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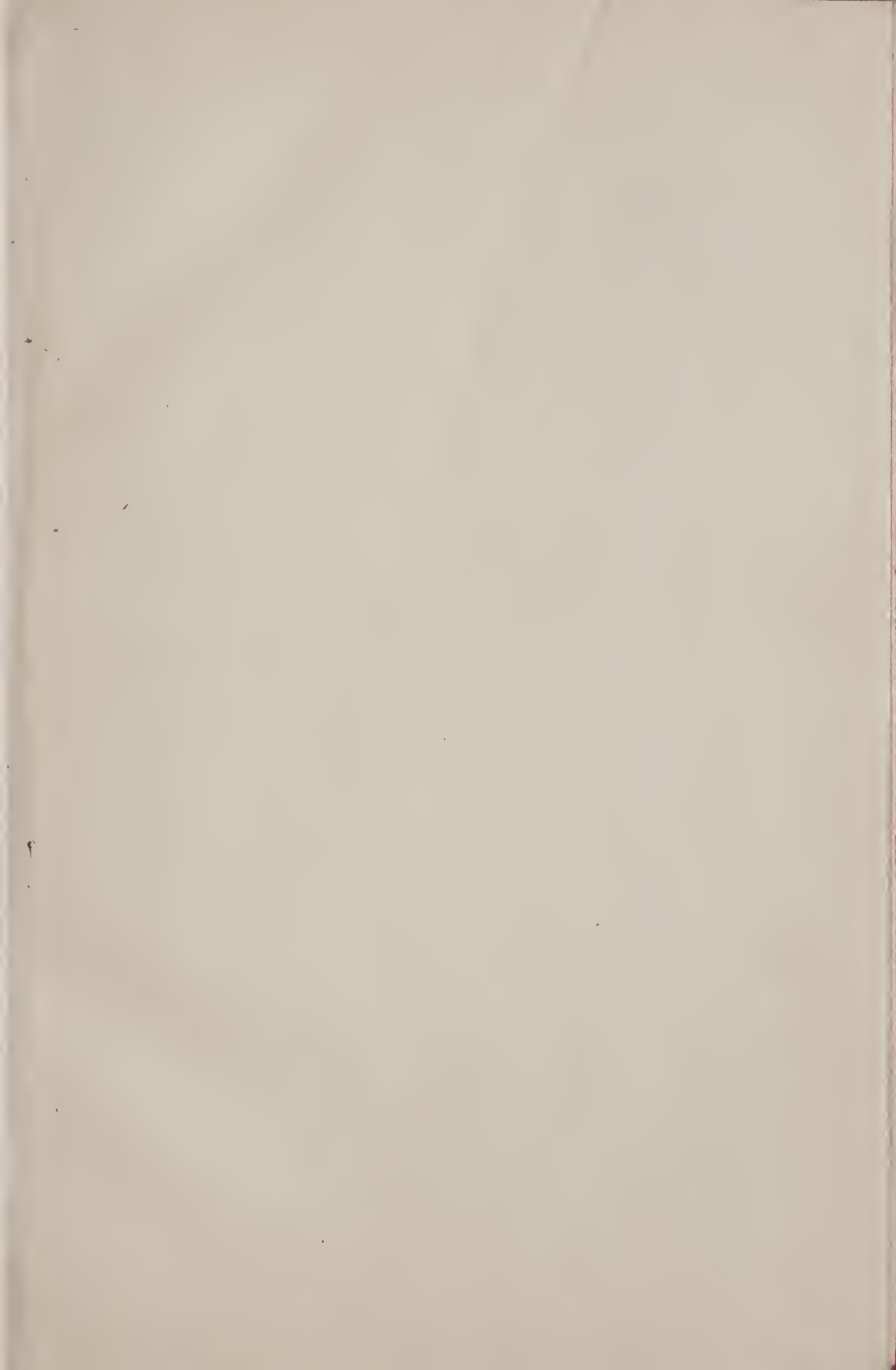


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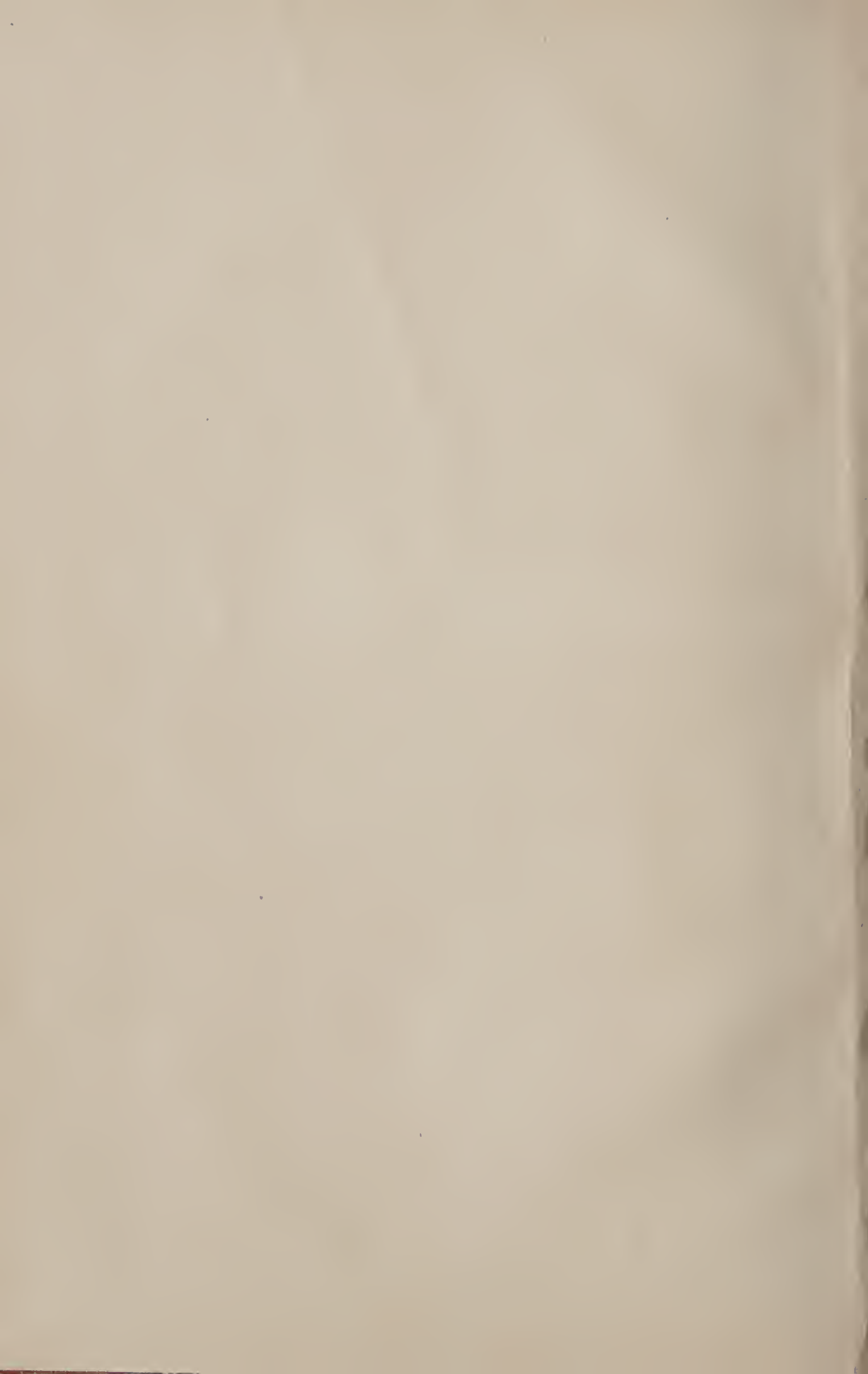
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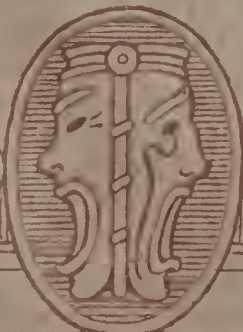


*Denison's Select Plays*

*The  
Real Thing  
After All*

by  
*Lindsey Barbee*

*T. S. Denison & Company  
Publishers · Chicago  
Price 35 cents*



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By Walter Ben Hare. Comedy in 3 acts; 8 males, 8 females. Time, 2½ hours. Price, 25 Cents.

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

154 West Randolph Street

CHICAGO



# The Real Thing After All

An After the War Comedy-Drama  
in Three Acts

BY

LINDSEY BARBEE

AUTHOR OF

*“After the Game,” “At the End of the Rainbow,” “The Call of the Colors,” “The Call of Wohelo,” “The Dream That Came True,” “The Fifteenth of January,” “Then Greek Met Greek,” “Her First Scoop,” “The Kingdom of Heart’s Content,” “The Promise of Tomorrow,” “Sing a Song of Seniors,” “The Spell of the Image,” “The Thread of Destiny,” “Tomorrow at Ten,” “The Trial of Hearts,” “A Watch, a Wallet and a Jack of Spades,” “When the Clock Strikes Twelve,” “The Whole Truth,” “In the College Days,” “Let’s Pretend — A Book of Children’s Plays,” etc.*



CHICAGO  
T. S. DENISON & COMPANY  
PUBLISHERS

1919

TO  
DAYTON DENIOUS  
AND  
EMMA BOUGHTON DENIOUS  
"Bobby" and "Aimée"

PS 3503  
A 5587 R4  
1919



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LINDSEY BARBEE.

# THE REAL THING AFTER ALL

FOR SEVEN MEN AND NINE WOMEN.

## CAST OF CHARACTERS.

(Named in order of appearance.)

BOBBY WINTON . . . . .	<i>A Youthful Soldier</i>
RUTH MEREDITH . . . . .	<i>With the Gift of Understanding</i>
ANNE MEREDITH WINTON . . . . .	<i>In Love with Her Husband</i>
KATE . . . . .	<i>Mrs. Winton's Maid</i>
ROBERT WINTON . . . . .	<i>A Successful Lawyer</i>
CECILY HARGRAVES . . . . .	<i>Richard's Fiancée</i>
THOMAS GREGORY . . . . .	<i>A Mystery</i>
ALISON PAGE . . . . .	<i>Who is Clever</i>
DENNIS . . . . .	<i>Who Emulates Sherlock Holmes</i>
DORIS THORNE . . . . .	<i>A War Bride</i>
EDWARD THORNE ("TED") . . . . .	<i>A War Groom</i>
CAPTAIN RICHARD WINTON . . . . .	
. . . . .	<i>Who Does the Unexpected</i>
AIMÉE . . . . .	<i>"A Little Bit of France"</i>
MISS WARD . . . . .	<i>Richard's Aunt and Housekeeper</i>
FIFI . . . . .	<i>A French Maid</i>
ROGER ATHERTON . . . . .	<i>An American Aviator</i>

TIME—*After the Great War.*

PLACE—*A Suburban Home.*

TIME OF PLAYING—*Two Hours and Thirty Minutes.*

ACT I. Garden of Richard Winton's suburban home. A September day.

ACT II. Richard Winton's den. Christmas Eve.

ACT III. Same as Act II.

SCENE I—*Christmas morning.*

SCENE II—*Candle-lighting time.*

## STORY OF THE PLAY.

Richard Winton, a young architect who has distinguished himself in foreign service, returns home with Aimée, a wee French orphan, whom he has adopted. Richard's fiancée, Cecily Hargraves, a spoiled and superficial society girl, resents his affection for the child and finally breaks the engagement because he refuses to give her up. Richard wins the Civic Prize offered for the best design for an Auditorium, and inspired with a boyish desire "to see the first big thing" which he has ever earned, cashes the check for twenty-five thousand dollars and locks the money in his desk. Several robberies in the neighborhood remain unsolved, and Dennis, one of the Winton servants, fastens suspicion upon Thomas Gregory, a stranger in the vicinity, who is a member of Richard's Christmas house party. Mrs. Winton's pearls disappear; another guest loses a jeweled bracelet, and as a climax comes the removal of the money in the desk. After many complications the theft of the jewels is traced to Aimée's French nurse, and the astonishing discovery is made that Richard—walking in his sleep—has hidden his money in a secret panel of the mantelpiece. Gregory proves to be the mysterious aviator with whom Alison Page—a friend of the Winton family—has been corresponding, and Richard, in his search for the real thing in life, finds his happiness in the love of the quiet little Ruth whose comradeship and encouragement have always meant so much to him.

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## SYNOPSIS FOR PROGRAM.

ACT I. Dick's expectant family await his return from France. Successive robberies in the neighborhood inspire Dennis to play detective. An accident—a war

bride and groom—a telegram—and an unexpected “bit of France” help to make the week-end memorable.

ACT II. The Christmas house party is enlivened by a bride-and-groom quarrel, a loss of jewels, a confession, a broken engagement and a robbery of the desk.

ACT III. Christmas morning finds Cecily gone. Atherton's arrival brings a new complication of affairs. Gregory's identity is established, the jewels are recovered, Bobby solves the mystery and Dick finds “the real thing after all.”

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### CHARACTERS AND COSTUMES.

RUTH—Sweet, quiet, gracious and winning in manner. Summer or sport gown in I; evening gown in II; afternoon gown in III.

ANNE—Of charming dignity and poise. Summer or sport gown in I; elaborate evening gown in II; afternoon gown in III.

CECILY—Spoiled, impatient, selfish and shallow. Summer gown in I; elaborate evening gown in II.

ALISON—Clever, quick at repartee, independent. Summer gown with motor coat and hat in I; evening gown in II; afternoon gown in III.

DORIS—Talkative, childish and vivacious. Tailor suit and hat in I; evening gown in II; afternoon gown in III.

MISS WARD—With a keen sense of humor. Evening gown in II; afternoon gown in III.

KATE—Assertive. Conventional maid's costume—black with sheer white apron, collar and cuffs. Small white cap. Coat and hat in latter part of III.

FIFI—Coquettish in II; hard and indifferent in III.

Maid's costume with nurse's frilled cap; high-heeled slippers. Coat, hat in latter part of III.

AIMÉE—Plain little dress and bonnet in I; elaborate little dresses in II and III. Socks and slippers. Nightgown in latter part of II.

ROBERT—Attractive and genial. White trousers, dark coat, white shoes in I; tuxedo in II; morning suit in III.

GREGORY—A trifle reserved, matter-of-fact, polished. Summer suit in I; tuxedo in II; morning suit in III.

TED—Unemotional, boyish. Uniform in I; tuxedo in II; morning suit in III.

DICK—Impulsive, boyish and yet thoroughly manly. Uniform in I; tuxedo in II; business suit in III.

The Publishers advise that the military costumes have such variations as not to interfere in any way with the Government regulations regarding the wearing of uniforms. It is, of course, inferred that such costumes will be procured from a costumer who undoubtedly will be able to supply something that will answer the purpose and avoid any criticism.

DENNIS—Happy-go-lucky, mysterious in his dealings with Gregory. Sailor suit in I; dark trousers and white coat in II and III.

ATHERTON—Easy and gracious in manner. Business suit, overcoat and hat.

BOBBY—Pretty suits throughout the play; slippers and socks. Pajamas in latter part of II; coat and hat in latter part of III.

## PROPERTIES.

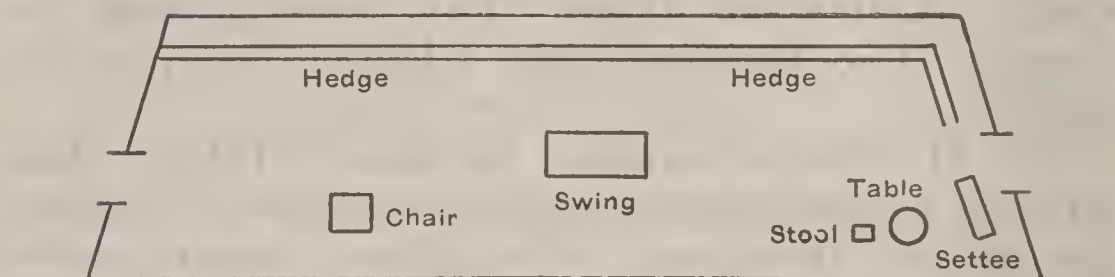
ACT I. Seat, swing or hammock. Table, settee, stool and chair, all of wicker. Pillow for swing. Trees, flowers, etc. Checker board and men for Bobby and Ruth. Knitting bag and yarn for Anne. Tray with pitcher of lemonade and glasses for Kate. Paper for Cecily. Letter for Alison. Two traveling bags for Dennis. Two traveling bags, telegram and pipe for Ted.

ACT II. Rugs, draperies for doors. Table. Mantel with candlesticks and box of cigarettes. Andirons for grate. Davenport with pillows. Small settee. Desk with telephone, electrolier, etc. Gauze, peroxide and needle book for one drawer of desk. Package in locked drawer. Desk chair. Hassock. Large and elaborately decorated Christmas tree. Holly and mistletoe. Large chair. Pin for Miss Ward. Holly and mistletoe for Dennis. Stockings and flashlight for Aimée and Bobby. Ring for Cecily. Scarf for Doris.

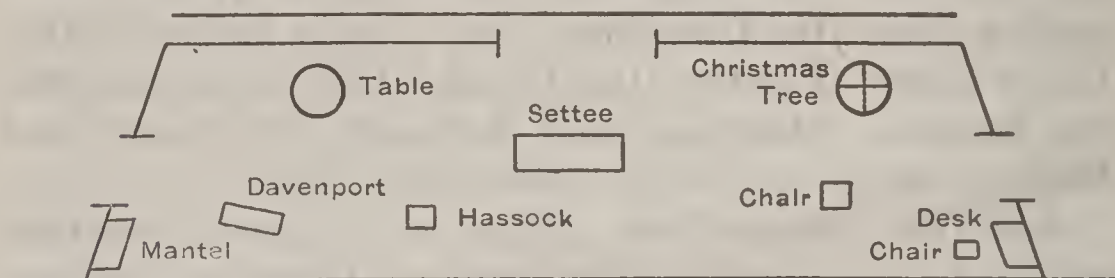
ACT III. Stepladder. Toys for children, including doll and doll carriage for Aimée. Horn for Bobby. Mechanical game for Robert. Keys and watch for Dick. A gift for each character on stage as curtain rises. Cook book for Doris. Handkerchief and matches for Ruth. Handkerchief for Alison. Package of letters and ring for Gregory. Note for Kate and handbag containing string of pearls and jeweled bracelet for Fifi.

## SCENE PLOT.

## ACT I.



## ACTS II and III.



## STAGE DIRECTIONS.

*R.* means right of stage; *C.*, center; *R. C.*, right center; *L.*, left; *1 E.*, first entrance; *U. E.*, upper entrance; *R. 3 E.*, right entrance, up stage; *D. F.*, door in flat, or scene running across the back of the stage, etc.; up stage, away from footlights; down stage, near footlights. The actor is supposed to be facing the audience.



# THE REAL THING AFTER ALL

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## THE FIRST ACT.

SCENE: *A part of the lawn adjoining RICHARD WINTON'S suburban home. Landscape drop for background. A close-cut hedge runs along back of stage and down L., with opening at C. in L. To the left off stage is presumably a public road, while the house itself is approached from the right. (If feasible, a drop depicting a house with door, porch and steps may be placed diagonally at R. U. E. If this is done, the door becomes entrance otherwise designated as R.) At C. is placed a stationary swinging seat with low back. (A long garden seat may be used.) At L. 2 E. is a small wicker settee; to its right a low wicker table on which is a checker board with checkers. R. of table is wicker stool. At R. 2 E. is a large wicker chair. Grass, trees, flowers, etc.*

*Curtain rises on RUTH on settee and BOBBY on stool, deeply engrossed in a game.*

BOBBY. It's your move, Aunt Ruth.

RUTH (*hesitating*). But, Bobby, where can I move? You have me cornered. (*Moves.*) There!

BOBBY. Now I've got you! Just as the Yanks got the Germans! Say, Aunt Ruth, let's pretend that I'm the American Army and you're the German Army.

RUTH. But I don't want to be the German Army.

BOBBY. You've got to be. You're licked. (*Rises and kneels on stool.*)

RUTH. Then that just about ends everything, doesn't it?

BOBBY. Everything except—unconditional surrender!

RUTH (*raising hands*). Very well—I surrender.

BOBBY (*pushing checkers to center of board*). Let's play it all over again.

RUTH. But—*this* time—I may win.

BOBBY. You can't—you're the German Army.

RUTH. It isn't fair to make me the enemy twice in succession. (*Settles back.*) Anyway, the war's over.

BOBBY. You don't like to play fighting games, do you, Aunt Ruth?

RUTH. Why should I? I'm a woman.

BOBBY (*scornfully*). And women can't fight!

RUTH. Oh, *can't* they? There are many ways of fighting, Bobby boy.

BOBBY. Making bandages isn't fighting; knitting sweaters isn't, either.

RUTH. Well, it's playing the game.

BOBBY. But it isn't firing a cannon or shooting a gun.

RUTH. Just the same, Bobby, there's always a girl behind the man behind the gun.

BOBBY. Well, I don't believe Uncle Dick needed any girl to help *him* shoot.

RUTH. You just ask him—when he comes home.

BOBBY. Isn't it bully to think that he *is* coming home?

RUTH. It's wonderful, Bobby, and it's still more wonderful to know that he is safe and sound.

BOBBY. Do you suppose he'll bring me a German helmet?

RUTH. A dozen of them.

BOBBY. And will he let me wear his cross of war?

RUTH. Of course he will.

BOBBY (*rising excitedly*). Gee—but it was brave to bring in that wounded officer when the old Germans were firing right at him—it was *awfully* brave, wasn't it, Aunt Ruth?

RUTH. To risk one's life for somebody else is the bravest thing in the world, Bobby boy. You ought to be pretty proud of Uncle Dick.

BOBBY. You bet I am. (*Turns as—*)

ANNE, *with knitting bag, enters at R.*

BOBBY. Here's mother! (*Runs to her.*)

ANNE. So this is where you two people have hidden yourselves! I hope you've captured a stray breeze in your particular corner.

BOBBY. We've captured something better than a breeze.

ANNE. And what is that?

BOBBY. (*pointing to RUTH*). The German Army.

ANNE (*laughing*). You seem doomed to always portray the part of the enemy, Ruth.

RUTH. Bobby thinks I'm quite a success in the role.

ANNE. Doubtful flattery.

RUTH. Exactly. (*As ANNE seats herself by RUTH.*) We've been talking of Dick's homecoming. (*BOBBY pushes stool to C. and seats himself.*)

ANNE. And I've been thinking of it. In his usual evasive way, Dick didn't give us exact details concerning his return, but the boat on which I think he sailed docked yesterday.

RUTH. Dick loves surprises and he'll doubtless appear just when we least expect him.

ANNE. Won't it be fun to exploit our young captain with his wound of honor and his Croix de Guerre?

RUTH. Wearing laurels and being a hero won't appeal to Dick.

ANNE. Why not? Every man is human.

RUTH. But every man isn't a boy. And Dick—like Peter Pan—will never grow up.

BOBBY (*who has been seriously thinking*). Mother, I wish *we* had a service flag.

ANNE. Why, Bobby, we *have*. With Uncle Dick's own particular star upon it.

BOBBY. But that isn't exactly like having daddy's own particular star, is it?

ANNE. Daddy couldn't go, dear; you know that. He had *us* to take care of.

BOBBY. But Johnny Jones' dad went—and there's nobody to take care of them—and they live in a little house—and they haven't any money—and—

ANNE. Bobby, a man can serve his country without wearing a uniform.

BOBBY (*rising and going to ANNE*). But, mother—

ANNE (*with her arm around him*). Don't worry about things you don't understand, dear. Now run along and ask Kate to bring us the coldest lemonade she can make.

BOBBY. What about my prisoner?

ANNE. Oh, I'll keep an eye on the enemy.

BOBBY. He's a pretty slippery customer.

ANNE. But he has a Yank guarding him—and that makes all the difference in the world. Now hurry up, brave soldier. (BOBBY *runs off at R.*) Ruth, how many people are thinking that very same thing?

RUTH. What do you mean?

ANNE. Just what Bobby said.

RUTH. The war is over, my dear sister. People aren't doing the same amount of thinking.

ANNE. Don't evade the question.

RUTH. Then—to be frank—I suppose some people

*did* wonder why as successful a man as Robert Winton couldn't run the common risk—

ANNE (*rising*). Ruth!

RUTH. You asked me to be frank.

ANNE. But—

RUTH (*as she draws ANNE down beside her*). Wait just a minute until I finish my sentence. I meant to add that any second thought would have satisfied the doubter concerning Bob's patriotism.

ANNE. Somebody had to do war work in this country.

RUTH. Of course.

ANNE. And if there hadn't been home effort the war never could have been won.

RUTH. Never.

ANNE. But people love to criticize, and when Dick comes home there'll be comparisons—oh, I know it! We'll hear nothing but Dick's triumphs, Dick's praises and Dick's experiences!

RUTH. Anne, I'm ashamed of you. You're jealous.

ANNE. I'm not jealous. I just don't want Dick to have anything which Bob hasn't.

RUTH. But that isn't fair to Dick, and if all these honors had come to Bob, Dick would be the very first to be happy with him. Now, wouldn't he?

ANNE. Yes—but—

RUTH. Nobody in the world has a sunnier disposition than Dick—you know it, Anne. Nobody is more generous, more loyal to his friends—

ANNE. And nobody is more impulsive. You'll have to acknowledge it.

RUTH. Impulsiveness isn't a crime.

ANNE. But it's a decided inconvenience. Dick always does the unexpected.

RUTH. Doing the unexpected is often the charm of life.

ANNE. Oh, *is* it? Perhaps you think it was the proper thing for Dick to give up his last year of college, forfeit his degree—

RUTH. And give the money he would have spent to a classmate whose health depended on a change of climate? I do—I decidedly do.

ANNE. It was visionary and impractical.

RUTH. But it saved the man's life—and he paid back the money—every cent.

ANNE. Still, that particular year could never come back to Dick. Its opportunities were gone—it was a loss.

RUTH. You mean—a gain.

ANNE. The next disappointment was his profession. Bob had always planned for Dick to share his law practice. But *no*. Off he went to Paris to study architecture.

RUTH (*leaning forward*). But, Anne, Dick was destined to be an architect or an artist. Anyone who is so keenly alive to beauty *must* find expression for it. His work has proved the wisdom of his choice.

ANNE. Then the crowning rashness of his career has been his engagement to Cecily Hargraves.

RUTH. I shouldn't call it that.

ANNE (*placing arm around RUTH's shoulder*). When Bob and I had so hoped and believed that it would be—you.

RUTH (*quietly*). Dick never cared for me in that way, Anne. I was just his pal—his sister so to speak—somebody whose friendship and companionship was a matter of course.

ANNE. Love sometimes masquerades as friendship, Ruth.

RUTH. Not in this case. Men don't fall in love with me, Anne—they never have.

ANNE. Nonsense. A sensible girl like you! (*Withdraws arm.*)

RUTH. That's just it—I'm sensible. Theoretically, a man admires what he calls common-sense, but in reality he yields every time to the capricious creature of a thousand moods.

ANNE. Not quite so bad as that.

*As KATE enters from R. with lemonade.*

ANNE. I hope you used the coldest ice you could find, Kate. (*Takes checker board from table.*)

KATE. I came pretty nearly not finding any at all, Mrs. Winton. That good-for-nothing Dennis had forgotten to fill the ice box. (*Places tray on table.*)

ANNE. And I've week-end guests.

KATE (*as she pours lemonade into two glasses and hands them to RUTH and ANNE.*) Don't worry. I've just telephoned for enough to last till Monday. You'll excuse me for saying it, Mrs. Winton, but ever since Dennis was dismissed from service, I've had to use brain power for two.

ANNE. What's the matter with Dennis?

KATE (*at C.*). Just what's the matter with a lot of soldiers and sailors whose heads have been turned by a little notice. Between thinking that he's the only Jacky in captivity, and that all the girls are crazy over him, he's all swelled up.

RUTH. But Kate—I thought you and Dennis were en—well, I thought you were wearing a service pin for him.

KATE. I was, Miss Ruth; but it seems that in most

every town some girl has been doing the same thing. We're just beginning to find out about each other.

ANNE (*laughing*). And Dennis thinks the war's over! (*Pauses.*) Where is he this afternoon?

KATE. Joining in the town celebration for the boys who are back from the front. Oh, it ain't his company and he don't know a one of 'em, but he's the biggest man in the bunch.

RUTH. But why shouldn't he think of himself now—he thought of his country first.

KATE. That's all right, Miss Ruth, and I ain't begrudging Dennis any pleasure he can get out of celebrations, for he didn't hesitate about doing his bit—and I don't mind saying that he does set off that sailor suit!

ANNE. Things will adjust themselves, and all the boys will soon settle down to old familiar ways. Just wait and see.

KATE. Well, there won't be much settling, Mrs. Winton, until a lot of these boys are taught that life ain't just a big parade with a brass band, a movie camera and eats along the way. France ain't the only place that needs reconstructing. (*Pauses.*) Anything else, Mrs. Winton?

ANNE (*handing her the checker board.*) Take this in the house. (*KATE takes board and starts off R.*)

RUTH. Kate?

KATE (*turning*). Yes, Miss Ruth?

RUTH. If I were you I'd wear the service pin a little longer. Maybe those other girls have promised to be—just sisters!

KATE. I ain't so afraid of them as I am of those French croquettes he's left behind. (*Exit R.*)



RUTH (*laughingly*). Men are a great worry, aren't they?

ANNE. All but one.

RUTH. And the incomparable one?

ANNE. Bob, of course.

RUTH. But even Bob is something of a worry, isn't he?

ANNE. What do you mean?

RUTH. That he is responsible for a little wrinkle in your forehead which comes when you think nobody's looking.

ANNE. A wrinkle doesn't necessarily mean a worry.

RUTH. This one does.

ANNE. How do you know?

RUTH. Because I have a sixth sense, dear Anne, which gives me a second sight.

ANNE. Sixth sense and second sight. Aren't you exceedingly mathematical?

RUTH. No—just human. Come now, what's the trouble?

ANNE. Bob.

RUTH. He doesn't seem himself, does he?

ANNE. You've noticed it?

RUTH. How could I help it?

ANNE. He's absent-minded—nervous—depressed at times. And that isn't like Bob.

RUTH. Some law case is perplexing him.

ANNE. I hardly think so.

RUTH. Or the responsibility of managing Dick's affairs.

ANNE. Nonsense. Dick's affairs don't need managing.

RUTH. Dick gave Bob power of attorney, didn't he?

ANNE. Of course.

RUTH. Has it ever occurred to you that he might be speculating?

ANNE. Speculating? Impossible! I wonder that you mention such a thing!

RUTH. Many men speculate, don't they?

ANNE. Well—Bob doesn't.

RUTH. How do you know?

ANNE. Because he would have told me.

RUTH. Do husbands tell their wives everything?

ANNE. Mine does. (*Pauses.*) What makes you think that he's speculating? (*Places glass on table.*)

RUTH. I *don't* think he's speculating. I said he *might* be.

ANNE. But why?

RUTH. He seems interested in the stock market—that's all.

ANNE. I don't believe a word of it.

RUTH. Then I don't either. (*Places glass on table.*) So smooth the wrinkle from your brow and we'll diagnose Bob's case as temporary indigestion. (*Laughingly catching up her glass.*) Let's drink to his health!

*Enter ROBERT from R. with BOBBY on his shoulder.*

ROBERT. Discovered! And with the goods! (*As BOBBY slips to the ground.*) Thought they could put something over on us, didn't they, sonny? (*They come to C.*)

ANNE. Where's Cecily?

ROBERT. Just where we left her.

ANNE. But I wanted you to entertain her.

ROBERT. And I got tired of the job. (*Seats himself in swing.*)

ANNE. But—

ROBERT. Don't you worry. Cecily is never alone when she has herself.

ANNE. Bobby, dear, go tell her where we are.

BOBBY. Oh, must we have *her* around?

ANNE. Don't ever say that again. You must remember that she is to marry Uncle Dick—and that she will be your aunt.

BOBBY. I don't want her for an aunt. (*Crosses and goes back of RUTH.*) Why couldn't Uncle Dick marry you, Aunt Ruth?

RUTH (*in confusion*). Why—Bobby—I'm already your aunt—and Uncle Dick's already your uncle. And nothing could make me any more of an aunt than it could make Dick any more of an uncle.

BOBBY (*walking slowly back of settee*). I don't know what you mean.

ROBERT. Neither do I—but that's the way with women, sonny. You never know what they mean.

BOBBY (*standing between settee and ROBERT*). They can't get ahead of us men, can they, daddy?

ROBERT. Well, I should say not. They may think they can, but *we know*.

ANNE. Run along, dear, and ask Miss Cecily to join use here. Now do it prettily.

ROBERT. And take your time.

BOBBY. But I don't want to go.

RUTH. Remember that in service a soldier's first duty is obedience. (*BOBBY hesitates, then salutes and marches out at R.*)

ANNE. Bob, it's dreadful the way you talk about Cecily.

ROBERT. You think it and I talk it—that's the only difference.

ANNE. Of course, I don't approve of everything she does, but she's Dick's choice and we have no right to say a word.

RUTH. Aren't you rather hard on Cecily? She's young and her head has been a little turned by excessive adoration.

ROBERT. A *little* turned. You put it charitably.

RUTH. She'll settle down and make Dick a good wife—for she is in love with him.

ANNE. But *is* she in love with anybody but herself?

ROBERT. Most emphatically and decidedly—*no*.

RUTH. Then why did she choose Dick? She had older and wealthier suitors.

ROBERT. Everybody falls for the kid—and she couldn't help herself. He was crazy about her from the first—and swept her off her feet before she realized it.

ANNE. But—will it last?

RUTH. Give her a chance—and she'll soon become interested in her own home.

ROBERT. I have great respect for your opinion, Ruth, but in my wildest flights of fancy I can't imagine my future sister-in-law a bundle of domesticity.

ANNE. Beauty and charm may win a man—but it takes brains to hold him.

ROBERT. What do you mean by that cryptic remark? You haven't had any trouble holding me.

ANNE. Well—what do *you* mean by insinuating that I haven't brains?

ROBERT. I don't want you to have brains. You're quite perfect as you are.

ANNE (*rising and seating herself by him*). Worse and worse and worse. Hold this yarn for me. (*Takes yarn from bag.*) I've noticed that you don't talk so much when you're at work.

ROBERT (*as he draws the stool to her feet and takes the yarn*). Bright colors for a change! It seems odd for you to be handling anything but army yarn.

(*Softly.*) You had on a dress just this color, Anne, the night I lost my heart to you.

ANNE. Oh, Bob, do you remember so far back?

ROBERT. *Remember?* Why I can shut my eyes and call to mind everything you've ever worn—every word you've ever said—every smile you've ever given me.

ANNE (*putting right arm around his neck*). Bob—you dear old thing!

ROBERT. And every day of my life I wonder how fate happened to send you good-for-nothing me.

ANNE. Good-for-nothing! Why, Bob, dear, I've been trying for years to live up to you!

RUTH. Would you like me to move on?

ROBERT. Not a bit of it. This is merely a practical demonstration of "How to be happy though married." We hope that it impresses you.

RUTH. To the extent that I feel like a Peri without the gates.

ROBERT. Then get inside.

RUTH. Alas, I can't do it myself.

ROBERT. Try vamping Gregory—he's all kinds of a good chap.

RUTH. Vamping isn't my long suit. And who is Gregory?

ANNE (*taking her arm from ROBERT'S neck*). Oh, Ruth, I forgot to tell you! He is the newcomer who has rented the Porter estate—next to us you know—and Bob asked him over for the week-end.

ROBERT. He's a stranger in these parts—is taking a rest cure, I fancy—and lives quite alone with his man. Very reticent as to his past and present.

ANNE. You're sure it's all right to ask him?

ROBERT. Perfectly. He's unmistakably a gentleman—and I like him.

RUTH. Who are the other guests, Anne?

ANNE. Alison Page.

RUTH. Oh, I'm glad!

ANNE. And the Thornes.

ROBERT. How's that marriage turning out?

ANNE. As well as can be expected when you consider that the bride knew the groom exactly four days before he sailed for France.

ROBERT. By the way, did I tell you that Alison was run in again yesterday?

RUTH. For speeding?

ROBERT. Speeding—and some other motor stunts. She's getting to be quite well-known in the police courts.

ANNE (*laughing*). Poor old Alison. Her war work seems to be hoodoo-ed. Her gauze work was discarded; her canned vegetables fermented; she'll probably be forced to leave the motor corps if this continues and—what became of the soldier she adopted, Ruth?

RUTH. The adoption still holds, I believe.

ROBERT. Anybody else in our party?

CECILY *appears from R.*

ANNE. Just Cecily.

CECILY (*crossing*). Who's talking about me? (ROBERT *rises*.)

RUTH. All of us. And wishing that Dick would come while we're having this week-end together.

CECILY (*seating herself R. 2 E.*). He'll telegraph us, surely. I hate surprises.

ROBERT. Dick loves them—so he may appear at any moment. (*As he sees the paper which she carries*.) Any news of incoming ships?

CECILY. I didn't look. (*Hands paper*.) Do you want the paper?

ROBERT. Please. (*As he opens it*.) We'll be pretty

glad to have the kid back again, won't we, Cecily? And we're pretty proud of everything that he's done over there. (*Sits.*)

CECILY. I'm glad he didn't lose an arm or a leg. It would be so embarrassing to go about with him.

RUTH. *Embarrassing!* It would be like trailing clouds of glory.

CECILY. You have such queer notions, Ruth. (*Yawns.*) Gracious, but it's hot! I wouldn't mind some lemonade. (*RUTH pours lemonade, brings it to her and returns to settee, sitting on arm.*) And would you mind throwing me a pillow, Anne? (*ANNE throws pillow.*) Bob?

ROBERT (*without raising his eyes from the paper*). Yes?

CECILY. Can you stop reading long enough to get me a footstool? (*ROBERT pushes stool toward her.*)

ANNE. Think of it's being September—and this perfect summer day—

CECILY. It's so still out here in the country. One can almost hear the silence.

ANNE. That's why we love it so. We'll be loth to relinquish Dick's property even to the rightful owner—won't we, Bob?

CECILY. *Dick's* property?

ROBERT. Certainly. We are merely holding it down for him.

CECILY. But I thought Dick owned the city home.

ROBERT. Just the other way. The city house was left to us—and whenever we can we escape here.

CECILY. Then if you like it so well—why not trade?

ROBERT (*looking at ANNE*). Trade? I can just hear Dick's reply to such a proposition.

CECILY. You mean that he—*likes*—it here?

ROBERT. *Likes it?* Why, it's the joy of his existence.

CECILY (*looking off R.*). But the house is dreadfully old-fashioned.

ROBERT. Don't tell that to Dick. For there's something about the architecture which—from a professional standpoint—is just what it should be.

CECILY (*pettishly*). I don't know anything about architecture.

ROBERT (*cheerfully*). Better learn, then, for Dick talks it all the time. And this will be your home, you know.

CECILY. Oh, I just can't live here. I'm used to amusements—people—

ROBERT. You won't miss those things when you have—Dick.

CECILY. Dick can't take the place of—everything.

ANNE. Bob's teasing you, Cecily. You need not live an absolutely solitary life just because your home is here. It takes only a half hour to motor to the city—the roads are good—and—

CECILY. But it's so frightfully lonely.

ANNE. As Bob says—you'll have Dick.

CECILY. Dick surely won't be so selfish as not to think of my wishes.

RUTH. Dick is never selfish.

CECILY. And he can't expect me to be interested in the dry old things he's so crazy about.

RUTH. Dick deserves all that you can give him, Cecily, and more. Don't disappoint him.

CECILY. Seems to me, Ruth, that you're mightily concerned about Dick. Why didn't you appropriate him for yourself?

RUTH (*coming back of stage to CECILY*). Don't be



angry, Cecily. (*Sits on arm of chair.*) Dick is just like my brother, you know. (*Gaily.*) And as to appropriating him, what chance has a sober little moth by the side of a shining butterfly?

CECILY (*condescendingly*). Then why don't you liven up a bit? But I don't suppose you care for men—you sensible girls don't.

ROBERT (*who—with ANNE—has been reading paper*). There's been another robbery in this part of the country. That makes three right around us.

CECILY (*anxiously*). Not around *here*?

ROBERT. Sure. Clever chap, too. Doesn't leave a trace of his identity.

CECILY. It doesn't seem possible that anything can happen in this quiet place. One never hears a sound—(*shriek off L. All but CECILY rise.*)

ROBERT. What on earth is that? (*Rushes to L. and looks off stage.*) Some man knocked down by a car—woman driving, of course. (*Looks more closely.*) Great heavens—it's Alison! (*Turns.*) I'll bring him in here, Anne. Better get everything ready for a bad case—Alison does things thoroughly. (*Rushes off L.*)

ANNE (*at C.*). Oh, dear—I've been afraid of this! Alison's mind is a thousand miles away from that steering wheel—and she's too busy with a sonnet or a triolet to notice such unfortunate beings as pedestrians.

CECILY. I hate clever literary women—and so do the men.

ANNE (*crossing to CECILY.*) We won't stop to argue *that*. Ruth, find Kate and meet me in the south guest room. (*RUTH hurries off R.*) Cecily, telephone Dr. Brent—he's the nearest physician—and tell him to hurry.

CECILY (*pettishly, as she follows ANNE off R.*). Why couldn't she have run down a woman—men are so scarce.

*Stage clear for a moment. Then enter GREGORY supported on either side by ROBERT and ALISON.*

ROBERT. Too bad your welcome had to take this particular form, Gregory.

GREGORY. Hardly that. If it hadn't been for the intervention of fate I should have arrived just as any ordinary guest. *Now* I'm making a dramatic entry, and all my life I've been longing for a dramatic entry.

ALISON. It's charitable of you to call it the intervention of fate. Most men would have looked upon it as the interference of the devil.

ROBERT. Don't be so hard on yourself, Alison. (*As he carefully helps GREGORY to the swing.*) Rest here for a moment or two, old man, and I'll go ahead to prepare the hospital ward.

GREGORY. Don't make so much of it, Winton. The car simply struck me aside and as I fell my wrist doubled over. It's nothing but a sprain.

ROBERT. Or a break. For fear that it might be the latter, we'll take every precaution. Play nurse, Alison, until I get back. (*Exit R.*)

ALISON (*drawing stool to GREGORY'S right*). Can you ever forgive me? I know you can't, but I'd like to hear you say so just the same.

GREGORY. There's nothing to forgive, for, after all, it was my fault. I heard the car, but my eyes have been troubling me lately and I didn't gauge the distance in a proper fashion.

ALISON. How can you say such comforting things when your wrist is half killing you? (*As he protests.*) Oh, I know it *is!* I wish I could ease the pain and I did take a first aid course—but with my feeble intelligence

I'm more likely to give you the remedy for drowning than the proper treatment for a sprain.

GREGORY (*hastily*). Oh, don't try, please. (As ALISON *persists in tying handkerchief around wrist*.) And I wish you wouldn't bother.

ALISON. *Bother!* Why, when I saw you prostrate and realized that I had done the deed, my mind went through a kaleidoscopic contortion in which I saw myself arraigned in the court-room, confined in the jail and patiently waiting my sentence. I had just taken my place in the electric chair when you opened your eyes.

GREGORY. Then I'm glad I opened my eyes. Electric shocks are bad for a person.

ALISON. Well, I need a shock of some kind to bring me down to common sense.

GREGORY. But it wasn't your fault.

ALISON. It was St. Christopher's fault.

GREGORY. St. Christopher's?

ALISON. The patron saint of motorists. I've just fastened his insignia to my car—and this is the way he has served me. Which goes to prove that one should not place her trust in any man—even a saint.

GREGORY. Hasn't someone said substantially the same thing about a woman?

ALISON. And this from you—after all your other pretty speeches.

GREGORY. But I really don't believe it, Miss Page.

ALISON (*in surprise*). How do you know my name?

GREGORY. Even if I *am* a comparative stranger in this neighborhood, I've had the opportunity of hearing about Miss Page.

ALISON. I suppose you mean the police courts. I *have* been figuring there quite conspicuously of late.

GREGORY. My association with the name is something pleasanter. I've often seen it after charming essays and poems in the best periodicals.

ALISON. Oh, I'm sorry—

GREGORY. Sorry? Why?

ALISON. Because you'll think I'm too literary for you to like.

GREGORY. Nonsense.

ALISON. Oh, no it isn't. I spend most of my time trying to convince people that half my brain is pure bluff.

GREGORY. That's pretty hard to believe.

ALISON. Don't say that—for I want you to believe it.

GREGORY. But—why?

ALISON. Men don't like literary women.

GREGORY. Then I'm an exception to the rule.

ALISON. You're just saying that to be nice.

GREGORY. No, I'm not. I'm trying to tell you that literary lights are placed upon pedestals.

ALISON. But have you ever stopped to think that pedestals are awfully lonely?

GREGORY. They *are* a bit removed from the madding crowd.

ALISON. And I happen to be mad about the madding crowd.

GREGORY. Then how am I to regard you?

ALISON. As you would regard any girl whom you met—conventionally.

GREGORY. But you're not like the everyday girl—

ALISON. And you haven't met me—conventionally. Nevertheless—promise.

GREGORY. I promise. (*Extends left hand which she takes.*) And here's my hand on it!

*Enter ROBERT from R.*

ROBERT. Hospital all ready. (*As he advances.*) Since when is it customary for the nurse to hold the patient's hand?

ALISON. Since the beginning of time. It acts like a tonic. (*Rises.*)

GREGORY (*as ROBERT attempts to help him from the swing*). Don't make such an invalid of me, Winton. I'm perfectly able to navigate—and as soon as my wrist is looked after I'll be as right as a trivet.

KATE *enters from R., goes back of stage to table, where she arranges tray.*

ROBERT. Of course you will—but you'd better let me help you just the same. One can't be struck by a battering ram without being a little shaky. (*As they move off to R.*) Here, Alison, support the wounded member—and do try to keep off the victim's feet.

ALISON (*turning head*). Oh, Kate—will you bring my bag? I left it in the car.

KATE. Yes, Miss Alison. (*Exeunt ALISON, GREGORY and ROBERT.*)

*Enter DENNIS from L. with two bags belonging to ALISON and GREGORY.*

KATE (*sarcastically*). Well, if it ain't the Lord High Commander of the Navy! How'd Washington let you off?

DENNIS (*trying to pass her*). Let me by, Kate. I ain't here to quarrel.

KATE (*with a glance at the bags*). Leaving us, I reckon.

DENNIS (*putting down bags*). I wish I was—I sure wish I was—and off to some place where a girl knows how to treat a fellow what's risked his life for his country.

KATE. I ain't seeing that your risk has been worth talking about.

DENNIS. 'Course you ain't. What you wanted was for me to stop a shell and get spread out all over the Atlantic ocean.

KATE. Who's bag is that?

DENNIS. Miss Page's.

KATE. I'll take it.

DENNIS (*pointing to GREGORY'S bag*). Well, you won't take this one. It belongs to the guy what's just been run over.

KATE. He's here for the week-end.

DENNIS (*coming closer*). Say, is that right?

KATE. Of course it is.

DENNIS. Look here, Kate, have you been hearing anything about what's taking place around here?

KATE. What do you mean?

DENNIS. This here robbing of country places.

KATE. Of course I've been hearing it.

DENNIS. Any idea of who's doing it?

KATE (*turning aside*). I should say not. (*Walks to R.*)

DENNIS. Well, *I* have. (*Walks to L.*) But I reckon you ain't interested.

KATE (*returning to C.*). I'm interested all right—but I ain't putting too much confidence in your word. You always *did* guess wrong, Dennis.

DENNIS (*coming to her*). I ain't guessing—not this time. (*Points to bag.*) It's him—the man what owns this bag.

KATE. Oh, come now, Dennis, you're way off. What would he be doing here—in this house?

DENNIS. Doing just what he's been doing ever since

he got here three weeks ago—learning the lay of the land.

KATE. What made you pick *him* out?

DENNIS. Didn't the robberies start just three weeks ago? And ain't it natural to be leery of a fellow what nobody knows about, what's living to himself—what's keeping to himself—

KATE. He ain't keeping to himself now.

DENNIS. But he's coming here for a purpose—you just wait and see.

KATE. If he's that sort, I *won't* wait and see. I'll keep my eyes open.

DENNIS. And so will I. Maybe the two of us can catch him in the act.

KATE. Ain't it awful tame for you to be catching thieves after chasing submarines and breaking the hearts of all the parley-voos?

DENNIS. You've got the darndest tongue, Kate. (*Walks to L. and folds his arms.*) It ain't my fault if the women are crazy over me.

KATE. You ain't classing *me* with them, are you?

DENNIS (*coming close to her*). See here, Kate. I've stood a good deal from you and I've been pretty decent about it. That there sweater you sent me was so short that it wouldn't do for nothing but a chest protector, and the socks made my feet look like corduroy—and the fruit cake laid me flat on my back—but I ain't said a word and I've took the presents in the spirit which I ought to. (*Crosses again to L. and turns.*) You ain't got nothing on me.

*Enter ALISON and RUTH from R.*

KATE (*furiously stamping her foot*). Oh—ain't I?

RUTH. Kate! (*KATE turns.*) Take Miss Alison's bag to her room.

KATE. Yes, Miss Ruth. (*Exit R. with bag.*)

RUTH. And drive her car to the garage, Dennis.

DENNIS. Yes, Miss Ruth. (*Exit L.*)

ALISON (*as she and RUTH seat themselves in swing*).  
For a moment, Ruth, I thought I'd killed him—I really did. Manslaughter is the one excitement I need as a climax to my checkered career.

RUTH. That very thing will happen, Alison, unless there is a decided change in your method of driving. Oh, you needn't laugh—it's no laughing matter.

ALISON. Do you think I brought you out here in order to hear one of your perfectly nice little sermons, Ruth?

RUTH. Never for a moment. Nor am I stupid enough to imagine that you wanted to talk about motor-ing. You're camouflaging as usual.

ALISON (*mockingly*). "Oh, wise young judge."

RUTH. Now—what's the trouble?

ALISON. *Trouble!* Did you say *trouble*? My dear, there's no such thing in all the universe. I'm looking through rose-colored spectacles at the very nicest old world that ever happened.

RUTH. Then take them off and come back to a normal vision, and to common sense. (*Pauses.*) What is the matter with you?

ALISON (*drawing letter from pocket*). Look!

RUTH. Lawrence?

ALISON. Of course. Would anything else intoxicate me to the point of imbecility?

RUTH. He's—well?

ALISON. More than that. He's in New York.

RUTH. *Alison!* Then you're expecting him.

ALISON. Not until Christmas.

RUTH. Why not *now*?



ALISON. Because he's on his way to a western ranch to recuperate, to rest and forget the dreadful things he's seen.

RUTH. Do you realize that you've gone into this thing pretty far, Alison?

ALISON. I realized that fate offered me the opportunity of my life and that I took it.

RUTH. I don't believe in fate quite so strongly.

ALISON. But I do. No ordinary chance could have sent me the name of Lawrence Thomas, aviator, even for the customary war correspondence.

RUTH. I don't know that I approve of these war correspondences.

ALISON. It *does* depend upon the man at the other end, I grant.

RUTH. And such a proceeding is pretty apt to result in complications. Go slowly, Alison.

ALISON. I *have* gone slowly. It's been over a year since my first letter.

RUTH. He *does* write good letters.

ALISON. *Good* letters—they are *heavenly!*

RUTH. What about yours to him?

ALISON. They are heavenly, too. I *can* write good letters, if I do say it, as shouldn't.

RUTH. What does he say in this last letter?

ALISON (*opening letter.*) He says—he says—(*hesitates*) honest to goodness, Ruth, there isn't a line I can read you. It all belongs exclusively to me.

RUTH. Alison, please don't do anything foolish. When a girl has your brains—

ALISON (*rising and seating herself R. 2 E.*). I haven't any brains now, Ruth—just a heart.

RUTH. But people expect so much of you.

ALISON. Is that any reason why I shouldn't expect—just what any girl has a right to expect?

RUTH. But—Alison—

ALISON. It's no use to argue, Ruth. I'm crazily, overwhelmingly and irrevocably in love with Lawrence Thomas—and I'll never love any other man.

RUTH. Are you—sure?

ALISON. I was sure on the day when I heard of the splendid act of bravery which made him an ace—and which almost meant an end of his career.

RUTH. You're in love with his letters.

ALISON. No, I'm not. I know the man behind them.

RUTH. A man you've never seen! He may be very different from what you imagine.

ALISON. I'll take the risk.

RUTH. Somebody may have written the letters for him.

ALISON. Guess again.

RUTH. He may have a sweetheart.

ALISON. He has. Who knows better than I?

RUTH. Or a wife.

ALISON. That will come in time.

RUTH. Alison, I give you up. You're playing a dangerous game.

ALISON (*laughing*). And it looks as if the ace had taken the trick!

*Enter DORIS from L.*

DORIS. Hello, you people! (*RUTH and ALISON rise.*)

RUTH (*as she takes DORIS' hand*). Doris! How do you happen to be coming in at this gate—and where's Ted? (*DORIS greets ALISON.*)

DORIS. I'm coming in at this gate because the car broke down—way off there—(*points*) and Ted is squirming under the old thing trying to regulate its

internals. Lemonade! (*Crosses and seats herself on settee.*) Please give me some, for I'm so hot and dusty and tired and cross and—(*ALISON crosses to table.*) Maybe you think it's easy to pack two suit cases—and get an apartment all straightened out—and put out a notice for the milk man—and take down the ice card—and hide all the silver—and try to remember every single thing that Ted will need—and—why, when I used to go to house parties, the maid packed my clothes and all I had to do was to step into the car—and I didn't think even about myself—and—

*ALISON* (*handing her the lemonade*). Calm down, Doris, and get your breath. (*Goes back to seat R. 2 E.*)

*DORIS*. *Get my breath!* I haven't drawn a long one since the day Ted got in—I think I lost it on the way to the pier—and I don't mind telling you two that I was downright scared for fear I wouldn't recognize him. Oh, of course I had studied his picture and had tried to memorize it, but for the life of me I couldn't remember whether his eyes were brown or blue—no, I couldn't—and I have an idea he felt a little hazy about me—because he asked me to wear a red carnation. (*Drinks lemonade and places glass on table.*)

*RUTH*. You silly youngster! How could you expect anything else when you married him four days after you met him?

*DORIS*. Now don't begin any I-told-you-so lecture, Ruth. Of course you wouldn't understand the situation because you're so sensible—but there are mighty few girls who wouldn't have done just what I did. Why, my dear, Ted had given me the most heavenly time for those four days, and on that particular night—well—it was moonlight—and the air was full of lovely rose smells—and the dancing was perfect—and the music

was divine—and when Ted said we'd be married right away I couldn't have refused if I had wanted to! I've always found it very hard to say *no* to a man who proposed on a moonlight night.

RUTH. Oh, Doris—Doris—

DORIS. Then it was just the time when everybody was wearing a service pin and flying a service flag and getting letters with little red triangles on them—and I didn't see why I shouldn't enjoy it, too. And most of all it was the uniform—(*ecstatically*) the uniform!

ALISON. A service flag—a red triangle—and a uniform—splendid foundation for the structure of matrimony!

DORIS. I don't see what you mean by *that*, Alison. Ted and I are perfectly happy—or will be when we get acquainted.

RUTH. How is the cooking coming on?

DORIS. It isn't coming—it's going mostly to the garbage can. You know, this is the first cooking I've ever done—and I do think that Ted is a little unreasonable. Now I had a good lunch for him today—a nice, thick steak—(it *was* a bit tough but that wasn't my fault)—potatoes—(they weren't *very* hard)—peas—(you could hardly tell they were burnt)—and biscuits (of *course* I forgot to put the baking powder in them but they weren't so bad)—and what do you think he said?

ALISON. Something about mother's cooking, I suppose.

DORIS. No, indeed. I could have stood *that*; but what would *you* have done if your husband had sighed and said in a sort of plaintive way, "Oh, for a taste of trench cooking!"

ALISON. I should have told him to put on civilian clothes and to come back to home eatables.

DORIS. But I don't want him to put on civilian clothes.

RUTH. Why?

DORIS. Because he has always worn the uniform, and plain, everyday clothes might not be so becoming.

RUTH. But you can't expect him to keep it on forever.

DORIS. Time will adjust that difficulty.

ALISON. It strikes me that Father Time has his hands pretty full when it comes to you and Ted.

DORIS. I don't understand you, Alison, and if you're insinuating that Ted and I have made a mistake, you're all wrong. Just as soon as we get acquainted everything will be perfectly lovely.

*Enter TED from L. loaded with bags.*

TED (*putting down the bags*). Is this the reception committee? And what do you do to a guest who sneaks in at the back way?

RUTH (*as she shakes hands with him*). Make him just as welcome as if he had arrived in a prim and proper fashion.

ALISON. What was the matter with the car?

TED (*as he greets her*). Not a thing. Ran out of gas, that's all. (*Turns and comes to DORIS.*) I told you to remind me of that, Doris. (*Sits by her.*)

DORIS. And I had plenty to do without thinking of any old gasoline tank. Speaking of gasoline, I hope you haven't a spot on that uniform, Ted.

TED. Oh, well, what if I have? Its days of usefulness are almost over.

DORIS. *Ted!* Don't say that. I just can't bear for you to take it off.

TED. It's all right for you to respect the uniform, DORIS, but there's no use in carrying it to an extreme.

DORIS. But you wore it when I first met you, dear.

TED. All the more reason that I should let you see me in something else.

DORIS. But you might look different.

TED. Of course I'll look different. But why should *you* care? I'm the same.

DORIS. But I love you in that uniform, Ted.

TED. Can't you love me in civilian clothes? What's the matter with you, Doris?

DORIS. I'm worrying about the uniform.

TED. I'm the one who has to wear it.

DORIS. But I'm the one who has to look at you.

RUTH (*hastily*). It's good to be back, isn't it, Ted?

TED. Well—rather. (*As he puts arm about DORIS.*) And it's downright fun getting acquainted with my wife.

ALISON. So I should imagine. A regular Columbus-discovering-America experience.

DORIS. Well, he's not the only one who's been making discoveries. (*As she pulls pipe from his pocket.*) Ted, you never told me that you smoked a horrid, old, smelly pipe!

TED. You never told me about that messy boudoir cap, either.

DORIS. And as to your liking onions—*ugh!*

TED (*withdrawing his arm*). Liking onions is no worse than not being able to cook them.

DORIS. Suppose you help me with the cooking for a while.

TED. Doris, you have married a soldier—not a kitchen convenience!

RUTH. Such youngsters as you are! From your

talk an outsider might say that each had made a bad match of it.

DORIS. Nonsense. War matches are made in heaven.

ALISON. Not a bit of it. Too many of them smell of brimstone.

TED. When do you expect Dick?

RUTH. Almost any time. In fact, we've been looking for a telegram this very afternoon.

TED (*rising*). Great Scott! How could I forget it! (*Pulls telegram from pocket.*) Met the boy as I came along and told him I'd deliver the message and save him the trouble. Maybe it's the very one you're looking for.

RUTH (*rising*). Oh, I hope so! I'll take it to Bob—and the rest of you can follow at your leisure.

*As ROBERT appears from R.*

DORIS. Here comes Bob now. (*Rises.*) Gather up our bags, Ted, for we want to freshen up before dinner.

ROBERT (*crossing to DORIS.*) Greetings, Doris! How's the bride? And hello, Ted! (*Shakes his hand.*) Being the returned hero isn't half bad, is it? Well, we're glad to know that you're back, safe and sound and without a scratch!

TED (*grinning*). Aren't you forgetting the cooties?

RUTH (*handing ROBERT the telegram*). A telegram, Bob—see if it's from Dick, please.

ROBERT. Why, when did this come?

TED. About fifteen minutes ago. I took it from the messenger boy—then got sidetracked by the ladies—and forgot to deliver it until just now.

ROBERT (*as he opens it*). You'll excuse me?

DORIS. Excuse you—when we're just dying to know what's in it!

ROBERT (*as he reads it*). Great heavens!

RUTH. Oh, it's no bad news, is it, Bob?

ROBERT. I don't understand—here—read it, Ruth.

RUTH (*reads*). "Aimée and I will be with you to-night. You will all love her." It's signed—Dick. Who is Aimée, Bob?

ROBERT. I'm wondering myself.

DORIS. Do you suppose he has—married?

RUTH. *Married!* Impossible. Why—there's Cecily—and Dick wouldn't do so dishonorable a thing.

TED. Those French girls are pretty attractive.

DORIS. *Ted!*

TED (*hastily as he puts his arm about her*). And unless one is already married it is hard to escape.

ROBERT. Well, whoever it is, some one must drive to the station right away. Shall we all go in the house? Anne is waiting for us.

DORIS. Let's hurry. (ROBERT *takes one bag*, TED *another and the three go off stage at R.*)

ALISON (*rising*). Dick didn't mention any certain train, did he?

RUTH. No—but—

ALISON (*as they move to R.*). It looks to me as if Cecily had met her Waterloo.

RUTH (*indignantly*). Alison!

ALISON. Well, isn't it Dick who always does the unexpected? (*Exeunt ALISON and RUTH off R.*)

*The stage is clear and grows gradually darker. DICK enters at L. with AIMÉE. For a moment he gazes slowly around him and then advances to C.*

DICK. We're home, Aimée—home. Do you know what that means? (*To himself.*) I wonder if it's all a dream—if I'll wake up—over there—with the horrors around me and the sound of the everlasting guns in my ears. (*To AIMÉE.*) Poor, tired little kiddie! (*Lifts her*



*on swing.*) Shall we rest just a little before we go in to all the strange new faces?

RUTH *enters from R. unseen by DICK.*

DICK. You'll have friends now, dear,—real friends—and they'll make you the happiest little girl in the world.

AIMÉE. But I want *you*, Uncle Dicky.

DICK. Oh, you'll have me forever and ever. Why, you've adopted me, haven't you? (*She nods.*) And we're going to live here always and always—and you'll play where Uncle Dicky played when he was a little boy just like you.

AIMÉE. But I'm a little girl.

DICK (*laughing*). Why of course you are. Uncle Dicky's saying all sorts of funny things, isn't he? That's because he's so excited over getting home. (*Takes off her bonnet.*) *There!* Feel better? You've been the bulliest little pal a fellow ever had—a regular soldier—for you haven't cried a single time—and there's never been a whimper when Uncle Dicky pulled your hair the wrong way and got the buttons twisted. And we've come a long way together—you and I.

RUTH (*steps forward*). Dick!

DICK (*rising*). Ruth! Is it really *you*? Or just one of the dear familiar memories which have been with me for so long? (*Kisses her.*) This makes you real. You don't mind, do you? For you're part of the home I'm coming back to!

RUTH. Oh, Dick, it's so wonderful to have you here—to know that you're safe—and oh, we're very, very proud of you! (*As AIMÉE rises, goes to DICK and slips her hand in his.*) Who is this?

DICK. A little bit of France come back with me to stay.

RUTH. You mean—

DICK. That I shall keep her—

RUTH. Always?

DICK. Always. I couldn't do without her—now.

RUTH. It's a great responsibility, Dick.

DICK. And a greater privilege. Why, Ruth, she loves me—and any man is better and stronger for a child's faith.

RUTH (*drawing AIMÉE to her*). Shall we be friends, Aimée?

DICK. The best friends in the world, I'm hoping. Ruth, you'll love her—you can't help it—and—(*to AIMÉE*) listen, dear—she's the kind of friend who will always know where the hurt is—and who will always understand when other grown-ups don't. Won't you give her your hand, Aimée? (*The child looks at RUTH seriously for a moment—then smiles and puts out her hand. RUTH seats herself in the swing and lifts AIMÉE by her.*)

RUTH. Her parents?

DICK (*sitting by AIMÉE*). The mother went first. Loss of home and friends—and unaccustomed privations proved too much for her. The father—the finest type of a Frenchman—was near my company—and when he fell at Chateau Thierry I promised to take the child.

RUTH. Does she understand what we say?

DICK. Her mother was an American—so she has always spoken English. Poor little girl! Life hasn't been very kind to her—and she has seen so much that is terrible and grewsome that she is old beyond her years.

RUTH. Then we'll bring back the child vision, Dick. (*Kisses her.*) But to think of my keeping you here when the others—(*rises*).

DICK (*rising eagerly*). Bob—Anne—and the boy! Are they all—in—there? (*Goes back of swing.*)

RUTH (*laughing*). They've all gone to meet you, you foolish boy! (*Goes back of swing.*) Why did you send us that unsatisfactory telegram which never mentioned a train?

DICK. Did I do that? Well, I'm hardly responsible today—and when I found a man at the station who could give us a lift, I came as far as the cross roads and walked the rest of the way.

RUTH. War hasn't made you less of a boy, Dick.

DICK. But it has changed me into more of a man. One can't live in a topsy turvy universe without gaining a truer, wider viewpoint; one cannot look upon suffering and death without determining to be a part of that juster, better and happier world which will come from all this strife and agony. (*Pauses as he looks around.*) And after crashing guns and ringing steel, there *are* such things as roses—moonlight—romance—poetry—home—

RUTH. And love, Dick. (*Points off R.*) It's waiting for you—there.

DICK. You can't mean that Cecily—

RUTH. Oh, but I do—it's a real home-coming.

DICK. Cecily! I can't realize that I've come back to her. Why, Ruth, you don't know what the very thought of her has been to me—through everything. What her love, her sympathy, her—(*seizes RUTH's hands*) tell me, is she as wonderful as ever?

RUTH. Just as wonderful.

DICK. And is she still in love with me?

RUTH. You know she is.

DICK. And do you think that she'll be—oh, just a little proud of me?

RUTH. Of course she will.

DICK. You're the best friend a man ever had—you've always been—you've always had the knack of understanding me when others couldn't—and I don't know what I'd do without you, Ruth. (*Drops her hands.*)

RUTH (*pointing off R.*). Look!

DICK (*half to himself*). The only girl in the world! (*Calls.*) Cecily! (*Leaves the stage with outstretched hands.*)

AIMÉE (*starting to follow him*). I want to go, too.

RUTH. Not yet, dear. Won't you stay with me? (*Seats herself in swing with AIMÉE on her lap.*)

AIMÉE. But I want Uncle Dicky!

RUTH. Oh, baby—baby—I want him, too. (*Hides her face on AIMÉE's shoulder.*)

CURTAIN.

# THE REAL THING AFTER ALL

## THE SECOND ACT.

SCENE: RICHARD WINTON'S *den*—transformed by festoons of holly and mistletoe into a Christmas rendezvous. An arch C. in F. reveals hall beyond. Entrances down R. and L. Large glittering tree at L. U. E. Large desk L. 2 E. with several drawers, in one of which is a bottle of peroxide, antiseptic gauze and a needle book. Electrolier and telephone for desk. Desk chair and larger chair down L. Table at R. U. E. Mantel with candlesticks and box of cigarettes. Davenport placed diagonally. Settee at C. Hassock down C. Pictures, rugs, draperies for three entrances. Push button R. of C. in F. Secret panel in mantel revealing small aperture. Furniture should be colonial if possible.

Curtain rises on AIMÉE at tree and BOBBY at mantel, listening intently.

AIMÉE (*running to BOBBY*). Do you hear the reindeer?

BOBBY. I don't hear anything. Anyway, it's too early for Santa Claus.

AIMÉE. It's late. The stars are out.

BOBBY. Well, it isn't late enough for *him*. He won't come until the grown-ups go to bed.

AIMÉE. He'll bring me a dolly.

BOBBY. How do you know?

AIMÉE. Uncle Dicky says so.

BOBBY. Uncle Dicky doesn't know everything.

AIMÉE. Oh, yes he does.

BOBBY. Anyway, he's just an uncle and an uncle isn't as good as a daddy. (*As AIMÉE shrugs her shoul-*

*ders and smiles.*) Don't you try any of your French ways on *me*, Aimée.

*As DICK and CECILY enter from C. in F.*

BOBBY. Hello, Uncle Dick! We're looking for Santa Claus.

AIMÉE (*running to DICK at C.*). And—oh, please let me hang up my stockings right now, Uncle Dicky.

DICK (*tossing her up*). Of course you can hang up your stockings! We'll help—won't we, Cecily? It will be a regular lark.

CECILY (*who has crossed to davenport*). Well, it isn't my idea of a lark—and if you intend to take part in these nursery stunts, I'll go right back to the other room. They're going to dance, anyway.

DICK. Then we won't think of it, Cecily. (*AIMÉE crosses to CECILY and touches her gown.*)

CECILY. Don't touch my gown, Aimée. Dear me, Dick—she's always around—I never see you by yourself.

AIMÉE (*going to DICK*). Uncle Dicky—

CECILY. Aimée, he isn't your uncle. Call him Mr. Dick.

AIMÉE. But he *isn't* Mr. Dick.

DICK. Run over and play by the tree, dear—just for a little while—and then we'll hang the stockings. (*AIMÉE obeys.*) (*To BOBBY.*) Go with her, old scout! (*BOBBY joins AIMÉE at tree, where they play quietly.*)

CECILY (*sitting on davenport*). Sometimes I think you love that child better than you love me.

DICK (*going around back of the davenport*). You know better than that—now don't you? (*Sitting by her.*) Now don't you?

CECILY. Don't look at me—like that.

DICK. What other fellow has the right to look at you—like that?

CECILY (*softly*). I don't want any other fellow to have the right.

DICK (*with his arm about her*). Cecily!

CECILY. Be careful of my dress, Dick. It's a part of my trousseau.

DICK. That trousseau has made me wait three months and I won't stand it another moment. (*Draws her close.*) Cecily—suppose you tell me—when!

CECILY. When—*what?*

DICK. You know what I mean.

CECILY. Then—any time you say.

DICK. Do you mean it? If you do, we'll turn Christmas bells into wedding chimes—holly berries into orange blossoms—and force our loving relatives to offer congratulations instead of greetings.

CECILY. Tomorrow? Oh, I can't!

DICK. There's no such word. (*Rises.*)

CECILY (*rising*). Then—I won't. What would people say?

DICK. Do we care what people say?

CECILY. Lots. *I* do. Anyway, I want a church wedding.

DICK (*pleadingly*). Cecily!

CECILY. Why not? I might as well get some presents in return for all I've given.

DICK (*happily*). But we won't need any presents—we can buy them for ourselves. (*Crosses to C.*) Why, I have the purse of Fortunatus, the lamp of Aladdin—the touch of Midas!

CECILY (*sitting on davenport*). Don't be so silly, Dick. You act like a boy.

DICK. I *am* a boy—a wild and hilariously happy

boy. (*Leaning over back of davenport*). Cecily—I won it!

CECILY. Won—*what?*

DICK. The prize.

CECILY. What prize?

DICK. The Civic Prize—for the Auditorium designs. How could you forget? Why, I've slaved and worked and dreamed over it for weeks.

CECILY. And you won?

DICK. I won—twenty-five thousand dollars.

CECILY. Twenty-five thousand dollars! Think of what it will buy!

DICK. And think—how it symbolizes my success—how it marks a beginning, a promise of things to be.

CECILY. Don't feel so encouraged that you won't make any further effort. Twenty-five thousand dollars won't last forever.

DICK. I'm not thinking of the dollars—only of that intangible, imaginative part of me which has gone into the work. Why, Cecily, it embodies my dreams, my ambitions, the beauty-loving soul of me that must find expression. There's a fascination in architecture—a—

CECILY (*pettishly*). Don't let's talk about architecture. I don't understand it and I'm not interested.

DICK. Not interested? You surely don't mean that, Cecily? Architecture is my chosen profession; it means my future and yours.

CECILY. And I don't see why you chose it as a profession. There's too much risk attached to it. Why didn't you go into stocks and bonds and make money in a quicker way?

DICK (*crossing back of davenport*). I can't quite see myself in stocks and bonds. (*Sits by her.*) I'm



sorry you're not interested—and I can see that you do not understand.

CECILY. What is there to understand?

DICK. Merely my natural craving for sympathy—comradeship—appreciation. Don't bother about it.

CECILY. But I do appreciate your winning the prize, Dick. You're the one who does not understand. (*Pauses and leans toward him.*) Now we can buy a new house, can't we?

DICK (*after a moment*). Will you say that again?

CECILY. A new house! Surely you can't expect me to live in this old-fashioned place.

DICK. I've never thought of it as old-fashioned. The happiest years of my life have been spent here—and, someway, Cecily, I've dreamed of its being to you what it is to me.

CECILY (*rising*). I hate it.

DICK (*rising*). Don't say that.

CECILY (*walking to C.*). For I've had my dreams, too; and they've centered around a city house where we could give smart little parties, dine out in the evening—and always have something going on.

DICK (*standing back of her*). I'm not that sort of a fellow, Cecily. I love my home.

CECILY. You're selfish, Dick; you're not thinking of me. Here I've just promised to marry you right away—and you refuse the very first thing I ask you.

DICK (*with his arm around her*). You shall have your city home, Cecily—so there. You know that my very first thought is to make you happy. (*Children advance to C.*)

BOBBY. Doesn't Santa Claus come after the grown-ups go to bed, Uncle Dick? (*AIMÉE stands by DICK and slips her hand into his.*)

DICK. Of course he does. He lets the grown-ups trim the tree, but he does the rest.

CECILY (*to* AIMÉE). Can't you keep your hands off Dick, Aimée? (*Crossing to davenport.*) Anyway, he doesn't love you half so much as he loves me. (*Sits.*)

DICK. Cecily! How can you say it?

CECILY. Well, you don't—you know you don't. (*AIMÉE walks to L. and turns her head aside.*)

DICK. Aimée? (*She does not answer.*) Aimée? (*Still she does not answer. He goes to her.*) You love Aunt Anne, don't you dear? And Bobby? And Aunt Ruth? But you love Uncle Dicky in a different sort of way, don't you? Of course you do—and that's the way Uncle Dicky loves you. Now do you see—and is it all right? (*AIMÉE smiles and puts her arms around his neck.*)

CECILY. Well, *I* want to dance. (*Rises.*)

DICK. And I'll go with you, Cecily. (*They cross to C. in F.*)

*Enter* MISS WARD *from R., followed by* DENNIS *with punch bowl.*

MISS WARD (*pointing to table*). Place it there, Dennis. (*He obeys.*) The young people are dancing—and will soon be ready. (*As she sees* DICK *and* CECILY.) Why, Dick, why aren't you in the other room with your house party?

DICK. We're going this minute, Aunt Ellen. By the way, there'll be another guest tomorrow—a man I met overseas. Can you put him up all right?

MISS WARD. Of course I can.

DICK. I just heard this afternoon or I should have told you sooner.

MISS WARD. There's a room all ready for a last mo-

ment arrival. Taking care of you all these years, Dick, has prepared me for emergencies.

DICK. That's bully of you. And I've been an awful nuisance, Aunt Ellen.

MISS WARD (*patting his shoulder*). You've more than made up for it in other ways, Dick. Now run along and play host.

CECILY (*impatiently at C. in F.*). I'm waiting.

DICK. Coming, Cecily. (*Exeunt DICK and CECILY.*)

MISS WARD (*at C.*). There are two plates of ice cream on the dining-room table—and some pretty little cakes. I wonder who wants them.

BOBBY and AIMÉE (*clapping hands*). We do! We do!

BOBBY. Are they for us, Aunt Ellen?

MISS WARD. Suppose you find out before anybody else has a chance.

BOBBY. Come on, Aimée. (*Exeunt BOBBY and AIMÉE at R.*)

MISS WARD. I won't need you any longer, Dennis, but I do want you to open the box which you'll find in the back hall. It's full of holly and mistletoe and I'll need some for the mantel.

DENNIS. Yes, Miss Ellen.

MISS WARD. Mistletoe at Christmas time comes in handy—even for you, Dennis.

DENNIS (*grinning*). I ain't forced to depend on mistletoe altogether, Miss Ellen.

MISS WARD. It may help out, just the same. (*As DENNIS lingers.*) Well, what is it?

DENNIS (*coming to C.*). Have you heard the news?

MISS WARD (*seating herself at desk*). Dear me! What news? So much comes under that head these days.

DENNIS (*whispering*). The robbery!

MISS WARD. Oh, Dennis—Dennis! The robberies

were three months back. In this galloping age that is ancient history.

DENNIS. But it wasn't three months ago. It was last night.

MISS WARD (*sharply*). What's that?

DENNIS. Last night—and not far from here.

MISS WARD. Has the thief been caught?

DENNIS. Not a sign of him. He's clever enough to make a get-away, every time. (*Pauses.*) Say, Miss Ellen?

MISS WARD. Well?

DENNIS. Does it strike you queer that there was a let-up of three months—and now it's started up again?

MISS WARD. I don't see anything so queer about it. It may not be the same person.

DENNIS. It's the same person all right. And it's somebody who knows all about this neighborhood.

MISS WARD. Whose home was robbed?

DENNIS. The Hamilton's.

MISS WARD. Why, Mr. Gregory was there last night for dinner.

DENNIS. Of course he was. And he came here this afternoon, didn't he?

MISS WARD. Certainly. What has that to do with it?

DENNIS. A lot, I'm thinking. The jewels weren't missed until this morning.

MISS WARD. You're not daring to insinuate—

DENNIS. Now what do you know about him, Miss Ellen?

MISS WARD. Dennis, we've brought you up and we look upon you as one of the family; but I really don't believe that gives you the right to cast suspicion on a guest.

DENNIS. I don't mean it that way, Miss Ellen,—

you know I don't. I just don't want anything to happen—here.

MISS WARD. Of course you don't; but I think it is hardly necessary to play Sherlock Holmes. (*Pauses.*) You'll find the box in the back hall; after you've unpacked it, bring some of the holly and mistletoe here.

DENNIS. Yes, Miss Ellen. (*Exit at R.*)

MISS WARD (*to herself*). I wonder.

*As DORIS enters from C. in F.*

MISS WARD. Well, Doris, has the matrimonial noose tightened? You look it.

DORIS. Now, Miss Ward, don't you begin to lecture me about marrying Ted four days after I met him.

MISS WARD. Bless your heart, child, I quite approve of your course.

DORIS. You're the very first to say *that*.

MISS WARD. Marriage is a lottery at the best; watchful waiting doesn't always help; and the longer I live the more I'm inclined toward a matrimonial draft law. There wouldn't be half so many mistakes, I'm thinking. (*As DORIS looks around.*) Well, what do you want?

DORIS. A pin. Do you happen to have any?

MISS WARD (*handing her one*). I have everything from a pin to a Red Cross emergency kit. What's torn?

DORIS (*sighing*). My dress. (*As she takes the pin.*) Here, I'll fix it. Since I've had all of Ted's clothes to keep in order, I haven't had time to look after my own. And I've never sewed in all my life.

MISS WARD. Marriage is quite an education, isn't it?

DORIS. I shouldn't call it that. Were you ever disappointed in love, Miss Ward? (*Sits in chair down L.*)

MISS WARD. Disappointed in love—or in lovers? There's a difference.

DORIS (*reflectively*). And what one thinks is a really true lover may turn out to be only a boarder whom she can't please.

MISS WARD. Evidently the cooking is bothering you again.

DORIS. *Again?* It's never stopped. Oh, Miss Ward, is it true that eating comes first with a man?

MISS WARD. I'm afraid so. It's a wise virgin who never forgets the alcohol in her chafing dish.

DORIS (*weeping*). Oh, dear—oh, dear—oh, dear!

MISS WARD. Is it as bad as that?

DORIS. It's worse. Miss Ward, I don't believe that Ted loves me any more.

MISS WARD. Nonsense.

DORIS. But it isn't nonsense.

MISS WARD. What makes you think so?

DORIS. He's different; and he's lost so many of the pretty little ways he had before I married him.

MISS WARD. Meaning lover-like demonstration, I suppose. Well, dear, he's probably put them away in camphor and moth-balls. He's your husband, now.

DORIS. But I'm horribly in love with him.

MISS WARD. Of course—and he probably is with you. If you both live through this period of readjustment, you'll find each other.

DORIS. But what can I do?

MISS WARD. Don't notice him for a while. A touch of indifference works wonders. And then—make him jealous.

DORIS. How?

MISS WARD. Flirt with somebody. Surely you still have that weapon left you.

DORIS. There's nobody to flirt with. Everybody's married or engaged.

MISS WARD. Since when has that been an obstacle? Have you tried Mr. Gregory?

DORIS. He won't look at anybody but Alison.

MISS WARD. Have you given him a chance?

DORIS. No—(suddenly) but I will. (*Rising and walking to C. in F.*) Good gracious, Miss Ward, here comes Ted. (*Tragically.*) Oh, he mustn't find me here. (*Rushes wildly about.*)

MISS WARD (*rising*). Why not? You're in perfectly respectable company. You act like the tragic heroine of a dime novel, Doris.

DORIS. But I don't want to see him.

MISS WARD. Then go out that back door. And remember what I told you to do.

DORIS. You—just—watch—me! (*Exit at R.*)

*Enter TED dejectedly from C. in F.*

MISS WARD (*seating herself*). What can I do for you, merry sunshine?

TED. You don't happen to have a needle and thread handy, do you, Miss Ward?

MISS WARD (*opening drawer and taking out needle book*). Why of course. I always prepare for emergencies at a dance. What's the trouble?

TED (*holding out arm*). A button loose. Would you mind tightening it? (*Sighs.*) Doris doesn't seem to have time to look after me.

MISS WARD (*as she sews the button*). Nonsense. She's probably overlooked just this particular button.

TED (*gloomily*). It isn't the first time it's happened. (*Sighs.*) Miss Ward, do you believe that marriage is a failure?

MISS WARD. I'm hardly the one to venture an opinion, am I?

TED (*in embarrassment*). Good gracious—I forgot—I'm sorry—

MISS WARD (*laughing*). Don't apologize. Married and unmarried people waste a great deal of time being sorry for each other. (*Pauses.*) Come—what's the trouble?

TED. Doris. She's tired of me, I think.

MISS WARD. Ridiculous!

TED. No, it isn't ridiculous. She's lost so many of the pretty little ways she had before I married her.

MISS WARD. Of course you've kept all your pretty little ways.

TED. I've tried to. (*After a moment.*) Just what do you mean, Miss Ward?

MISS WARD. Well, for example. Are you still the dashing and devoted lover?

TED. Well—you see—I—

MISS WARD. That question's answered. Next—how often do you tell her that you love her?

TED. But we're married now.

MISS WARD. Do you praise her cooking?

TED. Heavens! How can I? Could you be satisfied with a cup of broth and a salad of three lettuce leaves when your very soul was crying for roast beef and potatoes?

MISS WARD. It isn't fair to ask *me* questions. Last of all, what are you going to do about it?

TED. What *can* I do? I'm awfully in love with Doris and—if she turns me down—(*paces up and down*).

MISS WARD. Don't get excited. She isn't on the way to the divorce court yet. (*Rises.*) Do you really want to keep her interested?

TED. I've got to keep her interested.



MISS WARD. Then—flirt with somebody else. Make her jealous.

TED. *Flirt?* I've forgotten how.

MISS WARD. Doubtless the gift will return. Try it and see.

FIFI *appears at C. in F., walking back and forth.*

TED. By Jove, I will. (*As he sees FIFI.*) Say, Miss Ward, who is that classy little maid out there?

MISS WARD. You needn't practice on *her*. She's Aimée's new French nurse and is distinguished by the august name of Fifi.

TED. She's a peach, all right.

MISS WARD. She's a fluff of nothingness. (*Comes to TED at C.*)

TED. A *new* maid, you say?

MISS WARD. She's just come. Dick took a wild notion that Aimée must not forget her French—and *this* is the result. Proper credentials and all—but I haven't much faith in her type. (*Calls.*) Fifi! (*To TED.*) She might as well get to work.

*Enter FIFI from C. in F.*

FIFI (*coming down L.*). Madame—a-t-elle appelé?

MISS WARD. Can't you speak English?

FIFI. Je ne comprends pas l'anglais—vairy much. Mais Madame—parle-t-elle le français?

MISS WARD. Well, I'm not intending to speak it now. You'll understand my English, I think. (*Points to table.*) Punch. (*Points to glasses.*) Serve (*points off stage*) people. (*FIFI comes back stage to punch bowl.*) Come along, Ted. (*Starts to C. in F.*)

FIFI (*coyly offering TED a glass of punch*). Monsieur? (*TED starts toward her.*)

MISS WARD (*sharply*). No—monsieur doesn't care

for any. (*To TED.*) We'll join the others. (*As MISS WARD and TED go off the stage at C. in F. he turns and smiles at FIFI.*)

*Enter DENNIS from R. with holly and mistletoe.*

DENNIS. Well—look who's here.

FIFI (*clasping hands*). L'Americain!

DENNIS. Bong jour, Frenchy.

FIFI. C'est bon soir, n'est-ce-pas?

DENNIS. Can't you speak any English?

FIFI. Je ne comprends pas l'anglais—vairy much.  
(*Comes to C.*)

DENNIS. But I can talk with my eyes—can you? Parley—(*points*) eyes?

FIFI. Oui, oui, monsieur.

DENNIS. Wait just a minute. (*Takes book from pocket.*) Oh, darn it all. (*Turns pages rapidly.*) This tells you how to order oysters—and buy a cigarette—and get a hair cut—but it don't say a thing about getting acquainted with a pretty girl.

FIFI (*clasping hands*). Vous etes un beau marin—Vous combattez pour la patrie, vous—

DENNIS (*coming closer*). Hold on a minute, cherie—you don't mind if I call you cherie, do you?

FIFI. Oh, non—non, monsieur.

DENNIS (*taking sprig of mistletoe*). Do you know what this means?

*Enter KATE at C. in F. unseen by either.*

FIFI. Un baiser, n'est-ce-pas?

DENNIS (*holding mistletoe over her*). I don't know what *baiser* is, but I can show you all about this. (*Leans over.*)

KATE (*coming down L.*). Oh, can you? Mr. Winton ain't paying you to do any demonstrating work like

that as far as I know. Get busy and put that holly on the mantel. Miss Ellen sent me to help you. (*Turns to FIFI.*) And as for you, Fifi, or whatever your silly name is—Miss Aimée wants you. *Aimée!* (*As FIFI starts out C. in F.*) No—not that way—(*points*) the back door. (*FIFI hurries to R., turns, smiles archly at DENNIS and goes out.*)

KATE (*as they arrange holly and mistletoe on mantel*). Somebody else to fly a service flag, I reckon.

DENNIS. What's it to you?

KATE. Nothing—nothing at all.

DENNIS. Pity a fellow can't be nice and friendly to a strange little French girl without all this fuss.

KATE. There's no use in overdoing the friendliness.

DENNIS. People kiss a lot in France.

KATE. Oh, *do* they? Well, this ain't France. (*Crosses to L.*) And if she's a croquette, I don't think much of them.

DENNIS (*following her*). Say, Kate, Gregory's here—ain't he?

KATE. There you go again—still harping on that old robbery after making me snoop around in other people's affairs.

DENNIS. It ain't an old robbery—it's a new one.

KATE. Just the same—you can count me out.

DENNIS. Do you mean that you won't help?

KATE. That's exactly what I mean—and you'd better give it up, too, Dennis; for if it happened to be a lady robber you'd never have the heart to arrest her.

DENNIS. Well, *I'm* going to keep my eyes open.

KATE. And so am I. But I'm not trailing that robber any more; I'm fixing my gaze on that foreign creature with the cat name. She'll bear watching.

*Enter ALISON hurriedly from C. in F.*

ALISON. Where's Miss Ward?

KATE. She's upstairs. Anything I can do for you, Miss Alison?

ALISON. Do you know if there's any antiseptic gauze around?

KATE (*opening drawer*). Right here in the table drawer, Miss Alison. Miss Ellen keeps it handy on account of the children. Here's some peroxide, too. (*Takes gauze and peroxide from drawer.*) Hurt yourself?

ALISON. No. I've just torn open Mr. Gregory's finger with this pin—and he's trailing blood drops promiscuously.

*As GREGORY enters from C. in F.*

ALISON. Once more, Tom, you are saved by timely aid. Help me, Kate, will you? (*As they bind up his finger.*) That's not half bad.

KATE. Anything else, Miss Alison?

ALISON. I think not. Thanks a lot.

KATE. Then Dennis and I will be moving on. (*Crosses to R.*)

ALISON (*seating herself at C.*). Had any luck with the mistletoe, Dennis?

DENNIS (*gloomily*). I ain't having luck of any kind these days, Miss Alison. And I can't see much light ahead.

ALISON. That's a sign that you're about to turn a corner. Wait for the New Year. (*Exeunt DENNIS and KATE at R., DENNIS gazing searchingly at GREGORY.*)

GREGORY. Why does that fellow favor me with his scrutiny? When I'm near him he never takes his eye off of me.

ALISON. He's probably wondering how you've es-

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caped the catastrophes which I've heaped upon you. Most people regard you as a doomed creature.

GREGORY. You *have* been very generous with your souvenirs, Alison. (*Sits by her.*)

ALISON. Haven't I? Our first meeting was made memorable by the sprain; then we went rowing—and I upset the boat. As soon as your wrist was better, I sent you a golf ball that made you limp for a week; and now I'm responsible for your shedding life blood over your perfectly nice handkerchief.

GREGORY. What's left for me?

ALISON. Well, we're having target practice tomorrow; perhaps I can shoot you.

GREGORY. Don't aim at my heart—you've already damaged that.

ALISON (*rising*). Now, Tom, cut out the sentimental part. It doesn't go with us. (*Crosses to punch bowl.*) Here—have some punch; it may revive you. (*Hands him glass of punch.*)

GREGORY. Sure it isn't poisoned? (*Drinks.*)

ALISON. Sure. I didn't make it.

GREGORY (*handing glass to her*). Thanks. One compensation for being wounded is—being waited upon.

ALISON (*returning to settee*). Your guardian angel should sound a note of warning whenever I drag you to the precipice of destruction. But, maybe you haven't a guardian angel. (*Sits.*)

GREGORY. They're rather out of style, aren't they? I'd prefer somebody more tangible to caution me.

ALISON. What do you mean?

GREGORY. Nothing—in particular. I was just thinking of a former pal who used to warn me by saying, "Have a cigarette, Tom."

ALISON. Warn you?

GREGORY. At various times in my life I've been in—danger, we'll say. These few words always put me on my guard—and oftentimes saved me.

ALISON. But why these particular words?

GREGORY. I once saw a play in which the hero was saved from dire peril by the use of this ordinary and commonplace expression. We—my pal and I—were impressed, and adopted it as a signal.

ALISON. I'm interested. You've never told me about yourself.

GREGORY. You've never asked.

ALISON. You might know that I'd be dying to hear.

GREGORY. The fates have never given me the gift of reading the feminine mind, Alison.

ALISON. What danger were you in?

GREGORY. Oh, every man at some time or other finds himself in a tight place. Whether he escapes or not depends upon his own nerve and—

ALISON. The friendly warning.

GREGORY. Exactly.

ALISON. I'll help you out with that. Hereafter, when deadly distress may encompass you, you'll hear my clarion voice resounding with—"Have a cigarette, Tom."

GREGORY. Thanks. (*Pauses.*) It's worth the risk of a danger if there could be a chance of your saving me.

ALISON (*rising*). Alison in the role of a life saver! Tom, your sense of humor is undeveloped. (*Crosses and sits on arm of davenport.*)

GREGORY (*following her*). Look here, Alison. The time has come—

ALISON (*mockingly*). "The walrus said—to talk of many things." Don't be silly, Tom.

GREGORY. I was never more serious. And you're going to hear what I have to say.

ALISON. Not unless I want to!

GREGORY. But you want to!

ALISON. Of course I want to. Go on.

GREGORY. Very well. Will you marry me?

ALISON. Is this a proposal?

GREGORY. Sounds like it.

ALISON. Dear me! I didn't recognize it. With impassioned love one naturally expects fervent oratory, tender glances and a throbbing pulse. You haven't a symptom.

GREGORY. That's because I'm in love with a literary genius instead of a flesh and blood girl.

ALISON. Don't call me a literary genius. It makes me furious.

GREGORY. That's why I used the term.

ALISON. Sometimes I think I hate you, Tom Gregory.

GREGORY. But you really don't. On the other hand, you love me.

ALISON (*rising*). How dare you?

GREGORY. Why you loved me ever since that day you knocked the breath out of me.

ALISON. It isn't so.

GREGORY. Oh, yes, it is; and I've known that you were—mine—from the very first; with every physical torture you inflicted upon me, I grew surer of the fact.

ALISON. I never heard so matter-of-fact a lover. (*Crosses to settee.*)

GREGORY (*following her*). Then say the word and you may have the fervent oratory, the tender glances—and a lot of other things thrown in.

ALISON (*as she seats herself*). Let's talk common sense, Tom.

GREGORY. Agreed. (*Stands at her right.*)

ALISON. You're the best pal in the world. Why I don't mind telling you that never in my life have I been so happy as in these three months of our comradeship.

GREGORY. We like the same books; we enjoy the same things; we have the same ideas. In your own words, that is the safest basis for matrimony.

ALISON. Yes, but I can't marry you.

GREGORY. Would you mind telling me why?

ALISON. First, I don't know anything about you.

GREGORY. But, my dear girl, there's nothing to tell. I've lived the life of the average American man with no spectacular details.

ALISON. That doesn't quite satisfy.

GREGORY. Then—next?

ALISON. You haven't helped to win the war, and I could never marry a man who had failed to serve.

GREGORY. Perhaps I've helped—in a way you don't suspect. (*Crosses to L. back of settee.*)

ALISON. Then—tell me about it.

GREGORY (*coming down L.*). I can't—just yet. Isn't my word sufficient?

ALISON. I'm afraid not.

GREGORY. Is there anything else?

ALISON. Yes. I'm in love with another man.

GREGORY (*after a pause*). Do I know him?

ALISON. No. I don't know him myself.

GREGORY. *What?*

ALISON. I've just corresponded with him. He's an American aviator.

GREGORY. Is he in this country?

ALISON. Yes.



GREGORY. Where?

ALISON. I don't know.

GREGORY. Why don't you know?

ALISON. He hasn't written lately.

GREGORY. And you've never seen him?

ALISON. Never.

GREGORY (*coming closer*). You mean to say that you're in love with a man you've never seen—who doesn't even write to you—and who hasn't cared enough to hunt you up?

ALISON. You have no right to speak like that.

GREGORY. Oh, yes, I have; and if *he* is all I have to fight I'll win out. (*Pauses.*) I'll win out, anyway.

ALISON. But I don't love you.

GREGORY (*leaning over back of settee*). I'm not so sure of that, Alison. Listen. In days of old, people believed in signs—and waited for them. Some day—soon—a sign will come to me—(*places hand over hers which rests on back of settee*) and when it does—I'll know.

*Enter RUTH at L. with BOBBY and AIMÉE.*

RUTH. Oh, dear! Are we intruding?

ALISON (*rising*). Not a bit of it. We're the ones who are intruding if stockings are to be hung.

GREGORY. Anyway, it's our dance, Alison. (*As they dance off at C. in F.*) Keep that pin away from me.

BOBBY (*running to farther side of mantel*). I want to hang my stocking on this side of the mantel. I drove the nails right here.

RUTH. Then shall we take the other side, Aimée? (*As the children hang the stockings.*) Now! All ready for Santa Claus! (*Seats herself on davenport with BOBBY on her right and AIMÉE on her left.*)

BOBBY. Has anybody ever seen Santa Claus, Aunt Ruth? I mean the real Santa Claus.

RUTH. Nobody has ever seen him—but everybody's listened to him.

BOBBY. *Listened to him?*

RUTH. Of course. Haven't you noticed that at Christmas time everybody tries to do something for everybody else?

BOBBY. Yes—

RUTH. Well, that's because they listen to Santa Claus.

BOBBY. Does Santa Claus tell us to think of other people?

RUTH. He sends his little fairy to tell us. The fairy's name is Christmas Spirit and she whispers just three little words—and the three little words are—“Make somebody happy.”

BOBBY (*putting his arm around her neck*). Then the fairy must whisper to you all the time, Aunt Ruth. You're always making somebody happy.

RUTH. Oh, Bobby dear, I wish I could!

*Enter DICK from C. in F.*

DICK. Hello—am I in on this party? (*AIMÉE leaves RUTH and rushes to him.*)

RUTH. Aimée has answered that question, hasn't she? Whenever you appear, I'm deserted.

DICK (*seating himself on hassock and drawing AIMÉE to him*). Stockings all hung? What do you suppose Santa Claus expects to put into them?

AIMÉE. A doll baby.

DICK. Of course.

BOBBY (*who is lying before fire*). And a soldier suit just like yours, Uncle Dick.

DICK. That's pretty big for a stocking, old fellow. I wonder if Santa Claus won't put it under the tree.

AIMÉE. What will there be on the tree for me?

DICK. Oh, there will be a shining star of good fortune, a feather from the bluebird of happiness, a golden link from the chain of friendship, all the thistle down of childish dreams—and, last of all, the glimmering, shimmering star dust of love!

AIMÉE (*after a pause*). Uncle Dicky?

DICK. Yes?

AIMÉE. Why don't you say something like a doll baby?

DICK. Why, darling, there'll be dozens of them—and anything else you wish.

RUTH. Oh, Dick—Dick—such a disciplinarian!

DICK. Well, her first Christmas with me shall be a happy one if I can make it so. (*Rises.*) May I stay here for a moment?

RUTH. If our little corner isn't too quiet after all the Christmas fun—out there.

DICK (*as he sits by RUTH with AIMÉE in his lap.*) It's quiet that I love. (*To BOBBY, who has been gazing thoughtfully into the fire.*) What are you thinking about, old man?

BOBBY. The Spirit of Christmas.

DICK. Who is the Spirit of Christmas?

RUTH. Santa Claus' emissary, Dick.

BOBBY. And she tells everybody to make somebody else happy.

DICK. Christmas Day is the time to find happiness, Bobby.

BOBBY. Then why doesn't everybody find it?

RUTH. We can't always explain that, dear. Sometimes a person's happiness is so near that he can't see it.

BOBBY. Just like the bluebird in the play?

RUTH. Exactly. Suppose we make a wish tonight, Bobby, a wish that the Spirit of Christmas may help everybody to find the happiness which is—nearest him.

BOBBY. That's a beautiful wish—isn't it, Uncle Dick?

DICK. Just the kind of a wish Aunt Ruth would make. Let's make another wish that this wish will come true.

RUTH (*laughing*). How serious we're getting—and on this jolly Christmas Eve.

DICK. It *is* a jolly Christmas Eve, isn't it? Snow without—an open fire—good friends—light hearts—and—

RUTH. Memories! Oh, Dick, the house is so full of them. Why, I've been thinking tonight how many children must have hung their stockings before this very fireplace; how many loves, griefs, joys have passed into the Long Ago; how many happy ghosts of other days must watch us here, tonight. Oh, Dick, it's wonderful to live with memories!

DICK. Ruth—does it mean *that* to you?

RUTH. It means—everything—to me. I don't wonder that your brain creates such beautiful things with—this—as an inspiration; I don't wonder that the prize came to you.

DICK (*eagerly*). Anne told you?

RUTH. Yes. And we're so very happy about it.

DICK (*thoughtfully*). Twenty-five thousand dollars!

RUTH. The work isn't measured by money, Dick. One thinks only of the *you* that it symbolizes—the effort, the ambition, the hopes—

DICK. And the dreams, Ruth. So many dreams are a part of it.

RUTH. Every beautiful thing has its beginning in a dream.

DICK (*as he puts his hand on hers*). How—you—understand.

*Enter ROBERT and ANNE from C. in F.*

ANNE. We're looking for a somebody by the name of Bobby! (*They come down C.*)

BOBBY (*running to her*). Oh, mother, it isn't bedtime—please say it isn't bedtime!

ANNE. Why it's way past bedtime, dear.

BOBBY (*going to ROBERT*). Daddy—don't make me go. Why, there's just one Christmas Eve in all the year. (*ANNE draws hassock to right of davenport and seats herself.*)

ROBERT. But look here, sonny. It's almost time for Santa Claus—and he can't come until you're asleep.

BOBBY. Aimée and I want to watch for him.

ROBERT. I don't think that's quite fair to the old fellow, do you? If he wanted you to see him he'd come in the daytime.

BOBBY. But he wouldn't know we were watching. We'd keep very quiet.

ROBERT. Do you suppose you can hide anything from Santa Claus? Come now,—dad will go with you.

BOBBY. And tell me a story?

ROBERT. As many as you like.

BOBBY. Then it's all right, I guess. (*Runs to ANNE.*) Goodnight, mother.

ANNE (*as she kisses him*). I'm coming in a few minutes, dear. You don't suppose I'd let anybody else tuck you in on Christmas Eve, do you?

*Enter FIFI from L.*

BOBBY. Here comes Fifi. Now Aimée will have to go, too.

ROBERT. Then we'll go on ahead. (*Exeunt ROBERT and BOBBY at L.*)

FIFI (*coming down L.*). Mademoiselle Aimée—il est temps de te coucher maintenant.

AIMÉE. Non, non, Fifi. Je ne veux pas aller. Je vais avec Uncle Dicky.

DICK. But remember, dear, what's going to happen tonight. Now run along—and I'll come up pretty soon to see that you're all right. (*AIMÉE kisses him, goes to FIFI and they pass out at L.*)

ANNE. Where did you pick up that bit of femininity, Dick?

DICK. Who—Fifi? I wanted the child to remember her French; advertised for a French nurse—and she answered. Don't you like her?

ANNE. Personally, I haven't had a chance to form an opinion; (*laughingly*) but she seems to be attractive to the masculine contingency of your house party.

DICK. What do you mean?

ANNE. Oh, nothing in particular; only Ted appears to be smitten.

DICK. *Ted?*

ANNE. The same. Even under the wrathful eye of Doris.

RUTH. What is the matter with Ted? He's positively flirtatious. (*Laughingly.*) Why, he even tried to kiss me under the mistletoe—right before Doris, too.

ANNE. He's tried it on every one, Ruth—so don't feel conspicuous. Being married—I've escaped.

DICK. Irresponsible kid, isn't he?

ANNE. Don't talk of irresponsibility, Dick—after your last exploit. Ruth, did he tell you that he cashed

his check for twenty-five thousand dollars and brought home the money and carefully stored it away in his desk?

RUTH. Dick! How foolish!

DICK. Isn't it? But sometimes it's fun to do foolish things. I wanted to see that money—the first big thing I've ever earned. Tomorrow I'll be sure that it is duly deposited in the bank.

ANNE. Just the same, it worries me to have it here. This last robbery—so near us—makes me a bit nervous.

DICK. Nobody knows it is here except you people, Bob and Gregory.

RUTH. Gregory?

DICK. He came in while I was storing my wealth in the desk over there—had a valuable packet which he wanted me to keep for him.

RUTH. What was in the packet?

DICK. I don't know. He said—valuables. By Jove—why didn't I put it all away behind the secret panel!

RUTH. What secret panel?

DICK (*rising*). Haven't I ever showed you? (*Goes to mantel, touches a spring and reveals hidden aperture. RUTH moves to end of davenport next ANNE.*) There! It's been a part of the house since it was built.

ANNE. Then hide all the money in that very spot. It's much safer.

DICK. Later on I will. (*Sits at RUTH's right.*) Heavens—but I'm tired!

ANNE. You've been working too hard.

DICK. And sleeping too little. Sometimes I've slaved over those designs all night long; and whenever I've felt free to indulge in a good rest I've wakened

to find myself seated at my desk—and, subconsciously, hard at work.

ANNE. That won't do.

DICK. Oh, I'll be normal again now. As long as the responsibility of my drawings was on my mind, I didn't seem able to throw off the burden—even when asleep.

ANNE (*after a pause*). I hate to worry you, Dick—but I feel that I really should tell you.

DICK (*leaning forward*). Tell me—what?

ANNE. That something very puzzling has happened. To be brief—I've lost my pearls.

RUTH. Anne!

DICK. You mean—they've been stolen?

ANNE. I mean that they've disappeared. *How*—I don't know.

DICK. When did you have them last?

ANNE. Tonight—before dinner. I left the necklace on my dressing table just for a moment—while I went to Bobby's room. When I came back the necklace was gone.

DICK. The servants—

ANNE. Impossible, Dick. They've been with you too long and have served you too faithfully. Aunt Ellen trusts them implicitly. As to Kate—Kate is one of *our* family.

DICK. Kate is out of the question, of course.

ANNE. And at that particular time the servants were all busy.

RUTH. Their rooms are not near you, anyway.

ANNE. Of course not. Cecily is on one side of me—Mr. Gregory on the other.

DICK. And the only entrance to the room is through the door which leads from the main hall.



ANNE. I was in Bobby's room directly across the hall, Dick. Both doors were open and nobody could have entered my room without my knowledge.

DICK. Then—

ANNE. It's nobody in the house—I feel sure of that. I'd sooner believe that the guilty person is the mysterious individual who is frequenting the neighborhood.

*As ALISON enters from C. in F.*

ANNE. Suppose we say nothing about it; there is no use in causing unnecessary excitement.

ALISON (*laughingly*). Does anybody know what's the matter with Ted? (*Comes down C.*)

RUTH. We've just been wondering.

ALISON. He acts like a lunatic—or worse. Tried to kiss me under the mistletoe—and Doris glaring at us like a wild beast. I loathe silly, sentimental men. (*To DICK.*) Cecily's looking for you, Dick.

DICK (*rising*). Then I'll be off—if you people will excuse me. (*Goes to C. in F.*)

ANNE (*rising*). I'm going too.

ALISON. Don't let me break up the family party.

ANNE. You're not, my dear. Bobby's waiting for me to tuck him in—so I must hurry. Wait, Dick. (*Exeunt ANNE and DICK at C. in F.*)

RUTH (*eagerly as she hurries to ALISON*). Have you heard from your birdman?

ALISON. Not a word. (*Seats herself on settee.*)

RUTH. Then something's happened. (*Sits by ALISON.*)

ALISON. But he promised to come—at Christmas.

RUTH. You still believe in him, Alison?

ALISON. I can't help it.

RUTH. Even though it has been three months since you heard from him?

ALISON. He may have been ill.

RUTH. Someone could have written for him.

ALISON. The letter may have been lost.

RUTH. Another could have followed it.

ALISON. You can't shake my faith in him, Ruth.

RUTH. Then I won't try.

ALISON. I told you I'd never marry any other man—and I won't.

RUTH. What about Tom Gregory?

ALISON. What has he to do with it?

RUTH. He's been having a great deal to do with you, my dear. That's all.

ALISON. Sometimes I think I'm half in love with *him*.

RUTH. Alison—I don't know what to make of you.

ALISON. I don't know what to make of myself.

RUTH. But you say you won't marry anybody but this mythical Lawrence Thomas—

ALISON. I mean it. I won't.

RUTH. And the very next moment you declare that you're half in love with Tom Gregory.

ALISON. I am. I don't understand and I don't pretend to explain it.

RUTH (*placing hand over ALISON'S*). Alison, please drop Mr. Gregory.

ALISON. *Drop him!* You don't seem to approve of my lovers, Ruth.

RUTH. I approve of *him*—but it's what I don't know about him that bothers me.

ALISON. Just what do you mean?

RUTH. Well—you must confess that he is a very mysterious person.

ALISON. As far as definite facts concerning him—yes.

RUTH. Has he ever told you anything about himself—or his past?

ALISON. Never.

RUTH. Has he ever mentioned his profession?

ALISON. No.

RUTH. Don't you think that his being so non-committal is a little strange?

ALISON. Perhaps. (*Rises.*) What are you trying to tell me, Ruth? (*Walks to desk.*)

RUTH (*following*). I shouldn't repeat it—for after all it's mere suspicion—and I don't believe it.

ALISON. Perfectly good reason that you ought to tell me.

RUTH. Well, has it ever occurred to you that the neighborhood robberies date from the time of his first appearance?

ALISON. You're not insinuating that he—

RUTH. I'm not insinuating anything. I'm repeating rumor.

ALISON. Who started this rumor?

RUTH. Dennis grew a little suspicious—and mentioned it to Aunt Ellen.

ALISON. And you take Dennis' word?

RUTH. I'm not taking anybody's word. I told you I didn't believe it.

ALISON. Then why are you taking the trouble to tell me?

RUTH. Simply to enforce my point. He *is* a bit mysterious—we *don't* know about him—and until we *do*—go slowly. We probably shouldn't have listened to such a suspicion—had not our own home been entered.

ALISON. *What?*

RUTH. Anne's pearls are gone—and Dick has twen-

ty-five thousand dollars in bank notes—stored away in this desk. It makes us a bit nervous.

ALISON. Does anybody know of the money?

RUTH. Anne and I—Bob of course—and Mr. Gregory.  
*Enter ROBERT from C. in F.*

ROBERT. Our dance, Ruth.

RUTH. Oh, I'd almost forgotten. Will you come, too, Alison?

ALISON (*crossing to R.*). I'm dancing this with Tom. I'll wait here for him. (*Exeunt ROBERT and RUTH C. in F.*)

*Enter DORIS and GREGORY from C. in F. ALISON, unseen by them, steps behind one of the curtains which hang at the door down R.*

DORIS (*drawing GREGORY to C.*). Will you do me a favor, Mr. Gregory?

GREGORY. Of course I will.

DORIS. Then—kiss me. Or pretend that you're kissing me.

GREGORY. I don't understand.

DORIS. Oh, don't try to! Just do as I say—and I'll explain later.

*As TED appears at C. in F.*

DORIS. Here comes Ted. *Now!* (*GREGORY puts his arm around her and bends his head.*)

*As TED enters.*

TED (*apoplectically*). Doris! Doris!

DORIS (*calmly powdering her nose*). Well?

TED (*hurrying to her*). I'm—I'm—ashamed of you.

DORIS. Then you know just how I feel about you. Is this our dance? (*She takes his arm.*) We've had a

heavenly time, haven't we, Mr. Gregory. We've—(*stops suddenly and gasps*) Oh! Oh! (*Shrieks.*) Oh!

TED. What's the matter?

DORIS. My bracelet—the jeweled one you gave me—it's gone, Ted—it's gone!

TED. Are you sure you wore it?

DORIS. *Sure?* I remember catching my scarf on it just before I danced with you, Mr. Gregory.

TED. Then suppose we look in the other room right away. (*They hurry off C. in F.*)

GREGORY *looks hastily around and strolls slowly to desk.* DENNIS *appears at C. in F. and stealthily follows him.* GREGORY *leans over desk and attempts to open the drawer.*

ALISON (*stepping forward and taking the box of cigarettes from the mantel*). Have a cigarette, Tom! (*GREGORY straightens—looks around—sees DENNIS—and coolly takes the proffered cigarette.*)

GREGORY. Thanks. Our dance, I believe?

ALISON. Yes. (*To DENNIS.*) That is all, Dennis.

DENNIS. Yes, Miss Alison. (*Goes out R.*)

GREGORY. Do you remember my saying that—someday soon—a sign would come to me? The sign has come—and you have told me what I wanted to know.

ALISON. You overestimate my interest, Mr. Gregory. Please consider this incident—and others—closed. You'll excuse me from dancing?

GREGORY. Certainly. (*Exit C. in F.* ALISON *seats herself on settee.*)

*Enter ROBERT and ANNE from C. in F.*

ANNE. What have you done to Tom Gregory? He looks utterly demoralized. (*ROBERT crosses to davenport and seats himself, head in hands.*)

ALISON. Nonsense. Excusing oneself from a dance brings no such tragic result. I've a wretched headache—and I think I'll go to my room. (*Rises.*) Anne, will you excuse me to anyone who may ask for me?

ANNE. Of course I shall. Is there anything I can do for the headache?

ALISON. Nothing. It will be gone by morning. Good night. (*Exit L.*)

ANNE (*reflectively.*) Alison on the verge of tears! What will happen next? (*As she advances.*) Bob? (*ROBERT does not answer.*) Bob?

ROBERT (*looking up*). I beg your pardon, dear. I was a thousand miles away.

ANNE (*as she sits by him*). And I resent even the figurative distance.

ROBERT (*drawing her to him*). Then it doesn't exist.

ANNE. But it does exist. For the first time in nine years, Bob, an intangible, indefinable something has come between us.

ROBERT. Nothing could ever come between us, Anne.

ANNE. But something has.

ROBERT. When I married you I vowed to myself that—never—consciously—would I cause you a moment's worry.

ANNE. And when I married *you* I promised to share whatever should come to us. Have you been quite fair to me?

ROBERT. But to bring you anxiety—

ANNE. Oh, Bob—*Bob!* Don't you know—can't you realize—that the greatest anxiety I have ever known is the fact that you don't trust me?

ROBERT. Don't put it that way.

ANNE. If I'm not strong enough—or woman enough—

ROBERT. Oh, you've been everything to me, Anne—you know it—that's why it is hard to confess that I'm a miserable failure.

ANNE. Never a failure—to me, Bob.

ROBERT. It's been the hardest year of my life. First, the terrible disappointment because I couldn't serve my country.

ANNE. What do you mean, Bob?

ROBERT. That I couldn't—that's all. I went to every physician in the country—and each one of them told me the same thing—that I wouldn't last a month in a training camp. (*As she turns aside.*) Don't look that way, Anne; it's all right now, or I shouldn't be telling you. The doctor says I'm out of danger and that another year will finish the cure.

ANNE. I hadn't expected—*this*. Oh, Bob—Bob—are you sure—or are you just—

ROBERT. Would I be telling you, dear, unless I were sure, after keeping it from you all this time? It's been pretty hard to know that you were wondering why I didn't go—harder still to explain to my boy why he couldn't have a soldier father.

ANNE. You should have told me, Bob.

ROBERT. No, Anne; it was my fight.

ANNE. And I'm prouder of you than if you had led a regiment to victory.

ROBERT. It's—heaven to hear you say that, Anne—to know that you understand—

ANNE. Then we'll let the New Year ring in the truest happiness we've ever had; and we'll forget what's past and gone.

ROBERT. We can't forget.

ANNE. And why?

ROBERT. I'm facing absolute ruin, Anne; I may not have a penny to call my own.

ANNE. I don't understand.

ROBERT. I've speculated—and I've lost.

ANNE (*leaning back and sighing*). Is that all?

ROBERT. *All?* It means that my dream of gaining everything for you and the boy—has vanished.

ANNE (*after a pause*). Bob, I've had a dream, too. I've had it always—but you wouldn't listen because you thought in terms of dollars and cents—of palaces and jewels. (*Pauses.*) Do you remember the little house on the right of the road just before we reach the city? It has quaint dormer windows, a garden of sweet, old-fashioned flowers, a lilac bush by a wide-open front door. If Bobby and I could stand by that lilac bush and watch you coming up the shadowy walk—I think I'd be the happiest woman in the world.

ROBERT. Are you just saying—this—to help me along?

ANNE. I'm saying it because I have no other ambition or thought beyond that simple little home—with you.

ROBERT. But to start all over again—I haven't the courage.

ANNE. Nonsense. Perhaps things are not so hopeless as you think.

ROBERT. My broker hopes to realize something, and an investment is still hanging fire. If I had twenty-five thousand dollars right now I might be able to tide things over.

ANNE (*thoughtfully*). Twenty-five thousand dollars!

ROBERT. Anne, you've been such a trump—will you



be able ever to trust me again—when I say that Dick's money, too, is gone?

ANNE. I don't believe I understand you, Bob.

ROBERT. I invested not only my own funds—but Dick's—

ANNE. *Dick's?*

ROBERT. Oh, I did it for—him; I thought it was safe—and this is the end of it all!

ANNE. Have you told Dick?

ROBERT. I don't intend to tell him; I'll make it up some way—for I can't confess that I've abused his trust, that I'm responsible for his loss.

ANNE (*rising*). But you *will* tell Dick. (*Crosses and touches bell button.*) We can't begin all over again, Bob, if any shadow threatens our happiness.

*As DENNIS enters from R.*

ANNE. Tell Mr. Richard to join us here. (*Exit DENNIS C. in F.*)

ROBERT (*as he goes to ANNE, who stands at back of settee*). Anne, I've never loved you as I love you now. (*Takes her in his arms.*)

*Enter DICK at C. in F.*

DICK (*laughingly*). Surely—three's a crowd.

ANNE. Not when we've sent for you. (*ROBERT sits on settee.*)

DICK. What's wrong?

ANNE. Bob has something to say to you. (*Turns back to audience.*)

ROBERT. Your money, Dick—left to my care—has gone.

DICK (*at his left*). What's become of it?

ROBERT. I've invested it—unfortunately—unwisely. There is little chance of my making good the loss; and

while I did it—with the best of intentions, I don't ask for any leniency, any exoneration on your part.

DICK. Is it *all* gone?

ROBERT. Practically.

DICK. And you've been afraid to tell me?

ROBERT. Almost.

DICK (*after a pause*). Bob, some years ago I begged for a year in Paris—to follow what you all thought a will-of-the-wisp idea. I had disappointed you—for you had formed other plans for me; but, one morning, before I started, you came to me, laid your check book on the desk and said, “What's mine, kid, is yours.” Fate has been pretty kind to me, Bob; for now she has given me, after all this time, the chance to use those very words which meant so much to me. (*Holds out his hand.*) Bob—old fellow—best brother a willful boy ever had—what's mine—is yours. (*Pauses.*) Won't you understand—how I feel about it? How happy it makes me to be able to say—what you said to me? (*ROBERT takes his hand; ANNE turns.*)

*Enter CECILY C. in F.*

CECILY (*coming down C.*). Dear me! I never find Dick alone.

ANNE. We're going now, Cecily. (*Puts her arm around DICK's shoulder.*)

CECILY. What's the matter? You all look like solemn old owls.

DICK. Wait for me, Bob. (*Exeunt ROBERT and ANNE at L.*)

CECILY. I never saw such a sentimental family. Anne needn't be so demonstrative. (*Sits on davenport.*)

DICK (*leaning over back of davenport*). Anne has been a good sister to me, Cecily. “Guide, philosopher and friend”—all in one.

CECILY. Well, after we're married I don't intend to have her interfering with *my* affairs.

DICK. *Interfering?* (*Sternly.*) You forget yourself.

CECILY. We're going to live here all alone, aren't we, Dick?

DICK (*absently*). Alone? Oh, yes—of course.

CECILY. *All* alone?

DICK. Why, yes, Cecily.

CECILY. We don't even want Aimée around, do we?

DICK. What do you mean by that?

CECILY. Just what I said.

DICK. What are you planning to have me do with Aimée?

CECILY. Well, there are many nice orphan homes, aren't there? And they say that they are very attractive and homelike. If you can spare the money, we might put her in a boarding school.

DICK. You don't mean what you say, do you, Cecily?

CECILY. Of course I mean it. I hate children and I don't want to bother with her.

DICK. Do you realize that the child is a sacred trust?

CECILY. I don't realize anything but your foolishness in bringing her home without asking me.

DICK. Cecily, that child has become a vital part of my existence. She's my dearest possession.

CECILY (*rising*). In that case—choose between us. (*Stands by mantel.*)

DICK. You mean it?

CECILY. I mean it. Either Aimée or I must go.

DICK. You're speaking on the impulse of the moment.

CECILY. I'm speaking what has been on my mind—for weeks.

DICK. What sort of a man would I be if I broke my word—if I destroyed that child's confidence—if I sent her away?

CECILY. You might think of me.

DICK. And you might think of me. Has that ever occurred to you?

CECILY. You're selfish, Dick, so selfish that, sometimes, I wonder if we'll ever be happy.

DICK. I've been wondering the same thing. (*Comes to her.*) Cecily, is your love great enough to include—me?

CECILY. I don't know what you mean.

DICK. Of course you don't.

CECILY. And I'm waiting for you to choose. (*DICK walks to L.*)

DICK (*after a pause*). I've made my choice.

CECILY (*running to him*). Oh, Dick, I knew you'd see it my way—I knew that—

DICK (*pushing her aside*). You're mistaken, Cecily. I have chosen—the child.

CECILY. Chosen Aimée—instead of me?

DICK. I can do without you more easily than I can do without her.

CECILY. How dare you speak to me like this? (*Slipping off ring.*) Take your ring. It can never mean anything to me.

DICK (*dropping ring in pocket*). It never did—and it never would.

CECILY (*crossing to davenport*). Do you realize that this means—goodbye?

DICK. It is better so, Cecily. I'm not the man to make you happy. And as for you—(*hesitates*)—

CECILY (*sharply*). Well?

DICK. You're a butterfly—merely a butterfly. If you had a soul you wouldn't ask me to sacrifice my manhood. That's all. (CECILY *rushes angrily out L.*)

DICK *goes slowly to davenport, sinks upon it and rests his head in his hands.* AIMÉE *enters at L.*

AIMÉE. Uncle Dicky! You didn't come to tell me goodnight. (DICK *turns, holds out his arms and she runs into them.*)

CURTAIN.

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*In a few moments the curtain rises upon a dark and empty stage. A figure makes its way to the desk, seats itself and fumbles with the drawer. Into this darkness, BOBBY and AIMÉE creep stealthily from the curtained door at R., a tiny flashlight held by BOBBY, throwing the children's figures into strong relief yet in no way revealing the identity of the man at the desk.*

BOBBY (*as they come closer*). Are—you—Santa Claus?

CURTAIN.

# THE REAL THING AFTER ALL

## THE THIRD ACT.

### SCENE I. CHRISTMAS MORNING.

SCENE: *Same as Act II save that an arm chair replaces the desk chair. To the accompaniment of whistles, drums, etc., the curtain rises upon the assembled house party, gaily opening gifts. DICK, on a step-ladder L. U. E., is distributing gifts from the tree. BOBBY and ROBERT on settee are intent upon a mechanical toy. ANNE is on davenport with GREGORY leaning over the back. DORIS is on stool placed left of davenport and TED is standing back of her. MISS WARD is seated at desk and ALISON is perched on the arm of her chair. AIMÉE is in front of the fireplace. RUTH stands at DICK's right.*

BOBBY. Is that all, Uncle Dick?

DICK. That's all. If anybody is without a present let him speak up or forever after hold his peace.

MISS WARD. You're an extravagant boy, Dick—you've always been. And when I look at Aimée in that avalanche of toys I wonder what you're coming to.

DICK. But—Aunt Ellen—it's her first Christmas with me and—(*calls*) Aimée?

AIMÉE. Yes, Uncle Dicky.

DICK. Come here a moment. (*As she runs to him.*) Did Santa Claus forget a single thing?

AIMÉE. Not a single thing.

DICK. For if he did—we'll go to town early in the morning and hunt until we find it. (*Lifts her on ladder.*)

ANNE (*as BOBBY blows wildly on his horn*). Bobby, stop tooting that thing; my head is simply splitting. And pick up your soldiers, dear; here's one under my chair and dad's just about to put his foot on another. (*BOBBY obeys.*) Why is it that the toys of each successive generation must always remind us of war when we're doing our best to forget it?

ROBERT. Self-preservation, isn't it, sonny? We men are forced to protect ourselves from other men. (*BOBBY sits on floor by ROBERT.*)

GREGORY (*glancing at ALISON*). And from women. "The female of the species is more deadly than the male."

ALISON (*sarcastically*). Dear me! What an original sentiment!

DORIS. Of course, Dick, I appreciate your gift to me, but I don't understand why you should have chosen a cook book.

DICK. Perhaps I was thinking of—Ted.

TED. Well, you needn't bother about me. Doris cooks like a professional—and I've never eaten anything like—her salads.

DORIS (*soulfully*). Ted! (*RUTH seats herself on settee at ROBERT'S left.*)

ALISON. One can't keep up with you and Ted. Last night you weren't on speaking terms—and, today, there's danger of overdoing the conventional peace and goodwill.

DORIS (*loftily*). Last night was only an incident and a mistake. I've forgiven Ted for his part in it.

ALISON. Don't forgive too easily or you'll have a lot of it to do.

TED. See here, Doris. I forgave you, too. You don't mention *your* part in last night's performance.

DORIS. My part was all for your good, Ted dear; I was just trying to make you jealous.

TED. You don't think I really wanted to kiss those people, do you? Great heavens! Miss Ward told me that if I'd flirt with somebody else you'd come to your senses.

DORIS. Come to *my* senses! Well, she told me that a little jealousy would teach *you* a few things.

TED. So she's the cause of all this mixup. (*They look at her accusingly.*)

MISS WARD (*composedly*). Well—didn't it work?

TED (*grinning*). Something worked all right.

MISS WARD. You see, there's a good old theory that like cures like; so I put it to a practical test.

DORIS. I'll never do it again, Ted.

TED. You'll never need to do it.

MISS WARD. That's the way to prove that your all-of-a-sudden marriage isn't exactly a failure.

DORIS. All-of-a-sudden! I know now that I've been waiting for Ted all my life.

ALISON. Sometimes a woman keeps waiting for a man after she's married him.

DORIS. You can say the meanest things, Alison. And you've been a regular old cross patch all morning.

MISS WARD (*hastily*). Dick, I wonder why your friend hasn't arrived.

DICK (*looking at watch*). Train must be late. Dennis has been gone some time. (*Gets off step-ladder. AIMÉE runs to front of fireplace.*)

RUTH. A war friend, Dick?

DICK. Someone I met just before sailing. In fact, we came back on the same boat. He's an aviator.

ALISON (*in agitation*). An aviator?

DICK (*in surprise*). Sure. What's the matter?



ALISON (*sharply*). Why, nothing's the matter. Why should there be?

ANNE. I've forgotten his name, Dick—except that it's a pretty one.

DICK. Roger Atherton.

GREGORY (*in agitation*). Roger Atherton?

DICK (*in surprise*). Do you know him?

GREGORY (*sharply*). Now why should I know him?

DORIS (*turning*). You're cross, too, Mr. Gregory. You haven't smiled at me once.

ALISON. Why should he smile at you? (*Rises.*) I'm going to have some breakfast. Come along, Ruth. (*RUTH rises.*)

MISS WARD. We've been breakfasting in relays this morning. Mr. Gregory, have you been served?

GREGORY. Quite early, thank you. I indulged before I set out upon my solitary walk.

DICK. Solitary? And on Christmas morning? Can't you do any better than that?

GREGORY. Dennis followed me at a respectful distance.

ALISON. Hero worship, probably. Did anybody offer you a cigarette?

GREGORY. It wasn't necessary—fortunately. (*Exeunt ALISON and RUTH at R. followed by GREGORY.*)

DORIS. Don't they say the queerest things? Nobody ever knows what they mean. (*Rises.*) Shall we go to breakfast, Ted dearest?

TED. Just as you say, darling.

DORIS (*as they pass out R.*). Or would you rather have me make you coffee?

ROBERT. Heavens! Were we ever as silly as that, Anne?

ANNE. Never. But we were a very exceptional couple, you must remember.

MISS WARD. And each passing year finds you a little more exceptional.

ANNE. To think of this tribute from a member of one's own family!

ROBERT. Do you mean it, Aunt Ellen? Or is the remark intended merely for a Christmas present?

BOBBY. That's no kind of a Christmas present—is it, Aunt Ellen? Christmas presents are handkerchiefs—and automobiles—and cigars—and diamond necklaces—

ANNE. And kisses. That's the kind of a present I want. (*BOBBY runs to ANNE, kisses her and then runs to ROBERT.*)

ROBERT. See here, old man. Do you remember what time you made me get up this morning? Well, I'm ready for a second breakfast. (*As they start off R.*) Coming, Anne?

ANNE. As soon as I straighten up this fireplace. It looks like a toy shop.

BOBBY. Come on, Aimée. (*Exeunt ROBERT and BOBBY at R.*)

ANNE (*as she arranges the toys about the fireplace*). We're coming, aren't we, dear? Baby carriage, doll buggy and all! (*Comes to DICK at C.*) Dick—remember your promise; not a regret, not a worry, not a thought of what's happened. (*Puts hand on his shoulder.*)

DICK. I promise, Anne. You and Bob have been bully about it all.

ANNE. Bully? We look upon her departure as a direct act of providence. (*To AIMÉE.*) Come, dear. (*Exit with AIMÉE at R.*)

DICK (*standing at Miss WARD's right*). Did you tell them, Aunt Ellen?

MISS WARD. I told them. It isn't necessary to repeat what you already know—the fact that your friends are more than pleased over the turn affairs have taken.

DICK. It doesn't seem quite fair to Cecily.

MISS WARD. Was Cecily ever quite fair to you, Dick?

DICK. She never understood me.

MISS WARD. You put it charitably.

DICK. And I didn't understand *her*. We should not have been happy.

MISS WARD (*rising*). Happiness never comes unless love is willing to give as well as to receive.

DICK. But I didn't really love her. I realized that when I came from France.

MISS WARD. We had always realized it. Why did you do it, Dick?

DICK. Infatuation, I suppose.

MISS WARD. Knowing that you had ceased to care, and understanding her shallowness, you still would have married her?

DICK. I should have done my best to make her happy.

MISS WARD. Fortunately, fate has relieved you of the responsibility. Did you part friends?

DICK. We parted—friendly. Before her train had left the station, she had forgotten. That's Cecily.

MISS WARD (*placing hand upon his shoulder*). Dick, there is none so blind as he who will not see. The truest, sweetest things in life have been yours for the asking—and you've passed them by.

DICK. What do you mean?

*Enter RUTH from R.*

RUTH. Oh—I'm interrupting!

MISS WARD. Not a bit of it. I'm just going.  
(*Exit R.*)

RUTH. I'm looking for a stray handkerchief. (*As she spies the handkerchief lying near the Christmas tree.*) Oh, here it is! (*As he returns it to her.*) Dick, ever since I heard I've been wanting to tell you how sorry—how very sorry—I am.

DICK. We'll be sorry for the mistake, Ruth—but let's be glad that it was discovered in time.

RUTH. To think that it should have come to you on Christmas Day.

DICK. Isn't it better so? For now, perhaps, the Spirit of Christmas will touch my eyes so that I may find the happiness which is nearest me.

RUTH (*as they clasp hands*). It's my Christmas wish to you. (*Hurries out R.*)

DICK *seats himself at desk*. In a moment GREGORY enters from R.

GREGORY (*coming to DICK*). If it's convenient, Dick, I'll relieve you of that package I deposited in your desk.

DICK. Couldn't be more convenient. Let's see. Was it in the left drawer—or the right?

GREGORY. The left.

DICK (*as he takes keys from pocket*). Of course. I remember now. (*Unlocks drawer and takes out package.*) Better look to see if it's intact.

GREGORY (*as he takes it*). That's not necessary. I'm not afraid of the highwayman.

*Enter DENNIS from C. in F.*

DENNIS. Mr. Atherton's here, sir.

*Enter ATHERTON from C. in F.*

DICK (*meeting him*). Atherton! It's fine to see you again. (*They clasp hands.*)

ATHERTON. And it's fine to be here. Hope my belated train didn't cause you any annoyance. (*Catching sight of GREGORY.*) Well, of all good fortune—(*starts toward him. GREGORY hastily lays a finger on his lips to enjoin silence.*)

DICK. Oh—you know Gregory?

ATHERTON. For a moment I thought I did—his resemblance to a friend of mine is striking; but I see now that I made a mistake. So you'll have to introduce us after all.

DICK. My house guest. (*As GREGORY and ATHERTON shake hands.*) Have you breakfasted, Atherton?

ATHERTON. On the train.

DICK. Then I'll show you to your room. (*To DENNIS.*) Take out the ladder, Dennis. I'll go with Mr. Atherton. (*Exeunt DICK and ATHERTON at L. DENNIS with ladder goes out at R.*)

GREGORY *crosses to desk and tears off the covering to the package, revealing—apparently—a bundle of papers. From the midst of the bundle he extracts a small box and drops it into his pocket. As ALISON enters from R. he slips the bundle in his coat pocket.*

ALISON (*coming to davenport*). Well, I'm here. (*Sits.*)

GREGORY. So I see. (*Stands left of davenport.*) It's gratifying to know that you granted my request.

ALISON. Curiosity is responsible for my amiability. Your note said that you had an explanation to make.

GREGORY. Did it? Then I confused the pronouns—for you are the one who is going to make the explanation.

ALISON. You interest me.

GREGORY. Be serious, Alison—and listen. Last night—for some reason unknown to me—you became—unfriendly. I have a right to ask the reason.

ALISON. Perhaps I've grown—tired—of you.

GREGORY (*leaning over the back of the davenport*). That isn't fair—and it isn't true. Because you had just told me that you cared for me.

ALISON. I told you nothing of the sort.

GREGORY. But you had given me the sign I asked you for.

ALISON. You're always talking of some ridiculous sign. What do you mean?

GREGORY. Just this. Last night you thought I was in danger, didn't you? And you gave me the friendly warning. If you had been—indifferent—you wouldn't have saved me.

ALISON. Saved you—from what?

GREGORY. From that lunatic of a Dennis. My back was toward him—and he evidently thought I was a stranger engaged in the pastime of robbing the desk. Why, he might have brained me.

ALISON. What *were* you doing?

GREGORY. Looking for a package of my own which Dick had put in the desk for me. Foolishly I forgot that he had the key.

ALISON. Do you expect me to believe such a story?

GREGORY. Do I expect you to believe such a story? (*Suddenly.*) Heavens, Alison! You don't—you can't—think *that* of me. (*Walks to C.*)

ALISON. What else can I think?

GREGORY. A common thief—and in the house of my friend. I haven't deserved such an insult—and I won't forgive it.

ALISON. Has anyone asked you to forgive it?

GREGORY. A suspect all along—which explains the omnipresence of Dennis. Perhaps he acted upon your suggestion?

ALISON (*rising*). How dare you? Now listen to me for a change.

GREGORY (*as he crosses to desk and faces her*). Please consider this incident—and others—closed. You'll excuse me from further discussion?

ALISON (*at C. in F.*). Sometimes I think I hate you, Tom Gregory.

GREGORY (*bowing ironically*). I assure you that such a feeling on your part is entirely satisfactory to me. (*Exit ALISON angrily at C. in F.*)

*Enter ATHERTON from L.*

ATHERTON (*crossing to GREGORY*). Tom, I had to escape those people for a moment. The joy of finding you here has almost knocked me off my feet.

GREGORY. And how do you suppose I felt, old fellow, when you entered that door. (*As they seat themselves on settee.*) Tell me of yourself.

ATHERTON. Not until you answer a few questions. How are you?

GREGORY. Getting better every day.

ATHERTON. And the eyes?

GREGORY. Almost normal again. Now—take up your story where we left off.

ATHERTON. The day after you sailed, I received special orders, took the next steamer and met Winton. We became friends—he asked me for Christmas—and here I am. That's all.

GREGORY. Then you didn't get my cable—or the letter?

ATHERTON. I haven't had a word of you since you left me. You were to send your address.

GREGORY. And I did. We were probably in the East at the same time.

ATHERTON. Very likely.

GREGORY. Well, I'm glad that this mystifying silence of yours is explained.

ATHERTON. What about this mystifying assumed name of yours?

GREGORY. I'll disclose that secret in time.

ATHERTON. And why in thunderation don't you want me to recognize you?

GREGORY. Because I haven't quite finished my game.

ATHERTON. Tom—what are you doing here?  
(*Sound of voices off R.*)

GREGORY. I can't tell you now; but perhaps—this—(*drops bundle in ATHERTON'S pocket*) will explain to you—*why*—I'm in this part of the country.

*Enter RUTH from R. They rise hastily.*

RUTH (*crossing to them*). I'm sent to pilot you both to the punch bowl. Sounds dreadfully convivial, doesn't it? But the punch is really quite harmless—and Aunt Ellen insists that we must celebrate the day by drinking each other's health.

ATHERTON (*as they pass off R.*). Let me have the fun of drinking your health first of all, Miss Meredith. Won't you?

RUTH (*as ALISON appears at arch*). Come on with us.

ALISON. Can't. I'm busy. (*Seats herself at desk as ATHERTON, GREGORY and RUTH go out at R.*)

*Enter KATE at C. in F.*

KATE (*crossing to her*). I've been chasing you all the way up the hall, Miss Alison. Here's a note. (*Hands her envelope.*)



ALISON. For me?

KATE. For you. It just came. (*Straightens room.*)

ALISON (*as she reads it*). Oh!

KATE. No bad news, I hope.

ALISON. No. On the contrary, I suppose I should call it good news. (*Pauses.*) A friend is coming—here—to see me.

KATE. An out-of-town friend?

ALISON. Quite out-of-town. I'm just wondering how he knew I was—here.

KATE. Don't you suppose he went to your home and they told him where to find you?

ALISON. Of course. How stupid of me! Who brought the note?

KATE. A small boy—from town. (*Exit R.*)

*Enter RUTH hurriedly from R.*

RUTH (*crossing to Alison*). Alison—something has happened—something wonderful has happened!

ALISON. Tell me.

RUTH. Lawrence Thomas is—here.

ALISON (*rising*). Here?

RUTH. In the other room. In fact, Mr. Atherton is Lawrence Thomas.

ALISON. I don't believe it.

RUTH. But I've—proof.

ALISON. What proof?

RUTH. He leaned over to pick up Aunt Ellen's handkerchief and a bundle of letters fell out of his pocket. They were addressed to Lawrence Thomas and were in your handwriting.

ALISON. Are you sure?

RUTH. Sure. I'd know your scrawl anywhere. And then—the name.

ALISON. But why would he call himself by an assumed name?

RUTH. To keep his identity from you until he chose to reveal it.

ALISON. Dick calls him Atherton.

RUTH. Dick may be in the secret.

ALISON. I don't understand.

RUTH. Neither do I. But—unless he *is* Lawrence Thomas—how could he have your letters?

ALISON. He *must* be Lawrence Thomas. (*Hands note to her.*) Read this.

RUTH (*as she reads it*). Of course he is—and he knows you're here.

ALISON. But does he know that *I* am Alison Page?

RUTH. Not unless you have met him.

ALISON. I haven't.

RUTH. He's following me—here.

ALISON. Then you'll introduce me as Miss Nelson.

RUTH. But Alison—

ALISON. If he won't fight in the open, neither will I. (*ATHERTON laughs off stage.*) Hush—he's coming.

*Enter ATHERTON from R.*

RUTH (*meeting him*). I'm leaving you with my friend for a few moments. Miss Nelson, may I present Mr. Atherton? (*Exit R.*)

ATHERTON. Meeting new friends is a delightful way to celebrate the day, Miss Nelson. (*Pointing to davenport.*) Shall we sit here by the fire? To the overseas man such a luxury seems too good to be true.

ALISON (*as they seat themselves*). You were—in aviation, I believe.

ATHERTON. In active service until the armistice.

ALISON. And since that time?

ATHERTON. I've been engaged in diplomatic work.

ALISON. Evidently in this country.

ATHERTON. Partly. I met Winton on my return trip, and this pleasant event is the result of our friendship.

ALISON. Like all other khaki clad men, I suppose the inevitable girl drew you back to American shores.

ATHERTON. Hardly. I've had too eventful a career to find time for the inevitable girl. (*As he notes her expression.*) Have I said something wrong, Miss Nelson?

ALISON. Oh, no; only unusual.

ATHERTON. Sometime let us hope that I'll find time to remedy my single blessedness; but as yet my fate in the guise of a coming event has failed to cast her shadow before.

ALISON. Haven't you indulged in the usual war correspondence?

ATHERTON. Oh, to a certain extent. Over there a fellow has to have letters—it's his one diversion; but outside of family epistles no correspondence has been a necessity to me.

ALISON (*after a pause*). You've been wounded, I suppose.

ATHERTON. Never. I've scrapped with many a German, but not a one has left me a souvenir. Dreadful record, isn't it?

ALISON. A fortunate one—for you.

ATHERTON. Not from my standpoint. My pal carried off all the honors in that line.

ALISON. In what way?

ATHERTON. Fought three enemy planes single-handed, downed them all, was severely wounded and was made an ace—all in one fell swoop.

ALISON. He recovered?

ATHERTON. After several months at the hospital.

ALISON. And came back with you?

ATHERTON. On the steamer ahead of me. I did not know then that I would be sent to America.

ALISON. You've seen him?

ATHERTON. I've—heard from him. His eyes were seriously injured and the physician ordered complete rest for a time.

ALISON. This war has been responsible for many splendid friendships, I fancy.

ATHERTON. Ours has been of long standing. Before our venture into aviation we shared diplomatic missions.

ALISON. Dangerous but interesting work. Each probably acted as a body guard to the other.

ATHERTON. Exactly. We had a foolish way of warning each other, which in spite of its foolishness helped us out of many critical situations.

ALISON (*eagerly*). What was the warning?

ATHERTON. Merely—"Have a cigarette." Sounds simple enough, doesn't it?

ALISON. It sounds—enlightening. (*Pauses.*) I think I have read of your friend's aerial exploits.

ATHERTON. Probably. The papers featured him prominently.

ALISON (*thoughtfully*). Let me see. The name was Lawrence—Lawrence—

ATHERTON. Thomas.

ALISON. Quite so. (*Drops her handkerchief. ATHERTON leans over for it and the letters fall on the floor. The packet of letters may be placed between them so a little shove will cause them to fall apparently from his pocket.*) GREGORY enters unperceived from R.

ALISON (*as ATHERTON picks up the letters*). Mr. Atherton, you're a base deceiver. (*As she takes letters*

from him.) A package of letters in a feminine handwriting and yet you say you're quite indifferent to a war correspondence.

ATHERTON (*taking the package from her and dropping them in his pocket*). These aren't mine.

ALISON. Where did you get them?

ATHERTON (*in surprise*). I can't tell you—and why should you ask?

ALISON. Because I happen to have written them.

ATHERTON. You are Alison Page?

ALISON. I'm Alison Page. Evidently you know of me.

ATHERTON. I couldn't be Tom's best friend without hearing of you, Miss Page.

ALISON. Then—tell me—who gave you those letters?

GREGORY (*coming forward*). I'll answer the question, Roger. (ATHERTON *rises and steps back of davenport*.) This morning, Alison, in a hurried conversation I had no time to explain to my friend why I happened to be in this particular place; so I dropped the letters in his pocket knowing that they would immediately enlighten him. The letters, Alison, I kept in the desk as a means of proving my identity when the time should come.

ATHERTON (*to ALISON*). Why did you meet me under an assumed name?

ALISON. Because I thought you were Lawrence Thomas. Forgive the deception—

GREGORY. And move on—for just a few moments. By that time I can tell you just when I'll need your services as best man.

ATHERTON. That suits me all right. In the meantime, am I to play the role of a stranger or of a friend?

GREGORY (*placing hand on shoulder*). Friend, Roger—the best friend I ever expect to have. And when you trot out into that little assembly you're to tell them all about me—and who I am—and how I've been living here under another name in order to be near the girl I love. And while you're about it, Roger—(*with a glance at ALISON*) you might announce our engagement. (*ALISON rises indignantly.*)

ATHERTON (*laughingly*). I'll do it. (*Exit R.*)

ALISON (*crossing to L.*). If your effrontery were not so ludicrous—it would be—unbearable. (*Turns back.*)

GREGORY. Since you left me a little while ago, Alison, I've been thinking it all over and I've come to the conclusion that the only method to use with you is that of the cave man. (*Turns her around.*) When he had selected his lady love, he seized her by the hair and used a club to advantage. She at least had no doubt in regard to his intentions.

ALISON. Don't be brutal, Tom. .

GREGORY. You've been the brutal one.

ALISON (*as she crosses to settee*). I suppose you're meditating revenge for all the corporal punishments I've heaped upon you. (*Seats herself.*)

GREGORY (*standing at back of settee*). All the corporal punishments in the world wouldn't have hurt me half so much as that one unfounded suspicion. (*Goes back of settee and sits at her right.*)

ALISON. I'm sorry for that, Tom—I truly am—and way down in my heart I didn't believe it. Some perverse little imp prompted me to say what I did.

GREGORY. That perverse little imp is responsible for a great deal of trouble—but his career of usefulness is ended. (*Pauses.*) Alison?

ALISON. Yes?

GREGORY. You love Lawrence Gregory Thomas—oh, you've told me so—and you love Thomas Gregory. The mental strain to which I've subjected you has been enough to torment the mind of even a literary genius. Now that all the pieces in the puzzle have been put together—aren't you sport enough to own up?

ALISON. Why didn't you write?

GREGORY. I did—this morning—and sent it from the village. As to the last three months—how could I hold a pen when you had given me a sprained wrist? Anyway—what was the use when I was busy with the experiment of meeting you under ordinary conditions?

ALISON. Well—is that all?

GREGORY. Just one thing more. (*Takes box from pocket.*) Hidden away in your letters in that desk was—this. (*Displays ring.*) I bought it in Paris—and I've been waiting all this time to give it to you.

ALISON. You must have been—sure.

GREGORY. I was. You must remember, Alison, that you quite revealed your heart in those letters.

ALISON. But haven't you learned by this time that a literary woman—as it pleases you to call me—does not necessarily mean what she writes? (*Telephone rings. She crosses to desk, seats herself and puts receiver to ear.*)

GREGORY (*following her*). Don't say that.

ALISON. And haven't you also learned—that I'm an exception to the rule?

GREGORY (*sitting on arm of chair and putting his arms around her*). Say that again. I won't let you go until you do.

ALISON. I don't want you to let me go. Tom, I'm crazily in love with you—(*into the telephone*) I'm not

talking to you! (*Puts down receiver.*) And you'd better put on that ring before that cross old man in the telephone interrupts us again.

GREGORY (*as he slips on the ring*). Alison—dear—(*kisses her*).

ALISON (*taking up receiver*). To whom do you wish to speak? (*To GREGORY.*) Tom, isn't it heavenly not to be quarreling? (*Into telephone.*) I—beg—your—pardon!—Mr. Winton?—Mr. Robert Winton? I'll call him. (*To GREGORY.*) What a horrid, impatient old man!

*Enter ROBERT from R.*

ROBERT. Hello, there! Is this telephone call the one I've been expecting? (*As GREGORY moves quickly away from ALISON.*) What makes you break away like that? Don't you suppose everybody in the next room knows what's happened? (*Takes GREGORY's hand.*) Congratulations, Gregory—or Thomas—or whatever your stage name is—we're proud to know you. And as to you, Alison—

ALISON. He's going into the matrimonial noose with his eyes wide open. So you can't say a thing if I strangle him.

ROBERT. Run on, you two—they're waiting for you in the other room. (*Exeunt GREGORY and ALISON at R. ROBERT goes to telephone and seats himself.*) This is Robert Winton. Oh—Graham? . . . I'm sorry you had so much trouble getting me. . . . Well, what news? . . . Say that again. . . . That's final, is it? (*ANNE appears at R.*) You don't know what a load that takes from my mind. . . . The twenty-five thousand? . . . I raised it easily. . . . Then I'll see you tomorrow and straighten out the matter. . . . Good-bye. (*Hangs up receiver.*)



ANNE (*coming to him*). Bob, is it good news?

ROBERT (*meeting her at C.*). The best of news.  
(*Draws her to him.*)

ANNE. Tell me.

ROBERT. Graham has realized enough to reimburse Dick and to start us all over again. It's going to be a happy Christmas after all.

ANNE. It isn't going to be. It already *is*. Bob?

ROBERT. Yes?

ANNE. Does it mean that we start—in the little house?

ROBERT. Do you really want it?

ANNE. I really want it.

ROBERT. But it is so different from what I planned.

ANNE. My dreams have been wiser than your plans, Bob.

ROBERT. And you'll be happy there?

ANNE. *Happy?* (*As he kisses her.*) Wait and see.

ROBERT. Then there isn't a regret to mar the day.

ANNE (*laughingly*). Except my pearls. I can't quite be reconciled to their loss.

*Enter DICK from C. in F.*

DICK (*coming down C.*). May Bobby go for a little ride with Aimée and me? I've an errand in the city and thought a little fresh air might calm their rising spirits.

ANNE. They need to be calmed. (*Crosses to settee.*) Of course he may go. (*Seats herself.*) But why a trip to the city on this particular morning?

DICK. I'm a little nervous about that money and want to put it in a safe place.

ANNE. But—you foolish boy—what bank is open on Christmas morning?

DICK (*standing back of desk chair*). I telephoned Allen and he offered to go with me, and to place the

package in the vault until I can regularly deposit it tomorrow.

ROBERT. That's a different proposition. (*Sits on settee.*)

ANNE. Dick, did you hide that money in the secret panel as we told you to do?

DICK. I forgot, Anne. I had it on my mind and fully intended to make the transfer—but, as you know, unusual events transpired. I lay down on my couch to think it over, fell asleep and didn't wake until this morning.

ROBERT. Has the detective any definite theory concerning the robberies?

DICK. Only that they were committed by some one in the house. That seems ridiculous to me.

ROBERT. And yet, Dick, an outsider had no opportunity to lay hands upon Doris' bracelet—and Anne declares that nobody could have entered her room without being seen from the opposite door.

DICK. Pretty perplexing! Well—whoever the culprit may be—there's no use in putting temptation in his way. (*Goes to desk, unlocks drawer. As he realizes that the money is gone, he stands as if dazed.*)

ROBERT (*after a moment's pause*). What's the matter, Dick?

DICK. It's gone! (ROBERT *crosses to him.*)

ANNE. *Gone?* (*Rises.*)

DICK. Quite gone. Rather takes one's breath, doesn't it?

ANNE. And the drawer was locked?

DICK. The drawer was locked. I don't know what to think of it.

ROBERT. It's someone in this house, Dick. Call the

servants. (DICK *crosses to push button.* ANNE *draws ROBERT to R.*)

ANNE. Bob—when you telephoned—what did you mean by saying that the twenty-five thousand came—easily?

ROBERT. I told you that I needed just that sum to tide me over—didn't I? Well—(*suddenly*)—Great heavens, Anne—you don't think that *I* took Dick's money?

ANNE. Where did you get it?

ROBERT. From Gregory. He knew of my predicament—and volunteered to help. I telephoned Graham early this morning. (DICK *returns to desk.*)

*Enter DENNIS from R.*

DICK. Dennis, something very strange and very unfortunate has happened. I am hoping that you can help us to solve the difficulty.

DENNIS. I hope I can, sir.

DICK. Mrs. Winton's pearl necklace mysteriously disappeared yesterday; later on Mrs. Thorne missed her bracelet; and now I've just discovered that twenty-five thousand dollars have been taken from my desk.

DENNIS. I've been expecting that very thing, Mr. Dick.

DICK. What do you mean?

DENNIS. That I've been spotting this here robber ever since he landed in this part of the country; and I pretty nearly caught him in the act of getting that very money.

DICK. *Caught* him?

DENNIS. Has it struck you funny, Mr. Dick, that the robberies round about here began just about the time a certain guy moved in the neighborhood?

DICK. I don't follow you.

DENNIS. Well, they *did*. And then the fellow let up for awhile—and now he's begun again. Night before last the Hamilton's was robbed—and who was there to dinner? This same guy. Last night Mrs. Thorne was dancing with him when she missed her bracelet.

DICK. Dennis—whom do you mean?

DENNIS. *Mean?* Why, Mr. Gregory, of course.

DICK. That's enough. Mr. Gregory is my friend, a guest in this house and—

DENNIS. Well, how are you going to explain *this*, Mr. Dick? Last night I followed him in here—and saw him leaning over that desk trying to open the drawer; and I would have had him in a jiffy if Miss Alison hadn't stepped out from behind them curtains and said—"Have a cigarette, Tom."

DICK. Listen—

DENNIS. And what made him signal Mr. Atherton not to recognize him?

DICK. Your surmise is all wrong, Dennis. Mr. Gregory happens to be a gentleman. Ask Kate and Fifi to come here.

DENNIS. Yes, Mr. Dick. (*Exit R.*)

ROBERT. What do you think of that story?

DICK. Ridiculous, of course.

ANNE. Dick—Mr. Gregory's room is next to mine; Doris *had* been dancing with him; and—tell him, Bob, what you told me a moment ago.

ROBERT. That's not a kind nor a generous thing to do, Anne.

ANNE. But Dick must know.

ROBERT. Then—(*going to Dick*) last night Gregory loaned me twenty-five thousand dollars.

DICK. A mere coincidence. The story of Lawrence

••

Thomas as we have just heard it from Atherton should place Thomas Gregory far above the shadow of a suspicion.

ANNE. Naturally. But his explanation might help.

DICK. I wouldn't mar his happiness—and Alison's—for all the explanations in the world.

*As DENNIS enters from R.*

DICK. Well, Dennis?

DENNIS (*in agitation*). Kate's gone, sir.

DICK. *Gone?*

DENNIS. Cook saw her leave about a half hour ago—coat, hat and—see here, Mr. Dick, Kate didn't have nothing to do with that robbery—I swear it.

DICK. Of course she didn't. (*To ANNE.*) Did you send Kate on an errand, Anne?

ANNE. No. She had duties for all morning. (*Noise off stage of approaching footsteps and sound of scuffling.*) That's a strange noise.

*Enter KATE from R. dragging a reluctant FIFI. Each shows signs of conflict.*

KATE (*coming down R. dragging FIFI*). I'm begging your pardon, Mrs. Winton, for blowing in like this, but I've got her and if you look in this bag I guess you'll find the jewels. (*Holds out handbag.*)

ANNE. Hand me the bag, Dennis. (*DENNIS takes the bag, hands it to ANNE, who opens it, examines the contents and pulls out a string of pearls and a bracelet.*) My pearls, Bob—(*he takes them*) and Doris' bracelet. Now tell us about it, Kate. (*FIFI and KATE stand R. 2 E., ANNE next, then ROBERT, with DENNIS and DICK near desk.*)

KATE. I've been suspicious all along—ever since I laid eyes on her smirky little smile and her pussy cat

snooping—and (*angrily*) her silly French ways with Dennis—and me being engaged to him! And when I knew your pearls were gone, Mrs. Winton, and that nobody could have gone into the room, I set my wits to work.

ANNE (*excitedly*). Go on.

KATE. The windows open out on a long porch that runs to the back of the hall; and when I looked out on that porch, what did I see but the print of those idiotic little high-heeled slippers that she always wears. It had been snowing you know, and she had come through the window. (*Pauses.*)

DICK (*impatiently*). Yes?

KATE. Then I remembered that just before Mrs. Thorne's bracelet disappeared, Fifi had brought a scarf to her and had put it around her shoulders. So—today—when I saw her sneaking out the back way, I took after her—and well—here we are.

DICK. Has she had a hand in the neighborhood robberies?

KATE. Good gracious, Mr. Dick, didn't you read in the morning's paper that *he* had been caught? (*To DENNIS.*) Now, Dennis, maybe you'll leave poor Mr. Gregory alone. (*DENNIS turns and walks toward back of stage.*)

DICK. I don't know how to thank you, Kate. You've saved not only the jewels but our peace of mind. (*To FIFI.*) As for you, Fifi,—here, Anne, you talk to her. I get my French twisted.

FIFI (*as ANNE steps forward*). There's no reason for you to use French for I'm just as American as you are. Please finish with me for I'm caught with the goods and I plead guilty. If I hadn't been new at my job I would have made a getaway.

DICK. Since this is a first offence, I am quite sure that Mrs. Winton will agree with me when I say that we are willing to overlook it if you will return the money which you took from my desk.

FIFI. The money? I don't understand.

DICK. I think you do. Tell me what you have done with it—and it means freedom to you.

FIFI. But I took nothing from the desk. I am telling you the truth.

DICK. I can't let you go until I have the money.

FIFI. Please believe me, Mr. Winton.

DICK. Dennis—take her into the other room until we call for her. (*DENNIS crosses back of stage to FIFI's right.*)

KATE. If you don't mind my suggesting it, Mr. Dick, I'd better do the watching. Dennis ain't to be trusted with any French croquette. (*Exeunt KATE and FIFI at R.*)

ANNE. Do you think that Kate can manage that girl, Dick?

DENNIS. Please, Mrs. Winton, if you don't mind my suggesting it—I think *I* can manage Kate.

DICK. Then—you're excused. (*Exit DENNIS at R.*) Well—what do you think of her story? (*ANNE and ROBERT seat themselves on settee.*)

ROBERT. It's true. She hasn't the money.

DICK. Then—who has?

*Enter BOBBY from C. in F.*

BOBBY. I thought you were going out in the car, Uncle Dick. Aimée and I have been waiting for you. (*Goes to DICK.*)

DICK. We were, old fellow, but something has happened to keep us at home.

BOBBY (*going to ANNE*). What's happened, mother?

ANNE. Uncle Dick can't find the money that he wanted to take to the bank.

BOBBY. Has he forgotten where he put it?

ANNE. Something like that.

BOBBY (*going to ROBERT*). Uncle Dick's joking, isn't he, daddy?

ROBERT. I'm afraid not, son.

BOBBY. But he knows where the money is—and so do I.

ANNE. Don't let your imagination run away with you, dear.

BOBBY (*running to DICK*). Uncle Dick—don't you really know where it is?

DICK (*sitting in chair at desk*). I'm afraid I don't, Bobby.

BOBBY. Then you've forgotten. Shall I tell you all about it?

ANNE. Bobby, dear, you don't know what you're saying.

BOBBY. But I *do* know. Uncle Dick, please let me tell.

DICK. Of course you may tell.

BOBBY (*perching on DICK's knee*). Last night Aimée and I came down to look for Santa Claus. It was late—and the house was just as still as—(*hesitates*)—well it was awfully still. We were standing right over there (*points to R.*) when somebody came up to the desk—and sat down—and opened the drawer. And Aimée got scared—but I went right up to him and I said "Are you Santa Claus?" Just like that.

ROBERT. Then what happened?

BOBBY. He didn't answer—but he got up with his hands full of money—and he walked right by us—and we saw who he was.



ANNE. And who was he?

BOBBY (*looking at DICK*). *Who was he? Why, Uncle Dick, of course.*

ANNE. But—Bobby—

ROBERT. Hush, dear. (*To BOBBY.*) What did Uncle Dick do then?

BOBBY. He went over there—(*runs to mantel as DICK rises in excitement*) touched a button and put the money away in a little cubby hole.

ANNE (*rising*). The secret panel! (*ROBERT rises.*)

BOBBY. And we didn't wait any longer but ran upstairs before he found us out.

ANNE. Dick—you were walking in your sleep!

DICK. Do you suppose it's possible? I had it on my mind to do this very thing. I wonder—if subconsciously—

BOBBY (*impatiently*). Don't talk about it. Look and see. (*Runs to DICK.*)

(*DICK goes to the mantel, touches the button and the panel rolls back. He thrusts his hands into the aperture—and turns.*)

DICK. It's here—safe and sound.

BOBBY. Well, didn't I tell you so? (*Runs to DICK.*) Now may we go for a ride?

CURTAIN.

## SCENE II., CANDLE-LIGHTING TIME.

*Curtain falls for a moment to indicate the passage of the afternoon. It rises upon DICK on davenport with AIMÉE in his lap.*

*Enter RUTH from R.*

RUTH (*as she lights the candles on the mantel*).  
Candle-lighting time, Aimée.

AIMÉE. But I don't want to go to bed.

DICK. Who said anything about bed? Why we're going to put you in a boat of poppy leaves and set you afloat upon a river of dreams. And by and by you'll come to Shut-eye Town.

RUTH. And, perhaps, Uncle Dick has a story for you.

DICK. Will you listen to the story, Ruth?

RUTH. Of course I will. (*Sits by him on davenport.*)

DICK. Because it is—for you. (*To AIMÉE.*) All ready? (*Pauses.*) Well—once there was a chap who walked with his head in the clouds.

AIMÉE. What is a *chap*, Uncle Dicky?

DICK. Somebody—just like Uncle Dicky. And this chap had the idea that someday he would find what he called the real thing—though he didn't know just what the real thing would be. One day he caught sight of a bright and beautiful star and he thought his search was ended; for the star was what the world calls *fame*. But he couldn't reach it and he discovered that—although it was wonderful to think about—it couldn't bring him real contentment. And then he forgot to think about himself—for a sword was thrust into his hand and he was told to fight for a great and noble truth; but even *service* did not prove the real thing. Then one day—he followed a golden butterfly, thinking it would lead him to the land of joy—but the butterfly had no soul. (*Pauses.*)

AIMÉE. Go on, Uncle Dicky.

DICK. Suddenly, the Spirit of Christmas touched his eyes—and he found the happiness which was—nearest him. (*Puts his arm around RUTH.*) For he saw a friend—the friend who had always cheered and comforted him in her quiet way; who had understood him

as no other could ever understand; and he knew that in her love, her faith and her comradeship he had found the real thing, after all. So he went to her and he said—"Can you forget the years and years of blindness—and remember only that—I love you?"

AIMÉE. And what did the friend say, Uncle Dicky?

DICK. What *did* she say, Ruth?

RUTH (*as she lays her head on his shoulder*). She said—"Oh, Dick—dear Dick—try me and see."

CURTAIN.

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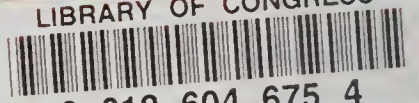








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