to take Phil's place, now that he's going away. Oh, Sophia, isn't it wonderful?

SOPHIA. Wonderful? Yes, it is. How'd he get away so soon? I thought it was three hull years yet —

MRS. R. He was pardoned, as I had believed he would be. But nobody knows that he is here, nobody but you and me, Sophia, and you mustn't tell just yet. Please wait. Just till to-night. Then I don't care who knows. I want everybody to know. After I have told Phil and Jessie, and he has seen them—then let the whole world know. He is free—innocent, even if the shadow of that awful prison, those terrible three years still clings to him. But he is innocent—I know it—I always knew it—and no matter what anybody else thinks, I shall always believe and feel sure that he has had to suffer for what somebody else did.

SOPHIA. Somebody else. But who? Do you suspect—do you think —

MRS. R. No. That may never be known. But even if it isn't, I shall believe and know that it wasn't my Tom. (*Looks out door c.*) Somebody's coming. Remember what I said, Sophia. Not a word.

SOPHIA. All right, Mis' Randall. You can depend on me. (*Looks toward door c.*) Oh, it's Hezekiah come back. I might 'a' known he wouldn't be fur b'hind.

(*Enter HEZEKIAH, door c. from R. MRS. R. is up c., SOPHIA down R. c.*)

HEZEKIAH. Afternoon, Mis' Randall. Oh, that you, Sophi'?

SOPHIA. Of course it's me. Who'd y' think it was?

HEZEKIAH. Wal, I didn't know but it might be little "Prairie Flower." (*Chuckles.*)

SOPHIA. You think that's cute, don't y'? Wal, it ain't. It's irreverent, that's what it is—makin' fun o' sacred things.

HEZEKIAH. "Sacred!" Huh! Fail t' see what's sacred about 'n Injun gal, 'n' a dead one 't that.

SOPHIA. "Dead one." 'N' you didn't know but I was her! Thanks f'r the compliment—but I guess I ain't a dead one yet. Not quite.

(Going up c., pretending to be greatly injured.)

HEZEKIAH. Now, Sophi', you know I didn't mean nothin'. *(Following her.)* Can't you take a little joke?

SOPHIA. Joke! Wal, I don't call it a joke, 'f you do—makin' fun o' Prairie Flower, 'n' me too. Don't you follow me, Hezekiah Wilkins! I won't speak to y' 'f y' do. *(In door c.)* Good-afternoon, Mis' Randall. I'll remember what you said. You c'n trust me. *(About to go out.)*

HEZEKIAH *(up by her, pleadingly)*. Now, Sophi'—don't git mad. I didn't mean it, hope t' die I didn't. Can't you take the word of an old soldier?

SOPHIA. No, I can't—not when he's an old reprobate, too! *(Just going out, she turns, sees him close behind her; motions him back with a commanding gesture.)* Stay! I'm done with you—forever! Do y' hear?—forever!

(Exit SOPHIA, haughtily, door c. to L. HEZEKIAH looks after her, dejectedly. MRS. R. is at L. c.)

HEZEKIAH. Oh, Mis' Randall, do y' think she means it?

MRS. R. No, of course I don't. She's just pretending, to make you all the more anxious. She'll come around all right.

HEZEKIAH *(coming down to c.)*. Do y' think so, Mis' Randall—honest?

MRS. R. Why, of course I do. I know women and I know—her. You are taking the wrong tactics, Hezekiah. If you were a little more hang-offish,

so to speak, you'd soon see that I'm right. You're too anxious, and she likes to keep you dangling.

HEZEKIAH. Mebbe that's so.

MRS. R. I'm sure it's so. Just you try leavin' her alone for a while—pretend there's somebody else —

HEZEKIAH. But they ain't. (*Goes up c.*)

MRS. R. Well, you can pretend there is, can't you? "All's fair in love and war," you know, and havin' been through a war, and had two wives already, you ought to know a little bit about love too, it seems to me.

HEZEKIAH. That's right. Guess I had. I vum, I b'lieve you're right, Mis' Randall. 'Ll be gum-swizzled 'f I don't try it, too. Much obleeged for th' hint.

(*OLIVER runs in R., followed by IVY, who is chasing him, striking at him with broom. He runs rapidly up and into HEZEKIAH, who turns upon him.*)

OLIVER. Oh, 'xcuse me, Mr. Wilkins. Didn't see y'.

HEZEKIAH. Wal, you'd better look where y're goin'.

(*IVY about to hit OLIVER again with broom, hits HEZEKIAH instead.*) Hey, there, what's all this?

MRS. R. Ivy! What do you mean by such actions? Stop it this minute.

IVY. I don't care. He's the boldest thing! Tried t' kiss me.

OLIVER. Tried t'? Did!

IVY. Yes, 'n' I'll pay you back for it, too.

OLIVER. All right. I'm ready. Put it right there.

(*Offering his pursed-up lips. She slaps him.*)
Ouch!

HEZEKIAH (*between them*). Here, here, that'll do. (*Taking OLIVER by ear.*) Now you 'pologize, young man.

OLIVER. What f'r? Ain't done nothin' I'm sorry f'r.

HEZEKIAH. Stole a kiss fr'm her, didn't y'?

OLIVER. Stole it nothin'. Jest borrowed it. Willin' t' put it back right where I got it from.

IVY. Well, I guess you won't.

FOR THE OLD FLAG

(*Strikes at him. HEZEKIAH shields him.*)

HEZEKIAH. Talk about the Germans 'n' th' Alleys. Guess we got war right here. Eh, Mis' Randall?

MRS. R. I'm astonished. Ivy, you go straight back to that kitchen. And you'd better go back to the store, Oliver Moon. And the next time I order groceries you needn't bother to take them in where she is. You can leave them right here.

IVY. Huh! Needn't think I'm goin' t' lug 'em the rest of the way.

MRS. R. That will do. Do as I told you.

IVY. Yes, ma'am. (*Going to door R.*) But I don't care. I know a secret, 'n' if you ain't careful I'll tell. So there!

(*Exits R., impudently.*)

HEZEKIAH. Guess you've kind o' sp'iled her, Mis' Randall.

OLIVER. Naw! She ain't sp'iled. Fresh as ever—'n' sweet, too. Yum-yum!

(*Drawing finger across lips. IVY looks in R. He sees her; she makes face at him. He laughs, throws her a kiss.*)

HEZEKIAH. Hey, there, what's all this?

MRS. R. Ivy! What did I tell you?

(*IVY disappears; exit OLIVER, laughing mischievously, as HEZEKIAH good-naturedly cuffs him. HEZEKIAH pauses at door C.*)

HEZEKIAH. See? 'T's jest the same, young, middle-aged 'r old. Takes two t' be lovers 'n' two t' fight. Jest th' same story, right down sence Adam 'n' Eve. Guess you're right about me 'n' Sophi', too, Mis' Randall. Much obleeged agin. Goin' t' try your p'rscription. 'F it works 'll let y' know. Hope it does. Hope it does.

MRS. R. And I think it will, Hezekiah. I'm quite sure it will. You try it.

HEZEKIAH. All right, Mis' Randall, I will. 'N' if at fust I don't succeed, I'll try it agin 'n' agin. I'll win 'er yet, 'f I have t' call out th' hull United States m'litia 'n' the G. A. R. t' do it.

(Exit, door c. and to L. MRS. R., in door c., pauses, looks after him a moment, then comes part way down c., looks about, and exit L. She has just disappeared when JESSIE and LUCY enter door c. from L. They come down.)

JESSIE. I wish you didn't feel that way about Phil, Lucy. I'm sure you wrong him.

LUCY. Perhaps I do. But I can't help it. I have told him and told him, times enough, that I—that—oh, you know what I mean, Jessie. Surely you don't think I ought to go back on—on Tom, just because of—of what happened?

JESSIE. No, of course I don't. How could you think such a thing?

LUCY. Oh, I didn't, but—well, you take Phil's part, and—and sometimes I think everybody has gone back on Tom except his mother and me. I never believed him a—a thief, and I never would. No, not if all the world told me so.

JESSIE. Lucy! You know I don't either. No, no, it isn't that. I wouldn't have you go back on Tom. I admire you for being so true to him. But I'm afraid it's no use. There's your father, you know, Tom's employer, who had him sent to prison, and who believes him guilty, and who has forbidden you even to speak of Tom, and—oh, Lucy, dear, you see how hopeless it all is.

LUCY. No, it is not hopeless. When Tom comes back, if he still wants me, I want him too—in spite of my father—in spite of everything.

JESSIE. Lucy, do you mean it? Could you do that?

LUCY. Of course I could—and will. I should hate and despise myself, as much as I should expect him to despise me—or think he ought to—if I did otherwise. But we won't talk any more about it

now. I'm going before Phil comes back. I don't want to see him again.

JESSIE. Please don't feel that way, Lucy. He is going away—across the ocean—to fight for his country. You can't let him go feeling that you are mad at him—that you are not his friend. Just think what that would mean to him.

LUCY. I am his friend. Of course I am. But—I want him to know—to understand——

(She has gone up, is in door c., about to go out; looks off R., draws back.)

JESSIE. What is it?

LUCY. It's Phil. He's coming back. I'll have to speak to him. Perhaps it is just as well. I'll tell him once more and make him understand.

JESSIE. But kindly, Lucy. Be careful. Remember——

LUCY. Oh, yes, I'll remember that he is a soldier—that he is going to war, and—I'll remember some one else too—some one and—some—thing.

JESSIE. Why, Lucy—what do you mean?

LUCY. Never mind. Please go, Jessie. I want to see Phil alone. Please do.

JESSIE. Why, yes, of course I will, if you want me to. Only—please—please be kind to him.

(LUCY nods head, smiling faintly. Exit JESSIE, R. LUCY comes part way down R. Enter PHILIP, door C. from R. Sees her, comes down C.)

PHILIP. Oh, you're still here? I thought you had gone.

LUCY. I was just going. I'll go now.

(Starts up c. He detains her.)

PHILIP. Wait. Just a minute. We might as well have it out, Lucy. You know how I feel, but you have chosen to misunderstand me, to say things that I am sure you can't mean. Don't you think you can reconsider?

LUCY. There's nothing to reconsider. I meant all that I said. Not unkindly, Phil, please believe that. I don't want you to go away feeling that I am not your friend —

PHILIP. Friend! That isn't enough. You cannot be my friend, Lucy, without being more than that to me. I want your word—your promise—that when I come back you will be my wife—that I may have that joy to look forward to, to sustain me, in all that I may have to face over there. Think what it would mean to me, Lucy, if I could know that you were waiting here for me—how much better I could fight, if it was for you as well as for—my country. Lucy—say you will! Oh, if you knew all it means to me—if you could only know —

(They are down c., she at his R. They do not see TOM, who, having bathed, combed his hair, etc., though wearing the same clothes, looks much better than at his first appearance, enters L. and stands there, looking at them. He is still very pale, agitated, and seems scarcely able to control himself, but does not as yet reveal his presence.)

LUCY. And what do you think it means to me? And to him—to that one, your own brother, whose rights you seem to forget?

PHILIP. Rights! The rights of a—convict!

LUCY. Stop! Don't you dare say a word against him in my presence. He may be a "convict," so far as wearing prison clothes and being confined behind iron bars is concerned. But that doesn't make him a thief. You ought to know that, Philip Randall. You ought to know that—and you do know it!

PHILIP. What do you mean? It isn't the first time you've made that insinuation, and now you've got to explain. Tell me. You've got to tell me.

LUCY. There's nothing for me to tell. It is you who should tell, who ought to have told—long ago —

PHILIP. Tell what?

LUCY. The—truth!

PHILIP. Do you mean to say that I—lied? Do you? Do you dare say that? *(He seems almost to threaten her, advancing toward her, and as she draws away from him, facing L., she sees TOM, who has advanced, with livid face, his eyes staring, looking faint and leaning on table L. C. PHILIP has his back turned toward L. and does not see TOM. LUCY gives a suppressed scream, almost overcome as she sees TOM and stares at him, at first seeming not to believe her senses. PHILIP pauses, amazed at her expression.)* Why, Lucy, what is it? What —

(He turns; sees TOM, becomes speechless with surprise, in which there is something of fear, or dismay. TOM does not speak, but looks fixedly at PHILIP for a moment, then turns to LUCY, motioning her to leave them.)

LUCY. Tom—I—I can't believe it, Tom. Why, where—how —

TOM. Please go, Lucy. I want to speak to Phil —

LUCY. But, Tom, aren't you glad to see me? Won't you speak to me?

TOM. Glad? Oh, Lucy, if you only knew how glad! Why, it's like seeing the sunshine after years of darkness. And after what I just heard you say, it's worth all the world to see you again and to feel that you still believe in me. But I want you to go now, for a little while. Will you, Lucy?

LUCY. Yes, of course, Tom, if you want me to. But not till you have shaken hands with me. I can't wait for that.

(They are c., part way up; PHILIP, looking almost overcome, has withdrawn slightly to R. LUCY holds out her hand to TOM, looking straight into his eyes, with a tender, pleading expression. He falters an instant, still showing his weakness, then, almost in tears, grasps her hand.)

TOM. Lucy!

(*He holds her hand a moment, then releases it. She smiles at him encouragingly and exits by door c. to L. He stands looking after her, then turns and, with a change of expression, showing mingled anger, bitterness and determination, looks straight at PHILIP, who tries boldly to meet his gaze but is not able wholly to do so.*)

PHILIP (*down R.*). Well, Tom, so you are home? You don't wonder I'm a bit—a—surprised, do you? Isn't it rather sudden, or—unexpected?

TOM (*coming down c.*). I suppose it is, and none too welcome to you, either, if the truth were known. I don't flatter myself you are quite so glad to see me as Lucy Garrett appeared to be.

PHILIP. Why, of—of course I am. Only, you see, I had no idea—we weren't expecting you just yet, and—naturally it upsets me a little. You see, I thought——

TOM. I know. You thought I was safe behind those stone walls and those iron bars, where you were the means of placing me, and where you'd like to have me stay. But you thought wrong, for I'm not there now. I was there three years, though. Wasn't that long enough for an innocent man—one who was there instead of another, who ought to have been in his place?

(*PHILIP seems to avoid his brother, though showing that he is trying to disguise his real feelings and to appear at ease. TOM, however, is relentless in his gaze and his manner, so that PHILIP cannot altogether conceal his perturbation.*)

PHILIP. I don't know what you mean.

TOM. I think you do. If not, I can soon tell you. It was your testimony that sent me to that prison, wasn't it?

PHILIP. Well, if it was, it was because it was forced out of me. I was summoned as a witness. I had to tell what I knew.

TOM. Yes—what you “knew”—and a good deal more that you didn’t know.

PHILIP. What do you mean by that? Do you mean to insinuate——

TOM. I don’t mean to “insinuate” at all. I mean to speak my mind and to say what I think—yes, what I know now, though I didn’t then. (PHILIP makes a gesture of impatience, walks up, as if to go. TOM steps in his way, makes him remain.) No, you can’t go. You’ve got to listen to what I have to say—what I’ve been weeks and months waiting and longing to have an opportunity to say to you. There’s no use going over it all, except for a few things that may refresh your memory.

PHILIP. Oh, it isn’t necessary. I haven’t forgotten.

TOM. So much the better. But perhaps I can tell you a thing or two you don’t know. You don’t know, for one thing, that during the three years I have been shut up there, suffering for something that I never did, I have thought and thought and thought, till things have become clear. You know I went back to the bank that night, about nine o’clock, because I found that I had in my pocket a letter containing a check for a large sum from a depositor, which I meant to put in the safe. So I went back to the bank. I had a perfect right to go in there, after hours. I had a key, and often went in, to work at the books, when I was behind, or to look after something. But that night I found the safe open and a lot of money gone—more than a thousand dollars. Naturally I was excited. I hardly knew what to do, but I suppose I did the worst thing possible—closed the safe and went out, thinking I’d wait till morning before I said anything about it. I knew afterward that I did a foolish thing, something that I couldn’t explain—especially when they found those bills, amounting to two hundred dollars, hidden in my room. And then when you—so reluctantly!—“let it out” that you were passing the bank and saw me come out, and I had no real explanation

as to why I didn't report the robbery at once, that night, except that I was so frightened and excited that I couldn't think and didn't know what I was doing, why—it all went against me and I was pronounced a—thief!

PHILIP. Well, I don't see as you have offered anything, as yet, even to suggest that the verdict wasn't a just one.

TOM. But I'm not through. Listen. Look—look here—look me straight in the face ——

(PHILIP has tried to ignore him, but now is compelled to face him, which he does, at first boldly.)

PHILIP. Well,—what?

TOM. Can you look me in the face and tell me—swear to me—that you know of no reason why that verdict was a wrong one?—that you honestly believe I took that money?

PHILIP. Oh, well, even if I didn't, I couldn't help what happened. I simply answered questions—told what I saw—and it went against you. It wasn't my fault. I tried to spare you—to keep from telling, but—they made me.

TOM. Oh, yes, I remember. You managed to act very much as if you were testifying unwillingly, and I was too crushed, too dazed, then, to see through you, to see what you were up to and to understand what I understand now. You were sacrificing me to save yourself.

PHILIP. What! You dare! You dare accuse me ——

TOM. Yes, to accuse you to your face and to tell others. It has all come to me. I am as sure as I am that I was three years in prison, that I was there innocent of any crime, and that I am now here talking to you, that you were the one who had been in the bank—that it was you who opened the safe and took that money—you, Philip Randall, you!

PHILIP. You're crazy. You must be, to imagine such a yarn and to think that anybody would believe it.

TOM. They shall believe it! I'll make them! And I'll have help in proving that what I say is true.

PHILIP (*doubly alarmed*). Help? Why, what do you mean? Who—who will—help you?

TOM. You will—you! You, yourself.

PHILIP (*relieved*). Ho! Now I know you're crazy. How could I help you? My story would be the same.

TOM. No, it would be an entirely different story this time. You wouldn't have it quite so much your way, for I would be a different man and I would have a few things to say—a few questions to suggest. Why were you near the bank that night? Where did you get all the money you had after that—to go to New York and to go with the set you went with? Ha! You see I have found out a few things, even shut up there behind prison walls. I have been out of there two months, and I haven't been idle.

PHILIP. Out—two months! Did you—escape?

TOM. No. It isn't easy to escape from Dannemora, and I wasn't fool enough even to attempt such a thing. No, I didn't escape, I was pardoned. Pardoned two months ago, and I have spent the time to good advantage, even if at last I have come home sick and penniless. But I have come home with a purpose, and nothing shall turn me from it. Do you know what that purpose is?

PHILIP. Why, no, Tom, unless—I suppose it is to live down the past and make a new start —

TOM. You're nowhere near guessing it. My purpose is different from that. It's to expose the guilty man, the one who sent me to prison, and to make him suffer as I have. Yes—no matter who that man is—even if he is my—own—brother!

PHILIP. Pooh! You're just talking. You have no proofs—you can't have.

TOM (*fixing PHILIP with his accusing gaze*). I have my will and you have your conscience—even if there was nothing more. (*PHILIP cowers, in spite of himself.*) Why, you show it—you show it

now! It's written in your face—all the proof that is necessary. You couldn't deny it—you couldn't!

PHILIP (*trying to recover himself*). Pshaw! Nobody would pay any attention to you.

TOM. Oh, yes, they will. I'll make them. I'll make them pay attention, and I'll make you tell the truth, in spite of yourself.

(*There is a pause. PHILIP has walked part way up c., where he stands as if in deep thought, his head bowed. TOM looks at him, waiting for him to speak. Finally PHILIP lifts his head, comes down, facing TOM.*)

PHILIP. Very well. Do it. Tell it all—your suspicions, what you think and what you know. But think, first, what it would mean. Think of our mother—of our country—of this uniform.

TOM. Yes, the uniform which you disgrace by wearing. Oh, I noticed it, but it means nothing to me when it is worn by a man like you.

PHILIP. Can you say that? Can you say that it means nothing, if I am willing to go to France, to try and prove that I am a man, not a coward, and that I will die, if need be, to do it? I mean it, Tom. Won't you give me a chance—for the sake of Mother—of Uncle Sam—for the flag? I want to make good, and you can help me. Won't you do it? It's up to you.

TOM. Pretty late, seems to me, after all I've been through because of you. What about that? Do you mean you own up to it—that you will confess?

PHILIP. I mean that I want to keep my uniform, to go to France—to fight and do my bit. Think what it would mean if I had to give up now. It would kill Mother—I guess it would kill me too, Tom. I should never live to bear it. After all, I'm your brother, even if I have done wrong—

TOM. "Brother!" There was a time when you for-

got that, I guess. It's a nice kind of brother you've been to me. And now—now, after I've spent three years in prison, for what you did; given up my good name and got it all to live down, if I ever can, you ask me to keep silent about it, to let them still think I am a thief. Don't you think it's a good deal to ask?

PHILIP. Yes, Tom, I do. But can you go? Can you wear this uniform in my place and go and fight for Uncle Sam—for France—for Liberty?

TOM (*cogitating, sadly*). No. N-no—I can't go. I'm not strong enough. I'm a wreck. But it was you made me so—don't forget that.

PHILIP. I don't forget, Tom—I never will forget. I promise you that. I swear that I will prove it to you, and that I will do the right thing. Only let me go now, and some day you will not be sorry. Will you do it, Tom—will you?

(PHILIP is near him, speaking with eager entreaty. TOM falters, seeming to ponder. The sacrifice is almost too much for him, but after a pause he looks at PHILIP, then turns his gaze to the flag. Finally raises his head bravely, with one hand on flag, looks straight at PHILIP.)

TOM. Yes. I'll do it. Go. Prove your manhood—fight for yourself and for me. I'll try to do my bit too, here at home. I will keep still and send you in my place. But see that you wear that uniform like a soldier and a man—or—I'll have my revenge yet.

(PHILIP seems scarcely able to believe what he hears. Is overcome; almost breaks down. Holds out his hand.)

PHILIP. Tom—my brother—you are more of a hero than I can ever be, even on the battle-field. And I promise you what you are doing shall not be in vain. (*As TOM refuses to take his hand.*) Won't you wish me luck, Tom?

FOR THE OLD FLAG

TOM. I wish you luck, yes—luck and success. But—don't say any more. I can't stand it. Just go—go!

PHILIP. But I can trust you—you promise?

TOM. Yes. I promise. Now go. (*He turns away from PHILIP. TOM is down L. PHILIP looks at him a moment, as if about to speak again, but instead goes R. C., takes his hat from table, goes up and exits at door C. to R., without looking back. TOM stands a moment in silence, his head bowed; then straightens up, with a brave look, his face brightened by lofty courage and determination. Shakes head slowly, as he glances L., as if thinking "Mother!" then takes up corner of flag, clasps it in both hands, looks down at it reverently.*) Yes, I can do it. I will. For you, Old Flag—for you!

CURTAIN

ACT III

SCENE.—*Same as before, an evening in the next February. The doors are closed, window curtains drawn, etc. MRS. R. sits by table, L., knitting on soldier's sweater. Up R. C. are seated IVY and OLIVER, busily engaged playing checkers. There is a pause after rise of curtain, IVY and OLIVER intently studying the board and MRS. R. earnestly working. Then IVY exclaims joyfully, as she finally makes a move.*

IVY. There! Now I got y'. Move! Go on, slow-poke! Don't y' see it's your move?

OLIVER (*calmly, with assurance*). Why, so 'tis—sure enough. All right. There—and there—and there! (*Jumps one of his "kings" several times, taking IVY's men and winning game.*) Now y' satisfied?

IVY. Wha—what y' doin'? I didn't see that.

OLIVER. No, o' course y' didn't; but I did. Beat y' agin. See?

IVY. Yes, I see 't you cheated.

OLIVER. Huh! Leave it to a girl t' squeal when she's beat. 'D ruther play with a feller, any time.

IVY. Oh, y' would? Well, then, play with 'em, Mr. Smarty. I don't care.

(*Jumps up, upsetting board and spilling checkers on floor.*)

MRS. R. (*looking up*). Dear me, children, if you can't play a game of checkers without ending up in a quarrel every time, I guess you'd better not play any more. I'm surprised at you.

IVY. Well, I don't care, Mis' Randall, he cheated. I didn't have t' move that way, 'n' he made me do it.

OLIVER. Made y'! 'F you was silly enough t' move jest where I wanted y' to, that was your fault. 'Tain't my fault 'f you don't know enough to look out for y'r own interest. That's where the game comes in.

IVY. Oh, 'tis, is it? I want t' know —

OLIVER. Sure 'tis. That's "st-st-rattlegem"—like they do in the war.

IVY. My! Ain't you smart? 'T's a wonder you don't go 'n' tell 'em how t' lick the Kaiser.

OLIVER. Goin' t', pretty soon. Soon's I git old enough.

IVY. Yes. You 'n' your "goin' t's." Huh! 'T's easy enough t' talk.

MRS. R. There now, that will do, you two. Ivy, did you light the fire in the front room, as I told you to?

IVY. Yes'm. Quite a while ago. 'T must be gett'n' real warm in there by this time.

MRS. R. Well, you pick up those checkers 'n' things, and then go and see.

OLIVER (*picking up checkers*). I'll pick 'em up, Mis' Randall.

MRS. R. Thank you, Oliver. That's the way I like to see you—acting the gentleman.

IVY (*who has gone to door L., snickering*). Who—him?

MRS. R. Yes—him. I wish you'd take pattern after him a little —

IVY. 'N' try t' be a "gentleman"?

MRS. R. No, of course not. A "lady," which I'm afraid you never will be, if you don't start in pretty soon. Now you go and see to that fire, and have it a good one, 'cause Lucy Garrett is coming to spend the night with Jessie, and they may want to have some music. Probably Tom will play on his violin and Lucy will sing. I hope so, 't any rate.

IVY. Yes, 'n' I might favor with a song too, 'f you urged me enough.

OLIVER. Ho! that would be a treat, that would.

(*She makes a face at him and exits L. He has placed checker-board, etc., on table or stand, up R. Now is C.*)

MRS. R. You can stay and hear them, if you wish, Oliver. You like music, I know.

OLIVER. You jest bet I do, Mis' Randall. Your Tom certainly can play that fiddle, and as for Lucy Garrett, she sings like a reg'lar op'ry.

MRS. R. Well, she ought to sing well. She took lessons in New York at two dollars a lesson, when she stayed there all that time with her mother's folks. She plays on the piano well, too, but of course, we only having an organ, she can't do so much when she's here. Her father bought her a beautiful upright. She always says she could make her own living giving music lessons, if it was necessary. But I guess it never will be, and her father with all his money.

OLIVER. No, I don't s'pose it will, unless he should turn her out, 'r somethin'.

MRS. R. Why, Oliver, what do you mean?

OLIVER. Nothin'. Only I hear the men talking, down 't the store sometimes, 'n' they say 'f she don't give up your Tom, her father's goin' t' throw her out. He don't know she ever sees him. I guess she wouldn't be over here t' stay with Jessie all night t'-night 'f her father wa'n't in New York f'r a week. If he finds it out when he comes home there'll be—the dickens t' pay.

MRS. R. Oliver! I believe you're a regular gossip. Goodness, I didn't know men, and boys too, like you, talked that way about folks.

OLIVER. Oh, y' didn't? Well, y' ought t' work in our store a few nights, 'n' I guess you'd change y'r mind. Gossip? Huh! Why, some o' them men could give Sophia Ash and all her spirits 'n' things lessons. (*Going L.*) Guess I'll go in and see 'f I can help Ivy, Mis' Randall.

MRS. R. Yes, I guess you'd better. And see that you don't repeat any of that talk. It's terrible. I

wouldn't want Tom to hear it for anything. It's hard enough for him as it is, with all he has to bear.

OLIVER. Oh, I won't say anything. But I guess it wouldn't be much news t' him, 'f I did.

(Exit OLIVER, L. MRS. R., who has kept on knitting, now wipes eyes with end of sweater, almost weeping. There is a slight pause, then TOM enters, door C. He is well wrapped up in heavy overcoat, with cap pulled down, etc., and there is snow on his head and shoulders. He takes off cap, shaking it, then brushes snow from coat. MRS. R. does not notice him until he speaks.)

TOM. Why, Mother, what's the matter? Not crying again? Now, you know what you promised me.

MRS. R. Oh, Tom, is that you? I didn't hear you come in. Is it snowing?

TOM. Yes. It started just as I left the post-office. It's already getting quite deep. Looks like we're in for a real snow-storm.

(Takes off hat and coat, throwing them on chair.)

MRS. R. (hesitating, as if fearful to ask). Wasn't there any—letter—Tom?

TOM (going to her, standing by her, putting hand on her shoulder tenderly). No, dear. But don't worry. It takes a long time for a letter to come from France, you know —

MRS. R. I should say it did. We haven't heard a word from Phil for over two months.

TOM. I know, but that's no proof he hasn't written. Just think how uncertain the mails must be now, and—there, there, don't you fret. "No news is good news," you know.

MRS. R. Perhaps—sometimes. But not these times. With this terrible war going on, and my boy—my handsome, brave boy over there fighting—oh, I'm afraid he is sick, or—or — Oh, Tom, I can't bear it, I can't!

TOM (*his arm about her*). Mother! Is that the way to be brave? You know we promised each other. You said if I would be brave and make the best of—of things—you would, too.

(*He goes up R., as if unable to control himself. She rises, goes toward him, laying her knitting on table.*)

MRS. R. Tom! Forgive me. I forgot. It was very selfish of me. You are fighting a harder battle than any soldier over there in that awful war. You are a hero too——

TOM. Mother—don't! We weren't to speak of it, you know. (*Draws her down c.*)

MRS. R. But I must speak of it. I must tell you that I don't mean to be selfish, to think only of him and his danger and heroism, when you are here facing what you have to face. Oh, if we could only find out the truth—if we could prove your innocence——

TOM. Mother!

MRS. R. For you are innocent, Tom, I always knew it. Nothing could ever make me believe you took that money.

TOM (*now close to her, c.*). But somebody took it, Mother, and somebody had to be blamed for it. Appearances were against me and I have had to pay the penalty. It is all over now, so let us not take it up again.

MRS. R. Over! Over—and you still thought a thief and shunned by people who should know better, who do know better, only they are too uncharitable to say so. Tom, you never told me what you did—what you found out—those weeks after you left the—after you were freed—before you came home. Did you never find out anything—who else had been to the bank, or near it, that night, so that you had something to work on, to prove your own innocence? That first night when you came home you let it out that you had suspicions,

that you had found evidence—had proofs—then all of a sudden you kept still, you wouldn't tell me any more, and you never tried to find out. What was the reason, Tom? Why was it?

TOM. Mother, dear, there is nothing to tell. At first I was dazed—excited—I didn't know what I thought or said, and I imagined many things. Afterward I saw that it was no use, that everything was against me, and I gave it up. If it hadn't been for you, and Jessie, and—and her, Heaven bless her, I—I guess I would have given up.

MRS. R. Tom! She is coming here to-night—to stay all night with Jessie. I expect her any minute.

TOM. Who? You mean—Lucy is?

MRS. R. Yes. Her father's gone to New York for a week, and she's coming over to spend the night with Jessie. I suppose she hadn't ought to—probably it isn't right, and him telling her she mustn't—well, anyhow, she's coming. Jessie said she said she just would, anyway, and if her father didn't like it she didn't know as she cared much. I guess she's about made up her mind to take things into her own hands.

TOM. Lucy's a brick, Mother. There isn't another girl in the world like her. But I wouldn't let her do that—go against her father and—and take up with me, so long as things are as they are now. It wouldn't be right. I should be a coward to let her, and I won't.

MRS. R. I know, Tom. You're too good and noble. But it's hard. Oh, if you could prove your innocence. Isn't there any hope, Tom—none?

TOM. No, Mother, I'm afraid not. I've got to bear it. I promised, and —

MRS. R. Promised? Why, what do you mean?—"promised" who?

TOM. Why, nobody, I—I meant I promised myself I'd never let Lucy Garrett sacrifice herself for me, even if she was willing to. I hope I should never stoop to that.

MRS. R. Oh! Well, Lucy'd do it, I'm sure she would. She's that kind of girl, and she believes in you too, Tom—the same as I do.

TOM (*they are at c.; he puts an arm about her, tenderly*). Yes, and that's everything to me, Mother—you and Lucy. I can stand it, so long as I have that much. But, oh, it's hard not to be able to enlist, to go with the boys "Over There." They need me, Mother—they need every man who's able to go.

MRS. R. But Phil's there. We need you here. I can't give you both up—yet. I will, gladly—I mean willingly—when it comes to it. Even that—for my country. But I hope it won't be yet—not just yet.

(*IVY thrusts head in L., calling out suddenly.*)

IVY. Say, Mis' Randall, c'n Oliver 'n' me have some apples?

MRS. R. Yes, of course. But land, can't you wait? We're going to have apples and cider and cake, by and by.

IVY. We'd ruther have some apples now. Oliver would.

MRS. R. Oh, well, then—of course.

IVY (*who has entered—hurrying to R.*). All right. I'll git some.

(*Exit R., as JESSIE enters same door. She comes to R. C.; MRS. R. goes to table L.; TOM is C.*)

JESSIE. Oh, here you are. I didn't know you were back from the post-office, Tom. Wasn't there any letter?

TOM. No.

MRS. R. No, Jessie, not a word. Isn't it strange? I'm so afraid something has happened to Phil. We ought to have had a letter before this.

JESSIE. Well, it won't do any good to worry, that's certain. (*Goes up, lifts curtain, looks out.*)

Seems to me it's about time Lucy came. My, it's snowing real hard.

MRS. R. Yes, so Tom says. Do you think she can come over all right, alone?

JESSIE. Why, of course. It isn't far, and she's not afraid. But why don't you go after her, Tom?

TOM. Do you think I'd—better?

(He shows eagerness, but some hesitation.)

JESSIE. Sure. Don't you, Mother?

MRS. R. Why, yes, of course. I don't see why not. You might meet her.

TOM *(taking hat and overcoat, putting them on)*. All right, I will. I guess there won't be any crime in that. *(Up at door c.)* Besides, it's dark. Nobody will see us. But I don't care if they do—the whole world!

(Exit hurriedly, door c. MRS. R. is again seated L. of table, with knitting; JESSIE up by door c.)

MRS. R. Oh, Jessie, isn't it terrible? He loves Lucy and she loves him. But with this terrible thing hanging over him—and he vows and declares he'd never let Lucy go against her father for him. He says he couldn't be such a coward. He's a brave boy, Tom is—a hero.

JESSIE *(coming down to L. c.)*. Yes, I suppose he is. But I guess there's such a thing as overdoing it. Maybe he's a little too set on being a hero.

MRS. R. Why, Jessie, what do you mean?

JESSIE. Oh, I mean that sometimes I wish Tom had more spunk, and was a little more determined to stick up for himself and not mind so much what people say. Maybe if he'd act more like he didn't care so much, and face people as if he had some pride, they'd begin to think more of him.

MRS. R. Why, Jessie, how you talk! I'm surprised —

JESSIE. Well, I can't help it. Sometimes I think Tom has a reason—that he knows much more than he

lets on, and is shielding somebody. I must say, it doesn't look natural to me, the way he changed all of a sudden, and the way he acts——

MRS. R. (*rising, laying knitting on table*). Jessie—what do you mean—“shielding” somebody? How could he?—who—who could it be?

JESSIE. Have you never wondered—thought that perhaps there was something—more than we know——?

MRS. R. Of course I have. He hinted as much, and then—all of a sudden—— Oh, I don't know what to think. There's some mystery. Altogether, with thinking of Phil—'way over there—perhaps wounded, or dead—and then my other boy, here, despised and suffering—it seems as if it is more than I can bear.

(*Stamping of feet heard outside door c.*)

JESSIE. There, there, Mother, dear, don't. Somebody's coming. Perhaps it's——

(*Goes up, opens door, admits LUCY GARRETT and TOM, both with snow on shoulders. LUCY wears cloak, furs, etc. They enter, LUCY coming down, cordially greeted by MRS. R. and JESSIE. TOM has her small hand-bag, which he sets down, staying somewhat back.*)

LUCY. Well, here I am.

MRS. R. Yes, in a regular snow-storm.

LUCY. Oh, I don't mind. I just love it. Tom met me. It was real kind of him to come after me.

JESSIE. Yes, considerably after—you had started. (*They laugh.*) But he had to be sent, you know.

LUCY. Now, you're spoiling it——

TOM (*coming down, somewhat embarrassed*). You know better than that, don't you, Lucy? You believe, anyhow, that I wanted to come, only——

LUCY. Yes, Tom, of course I do. Don't you let this little sister of yours tease you.

MRS. R. I'll take your things, Lucy, and put them up in your room.

JESSIE. No, I'll take them. You're to sleep in the room next to mine, Lucy—you know, with the door between. (*Taking LUCY'S cloak, etc.*)

LUCY. Fine. But, here, I must have my knitting. Can't lose any time on that sweater, you know. It's in that bag, Tom.

(*TOM presents bag; she takes out partly finished sweater, with needles, wool, etc.*)

JESSIE. Yes, and I must get mine. We're all doing it, you know.

MRS. R. How many does this make, Lucy?

LUCY. Seven. I wish it were twenty-seven.

MRS. R. My! I think you've done wonders. And me, with only the second.

JESSIE (L.). And look at poor little me, still working on my first pair of socks. Oh, I'm some knitter—nit!

(*Exit, L. TOM is down c.; LUCY L. c.; MRS. R., L. of table.*)

TOM. I'll go and put up my hat and overcoat. They're kind of wet. (*Going R.*) Excuse me?

LUCY. Certainly. Only come back—soon.

TOM. Sure! Don't have this treat every day, and I don't want to miss any of it.

(*He smiles and exits R. MRS. R. looks surprised, LUCY pleased.*)

MRS. R. Well, that's about the first he's chirked up that way since—I don't know when. He seems quite like himself. Oh, Lucy, it's you—all you—with him. I mean, if only— Oh, do you think there's any hope—that it will ever be cleared up, and—all?

LUCY. Yes, Mrs. Randall, I believe it will. I mean it shall be. I've made up my mind to stick by Tom—well, I guess you knew I had done that

long ago—but I mean I'm going to help clear it up. I don't intend to let anybody—even my own father—hold me back any longer. If Tom won't tell what he knows, and do what he can do—why, somebody will have to make him. There is some reason for his silence. I know it. More than once he has let it out, and it's time we found out what that reason is.

MRS. R. Why, Lucy, you talk just like Jessie. That's about what she was saying just before you came. Have you and she been putting your heads together?

LUCY. Yes, Mrs. Randall, we have—our heads and our hearts. And our whole souls are in it, too. And we want your help—your faith—your prayers.

(MRS. R. *does not speak, but takes one of LUCY'S hands in both of hers, holding it tenderly, with a smile of assent and encouragement. Enter OLIVER, L.*)

OLIVER. 'Xcuse me. I was —— (*Sees LUCY.*) Oh, good-even'n', Miss Garrett.

LUCY. Good-evening, Oliver. How are you?

OLIVER. Fair t' middling, thank y'. I was lookin' for Ivy. She said she'd get some apples. Strikes me mebbe she's eat'n' 'em, too. Takes her long enough.

MRS. R. I guess you'd better go and see about it, Oliver. I think you'll find her in the kitchen.

OLIVER (*going R.*). All right—thanks—guess I will. D' know's she'll give me any, after all, she's s' mad 'cause I beat her playin' checkers. Guess mebbe I c'n coax her up, though. 'S all right, 'f y' know how t' handle girls.

LUCY. So you've found that out, have you, Mr. Moon?

OLIVER. Sure. Long ago. (*In door R.*) Say, Miss Garrett, you goin' t' sing?

LUCY. I don't know. Perhaps. Why?

OLIVER. 'Cause I'd like t' hang around 'n' hear it.
Hope it's one o' them op'ry pieces—all wobbly.

LUCY. Wobbly?

OLIVER. Yes,—trilly-like—— (*Makes attempt at trill, running up to a high note in a falsetto tone.*)
So!—see?

LUCY (*convulsed*). Yes, I see—and hear, too. But I'm afraid—really, I'm afraid I couldn't do it like that.

MRS. R. Well, I should hope not. You'd better go and find out about those apples, Oliver. I'm afraid Ivy 'll have them all eaten up.

OLIVER. Yes, I reckon I had. But I'll be back when y' begin y'r wobblin', Miss Garrett. Ho-o—oh—o-o-oh!

(*Putting hand on chest and flinging out a high note, as he exits R.*)

MRS. R. He is irrepressible, that boy. Between him and Ivy—well, I guess you can imagine.

(*Enter JESSIE, L., with partly knitted sock.*)

JESSIE. What's all this I hear? Mercy, i thought a wild Injun was let loose.

MRS. R. Why, it was Oliver Moon, trying to sing.

LUCY. Or trying to show me how to do it. Is that your knitting, Jessie?

JESSIE. Well, it's my—whatever-y'-call-it. I don't know as I'd call it "knitting." I pity the poor soldier that ever tries to wear this pair of socks. If he hasn't corns already, I guess he soon will have. I hope it's one of those old Germans.

MRS. R. Oh, Jessie, I don't believe it's so bad as all that.

LUCY. No, of course it isn't. (*Examining JESSIE's work.*) Why, you're getting along all right. Just keep at it.

JESSIE. Oh, I'll keep at it all right. Got to do my share toward winning the war, and if these socks exterminate one German, that'll be so much.

(*They all sit, knitting—MRS. R. at L. of table, as before; LUCY R. of table and JESSIE R. C. Enter TOM, R.*)

TOM. Well, well, but you're an industrious lot. Guess I ought to have some knitting, too, or something like that.

LUCY. Well, why not? It wouldn't hurt a man to knit, any more than a woman to do some of the things she does.

JESSIE. Why, of course not. I could drive an ox-team or hoe a potato field ten times better'n I can knit these socks, I'll bet.

MRS. R. The idea! I guess you couldn't. I don't approve of the way women are taking up the men's work these days. It seems all wrong to me.

JESSIE. Yes, you're just an old-fashioned woman, Mother, dear. Not up to the times.

LUCY. Then I hope she never is.

TOM. Me, too. I wouldn't have Mother change one iota for the world. Eh, Mother-o'-mine?

(*He has gone around back of her, leans over her chair, with arms about her.*)

MRS. R. (*looking up at him, tenderly*). Well, so long as you are suited, Tom—you and a few others—I guess I ought to be happy. But you do spoil me so.

TOM. Pshaw! It couldn't be done.

(*JESSIE and LUCY smile affectionately at MRS. R., who now rises.*)

MRS. R. Well, I'm not so sure about that. (*Crossing to R.*) I'm going in the kitchen now. I want to see what Ivy and Oliver are up to. Besides, I have a few things to see to.

LUCY. Now, Mrs. Randall, don't go and fuss.

MRS. R. No, of course I won't. Just some cakes and cider and a few nuts and apples, that's all.

(*Exit, R. JESSIE rises, goes to R.*)

JESSIE. Guess I'll go and see if I can help. You
two excuse me? (*Smiling knowingly.*)

LUCY. Why, yes—of course——

TOM. Oh, sure—take your time——

(*These two sentences are spoken together. JESSIE smiles and exits R. LUCY is still seated R. of table, TOM is standing other side of table.*)

LUCY. I—haven't seen much of you lately, Tom.
Where have you been keeping yourself?

TOM. Oh—around. Here at home, most of the
time. It seems the best place for me, somehow.

LUCY. I can't say that I agree with you.

TOM. You—don't?

LUCY. No. You are simply helping people to take
you at their own estimate. Excuse me, Tom, I
don't mean to hurt your feelings. You know
that. But I do think you make a mistake.

TOM. Maybe I do. It's mighty hard, though. Why,
I had even begun to think you were going back
on me, Lucy.

LUCY. You know better than that. It's been hard for
me, too. You don't know all I have to contend
with. But never mind that. Sit down, Tom. I
want to talk to you. (*He sits; she leans on table,
looking across at him earnestly.*) I've been wait-
ing for this opportunity.

TOM. To give me a talking to?

LUCY. Well, yes—if you want to put it that way.
Anyhow, to say a few things that have been on
my mind for a long time. First: do you mean
to keep it up?

TOM. What?—keep what—up?

LUCY. You know—bearing all the shame and misery,
that you have to bear, for something somebody,
else did. That's what you're doing.

TOM. I believe you have said that before, or hinted
as much. You haven't much to go on, though,
have you?

LUCY (*ignoring what he says*). And you think it's

your duty? Is it for Phil, or for your mother—chiefly? (*He rises, amazed.*)

TOM. Lucy! What do you mean? What are you—driving at?

LUCY (*quietly*). Driving square up to the right hitching-post, Tom Randall, and you know it. Oh, I've understood the whole thing right along—ever since last summer. I suspected it before Phil went away. I was sure of it soon after. It's noble of you, Tom. You're a real hero—a true patriot—and I'd like to give you the Cross of Honor and all the other decorations and things. But I think it's rather too much. Phil is away over there now, where it doesn't matter so much to him. You are here, with it to bear. Don't you think, if you can prove your innocence—even if you have to implicate him—it's your privilege now—your duty to yourself ——

TOM. No—I can't ——

LUCY. And to—me!—Tom?

TOM. Oh, Lucy, don't put it that way. I—I can bear it for myself, but don't make it harder for me. I promised—faithfully, on my word of honor—and I pride myself I still have a “word of honor” that stands for something. I couldn't go back on it. No—not even for you, Lucy—I couldn't!

LUCY. I see. And I suppose I shouldn't ask it of you. But I can do my share—bear my share—too. I can stand by you and with you, and show everybody that I believe in you, no matter what anybody else says or thinks. That's what I want to do, Tom.

(*They are standing c. TOM looks at her, almost uncomprehendingly, almost overcome as her meaning dawns upon him.*)

TOM. Would you do it, Lucy? Would you become—my wife—now—as things are—and still let me keep my promise? Could you do that ——?

LUCY. Yes, Tom, yes. Gladly. I want to do it ——

TOM. But your father—he ——

LUCY. I don't care. Not for him nor the whole world. It's you, Tom—you who need me and whom I want. Isn't that enough?

TOM (*wonderingly—looking at her with great tenderness*). Enough? It's everything—it's wonderful! You're the most wonderful, the bravest, truest girl in all the world. (*He takes her in his arms; she nestles against him—there is a pause, then suddenly he puts her from him with determination.*) But it can't be—it mustn't. It wouldn't be right. No—no!

LUCY. Tom! It must, it shall! In spite of everything. (*Puts hand on his arm.*)

TOM (*drawing away from her, sadly, but firmly*). No. I would be a coward. I couldn't let you give up so much for me. Some time—it may come right—then—but not yet—not now ——

(*He turns up L. C.; she goes to him, pleadingly.*)

LUCY. Tom!

TOM. No—don't, Lucy—please! Don't make it harder for me. I must bear it—alone.

(*He exits L. She stands L. C., by table, sadly, almost breaking down. There is a pause, then a stamping of feet outside and knocking on door C. LUCY looks that way, but does not go to door; takes up her knitting, goes L. Enter MRS. R., hurriedly, R.*)

MRS. R. Oh, you here alone, Lucy? (*Going up to door C.*) I guess that's Mr. and Mrs. Wilkins. I asked them to come over a little while, too.

LUCY. Did you? Seems it's a regular party.

MRS. R. Oh, no; but seeing they are just back from their wedding trip, and all, you know ——

(*The knocking on door is repeated. LUCY crosses, exits R., just as MRS. R. opens door, admitting HEZEKIAH and SOPHIA. They are well bundled up, with snow on heads and shoulders. They come*

in hurriedly, shaking themselves, etc. MRS. R. glances out, then quickly closes door.)

SOPHIA. Urr! We're almost froze.

MRS. R. My, it's a regular storm, isn't it?

SOPHIA. Storm? I should say so. It's blowing and drifting something terrible.

HEZEKIAH. Twin sister to a blizzard, I call it. S' stiff I d' know's I'll ever git thawed out.

SOPHIA. Well, you would come. I told him it wa'n't fit, Mis' Randall, but he's so afraid he'll miss something. I guess he'd insisted on comin' 'f it 'd been a blizzard 'n' a cyclone all in one. That's about what 'tis, too.

HEZEKIAH. Listen t' that. Me 'nsisted! Gosh, can y' beat that? You couldn't 'a' kep' her t' home with a chain 'n' padlock.

MRS. R. Well, I'm real glad you got here, anyway. Come in the front room. I guess you'll find it real warm in there. Ivy lit the fire in the wood-stove some time ago.

SOPHIA. Oh, it's plenty warm enough here, Mis' Randall. Ain't it, Hezekiah?

HEZEKIAH. Sure—plenty—for me.

(They have removed things, which MRS. R. takes. SOPHIA retains immense cretonne knitting-bag, which she has had under shawl or cloak.)

MRS. R. Well, all right then, sit right down here and make yourselves as comfortable as you can for the present. I'll take these things out by the kitchen stove, where they'll get nice and dry.

(Exit at R., with things. SOPHIA sits R. of table with knitting; HEZEKIAH is C.)

SOPHIA. Be y' feelin' all right, Hezekiah? Sure you didn't git a chill?

HEZEKIAH. Chill? No. Be'n out in worse weather 'n this plenty o' times. It's you I'm worried about, darie.

(*Puts arm about her, as if about to kiss her; she draws away, repulsing him.*)

SOPHIA. Hezekiah Wilkins, b'have y'rself! What if some of 'em 'd come in and see y'?

HEZEKIAH. What'd I care? Ain't we bride 'n' groom? Guess we got a right to love a little —

SOPHIA. Bride 'n' groom? Land, we be'n married over a month. 'Bout time you had a little sense, accordin' t' my way o' thinkin'. 'T your age, too!

HEZEKIAH. What's age got t' do with it? Guess after wait'n' all them years t' git y', y' ain't goin' t' keep me from showin' how much I love y', now 't you're mine.

SOPHIA (*as he continues attempting to fondle her*). Well, y' don't have to do it b'fore folks. (*He is more persistent—she rises, pushing him back.*) F'r the land's sake, leave me be! I never saw sech a man.

(*Enter MRS. R. at R.*)

HEZEKIAH. 'Tain't right. Is it, Mis' Randall?

MRS. R. What isn't, Mr. Wilkins?

HEZEKIAH. Why, f'r Sophi' t' —

SOPHIA. Don't you pay no attention t' him, Mis' Randall. He's too silly for anything—wantin' t' make love all the time, at his age. No matter where we are, either—always actin' like we was a young married couple.

HEZEKIAH. Well, what'd I marry y' f'r, 'f 'twa'n't t' show my devotion?

SOPHIA. Devotion fiddlesticks! (*She is again seated, opens bag, takes out sock partly knitted—holds it out to HEZEKIAH.*) Here's your knittin'. Take it and keep busy, f'r goodness' sake.

MRS. R. Oh, have you learned to knit too, Hezekiah?

HEZEKIAH. She made me. Makes me tired. Knit-t'n's f'r women. (*Refuses to take work.*) I don't want it.

SOPHIA. Hezekiah Wilkins, you take that knittin'. Ain't you willin' t' do that much f'r y'r country?

HEZEKIAH. Me? Gosh a' fish-hooks, 'n' me a vet'-ran what fit f'r the Union. 'S if I hadn't done more 'n knit a darned old pair o' socks!

MRS. R. Well, I guess that's so, Hezekiah. It does seem as if you might be excused. Don't you think so, Sophia?

SOPHIA. No, I don't. It won't hurt him a bit. I've dug p'tatoes 'n' split kindlin'-wood lots o' times, 'n' I guess that ain't woman's work, any more knittin's a man's.

(*Again offering work to HEZEKIAH, who now grabs it spitefully.*)

HEZEKIAH. Oh, well, then, give it here! (*Looking at it.*) Pretty lookin' kind o' thing that is, ain't it? Git more stitches in m' side th'n I put in the blamed old stockin'. I thought we come over here t' have a pleasant evenin'. Wanted t' tell 'em about our wedd'n' trip.

SOPHIA. Oh, I guess they've heard all they want to about that. Ain't y', Mis' Randall?

MRS. R. It's nothing but what I could stand hearing over again, Sophia. It must have been quite a trip, to Philadelphia and all. They say that's a wonderful city.

HEZEKIAH. I should say 'tis. Talk about "slow,"—wal, 'f Philadelph'y's what they call slow, spare me fr'm where they're s'posed t' be rapid. We saw——

SOPHIA (*interrupting him*). That's where the Liberty Bell is, y' know. We saw it—crack 'n' all——

HEZEKIAH. 'Course we did. Didn't s'pose they was goin' t' hide the crack the days we was there, did y'?

SOPHIA. And the very table they set at t' sign the Declaration o' Independence—and the house—the very window—where Betsy Ross set t' make the first American flag.

HEZEKIAH. 'N' Benjamin Franklin's grave, 'n'——

SOPHIA. Yes, 'n' their City Hall's got a tower higher'n a church steeple, with Billy Penn standin' on

top of it. We went 'most to the top, 'n'—what d' think, Mis' Randall? Hezekiah got s' dizzy, goin' up s' far in that elevator, 't they had t' let us out on about the seventy-eighth floor—

HEZEKIAH. Huh! 'Twa'n't no sech thing—'twa'n't more'n the twenty-third—

SOPHIA. Wal, anyway, it was wonderful, and we certainly did have a fine time. Everybuddy seemed t' know we was bride 'n' groom, though, fr'm the way Hezekiah acted. I got so ashamed, I thought I'd sink.

MRS. R. I don't see what you cared—so long as you had a good time.

SOPHIA. But I hate t' see a man act so silly. His third time, too. (*Watches HEZEKIAH.*) See here, if you can't knit any better'n that you might as well stop. The war'll be over before you get that one sock done.

HEZEKIAH. Wal, I guess they'll be some one-footed ones left that'll be glad t' git it. (*Rises.*) You make me nervous. How can I knit, with you watchin' every minute?

MRS. R. Why don't you go in the other room, Hezekiah? Tom's in there. You can tell him about your trip.

HEZEKIAH (*going L.*). All right, guess I will. Mebbe it'll cheer him up.

MRS. R. Yes, maybe it would.

SOPHIA. Well, you go, 'cause I've got somethin' I want t' tell Mis' Randall, anyway. Mebbe we won't get another chance t' be alone this evenin'.

HEZEKIAH. Huh! 'Nother one of them "messages," I s'pose. I'm jealous o' them spirits—how d' I know but what some of 'em's male ones? Hey?

(*Exit, R., chuckling.*)

SOPHIA. Don't you pay any attention t' him, Mis' Randall. He's always talkin' like that. Says I ought t' give it all up, now 't I'm his. But I can't, Mis' Randall—I can't. It's them that won't give me up—Prairie Flower.

MRS. R. So you still hear from her, do you?

SOPHIA (*mysteriously*). Oh, yes—often. Not s' often 's I did, though. It has t' be something very important now, it seems. 'N' 'tis, this time. It's for you, Mis' Randall. It come t' me last night, as plain as day.

MRS. R. Dear me, I was in hopes there wouldn't be any more for me. It sort of makes me nervous.

SOPHIA. Why, it ought t' lift you up. It does me. I feel the honor and the responsibility placed upon me. (*Impressively*.) Mis' Randall, it all came to me last night. Sort of symbolic-like, but plain as could be. I saw a battle-field, then—a wounded soldier, in a hospital, I think it was. He seemed to be trying to tell me something—something he wanted me to tell somebody. And I thought it was you. Then he got s' weak he couldn't say it—and—and then ——

MRS. R. (*with an anxiety which she cannot conceal*). What, Sophia? What else? Of course, I don't believe in it—but—I can't help being interested ——

SOPHIA. Wal, I wouldn't want t' alarm you, for anything; but for a time it seemed as if it was the last word he ever spoke.

MRS. R. You don't mean he was—that he—died?

SOPHIA. For a time I did. But it went further—I saw a young man in uniform set out on a long journey. It was as if he went on the water—came back to this country—as if he was coming—here ——

MRS. R. (*rising, in unconcealed excitement*). Oh, Sophia, he is coming home—my boy—my Phil! Was it Phil? Do you think he is coming?

SOPHIA. Wal, it was all sort o' misty, as if it wa'n't intended I should know exactly. But that's what I saw.

MRS. R. I thought you said it was all “as plain as day.” I guess it wasn't. Seems to me it was nothing but a dream, the kind I have myself a good deal.

SOPHIA. You can take it for what it's worth. I ain't sayin' what that is. But it was plain enough—that is, that it was a message, and, t' my mind, that it was intended for you, even if it was kind o' faint at the end. That's the way it is. Sometimes I come out of 'em before I get it all.

MRS. R. Yes, I guess you do. Well, I'm much obliged, anyway, seeing you thought you ought to tell me. But I can't say I put much faith in it. (*Going L.*) Won't you come in where your husband is, Mrs. Wilkins?

SOPHIA (*rising*). Yes, I s'pose I'd better, 'r he'll be out here after me. Land, I don't see how I ever consented t' have him, after s' long. I can't hardly sense it yet, 't I'm a married woman—'n' t' nothin' but an old relic of the Civil War.

MRS. R. Yes, it does seem kind of queer, I will admit. Most men would have lost hope long ago. But I guess he knew you intended to have him some time, all along.

SOPHIA. Mis' Randall, how you talk! The very idee! Why, I never had no more intention of b'comin' Mis' Hezekiah Wilkins 'n I have of—of—wal, of—wal, of goin' t' France in an air-ship. But I had t' take him t' get red of him. Now 't I'm his wife I can at least be the boss and keep him in his place. It's easier t' manage a husband 'n 'tis a man what wants t' be.

MRS. R. Well, anyway, he's got you, at last.

SOPHIA. I've got him, I guess you mean. 'N' now 't I have, I declare I don't know what t' do with him. I s'pose I'll have t' make the best of it.

MRS. R. It's a wonder Prairie Flower didn't warn you, if it wasn't just the best thing for you to do.

SOPHIA. Mebbe she would've, 'f I'd listened. But I turned a deaf ear, 'n' now I've got t' pay the penalty.

(HEZEKIAH sticks head in door L.)

HEZEKIAH. Say, when's my little lovey-dovey coming in with her little piggy-wiggy?

SOPHIA. In a minute. Go back in there! (HEZ-
EKIAH *withdraws*.) Did you ever hear sech sick-
ishness—at his age, too? It's like livin' on whipped
cream and choc'late drops f'r a month till y'r dy-
ing f'r pickles 'n' chow-chow. (*Going L.*) But
I s'pose I'll have to go in, 'r he'll never give me a
minute's peace. (*As she goes out.*) No, I don't
see how I ever consented t' take him—I cer-
tainly don't.

(*Exit, L. MRS. R. stands a moment, looking after her,
with an amused smile. Then enter LUCY and
JESSIE, R.*)

JESSIE. Where are the bride and groom, Mother?

MRS. R. They went in the front room. Tom's in
there, too. I guess you'd better go in, and maybe
have a little music. I'm just dying to hear you
sing, Lucy.

LUCY. Mercy, if I can save your life so easily as that,
let me do it. I'm only glad it doesn't have the
opposite effect. Come, Jessie, you can play for
me.

JESSIE. All right. I'll be right in.

(*Exit LUCY, L.*)

MRS. R. Sophia Ash—I mean Mrs. Wilkins—has
been giving me another “message,” Jessie. She
says a man in uniform is coming. Do you sup-
pose —

JESSIE. What I suppose is that she has you all upset,
and I wish she'd leave you alone. It's too ridic-
ulous. If I put stock in all my dreams and
imaginings, like she does, I'd have enough “mes-
sages” and “visions” to keep us guessing for-
evermore. (*Going L.*) Don't you pay a bit of
attention to anything she says, Mother. Between
“Prairie Flower” and that new husband of hers,
I don't wonder she has her hands full. But if she
doesn't leave you alone, I intend to give her a
piece of my mind.

(Exit, L.)

MRS. R. Jessie—be careful. I wouldn't have you hurt Sophia's feelings for anything. (*She stands a moment, ruminating, then goes to door R. and calls.*) Ivy—Oliver!

(Enter IVY, R.)

IVY. 'D you call me, Mis' Randall?

MRS. R. Yes. I guess you and Oliver can go in the front room now. They're going to have some music. We won't have the refreshments yet a while.

IVY. All right. We got a whole pile o' nuts cracked. (*Calls off R.*) Oliver—Oliver, come on, now!

(Enter OLIVER, R.)

OLIVER. 'D y' call me?

IVY. Sure. Come on. We're goin' in the front room t' have some music.

OLIVER. Pshaw! Can't eat music.

MRS. R. Why, Oliver, I thought you were so anxious to hear Miss Garrett sing.

OLIVER. Am. But I could listen t' her 'n' eat too.

IVY (L.). All you think of 's eat'n'. Et as many nuts as y' cracked.

OLIVER. Shucks! Didn't, neither. (*He has gone L. IVY gets behind him and pushes him to door L.*)

Oh, all right, I'm a-goin'. See how she bosses me, Mis' Randall? Jest like a wife.

IVY. Oh, you!

(*She gives him a slap and he runs off L. She follows.*)

MRS. R. looks after them a moment, smiling. A small organ is heard being played off L., then a sweet soprano or contralto voice, supposed to be that of LUCY GARRETT, singing, "Keep the Home Fires Burning," or some other appropriate sympathetic song; if convenient, with violin obligato. A phonograph record may be used for this effect, which should not be omitted. During song MRS.

FOR THE OLD FLAG

R. stands a moment in thought, then crosses to R., pauses there and listens, then exits R. The stage is vacant for a moment, as the music continues. After a pause, sleigh-bells are heard off C., in distance, approaching. Finally they come to door outside and stop. There is a knocking on door C. After short pause it is repeated, more loudly. As there is no answer, the door is opened gently and RODNEY HUNT looks in. He is in army uniform, with heavy overcoat, the collar of which is turned up, with hat or cap pulled down, so that momentarily his identity may be concealed. He closes door, looks about; goes to L., stands listening to music, then looks off L. MRS. R. enters R., at first does not see him, starts up toward door, then sees RODNEY, who has his back turned to her. At first she thinks it is PHILIP, gasps, almost overcome. Grasps chair for support. Calls feebly.)

MRS. R. Philip—my—boy!

(RODNEY turns, removes hat. She takes a step toward him, then falters, nearly falls; he runs and catches her in his arms.)

RODNEY. Mrs. Randall! You didn't know me—you thought ——

MRS. R. (*partly recovering, clinging to him*). Philip—my boy—you have come back! Oh, my boy! my boy! (*Weeping, almost hysterically*.) I knew you would come. I knew. I hoped—I prayed ——

RODNEY. I'm sorry, Mrs. Randall, but it's not your son.

(*She looks at him more closely, steadily; the truth dawns upon her. Starts away from him, clasping her hands*.)

MRS. R. No—I see. Tell me, where is—he ——

(*Enter JESSIE, L., at first not noticing others*.)

JESSIE. Mother, aren't you coming ——

FOR THE OLD FLAG

(Pauses, as she sees RODNEY, at first bewildered, then recognizing him.)

RODNEY. Jes—Miss Randall! Don't you know me?
JESSIE. Why—yes—it's Mr. Hunt.

(She shakes hands with him cordially.)

RODNEY. I don't wonder you hardly knew me—in these.

JESSIE. You're a soldier! And you never told me—us.

RODNEY. No. I wanted to make good first; to try, at least, to be one that neither my country nor you would be ashamed of.

JESSIE. Oh, I'm so glad! Mother, Mr. Hunt is a soldier now. You see?

MRS. R. Yes, dear. But—ask him about Philip.

JESSIE. What about him, Mr. Hunt? He has not come back with you?

RODNEY. No. (He gives her, aside, a look which she understands. She quivers, but partly conceals her emotion.) I have a message—a letter.

MRS. R. Then he was—well—when you left him?

RODNEY. Mrs. Randall, I—I am sorry—but—you will be brave?

MRS. R. Brave? You ask me to be—brave? Then—oh, tell me, tell me! I can bear it. My boy—he is —

RODNEY. He was a real hero, Mrs. Randall. He did valiant deeds and won a great name before —

(He pauses, as MRS. R. totters, and is assisted by JESSIE to chair, L. C., where she sits, covering face with hands; JESSIE with arm about her.)

JESSIE. Mother, we must be brave, too—as he was.

MRS. R. Yes, yes, I know. Don't be afraid. I will be brave.

(RODNEY, who has removed overcoat and hat, which he lays aside, now takes letter from pocket.)

FOR THE OLD FLAG

RODNEY (*to JESSIE*). Is your brother here? This letter and my message are for him to hear.

JESSIE. Yes. He is in there, with Lucy Garrett and the others.

RODNEY. Miss Garrett? It concerns her, too. Will you call them?

JESSIE. Yes.

(*Exit, L. The music has ceased. MRS. R. still sits by table; RODNEY stands c., holding envelope in hand.*)

MRS. R. It is a letter from Philip? He wrote it?

RODNEY. No. I wrote it, at his dictation. It was just at the last, when he was unable to write. I wish I could tell you, Mrs. Randall, what a brave, noble boy he was—a real hero. It was through him that several of his comrades escaped death.

MRS. R. (*rising*). And he gave—his own life—to save them?

RODNEY. Yes.

MRS. R. My boy, my brave, noble boy—a hero! He died for his country and to save others. Yes, I can be brave now—I can bear it.

(*Enter JESSIE, LUCY and TOM, L. LUCY and TOM show great surprise as they recognize RODNEY. Both shake hands cordially with him.*)

TOM. Well, this is a surprise! Where did you come from?

RODNEY. France. Straight as I could get here.

LUCY. And in uniform? Well, isn't that grand? Look, Jessie! look at your soldier boy.

JESSIE (*a bit confused*). Oh, I noticed. I hope you don't think those glory-togs could escape my attention.

(*RODNEY is R., TOM, R. C., LUCY, C., JESSIE and MRS. R., L. C. and L.*)

TOM. But tell me ——— What about Phil? He didn't come with you?

RODNEY. No. You see, I was gassed the first week I was in the trenches. They gave me a leave of absence. Not fit yet, but hope to go back before long. As for Phil—that's where the hard part of it comes in, Tom. I have told your mother. She knows—and your sister.

TOM. And I think I know, now. The worst. Mother!

(TOM crosses to MRS. R.; comforts her. They are grouped about; RODNEY takes out letter, opens it.)

RODNEY. This letter will tell you better than I can. Will you read it, Miss Garrett?

LUCY (taking letter). I?—aloud?

RODNEY. Yes, please. It is in my handwriting, writing at Phil's dictation, just at the last. He wanted you all to hear it, and everybody to know what it contains.

LUCY. Then, of course —

(She glances over letter, looks hurriedly down page, in much excitement; gives an exclamation of surprise, trembling.)

JESSIE. But you were to read it aloud, Lucy. We are waiting.

LUCY. Oh—yes! (Reads.) "It is nearly over. I have come to the end, and I can't go without making a confession. I want to right a great wrong and do what I can to atone. I hope it isn't too late. Mother, I beg of you, with my last breath, to forgive me. You will, I know, even if Tom can't. It's too much to expect him to. I have done him too great a wrong. I was in the bank that night. I had just left when Tom came. I took the money, hid part of it in Tom's room, and afterward made it look as if he was the one who stole it. I was the thief, and he paid the penalty. Let him be cleared now, have it all straightened out, so that he and Lucy—I don't suppose they can forgive me, but I hope they will

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believe that I have tried, over here, to do what I could to make up, just a little, for the wrong I did over there."

(LUCY reads this brokenly, with pauses, weeping. MRS. R. and JESSIE also are weeping, the others likewise deeply affected. As LUCY finishes, there is silence and a pause. MRS. R. rises and JESSIE, her arms about her, silently leads her off L. JESSIE looks back, with a winning smile, at RODNEY, holding out one hand to him. He follows and also exits L. TOM and LUCY stand c. She holds out the letter to him; he takes her hand, draws her toward him.)

TOM. Lucy, do you know what it means? I am vindicated—I can hold up my head again—do you know?

LUCY. Yes, Tom, I know. But I knew all the time. I believed in you.

TOM. That's the wonderful part of it. Even more wonderful than this. But, just think, now I can go. I can wear a uniform—go to France—take his place—and fight for the Flag.

LUCY. Yes, Tom, and I can wait for you—till you come back.

(They go slowly toward L., his arm about her. The large flag still hangs on wall, stands there, or is on table. They take it up and hold it between them. The organ may be heard playing softly off L., then voices, subdued, singing "America" as the curtain falls.)

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