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A SUCCESSFUL FAILURE

A FARCE
IN ONE ACT

BY
GEORGE M. ROSENER

DICK & FITZGERALD
PUBLISHERS
18 Ann Street, New York

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

A
SUCCESSFUL FAILURE

Farce in One Act

By GEORGE M. ROSENER

Author of "Coast Folks," "Sleepy Hollow," "An Irish Eden,"
"Relations," "Sheriff of Tuckahoe," "The Frozen Trail," etc.

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A SUCCESSFUL FAILURE

CHARACTERS

JIM LANE *Cub reporter of The Gazette*
LINDY PAGE *Star reporter of The Recorder*
BELL BOY
COPY BOY

NOTE.—BELL BOY *and* COPY BOY *can double.*

TIME.—The Present. LOCALITY.—New York City.

TIME OF REPRESENTATION.—About thirty minutes.

COSTUMES AND CHARACTERISTICS

LINDY PAGE is a young woman of about twenty-five years. The character is played at times with quick and care-free manner, and at others it is sober and reserved; in fact, it is a part that requires no small amount of study to bring out the light and shade of the character. At the

opening scene LINDY is dressed in an evening gown and wears a decidedly red wig. Later she wears a plain coarse dress with white apron, black hair hanging down her shoulders.

JIM LANE is about the same age as LINDY. To get an idea of the part, call to mind a young man, who, with all of his eight years in New York is still of a retiring nature, and when you realize that this young man is about to interview one of the ultra-ultra's society leaders and is thereby given the chance of his life by the paper he represents, you will have an idea of the character. He is dressed in a business suit, cap, rain coat, bright red necktie, and tan shoes. Note book in left pocket, marked newspaper in right pocket.

BELL BOY, first appearance in livery, later in ordinary clothes.

PROPERTIES

Bundle of manuscript and wrapping paper in desk drawer for LINDY. Watch, note book, newspaper and pencil for LANE. Tray, bottle, check and pencil for BELL BOY. Wine cooler, glasses and champagne bottle.

STAGE DIRECTIONS

As seen by a performer on the stage facing the audience, R. means right-hand; L., left-hand; c., center of stage; D. R. door right; D. R. c., door right in rear flat.

A SUCCESSFUL FAILURE

SCENE.—*A hotel private reception room or parlor. D. R. C. opening into hall. D. R. opening into another room. Window L., opening on street. Shade and curtains cover the window. A flat top writing desk with writing material and desk phone set a little L. of C. A chair on either side of desk. Table with books and an arm chair. Couch or settee is placed up stage a little L. of C. Against the back wall about C. is a buffet well stocked. A few well selected pictures adorn the walls. If the furniture is all of the mission design it will lend much to the picture. Waltz music for rise.*

ENTER LINDY D. R. C., goes to window, raises shade and looks out. Starts toward desk, stops as if considering some important point; goes back to buffet, picks up a bottle of champagne, goes to desk and takes up phone.

LINDY. Hello! Send me up a bottle of cider. Wait a moment, listen, I want that light kind. Yes, that's it, champagne cider. Open the bottle and get it here as quickly as possible. (*Hangs up receiver and returns to buffet. Takes silver wine cooler and pours the contents of the bottle of champagne into it. Knock at D. R. C.*) Come in. (ENTER BELL BOY D. R. C. carrying tray, bottle, check and pencil) Bring that here, boy. (BOY goes down to desk. LINDY takes the bottle of cider and fills the champagne bottle, holding it over the cooler) There we are! (*Signs the check*) Here, take this with you. (*Hands the boy the cooler which he takes, and EXITS D. R. C.*

LINDY *places champagne bottle filled with cider on buffet and returns to desk. Picks up phone*) Hello, give me Billie. Yes, Billie the night clerk. Hello, Is this you, Billie? Say, listen, if anyone calls asking for Mrs. Worth send them up to me, will you? Yes, I'm afraid that some of the other newspapers might have been put next that she is stopping here, and I want to keep them off until she gets out of town and our sheets go to press. No, no. There isn't one of them who would know her if they saw her. They only know that she has red hair. Now you—what? Yes, mine was black but I washed it and I went out before it was dry and it got rusty. Yes. If any of those news-hunting dogs come around, send them to me, I'll make them think they are seeing things before they leave. Hello! Now do as I tell you, and I'll buy you the best segar you ever smoked when I see you again. What is that? Oh yes, send him up. Good-bye. (*Hangs up receiver, opens desk drawer and takes out a small package of manuscript. This she wraps up in piece of paper. Knock at D. R. C.*) Come in. (COPY BOY ENTERS D. R. C., *hat in hand. LINDY hands him manuscript*) Here you are, Tom. Take this copy to Mr. Alexander as fast as your two legs and the subway can make it, and don't stop to even breathe until you are in the press room. Got it?

BOY. Yep.

LINDY. Hike.

BOY. Right. Good night.

[EXIT D. R. C.]

LINDY. Good night. (*Telephone rings. She answers it*) Hello, Yes. Oh, Mr. Alexander? Yes, Tom just left this minute with the copy. No. Mrs. Worth never once suspected that I was on any paper. Yes, she is leaving on the eleven-thirty for Chicago. What's that? Jim Lane is coming here to see Mrs. Worth? What sheet is he on? A cub for The Gazette? Oh, I see. Oh yes, I know him. He and I came from the same town in Virginia, in fact, he was going to marry me once. He said he'd come back for me after he had been to the city and made his fortune, but like a lot of others he came to the city and the lights got into his brain, and made him forget all about the girl he left. Yes, I've seen him a hundred

times since then, but I never spoke to him. What's the use, eh? No, no. This is the last place he would expect to find me, and besides this red wig that I am wearing is good enough to disguise a snake. Yes. You can gamble that if any of the boys on the other papers come here to-night I will keep them here if I have to bind and gag them until the eleven-thirty with Mrs. Worth has left for Chicago. When all the papers go to press to-night, take it from me that we will be the only one that will have a full account of the Worth divorce. All right. Good-bye. (*Hangs up receiver. Knock at D. R. C.*) Come in. (ENTER LANE. *Aside*) It's Jim. (*Regains her self-control*) Good evening.

LANE. I beg your pardon, but have I the honor of addressing Mrs. Worth?

LINDY. Yes. Won't you be seated?

LANE (*sits L.*). Thank you. I represent the—

LINDY. Yes. You represent The Gazette.

LANE (*surprised*). How did you know that?

LINDY. I'm a mind reader. You are surprised? I will explain. I knew you were a reporter because I can see your note book sticking out of your left-hand pocket, and I knew you were on The Gazette because I can see that paper sticking out of your right-hand pocket all marked up where you have been making notes. Rather like Sherlock Holmes, don't you think?

LANE (*taking out note book and pencil*). It is very clever, any way you put it.

LINDY (*aside*). If I didn't hate him so much, I'd kiss him.

LANE. Now about this divorce?

LINDY (*speaks as though her heart and mind were far away*). Divorce?

LANE. Yes, when were you married?

LINDY. I never was married.

LANE. What?

LINDY. No, he never came back for me, he never even wrote me a line.

LANE. Then you have no husband?

LINDY. Not that I'm aware of. Ah, it was cruel to leave me there all those weary months.

LANE. I really don't understand. You are Mrs. Worth?

LINDY (*comes out of her reverie with a start*). Worth? Oh yes. What is it you would like to know?

LANE. Now about your husband.

LINDY. Which one?

LANE. Have you had more than one?

LINDY. Oh yes. Six, seven, or eight.

LANE. Six or seven or eight!

LINDY. Yes. You see after the sixth I stopped counting.

LANE. Do I understand that you have been divorced more than eight times?

LINDY. Oh dear, no. Now let me see. I was divorced four times, two died natural deaths, one was so young that his parents had the marriage annulled, and the others died from an overdose of arsenic.

LANE. Arsenic?

LINDY. Yes, they ate some biscuits that were covered with arsenic which I had laying about the house to destroy the rats.

LANE. Why should they eat them?

LINDY. Who, the rats?

LANE. No, your husbands.

LINDY. I couldn't really say, unless they were troubled with rats.

LANE. You are not in earnest.

LINDY. Indeed I am. I often heard them complain of a gnawing in their stomachs. (*A church clock chimes off L. Aside*) Eleven-fifteen. In fifteen minutes we go to press. (*Goes to buffet*) Will you have some refreshments?

LANE. No thank you, I never drink while on duty.

LINDY. A very good precept. (*Pours out a tumbler of cider from champagne bottle. LANE looks at the proceeding in amazement*) You see I take a little of this every hour as a tonic. (*Drinks from tumbler*)

LANE. If you call that a little tonic, just how much do you call a social glass?

LINDY. Please don't talk to me for a moment.

LANE. Why not?

LINDY. You see the bubbles get up in my nose and make me feel so funny.

LANE (*aside*). This woman has murdered several of her husbands. If I can get the full story from her while she is under the influence of that champagne, I'll have a beat for The Gazette that will melt the type. (*During the above speech LINDY comes down behind LANE and reaches out her arms as if to embrace him. LANE turns and sees her, starts to his feet and darts over R. somewhat frightened*) I wonder if she is trying to fix me.

LINDY (*laughs hysterically, pretending she is slightly intoxicated*). I was just trying to tickle you. (*Crosses to R. LANE still trying to keep out of her way crosses L.*)

LANE. I'll bet she was trying to choke me.

LINDY (*indicating LANE's necktie*). I beg your pardon, but is your throat cut or is your neck on fire?

LANE. That is my necktie.

LINDY. Is that so? I thought it was a danger signal.

LANE (*aside*). The champagne is beginning to take effect.

LINDY (*indicating LANE's russet shoes*). Will you kindly chase those yellow rabbits out of the room?

LANE. Rabbits? Where?

LINDY. There. Those two rabbits you are standing on.

LANE. These are my shoes.

LINDY. You don't mean it really. I don't know how you can ever forgive me. Now if I had seen you crossing the street I should have stopped my motor before it hit you. Oh, forgive me! Do say you will forgive me. (*Attempts to embrace LANE. He darts to other side of stage*)

LANE. Yes, yes, I'll forgive you of course. Only please sit down and calm yourself.

LINDY (*aside*). I don't know how I'm acting this part, but I'm beginning to feel silly. (*To LANE*) Will you please tell me the correct time?

LANE (*looking at watch*). Eleven-twenty-two.

LINDY (*aside*). In eight more minutes the Recorder will be on.

LANE (*aside*). If my story don't go to press to-night,

to-morrow will do just as well. A big beat is worth waiting for. (*To LINDY*) Mrs. Worth. (*No answer*) Mrs. Worth. (*No answer*) Mrs. Worth!

LINDY (*starts and turns quickly*). Oh, I beg your pardon, I thought you said Berth, and it quite unnerved me. You see Berth was my first husband's name. Yes, Berth. He was named after a Pullman car.

LANE. Named after a Pullman car? After a Pullman car did you say?

LINDY. Oh yes. You see he kept himself closed all day and at night he opened up. You understand?

LANE. Indeed yes. You mean by that, that he never took a drink until after six o'clock. (*Laughs uproariously at his own joke, looks up and observes that LINDY is glaring at him*) Eh, w-w-w-w-what's the matter?

LINDY. I'll have you understand that the lips that have touched liquor never did touch mine.

LANE (*aside*). I wonder if she is kidding me. (*Very business like*) Mrs. Worth, let us resume our business.

LINDY. Oh, of course. Do you know, your face is very familiar to me?

LANE. And I had just been thinking where I had seen you before. (*They become very confidential, and for the time being LINDY forgets that she is supposedly intoxicated*)

LINDY. Do you like newspaper work?

LANE. Yes, but you see I'm only a cub. I don't get more than a million a week, you know. Say, some time ago I went forty-eight hours without a mouthful to eat.

LINDY (*with feeling*). Jim!

LANE. What?

LINDY. I beg your pardon, that's a habit I have. I—I call most every one of my friends by that name. Silly habit, isn't it?

LANE (*ignoring her explanation*). I've been in New York for eight long years and I'm still what I was then, a rank outsider. I guess my folks at home often wonder and worry about me.

LINDY. Have you never even written them?

LANE. After the first year, not a line.

LINDY. Why, they will probably think you are dead.

LANE. Well, I'm the same thing, and worse. I'm a failure. Gee, in New York they will forgive a man any crime on the calendar, but if he is a failure, the go-by is the best he will get and "poor devil" is the sentence that the world places on him for his crime.

LINDY. Have you no friends?

LANE. Gee, if a man has only one real friend, he can't be a failure.

LINDY. Why don't you go home to your folks?

LANE. What? Go home and say the city whipped me? Go home and get "I told you so" from a bunch of home guards who never moved far enough away from the kitchen stove to cool their blood? Ah, no. I'd sooner starve and live in a live town, than eat three regulars in a burg and live in hell.

LINDY. Parents living?

LANE. Father. Mother's dead.

LINDY. Brothers or sisters?

LANE. Two brothers.

LINDY. Living?

LANE. No. Both married.

LINDY. But you have other near relations?

LANE. But not near enough to touch.

LINDY. Isn't there a girl in your story? There usually is a woman at the bottom of all hard luck stories.

LANE. In my story she is at the top. But that's another story and the only one in my life wherein I played the part of a dog. No matter how far down and out I go, no matter how hard fate kicks me, I have only to think of that girl down home and then realize that all I am getting is coming to me.

LINDY. It seems strange that a young man like you cannot get on in a big city like this.

LANE. Get on? That's just it. Every job I get, I last just about a week and then I get on. I've been getting on and getting off for eight years in this burg. Why, I've had so many jobs that lately when I take a new one, I meet myself coming out.

LINDY. Now about this girl—

LANE. If it's all the same to you, I'd rather not talk

about her. You see the memory of her is the only thing I can keep to myself without fear of some day handing it to the pawn broker.

LINDY. Would you know that girl down home if you saw her?

LANE. Know her?

LINDY. Eight years is a long time, you know, and she may have changed considerably in that time.

LANE. Look here, if that girl was in this room now all wrapped up like an Egyptian mummy, I wouldn't have to see her or hear her talk to know that she was near, I could feel her presence, I tell you. I haven't spoken of her to a living soul in eight years, that is except to you, and even these few words that I have had with you about her make me feel that she is near.

LINDY. Is that so? And you still love her?

LANE. Yes, if you can call the most sincere feeling and reverence of a "no good" like me by that name.

LINDY. And you—you—have never written to the girl either?

LANE. No.

LINDY. Why not?

LANE. You see I waited until I could tell her some good news. I kept putting it off until I—well, until I lost confidence in myself and—and—Oh, what's the use! It's all over now. But do you know, I think if I could only hear her speak, if I could only see her for just a minute, I could turn all my hard luck into experience and be a success at that.

LINDY. I see. Then you do really long for her. You are really lonely and—

LANE. Lonely? As Mark Twain said, "Sometimes I'm as lonely as God."

LINDY. Have you the correct time?

LANE (*looking at watch*). Eleven-twenty-seven.

LINDY (*aside*). Three minutes more.

LANE (*as if to himself*). She's sobering up.

LINDY (*aside*). I'm getting sober. (*Pours out another large drink from champagne bottle and drinks*) Dear me, I declare, that went right to my head. Do you know, a

little champagne puts me right in my natural element.
(*Again pretends to be under the influence of wine*)

LANE (*getting back to business*). Mrs. Worth, you can do me a great favor.

LINDY. I should be pleased to.

LANE. I was sent here to get the story of your impending divorce. From remarks that you have let fall I take it that you have had rather a life of adventure, if you will pardon my saying so. I have waited until it is too late to get your story in the edition now going to press, in the hope that I might get a bigger story and one that will make a name for me. If I fail in this, I am down and out, because in the vocabulary of a newspaper man there is no such phrase as "I couldn't." When you are sent to get a story, you either get it or give up your job to someone who can.

LINDY. Proceed with your questions.

LANE (*taking notes*). May I ask what your first husband worked at?

LINDY. None of them worked.

LANE. I beg your pardon.

LINDY. The first one was an English lord.

LANE. And the second?

LINDY. He was a pick-pocket.

LANE. Great Scott! And the third?

LINDY. A lawyer.

LANE. And the fourth?

LINDY. An actor.

LANE. And —

LINDY. And the others worked in the City Hall. Ah, but I forgot number five. He was an honest man.

LANE. And what did number five work at?

LINDY. He never worked.

LANE. Have you ever had any children?

LINDY. Have I ever had any children? Let me think!

LANE. Let you think?

LINDY. Of course. You don't expect me to remember every little thing in my life, do you.

LANE. No, no, Of course not.

LINDY. Oh yes, I've had seven children.

LANE. What were they?

LINDY. Eh?

LANE. I say, what were your children?

LINDY. They were babies at one time, but they outgrew that.

LANE. Perhaps I do not make myself clear. You say you had seven children. I mean, were they boys or girls?

LINDY. They were sort of a-a-a-a sort of a mixture. Yes, but all one color.

LANE (*aside*). I wonder if this woman is mad.

LINDY. I know what you are thinking about.

LANE. Do you?

LINDY. Yes, you are wondering whether you shall kiss me or not. (LANE *starts*) Don't you do it, or I will call for help. (*Screams in a feeble voice*) Help! Help! There, come one step nearer and I will scream like that again and arouse the guests. Whee, when the bubbles of that champagne get mixed with my hair, I feel just as if I didn't care whether I took another husband or not.

LANE. Mrs. Worth, won't you please tell me more about your husbands?

LINDY. Oh pshaw, why talk about the dead ones.

LANE. But your last husband, Mr. Worth, he's not dead.

LINDY. Not yet, but soon.

LANE. On what grounds are you getting this divorce?

LINDY. On the grounds of highway robbery.

LANE. I don't understand.

LINDY. He was held up by a stage robber, and I found it out.

LANE. This is interesting. Do you know the robber's name? Stage robber, eh?

LINDY. I don't know the stage robber's name, but she was with some burlesque show. Look here, you want a story for your paper? I'll give you one. Sit here. (LANE *sits on edge of desk with back to stage c. At his right is the phone. LINDY stands c., behind LANE. By degrees, during the speech, she casts off all affectation of being under influence of champagne and works the scene up to an emotional dramatic climax. Music until final curtain*) I'll

tell you a story. The one that affected my whole life. I loved a man once, really loved him, and though I was only a girl then I had already learned the full meaning of the word. He left me in a little country town, and—*(LANE turns and looks at her)* Similar to your own story, isn't it? *(LANE goes back to his notes)* He promised that he would return and marry me when he made his fortune. I waited—I waited days, months, years, but no word ever came, yet I trusted him. Oh, the agony of those years! The long hours spent alone with tears, doubt and fear, that ever gnawing, that ever craving here for just one word, the heart that sometimes was on the verge of breaking—unrealized hopes, temptations, a forgotten and a despised love all bearing in on my soul until I prayed to die. Then came the call of the world and I left my home, I mingled with the men and women of a big city. It was then I learned the true lesson of this false sense called life, it was then that I realized how easy it is for a man to forget and for a woman to suffer. I laughed and I drank, and I forgot with the others. Then when the lights were out and when the laughter ceased, when I was alone with my love and my God, then would come the old agony a thousand fold stronger and I suffered again, and how I suffered no one but He and I will ever know. And for what, for whom? For a man whom I loved and who had forgotten me—forgotten me—forgotten me. *(Falls on couch sobbing)*

LANE (starts toward her). Mrs. Worth. *(Goes back to his former position)*

LINDY (rising). I beg your pardon. I lost myself for a moment. You will excuse me. - [EXIT D. R.]

LANE. Gee, how her story hit home with me. Oh, I'm a contemptible cad. If I had only written Lindy, who knows, I might be something now. We can all kid the fair sex, but there comes a time in every man's life when a woman's advice is better than his own judgment. Gee, but the old days come back to me to-night, I can see Lindy now. I can see her waiting for me by her old home. Her long black hair hanging down her shoulders, her plain coarse dress with the white apron. I can almost

hear her say "I've been waitin' fer yo all, Jim, here's a peach for you." And I gave her up—for what?—for what? For a bunch of white lights and a bundle of false pride. (*Phone rings and LANE answers it*) Hello! Yes, this is Mrs. Worth's apartment. Yes. Is that you, Mr. Raymond? This is Lane. Why, Mrs. Worth is here. What? Mrs. Worth has left for Chicago? I've been sold. The Recorder has gone to press with the whole story? But Mr. Raymond, let me explain. (*Rattles the hook on phone*) Mr. Raymond. Mr. Raymond. Look here—he's gone. I've lost the best chance I ever had. I've lost the biggest beat of the year. I'm a failure again. A failure again. (*Drops head in arms on desk*)

ENTER LINDY D. R. and goes to c. *She is dressed exactly as LANE described her when she lived down home.*

LINDY. You have lost the biggest beat of the year, Jim. (*LANE looks up*) But here's a peach waiting for you.

LANE (*in a whisper*). Lindy!

LINDY. I've been waiting a long time for you all, Jim.

LANE (*crosses to LINDY and kneels at her feet*) Lindy! Lindy!

CURTAIN

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BY THE ENEMY'S HAND. 4 Acts; 2 hours	10	4
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ENTERTAINMENTS

25 CENTS EACH

AUNT DINAH'S QUILTING PARTY. 1 Scene.....	5	11
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JAPANESE WEDDING. 1 Scene; 1 hour.....	3	10
MATRIMONIAL EXCHANGE. 2 Acts; 2 hours.....	6	9
OLD PLANTATION NIGHT. 1 Scene; 1¼ hours.....	4	4
YE VILLAGE SKEWL OF LONG AGO. 1 Scene.	13	12
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EASTER TIDINGS. 20 minutes.....		8
BUNCH OF ROSES. (15 cents.) 1 Act; 1½ hours.....	1	13
OVER THE GARDEN WALL. (15 cents.).....	11	8

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



COMEDIES AND

25 CENTS EACH

BREAKING HIS BONDS. 4 Acts; 2 hours.....	6	3
BUTTERNUT'S BRIDE. 3 Acts; 2½ hours.....	11	6
COLLEGE CHUMS. 3 Acts; 2 hours; 1 Stage Setting.....	9	3
COUNT OF NO ACCOUNT. 3 Acts; 2½ hours.....	9	4
DEACON. 5 Acts; 2½ hours... ..	8	6
DELEGATES FROM DENVER. 2 Acts; 45 minutes.....	3	10
DOCTOR BY COURTESY. 3 Acts; 2 hours.....	6	5
EASTSIDERS, The. 3 Acts; 2 hours; 1 Stage Setting	8	4
ESCAPED FROM THE LAW. 5 Acts; 2 hours.....	7	4
GIRL FROM PORTO RICO. 3 Acts; 2½ hours.....	5	3
GYPSY QUEEN. 4 Acts; 2½ hours.....	5	3
IN THE ABSENCE OF SUSAN. 3 Acts; 1½ hours.....	4	6
JAIL BIRD. 5 Acts; 2½ hours.....	6	3
JOSIAH'S COURTSHIP. 4 Acts; 2 hours.....	7	4
MY LADY DARRELL. 4 Acts; 2½ hours	9	6
MY UNCLE FROM INDIA. 4 Acts; 2½ hours.....	13	4
NEXT DOOR. 3 Acts; 2 hours.....	5	4
PHYLLIS'S INHERITANCE. 3 Acts; 2 hours.....	6	9
REGULAR FLIRT. 3 Acts; 2 hours.....	4	4
ROGUE'S LUCK. 3 Acts; 2 hours.....	5	3
SQUIRE'S STRATAGEM. 5 Acts; 2½ hours.....	6	4
STEEL KING. 4 Acts; 2½ hours.....	5	3
WHAT'S NEXT? 3 Acts; 2½ hours.....	7	4
WHITE LIE. 4 Acts; 2½ hours.....	4	3

WESTERN PLAYS

25 CENTS EACH

ROCKY FORD. 4 Acts; 2 hours.....	8	3
GOLDEN GULCH. 3 Acts; 2¼ hours.....	11	3
RED ROSETTE. 3 Acts; 2 hours.....	6	3
MISS MOSHER OF COLORADO. 4 Acts; 2½ hours....	5	3
STUBBORN MOTOR CAR. 3 Acts; 2 hours; 1 Stage Setting	7	4
CRAWFORD'S CLAIM. (15 cents.) 3 Acts; 2¼ hours.	9	3

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