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His Uncle John

ELDRIDGE ENTERTAINMENT HOU
Franklin, - Ohio.

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HIS UNCLE JOHN.

A PLAY IN THREE ACTS,
With a Prologue.

BY

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Author of "She Organized a Club," "The Professor,"
and "The Master's Birthday."

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The Eldridge Entertainment House,
FRANKLIN, OHIO.

SYNOPSIS.

- Prologue: Mr. VanCourtland's law office, one morning in June, 1900. "It's an ill game of poker that blows nobody and good."
- Act I. The buffet sitting room of Mr. and Mrs. Jack Sander-son's apartment, Drake University, one morning in No- vember, 1900. "All is not lost that's falling!"
- Act II. The same, the afternoon of the same day. "Well, Brother, I am bobbed!"
- Act. III. The same, the evening of the same day. "Well, I have seen a Junior play at last."

THE PERSONS OF THE PLAY.

Mr. Jack Sanderson, of the Class of 1902, formerly of Northwestern.

Nellie Holmes Sanderson, His wife, who would really rather tell his
Uncle, anyway!

Mr. John VanCourtland, His Uncle John, who thinks "a young man
married is a man that's marred."

Mr. Bert Allison, His Sworn Friend, who is nothing if not loyal.

Miss Lucy Harrington, His Sworn Friend's Sweetheart, who has
"always been wild to visit Drake!"

"Nubbins" Goodwin, His Football Friend.

Mrs. Slatters, His Landlady.

PROLOGUE.

(The inner office of Mr. John Van Cortland, one morning in June, 1900. Mr. Van Cortland and his nephew, Jack Sanderson, seated at the desk.)

Van C. (Referring to an open letter on the desk before him) Well, it would seem that you can't get along there. What about it?

Jack. "Get along?" It's hardly that. I passed in everything, but—

Van C. (quickly) Was it girls? McLaughlin doesn't say anything about girls, but one never knows. On your honor, Jack, was it girls?

Jack. No, on my honor, Uncle, it wasn't girls. I haven't looked at a girl this year.

Van C. That's right, my boy, that's right. Let 'em alone; let 'em alone.

Jack. (stirring restlessly) Yes, sir. What do they say I did?

Van C. Oh, the charge is specific enough, but I didn't know but that girls were at the bottom of it. Listen. (He reads aloud from the letter.) "Quite aside, however, from his attendance at lectures, which has been desultory, Mr. Sanderson's conduct has been reprehensible in the extreme. He has —"

Jack. (scornfully) That's Chancey,—that's Chancey all over! "Reprehensible,"—I can hear him saying it! He works that word overtime! I suppose he says it's his personal interest in me—

Van C. Certainly; that is precisely what he says. He is an old friend of the family, and naturally this grieves him very much. His personal interest in you, as my nephew, makes him—

Jack. (miserably) I thought so! He's working you, Uncle John! They'll all do it. Anything for dough!

Van C. (with cold dignity) Chancellor McLaughlin is a friend of mine, and his interest in you is not—not financial.

I have known him since we were boys together in college, forty years ago. Forty years ago!

Jack. (*slowly*) But they do say that in his college days, he was—

Van C. (*hastily*) He was considered a very remarkable Greek scholar.

Jack. (*with a covert grin*) Oh, yes, Greek! Greek is easy. I can do Greek myself. But they say he was—well, a dead game sport, you know.

Van C. He was a remarkable Greek scholar. That is enough.

Jack. (*gazing at the ceiling*) Yes, that seems to be enough.

Van C. (*after a minute's silence*) Well, you can't go back there.

Jack. (*startled*) Can't go back? Why can't I go back?

Van C. "By request."

Jack. (*sitting erect*) You don't mean—?

Van C. Yes, I mean just that.

Jack. (*leaning over the desk*) I am not . . . not fired?

Van C. You are .

Jack. (*gazing at him hard*) Fired?

Van C. You are fired. By request of the Faculty you will not return to Northwestern next year.

Jack. But it was only a little game of poker!

Van C. It was a violation of the rules, and you knew it.

Jack. It must be a mistake. He's thinking of somebody else.

Van C. I wish to Heaven he were! But he isn't; he's thinking of you, all right. (*reads*) "Quite aside, however, from his attendance at lectures, which has been desultory, Mr. Sanderson's conduct has been reprehensible in the extreme. He has—"

Jack. You read that once.

Van C. I thought you might like to hear it again. (*reads*) "He has repeatedly been known to—"

Jack. (*springing up*) I haven't "repeatedly!" Don't read that to me! It's all rot!

Van C. It may be, but you are dismissed, anyway.

Jack. (*stramming around the room resentfully*) It's a personal attack, that's what it is! I know that old cove! He doesn't want me around. I know too much!

Van C. Yes, or too little. Your knowledge evidently is not—er,—normal. But this much is clear; you can't go back.

Jack. Who wants to go back? It's a slow old push, anyway! I guess I'll go to Harvard.

Van C. I guess you won't. You will go to Minnesota where Donlop can keep an eye on you.

Jack. You mean the University of Minnesota?

Van C. (*irritably*) Certainly. I am not sending you to the Legislature!

Jack. I won't go to Minnesota! Old Sam Dunlop can't tell *me* what to do!

Van C. Young man, who is sending you to school?

Jack. You are.

Van C. Who has the right to say where'll you go?

Jack. You, of course, Uncle John, but—

Van C. Then don't let me hear you say you won't go where I want you to. I am your guardian, and I say you'll go to Minnesota.

Jack. Well, let me go to a school nearer you.

Van C. Nearer me? Umph, I do not remember your wanting to be near me before. But that is a good idea. You can go to Iowa City.

Jack. I hate Iowa City.

Van C. They play good ball.

Jack. Yes, but nobody can get on the team. That champion team is going to live forever! Ponce de Leon is looking for that team! I'm not going to play on a second team, you can stake your money on that!

Van C. It strikes me, young man, that in your position—

Jack. (*pausing in his walk*) "My position?" What do you mean? Oh, *that!* Who cares for *that!* I'm all right. It's nothing to be fired by an old side-whiskered, psalm-singing—

Van C. (*severely*) That will do, my boy, that will do. Let me hear no more of that.

Jack. (*after a thoughtful pause*) Oh, I tell you what. I'll go to Drake.

Van C. Drake hasn't the reputation Iowa City has.

Jack. Of course not. How could it have? A State University is like the Prince of Wales; it has a reputation ready made.

Van C. But a degree from Iowa City would count more.

Jack. A degree isn't the main thing.

Van C. What is?

Jack. (*mEEKly*) Character.

Van C. Character?

Jack. (*soberly*) Yes, building—building character, you know.

Van C. (*shrugging*) Chancellor McLaughlin evidently fired the wrong man! Drake University hasn't any fine buildings.

Jack. Buildings don't make a University. Besides, Drake has more college spirit to the square inch than any school west of Ann Arbor!

Van C. (*smiling spaciouSly*) But you don't care for college spirit! You're going to build character!

Jack. (*grinning*) Then Drake's the place for me! They build character there at the rate of thirty knots an hour! Drake's a mighty fine school.

Van C. (*with sudden suspicion*) Why do you want to go to Drake so bad? Two years ago you wouldn't hear of going there. You said it was an upstart,—“a gourd,” that's what you called it. And now you're fighting to go there!

Jack. I'm not fighting to go there.

Van C. Oh, you aren't? All right, then, you go to Iowa City.

Jack. (*carelessly*) Drake's the better school, and it's nearer home. You could run over and spend Sunday once in a while. But then, (*with magnificent nonchalance*) it's nothing to me.

Van C. (*studying Jack curiously*) Say, do you know anybody at Drake?

Jack. Nobody.

Van C. Nobody? Think hard.

Jack. Some of the football fellows.

Van C. (*sinking back with a sigh of relief*) Oh.

Jack. (*cautiously*) Then it's Drake?

Van C. (*commencing absently to sort his papers*) I suppose so, since you're so set upon it. By the way, what are you, a Senior?

Jack. A Junior. 1902.

Van C. (*impatiently*) Is that all! What an endless process it is!

Jack. (*hopefully*) If I dig into it next year, I suppose I might—

Van C. Oh yes, I see you digging into it! Look here, now, you've got to brace up. I want steady work next year. Dig into it, as you say. No poker, and no late suppers. And Jack, no girls. Do you have girls at Drake?

Jack. I believe so.

Van C. They do? (*after a pause*) Can you let them alone?

Jack. (*grinning*) If they'll let me alone!

Van C. That isn't what I asked. *Can you let them alone?*

Jack. (*balancing a paper-knife with much nicety*) Haven't I, so far?

Van C. Have you?

Jack. (*absorbed in his balancing feat*) Yes.

Van C. Well, you'd better. Why, bless my soul, Drake's where so many fool students get married!

Jack. Oh, I guess not.

Van C. It is, it is. Everybody will tell you so. It's a regular matrimonial bureau. You cannot go to Drake.

Jack. Drake's Co-ed, that's all. So is Minnesota, and Iowa City, and all of 'em. It's no worse than any of the rest. Northwestern is Co-ed, and I escaped. What an ado about nothing!

Van C. (*with intense conviction*) Women are the devil. You cannot go to Drake.

Jack. Now, Uncle John, see here—

Van C. Women are the devil. Some blonde in pink will come dancing over the campus and you'll lose your head and marry her before help can reach you! You mark my word! That's what your father did.

Jack. (*slowly*) Did my father do that? Nobody ever told me that before.

Van C. Yes, he up and got married one Christmas vacation. And if he hadn't got a Van Courtland, he'd have been ruined.

Jack. So my father got married while he was in college?

Van C. He did. It was the only ridiculous thing I ever knew him to do. But your mother was a Van Courtland.

Jack. I see. Since I can't get a Van Courtland, I'd better steer clear of matrimony.

Van C. You had, sir. I won't give you a single cent if you marry before you're through school; not a single cent! Remember that. You can go to Drake, but there is to be no nonsense about girls.

Jack. No, sir.

Van C. Then you can go to Columbia for law. That means a career. You've got to make something of yourself. You are a Van Courtland. No more capers, young man. Stick to business. If you get married before you're thirty, I'll disinherit you, I will, by these United States!

Jack. (*dejectedly*) Yes, sir.

Van C. No cards, no girls, no nonsense. You understand?

Jack. (*looking gloomily into space*) I understand.

Van C. (tying up a bundle of papers with an air of finality) You can stay in the office this summer—there are no petticoats here, thank Heaven!—and pick up some law. But no nonsense, you understand. Here, hand these papers to Joyce, and tell him I want to speak to him. (*Jack rises and starts out.*) Tell him to come immediately.

Jack. Yes, sir. (*goes.*)

Van C. (*solus*) It's an ill game of poker that blows nobody any good. (*takes up his pen*) I'll keep an eye on him next winter myself. (*writes.*)

(Curtain.)

ACT I.

(*The buffet sitting room of Mr. and Mrs. Jack Sanderson's apartment, Drake University, a morning in November, 1900. Mrs. Sanderson getting breakfast. In the rear of the room a three-leafed screen hides the kitchen.*)

Nelle: (*Setting the table, having piled the books on the floor.*)

(*Sings*) "When other hearts and other lips
Their tales of love shall tell,
In language whose excess imparts
The power they feel so well . . ."

(*passes behind the screen*) "Then you'll remember me!"
Oh, this stove! Oh, Jack! "Then you'll remember me!"
Then you'll remember me!" Oh, Jack! Oh, Jack!

Voice. (*from another room*) What is it?

Nelle. (*from behind the screen*) Come here, please.
"Then you'll remember me!" Oh, Jack! Come here, please!

(*Enter JACK, with a big book.*)

Jack. What is it?

Nelle. (*peeping around the edge of the screen*) Come look at this stove. Something is the matter with it.

Jack. (standing still, hunting his place in the big book) I haven't time.

Nelle. Please, Jack!

Jack. I haven't read my philosophy.

Nelle. (coming from behind the screen) All right, then, we'll have no breakfast. (sits down) I'm not going to blow myself up with that stove.

Jack. (puts down the book) Oh well, then, let's see. (goes behind the screen.)

Nelle. (rocking serenely) Well?

Jack. (sound of striking matches) You hadn't it turned on far enough. You'll have to remember that. Turn it twice. Now, come on, (he comes from behind the screen) hustle! I'll miss Philosophy if you don't look sharp.

Nelle. Well, the alarm didn't go off. (she goes behind the screen, whence issue various sounds of breakfast preparation.) (Sings) "Then you'll remember me!"

Jack. (sits down and reads a few seconds) Oh, such rot! (yawning) I'm dead tired of school!

Nelle. (cutting bread at the table) Why, Jack Sanderson, and you have only one year more!

Jack. What good's it going to do a fellow? What does it matter what a lot of lazy Greeks thought about the Soul?

Nelle. "Lazy?"

Jack. Socrates was only a street loafer; many's the dry goods box *he* has demolished, I'll bet a sou! What's the use anyway? I'd a great deal rather hustle. This is the last year I'm going to waste with books. I am going to get out and do things.

Nelle. (smiling, and striking an attitude) "When you step forth into the great world of action—"

Jack. "When you face the real issues in the world of men and women—"

Nelle. (waving her bread-knife eloquently) ". . . And stand alone in your own strength—"

Jack. (springing up, and spreading his arms impressively) "Character, character will be the secret of your success

or failure. The character you build here, my dear young friends, will be your sole reliance. The world will not ask—”

Voice. (from the hall) “It gives me a pleasure to look into your bright and smiling faces.”

Nelle. (clutching her back chair) Oh gracious, there’s Bert Allison!

Jack. Hello, Bert, come in!

(Enter BERT ALLISON, book-laden.)

Jack. You mean my “bright and smiling face.” Nelle’s isn’t clean.

Nelle. (polishing her face with her apron) Oh Jack!

Bert. (gazing about ruefully) Going to Philosophy?

Jack. I haven’t had my breakfast.

Nelle. (bustling around) But it’ll be ready in a minute.

Jack. (sitting down at the table, and pounding an accompaniment with a table spoon while he chants)

“O we don’t hurry, for we don’t need to;
We get along well wherever we are;
We take things easy, just as we should do,
For we are loyal onto Nineteen Two!” *

Been to breakfast, Bert?

Bert. Of course. Be prompt, and you shall be—less hungry! We breakfast at 7 o’clock on the dot! Five minutes late, no steak; ten minutes late, no coffee; fifteen, no tablecloth; twenty, the landlady gives you the marble shoulder!

Nelle. Oh you poor boy! It’s pretty hard, isn’t it?

Jack. Here, Bridget, you bring in the breakfast, and don’t talk to the gents.

Bert. But I am equal to more breakfast. (draws up a chair.)

Jack. Like an omnibus, hey, always ready for more. Yes, we eat when we want to; it’s one of the advantages of matrimony. (*Nelle serves the breakfast.*)

Bert. Any others?

*Tune—“Whistling Rufus.”

Jack. Others? Why, man, they're numberless as the sands of the sea!

Nelle. Coffee, Bert?

Bert. Of course.

Jack. I tell you what, my wife does make good coffee—that is, for a bride.

Nelle. Yes, today is our anniversary.

Jack. Which means, being interpreted, that we've been married a month. Pass the sugar, *Nelle*.

Bert. Lucky fellow you are, *Jack*. I wish I were.

Jack. Lucky or married?

Bert. Both. Aren't they synonymous? *Nelle*, this coffee is good.

Nelle. It's very strong, but that's the way *Jack* likes it.

Bert. Yes, *Jack* lives on stimulants. Love, for instance. (*to Nelle*) Do you remember the coffee you made at the Philo picnic? And I stirred and stirred!

Jack. (*scornfully*) You should never stir coffee.

Nelle. (*smiling at Bert*) Of course not, but *Bert* didn't know that.

Bert. I wanted to be near the cook, so I offered to help.

Jack. (*comprehensively*) Oh.

Bert. (*retrospectively*) And they said it wasn't good, so we drove to Valley Junction for water.

Nelle. And when we finally got back—

Jack. (*sarcastically*) Oh, then you got back?

Nelle. (*dimpling*) Yes, but they had all gone, and—

Jack. (*tartly*) So *you* drank the water?

Bert. (*sighing heavily*) No, I can't say that we did. Gorgeous moonlight, wasn't it?

Nelle. (*dimpling deeper*) We forgot to get any water, really.

Bert. (*with a tender reminiscent smile*) Did we go to Valley Junction at all?

Jack. May I ask, when *was* that picnic?

Nelle. When was that picnic, Bert?

Bert. "Once in the dear dead days beyond recall."

Jack. Nelle, perhaps you can be a little more definite? When was that picnic?

Nelle. It must have been last Commencement. I never visited Drake but once in picnic time.

Jack. (*meaningly*) Possibly that is just as well. (*There is a knock on the door-jamb; Jack goes to the door, and finds Mrs. Slatters standing there.*) Oh, come in, Mrs. Slatters. We are breakfasting, you see.

Mrs. S. (*advancing into the room with a card*) Gentleman down stairs.

Jack. (*taking the card*) Good heavens, Uncle John!

Nelle. (*starting up*) W—who?

Jack. Uncle John. I thought he was in Europe. (*reels to a chair.*)

(*Mrs. Slatters starts out.*)

Jack. (*clutching her*) Wait! Wait till we think what to do!

Mrs. S. Do?

Jack. (*sits down weakly*) My Uncle John! My Uncle John! Is he down stairs?

Mrs. S. Of course. He isn't in the barn, I suppose.

Nelle. Of course he isn't. Never mind him, Mrs. Slatters. He is worried.

Jack. (*gasping and wild-eyed*) Yes, of course—that is, excuse me, Mrs. Slatters. No intimation that he was in the barn. Of course. Oh darn it, Bert, what shall I do?

Mrs. S. (*to Nelle*) Is he got the tissick?

Jack. Phthisic! You go to—go out in the hall, and wait!

Nelle. My dear Mrs. Slatters, just—just step into the hall and wait a minute.

Mrs. S. I'll wait, but you'd better do somepin for your husband. It looks to me like the tissick. (*retires slowly, looking at Jack with great commiseration*)

Bert. (*sympathetically*) Old gent who furnishes the tin?
(*Jack nods*) And is—ahem!—averse to matrimony?

Jack. (*rising*) I've not written to him I am married. Oh, heavens, what'll we do? I can't tell him now—I'd rather write. He may stay a week!

Nelle. Let me go away!

Jack. You can't go away. Don't be silly. What would people say? Besides, he'd hear it—if he hasn't already.

Bert. I've got it! Eureka and Epluribus Unum! You play friend; let me play husband.

Jack. I don't see.

Bert. You be me; Nelle, Mrs. Allison. See?

Jack. I be you?

Bert. (*snapping his fingers under Jack's nose*) Wake up! Right! Grip hold of yourself. This is a climax, man! All is not lost that's falling! Now, listen. He probably won't stay more than a day. We can bluff it that long. You're my friend—my chum—a fool student that got married. See?

Jack. He's been directed here, though.

Bert. (*hiding his cap*) That's O. K. You live here.

Jack. How can I?

Nelle. Don't you see? You're our boarder.

Bert. That'll do. That's great! Ring up the orchestra!
Act. I, Scene II, Enter the benevolent old gent.

Jack. I suppose that's as good as anything. Now, for pity's sake, don't forget.

Bert. (*smiling at Nelle*) Not on your life.

Nelle. (*anxiously*) Shall I be nice to him?

Jack. Yes, act your prettiest. You must bring him 'round.

Bert. No, she mustn't; she can't. She's just your wife's friend. She's not supposed to care.

Jack. Oh no, of course not. I forgot. You let him alone.

Bert. Go tell Mrs. Slatters to show him up.

Nelle. Shall we tell Mrs. Slatters?

Jack. We'll tell Mrs. Slatters nothing. This is not her affair. (*goes*)

Bert. Your face is as red as a beet. Can't you flour it some?

Nelle. I'm awfully frightened! Poor Jack! He was going to tell him Christmas!

Bert. Christmas is coming! He'll be all right! Brace up! And—and you must look at me, you know, as you did the day we—we made that—that coffee.

(*Re-enter JACK.*)

Jack. (*leaning against the door*) She's gone to tell him!

Bert. And you look like a wild man!

Nelle. (*smoothing Jack's hair*) Shall we be at breakfast?

Jack. No. Take the things away quick! Uncle hates laziness.

Bert. (*with dignity*) This is my house. It's none of his put in. I am eating my breakfast. (*reseats himself at the table, and opens a napkin.*)

Jack. (*picking up things*) If anybody should come!

(*A step is heard at the door*)

Jack. (*flinging open the door wide*) Hello, Uncle John! This is splendid! Where did you drop from? Come in!

Van C. Well, Jack, my boy, how are you? How are you? My dear boy, how are you?

Jack. All right, Uncle, fine as silk! How are you? I thought you were in Europe?

Van C. So I was, but I still have the power of locomotion.

Jack. Welcome to your native land! Uncle, this is Mr. Bert Allison, my friend, and er—Mrs. Allison.

Van C. I'm glad to meet you; always glad to meet any friends of Jack's.

Jack. Have you been to breakfast?

Van C. Well, I should say yes. At 7 o'clock. You're late.

Jack. (meekly) Yes, sir.

Bert. (airily) I am not an early riser, myself. (to *Nelle*) But we're later this morning than usual, aren't we, dear?

Nelle. I think so, maybe. (takes *Mr. Van Courtland's* hat and coat, while *Bert* hands a chair)

Jack. Where are you stopping, Uncle? Better have your togs brought up here.

Van C. At the Savery. Queer name, that. Reminds me of Isaac's mutton broth.

Bert. (serenely drinking cold coffee) Jacob's, wasn't it?

Van C. I don't know. Anyway, it was "a savory broth." I really don't quote the Bible often.

Jack. Either does Bert.

Van C. I'd rather trust his authority than mine, for of course you're straight on such matters at Drake. So we'll say Jacob, his broth. By the way, you have a very pretty campus; graceful slopes, fine old forest trees,—all that sort of thing.

Jack. (carelessly) You've been over to school?

Van C. Yes, where do you suppose I'd look for you this time of day?

Jack. (smiling genially) They directed you all right?

Van C. Yes. No extra information volunteered. Street and number, and I passed on.

Jack. (absolutely beaming) They think they're awfully busy in that office!

Bert. (pouring himself more coffee) Only one place busier, and that's the Delphic office when there is a crowd of two subscribers.

Van C. I got quite enthusiastic, just passing through. I want to go over to the college and look around—meet some of your professors, and see how it all goes. I haven't been in a college for years—I don't know when I have seen the outside of a college! Come on, Jack, (slapping him on the back) I feel like a boy again!

Jack. (rising with alacrity) We'll go right over now. You'll come, Bert?

Bert. (rising from the table) No, I guess not. I got to dig into Greek.

Van C. You are a student, too, Mr. Allison?

Bert. (modestly) Yes, sir, a—a theological student. (*Nelle drops a platter with a prodigious crash.*)

Van C. Indeed! And a friend of Jack's! (*to Jack*) I congratulate you, Sir. (*to Bert*) You have a fine Bible school here, I presume?

Bert. (solemnly) The finest in the West, Mr. Van Courtland.

Van C. Ah, that is very gratifying. And are you—ordained,—is that the term?

Bert. I—I have not been ordained yet.

Van C. Then you have not entered the ministry proper, as I understand it?

Bert. No, I have not—that is, Mr. Van Courtland, I do not preach.

Jack. Come on, Uncle, we'll go to chapel. (*to Bert*) You'd better come along.

Bert. No, thank you, old fellow, I won't interfere.

Jack. (desperately) You won't interfere, my dear fellow. Come along!

Nelle. (*handing Mr. Van Courtland his hat and coat with much grace*) I think he ought to study his Greek.

Jack. (savagely) Oh, you do!

Van C. You are extremely fortunate, Mr. Allison, in having so sensible a wife.

Bert. (*drops his arm lightly around Nelle's waist*) Thank you, Mr. Van Courtland. I think so, too.

Jack. Come on, Uncle John!

Nelle. Mr. Van Courtland, you will come back to dinner, will you not? Jack—Mr. Sanderson, you'll bring him?

Van C. (*bowing to Nelle*) I thank you, Mrs. Allison, but I'll keep the boy with me at the Jacob Hotel.

Jack. (*glowering at Bert, who is radiant with good nature*) But maybe we won't get so far as the Jacob Hotel. I think we'd better say we'll come back for dinner.

Van C. I'm here on business, and we must get that far. But I thank you, Mrs. Allison, just the same. Jack, are you ready?

Jack. We may be back anyway, Mrs.—Mrs. Allison. (*to Bert*) Aren't you going to Psychology?

Bert. I don't know. Perhaps, if the spirit moves me.

Jack. The spirit be d—

Nelle. (*cutting in gracefully*) Have you your cane, Mr. Van Courtland?

Van C. (*gazing at Jack curiously*) I never carry a cane.

Nelle. Oh, I—I mean your—your hat.

Van C. Thank you, I have my hat.

Bert. Well, so long. (*extending his hand to their guest*) We'll be glad to see you whenever you come. Suit yourselves. (*to Nelle*) Come, dear, don't stand in the draught.

Jack. Goodbye. This way, Uncle. (*they go*)

Bert. (*grinning*) Shall I hike?

Nelle. (*smiling*) You ought to be here when they come back, oughtn't you?

Bert. You think Jack will expect me?

Nelle. (*demurely, tying on her apron*) His Uncle will.

Bert. Do you think he suspects anything?

Nelle. (*busy at the table*) I don't think so, but he never took his eyes off of Jack. Isn't he handsome? Jack's awfully proud of him. And did you see him? He watched Jack as if he were—were just beginning to walk! I'd lots rather tell him. I've felt so all along.

Bert. (*watching her clear the table*) Why doesn't he tell him?

Nelle. I think he's ashamed to now, he's put it off so long. But at first he was afraid. He hates women, Jack says.

Bert. (after a silence) I wish that blessed car would run into an—an automobile and kill all the passengers!

Nelle. (folding the tablecloth) Why, Bert, aren't you ashamed?

Bert. (wishfully and recklessly) Oh well, automobiles are so—so hideous!

Nelle. (smiling) But you—you needn't act quite so much, if they are!

Bert. Oh, I'm not so slow! You're are a bride, and I am bound to keep up with the procession!

Nelle. Won't you stay awhile? But you'll have to excuse me. I've got to wash the dishes. My husband has company, you know. (She disappears behind the screen, whence, presently, comes her voice, "When other hearts and other lips, their tales of love shall tell. . .")

Bert. (listening, his eyes on the screen) It's another fellow's happiness . . . (Taking his cap and books, his eyes still on the screen.) It's another fellow's happiness! . . . I must hike. (tiptoes out softly)

Nelle. (sings behind the screen) "Then you'll remember me!"

(Curtain.)

ACT II.

(The buffet sitting-room of Mr. and Mrs. Jack Sanderson's apartment, the afternoon of the same day.)

(Enter JACK AND MR. VAN COURTLAND.)

Jack. Hello! Nobody at home? (aside) I wonder where the deuce Bert is?

Van C. Well, we've had a jaunt! (takes off his overcoat and sit down.) You room here, you say?

Jack. Yes.

Van C. Board, too?

Jack. Yes, with Bert and his wife.

Van C. (opening a newspaper) I thought you boarded

at some club. Somebody who was here reported so. I guess it was Miss Reynolds. Did you see her?

Jack. (mopping his forehead) Yes, I saw her. She was here a week. I did board at the Snyder Club, but I've been here two weeks. The clubs serve up such beastly stuff.

Van C. By the way, your sister will want to know all about your room. Women always care about such things.

Jack. (cheerfully) Yes, that's so. *(aside)* Good Heavens!

Van C. (rising briskly) Better show me your den before we forget it. Fannie wants to know the color. I think she has designs on a sofa cushion or something of that sort. But don't tell I said anything about it.

Jack. Yes, but sit down awhile. Later, we'll go up.

Van C. (re-seating himself) So your room is upstairs? I thought this house had only two stories. Who was the woman that showed me up this morning?

Jack. Mrs. Slatters. She's—she's a char-woman—I mean she owns the house. We,—Mr. and Mrs. Allison, you know, have this entire floor.

Van C. (absently, scanning the paper) Then your room isn't up, unless it's on the roof!

Jack. (in an agony) No, I—that is, it is down stairs. In the other house, the house I was in before I—I moved, my room was on the third floor, and I—I was thinking of it, I suppose.

Van C. (still scanning the paper) Yes, I suppose so. Well, the same old things seem to be happening. *(turns to a new page)*

Jack. (to himself) Where is my wife?

Van C. (looking up suddenly) By the way, Jack, get me those maps we spoke of, will you?

Jack. (rising with eagerness) All right. Excuse me a minute. *(goes)*

Van C. No hurry, my boy, but there's no time like the present.

(Enter NELLE, with her sewing.)

Nelle. Ah, quite alone, Mr. Van Courtland? (*extends her hand*) We are glad to see you back.

Van C. Yes, Jack was as restless as a young colt. We didn't have a very satisfactory time. He seems very fond of his home here with you all. It's quite marvelous. Jack has never been known as a home boy.

Nelle. It is lovely to have you here with him. Jack is always talking about his Uncle John.

(*Re-enter JACK, in haste.*)

Jack. How do you do, Mrs. Allison. We got back, you see.

Nelle. (*seating herself and commencing to sew*) Yes. We waited dinner till after one.

Jack. "We?" That is—er, I thank you. Where is Bert?

Nelle. He's gone over to the library for a few minutes. He'll be back.

Jack. I'll bet he will!

Van C. Is he so devoted to his home, too? (*to Jack*) Did you find those maps?

Jack. No, they must be here. (*He dashes to his desk and rummages, muttering*) "He'll be back!" They waited dinner till one! Umph! Watched the coffee boil, I presume!

(*Bert appears at the door, and stands, surveying the family scene.*)

Bert. May I speak to you a minute, Sweetheart? (*Nelle goes*)

Jack. (*upsetting things*) The devil!

Van C. (*looking over the top of his paper*) Well, you certainly are at home! Upsetting things as if it were your own house! (*Jack sops up the ink with his handkerchief*) So your desk is in the family sitting-room? This is mighty nice for you.

Jack. No, I—that is, Bert was using those maps. This is his desk.

Van C. Then let it alone for Heaven's sake! I'd kill the man who would treat my papers that way! He can find them for me.

Jack. (*starting up*) I guess they're in my room. (*starts out*)

Van C. Never mind, never mind. You look as if you had run ten miles!

Jack. No, but I must find 'em! (*he rushes out*)

Van C. (*solus*) He's nervous as a witch! I noticed it down town. But he looks well, and these people seem fond of him. I wonder if there is a girl in the case? That's the worst of these co-ed schools. I ought to have known better than to send him here. I'll ask Mrs.—Mrs. What's-her-name. She'll know. If he's in love, he can come home.

(*Re-enter NELLE and BERT.*)

Nelle. (*in surprise*) Are you alone, Mr. Van Courtland? Pardon me, I thought Jack was here. (*resumes her sewing*) You see we are treating you as one of the family.

Bert. (*rolling a cigarette*) I thought I heard Jack in the other room. He surely didn't go —

(*Re-enter JACK.*)

Jack. (*composedly*) No, I didn't. Don't you think it. You're going to Church History, aren't you?

Bert. (*putting the cigarette away at Nelle's mute protestations*) Not on your life. Too much Johnson! When a man has such a delightful home, what's Church History? Hey, Mr. Van Courtland?

Van C. Well, I—er, I am not so sure about that. Not your home, I don't mean; that is delightful. But after all, a college man, you know, is supposed to be a college man first, and a married man second.

Jack. Ha, ha, ha! Uncle John, you see, has theories.

Bert. Oh, theories! (*puts his hand lightly on Nelle's shoulder*) Men may have theories, but I have—a wife!

Jack. (*desperately*) Bert, won't you please find those maps I lent you?

Bert. What maps?

Jack. (*meaningly*) Those maps illustrating the Boer War.

Bert. (*frankly at sea*) The Boer War? Maps illustrating the Boer War—the Boer War?

Jack. You're as stupid as a Senior Prep! Yes, those maps of South Africa.

Bert. Oh yes, of course. I remember now. Of course, the Boer War.

Nelle. (*to Jack*) They're right there in your desk, de—Mr. Sanderson.

Van C. Jeck's desk there?

Bert. My desk, she means. They aren't there, dear. (*Mr. Van Courtland rises.*)

Jack. (*mopping his brow*) What is it, Uncle John?

Van C. (*with considerable firmness*) Come, let's go to your room. I wish to speak with you. Fannie will ask about that, first thing. (*to Nelle*) You know sisters are always interested in the way their brothers live.

Nelle. (*faintly*) Yes.

Bert. Ha, ha! Old fellow, that's a good one on you!

Jack. Yes, my room looks like—like—well, words fail me. The fellows keep it in such an awful tousel! I'll—I'll go throw things under the bed! (*goes.*)

Bert. (*goes to the desk to hide his laughter*) Maybe those maps are here.

Van C. Mrs. Allison, I think Jack acts very queer. Do you know him very well?

Nelle. (*bending over her sewing*) Y—e—s.

Van C. How long have you known him?

Nelle. He has been here—with us, a month.

Van C. I thought he said two weeks.

Nelle. Well, maybe it is so long—I mean so short. Time flies so, I thought it was longer.

Van C. (*rising, and looking down at her gravely*) Well, I wanted to know—that is, I want to ask you a question,—

a question of rather a—a private nature. Will you please look at me?

Nelle. Y—e—s, Mr. Van Courtland, I—I am g—glad to look at you.

Van C. Is he in love?

Nelle. Oh goodness, I don't know! Don't ask me!

Bert. (*turning from the desk*) No. Jack isn't in love any more than a rabbit.

Van C. You see, I am anxious that he finish his professional course before he—he settles down.

Bert. Yes, I see. I see perfectly. Well, I think Jack is heart free, don't you, *Nelle*?

(*Re-enter JACK.*)

Jack. Mrs. Slatters has got a cleaning spasm, and all the furniture's out of my room! That woman hasn't horse sense!

Bert. In this case she showed brains enough to rule an Empire!

Jack. (*turning on him savagely*) How?

Bert. (*sobering up*) Your room was scandalous!

Jack. Yes, that's so. But bachelor's quarters, you know, are not usually models of neatness.

Van C. Would a wife make it any better? I doubt it.

Bert. It depends upon the wife.

(*A bell rings on the landing*)

Jack. I told Mrs. Slatters not to let anybody come up.

Bert. But Mrs. Slatters is house-cleaning. She can't 'tend the door.

Jack. (*wearily*) Well, go see who it is, and stop 'em.

Bert. Go yourself.

Jack. It's your house. I have no authority to go to the door!

(*Bell rings imperiously.*)

Bert. Oh, as to authority—

Voice. (from the hall) Hello! Is everybody dead?

Nelle. (drops her sewing) Lucy!

(Enter MISS LUCY HARRINGTON, in smart traveling gown.)

Jack. Lucy Harrington!

Van C. (aside) Seems to strike terror to the hearts of the strongest!

Miss H. Well, you people! Pretty way to treat me on my first visit to Drake when I've been dying to come for two years! Why don't you kiss me, Nelle?

Nelle. We're very glad to see you. (kisses her, and takes her traveling bags)

Jack. (shaking hands like a wooden man) Yes, Miss Harrington, we are.

Bert. (offering her his hand, coolly) How do you do, Miss Harrington?

Miss H. (looking him over) How do you do, Mister Allison?

Nelle. (recovering her aplomb) Miss Harrington, Mr. Van Courtland, Jack's—Mr. Sanderson's uncle from Kansas City. You'll come, Lucy, and take your things off?

Miss H. (tosses her furs to Bert) This'll do. Bert, take 'em.

Bert. Yes. Give me your hat.

Jack. If you girls want a conflag, we'll excuse you. Women usually want to talk about three hours before they get started.

Bert. (eagerly) Yes, Ruth Ashmore talks! Do go and get it over with!

Miss H. (seating herself comfortably) Oh, we'll have time enough. I am going to stay over Sunday.

Nelle. Oh, I'm so glad.

Miss H. (sarcastically) So I see.

Jack. You bet we're glad.

Bert. Yes, that's good.

Van C. What good times you must have! Mrs. Allison, don't you find some difficulty in managing two young men?

Bert. She—she likes it. She had nine brothers.

Van C. (*gazing at Nelle earnestly*) Bless my heart! No wonder this is easy!

Jack. (*with a sickly smile*) And I am not much trouble.

Bert. (*to Nelle*) He troubles us a good bit, don't you think so, dear?

Miss H. (*aside*) I feel as if I were at a play!

Nelle. No, it is very pleasant to have him around.

Bert. When he stays out late, and forgets which side of the door the keyhole is—

Jack. Yes, and when I find you hunting for the door—

Nelle. (*hastily*) Well, Lucy, how did you find us? Why didn't you write?

Miss H. I wanted to surprise you. I love surprises!

Jack. Yes, I am partial to surprises myself.

Miss H. I just went to the office and inquired for Mr. and Mrs.—

Jack. (*cutting in frantically*) See anybody I knew?

Miss H. Of course not. How could I? I don't know anybody at Drake. I just stepped up to the window and asked for Mr. and Mrs.—

Nelle. (*rising, and dropping all her sewing impedi-
menta*) Don't you want a cup of tea, Lucy dear? Oh, do have a cup of tea!

Miss H. No, I just had my dinner. And I hate tea. You know I never drink it.

Van C. (*genially*) Did you dine at the Jacob Hotel, too?

Miss H. "The Jacob Hotel?"

Jack. He means The Savery.

Miss H. No, I dined at the station. You see, Nelle, I didn't want to eat too much, you being such a famous cook. Jack, how does it seem to be a—

Jack. A Junior? Pretty fine. "We are *the* people!"

Miss H. Oh, are you a Junior? I thought you were

a Senior. Nelle, you always vowed you wouldn't marry a man while he was in college.

Van C. (turning to *Nelle*) I think that was a very sensible vow. if you will pardon me.

Bert. Oh, the vow was all right so long as she didn't keep it.

Jack. (to *Miss Harrington*) Uncle John agrees with that line in *Kipling*:

"You may write it on his tombstone, you may'grave it on his card;

A young man married is a man that's marred."

Van C. It may sound ungallant, *Miss Harrington*, but—well, *Jack* has quoted me correctly. It may be just my notion, but I told *Jack* that if he married before he finished college—

Miss H. (squatting about and frankly staring at *Mr. Van Courtland*) If *Jack* married! You told *Jack* if he married—

Nelle. (starting up) Oh come on, *Lucy*, I want to tell you—to explain, I mean—

Miss H. It is time somebody explained, I'll admit.

Nelle. (pleadingly) Come on, dear.

Miss H. No, I am tired. Do let me alone! You didn't use to be so fidgety!

Nelle. (re-seating herself) I'm not fidgety.

Miss H. You are,—fidgety as an old woman! And your face is crimson. Aren't you well?

Nelle. I have a—a headache.

Miss H. You all seem a trifle theatrical. This isn't the *Junior Play*, is it?

Jack. (nervously) Ha! Ha! Ha!

Miss H. Your laugh, *Jack*, sounds like chopping ice with a small pick. You all seem keyed to concert pitch! I thought *Drake* was so primitive,—simple, that sort of thing.

Jack. That's so, this is your first visit. *Bert*, take her

over to the college and show her around. Take her to the football practice.

Bert. (*eagerly*) I shall be delighted. Come on, it's nearly four.

Miss H. Oh, then there's plenty of time. I'd rather watch this play. I feel like a box party.

Van C. I thought all young ladies were fond of football?

Bert. (*handing Miss Harrington her hat and wraps*) Come on,—unless you're tired, Miss Harrington.

Miss H. I am, and (*icily*) you make me tireder, *Mister Allison!*

Bert. (*politely*) Have you a headache?

Miss H. I have no headache.

Jack. (*aside*) Primer diction! Lord, what a mix-up!

Bert. (*recovering, and turning to Nelle with much solicitude*) Nelle, you had better take anti-kamnia for your headache.

Jack. Nelle can't take anti-kamnia.

Nelle. Oh, I'm all right.

Jack. But anti-kamnia will fix you right off.

Jack. But I say Nelle can't stand anti-kamnia!

Nelle. Never mind, never mind! My headache is better. Lucy, tell us about your trip. How did you leave everybody?

Miss H. Sane.

Nelle. "Sane?"

Miss H. I thought you would be pleased to know that somebody is.

Jack. Lucy Harrington, you ought to cash in your imagination!

(*Mrs. Slatters appears at the open door.*)

Mrs. S. Mrs. Sanderson, here is a telegram for you. (*When Nelle takes it, Mrs. Slatters goes with a clatter.*)

Van C. Your landlady is easily confused.

Jack. She's a driveling idiot!

Bert. That's just her joke. Don't call names; it isn't pretty.

Van C. (*thoughtfully, gazing at Jack with new attention*) She doesn't look like a humorist.

Nelle. I—I am so 'fraid of telegrams. (*Jack starts toward her, then falls back*)

Miss H. Oh, that's mine, I suspect. I telegraphed from Olewein.

(*There is a clatter of hasty steps and 'NUBBINS' GODWIN comes in, in football clothes.*)

Nubbins. Say, Jack, will you let your wife—

Bert. Ha, ha, ha! That's a good one on you, Jack Sanderson!

Jack. Ha, ha! Nubbins, old boy, you're a dandy!

Nubbins. What's the matter with you fellows? I want to know if you will let—

Jack. (*slapping him on the back*) Well, behave yourself. None of your frisky capers; we've company. Miss Harrington, Mr. Godwin, and Mr. Van Courtland, my uncle.

Nubbins. (*backing off sheepishly*) Glad to meet you, I'm sure. Excuse my regimentals.

Nelle. You'll sit down, Nubbins? I suppose you're on your way to practice?

Nubbins. No, I haven't time. I want to know, Jack, if you'll let your—

Jack. (*upsets a pitcher of water on the table*) Oh, my goodness! Bring a rag, somebody!

Nelle. Oh, Mr. Sanderson! (*as Nelle sops up the water, Jack motions to Nubbins*)

Nubbins. (*flatly*) What? Why don't you telegraph?

Miss H. Do you know, friends and Romans, I am not so stupid as I look?

Bert. Thank Heaven for that!

Miss H. Yes, I think I have what Hamlet would call "the argument of the play."

Nubbins. Jack's play, I suppose. Well, I must confess I haven't.

Jack. What do you want Nelle to do, Nubbins? Explain yourself, my lad.

Nubbins. Why, Held is getting up a Ladies' Minstrel, and wants her to be in it.

Jack. I'll let her—I mean, (*to Nelle*) what do you say?

Bert. She can't.

Nubbins. (*to Bert*) What have you got to say about it? (*one at a time*) What is the idea? A female minstrel show?

Miss H. Well, I see that, too! It's as fascinating as Greek!

Van C. (*who has been studying them all thoughtfully, one at a time*) What is the idea? A female minstrel show?

Nubbins. Yes, and we want Mrs. Sanderson—

Jack. Ha, ha, ha!

Nubbins. (*staring hard at Jack*) —to be end man.

Van C. Oh, I see. "End man" is good. No doubt Mrs. Allison will make a delightful "end man."

Nubbins. "Mrs. Allison?"

Miss H. (*to Nubbins*) Don't you see? You mean "Mrs. Allison."

Bert. (*to Miss Harrington, irritably*) You are just as stupid as you look!

Jack. Ha! Ha! Ha!

Nubbins. (*anxiously*) Say, Jack, have you got "a rather tough worm in your little insides?"

Jack. Ha! Ha! Is that a joke?

Nubbins. I give it up. Search me!

Van C. (*to Nubbins*) It is to be a real minstrel? Do they blacken their faces?

Nubbins. Yes, and sing songs.

Van C. (*nodding*) And tell jokes—jokes old, new, mediaeval and mixed! I played "end man" once. History repeats itself.

Nubbins. Yes, like an old clock. Well, Jack, then it is all right. Nelle will help us out?

Jack. Don't ask me. She may do as she pleases.

Van C. That's nice of you, to let the young woman do as she likes!

Nubbins. (*gazing at Jack helplessly*) Well, Brother, I am bobbed! (*Jack gesticulates to him behind Mr. Van Courtland's back.*)

Miss H. We are all bobbed. That is a part of the play.

Nubbins. (*in answer to Jack's sign language*) What?

Nelle. Tell Mr. Held that I will be "end man." I think it will be lots of fun.

Nubbins. (*rising*) All right.

Van C. Mr.—Mr. Nubbins, you are a football man, I see.

Nubbins. Yes, sir, and we practice at 4 o'clock. I'm due there now.

Van C. I believe I would like to watch the practice. I used to play Left Guard myself. Come on, Jack.

Jack. No, Uncle John, you go with the boys. Nubbins'll take care of you,—or Bert.

Van C. (*smiling in an inscrutable manner*) But Mr. Allison is a theological student. Perhaps he would hardly care to waste his time with football.

Nubbins. Allison a Theolog? Bert, go 'way back and sit down!

Jack. (*calmly, as one who has reached the limit*) I'll go with you, Uncle John. (*to Nelle*) We'll be back to supper about half-past five. Uncle's train goes at 8:30.

Nelle. (*assisting Mr. Van Courtland with his coat*) Must you go so soon, Mr. Van Courtland? I am very sorry. It has been a very short visit.

Van C. Yes, I must be at my desk tomorrow morning. (*bows to Mrs. Harrington*)

Nubbins. (*from the doorway*) Come on. It's after four.

Jack. Come, Uncle John. (*He and his Uncle go out.*)

Bert. (*turning at the door*) Get things straightened out before we come back, Nelle. Lucy, Nelle will explain everything—all this thushness! (*goes*)

Nelle. (*sobbing*) Lucy!

Lucy. (*sobbing*) Nelle!

(As they fall into each other's arms, Curtain.)

ACT III.

(*The buffed sitting-room of Mr. and Mrs. Jack Sanderson, the evening of the same day. Mr. Van Courtland seated as if waiting for some one. Presently, enter Jack.*)

Jack. I can't scare up anybody; the place seems deserted. Didn't Bert say he was coming right home when he left us?

Van C. Yes, I understood him to say so, and he probably did go home.

Jack. What do you mean?

Van C. (*steadily*) I mean what I say; he probably did go home.

Jack. But he isn't here. Maybe he stayed to see the boys; he's Manager of the team.

Van C. (*rising and facing Jack squarely*) Jack, my boy, do you think this is a manly course? Do you think it's fair? Do you think it's honest?

Jack. (*sinking into a chair*) I—I don't understand you, Uncle John.

Van C. Yes you do understand me.

(*Enter NELLE, with a fleecy shawl over her head.*)

Nelle. Oh, are you folks home? Pardon me; I just ran out to mail a letter. I did n't think you—why, what is the matter? Is Jack sick?

Van C. No. Mrs. Sanderson, he is not sick.

Nelle. Oh, I am so glad you know—I—I am *so* glad you know! I knew Jack would tell you! It's all my fault, Mr. Van Courtland. He wanted to tell you—

Jack. (taking his hands from before his face) No, Uncle John, it's my fault. Please understand that. I was afraid to tell you.

Van C. (with quiet scorn) "Afraid!" "Afraid!" You are the only Van Courtland, I have ever known, Sir, who was afraid to do right.

Nelle (eagerly) But he had done wrong, and it—it was my fault. I oughtn't to have left him marry me!

Jack. (rising, and putting his arm around his wife) I didn't do wrong, Nelle, and don't you say that again. (to his Uncle) There is no wrong, Sir, in marrying the woman you love. A man has a right to do that; every man has. This is my wife, and you may forgive us or not, as you see fit. I love her; that is enough for me.

Van C. That sounds very fine from a young man that hasn't a cent. How do you propose to live?

Jack. I propose to support my wife, as other men do. We can be happy without your money, or any one's else, I reckon.

Nelle. (looking out of her handkerchief) Oh, don't Jack, don't say such things to your Uncle! D—d—don't quarrel with him!

Jack. I'm not quarreling with him, dear. Uncle John, I am sorry I did not tell you sooner, and I beg your pardon. You have been good to me, but you can't stand there and tell me I am the only Van Courtland you ever knew who was afraid to do right.

Nelle. Jack, dear, tell him how it all was—tell him how it all was! P—please do!

Jack. Will you sit down, Uncle John, and let me tell you or do you prefer to leave it as it stands?

Van C. Jack, have I ever denied you justice? (*Nelle slips away from Jack, and goes out of the room softly.*)

Jack. (breaking a little) Never . . . until now.

Van C. Have I ever refused to hear any explanation you offered?

Jack. Never, Uncle, in—in all my life.

Van C. (*reseating himself*) Then I ask for your explanation now, and I am ready to listen to it.

Jack. I know what you think. You think I had—had this in mind when I wanted to come to Drake last June.

Van C. I certainly do.

Jack. I didn't; I never dreamed of it. Nelle and her aunt were living in Marshalltown then, and I didn't want to go so far away, so I—I compromised on Drake.

Van C. Jack, you didn't lie to me that day?

Jack. No, Sir, I did not. I hadn't seen Nelle for a year, and I didn't know when I'd see her again. We weren't engaged. She wouldn't ever have me, she said. Well, her aunt died in August,—the fifteenth, I think it was, and left Nelle without a home,—she is an orphan, you know. And when I came here I found her studying stenography, and she was going to make her own way. And so...well, Sir, the world's hard enough for a man, but for a pretty girl in a public office, it's—I just couldn't stand it. I thought I might as well marry her then, before she had broken her heart trying to make a living, as—as to stand by and watch the experiment. I over-persuaded her, and she married me. It was my fault. She wanted to tell you all along.

Van C. You went in debt, I suppose,—owe everybody in sight?

Jack. (*controlling himself*) I don't owe a dam cent. My allowance was enough,—we have only two rooms. I don't need any new clothes, and Nelle makes all hers.

Van C. (*trying to maintain his stern front*) Then she isn't in school now? I suppose you ruined her chances for an education?

Jack. (*proudly*) She's doing special work in art—but my money pays for that. I am not asking *you* to pay for her lessons. She has a great deal of talent, and some day I shall take her to Europe. Old Crowell says she ought to study in Paris.

Van C. (*rising eagerly, and holding out his hand*) I'll send her to Paris myself, Jack. I—I—

(Enter BERT ALLISON.)

Bert. I've almost pounded the hall door off! Mrs. Slaters must be deaf as—Oh, I beg your pardon! (*starts out*)

Jack. Bert, come back. Uncle John wants to shake hands with you.

Bert. Oh, then it's all right? (*to Van Courtland*) Thank Heaven, you know! I think the third act of the play would have been my finish!

Van C. (*shaking Bert's hand long and hard*) You stood by your friend, Mr. Allison. Angels could do no more!

Bert. Oh, I enjoyed it; I enjoyed it. But—well, there were complications!

Jack. Yes, there certainly were; the 'Theolog' flourish, for instance! That was pure art. Nelle broke the only platter we had when you sprung that! But say, Uncle, who gave it away,—Nelle?

Van C. No, her work was admirable; why didn't you give her the lead? Mr. Nubbins 'confirmed my growing suspicions,' as the lady novelists say. He was so—so flat-footed, you know, and he wouldn't be bought off. When he wanted your wife to be 'end man,' I mean.

Bert. Yes, Jack, you were pig-headed about that! You ought to have left me settle it. Instead, you *would* butt in and spoil it all!

Van C. The way you rummaged in your friend's desk opened my eyes, and Miss Harrington's amazement opened them wider.

Jack. Yes, it was a serious of eye-openers! It was enough to make you pop-eyed! (*to Bert*) And you were so airy about everything! And wanting to give Nelle anti-kamnia! I could have punched your head! She can't take anti-kamnia, Man. It makes her deathly sick. I guess I ought to know!

(Enter NELLE, in a white apron.)

Nelle. Aren't you all hungry? It's after six. As this is our dining room and kitchen—

Jack. —and sitting room—

Bert. —and library—

Nelle. Yes, and sitting room and library, Mr. Van Courtland, you must pardon—

Van C. Jack, please ask your wife to call me “uncle,” and tell her I have forgiven you both—if there were anything to forgive.

Jack. (*taking Nelle's hand*) Uncle John, this is my wife.

Van C. My dear niece, if you love your rogue of a husband half as well as he deserves, I shall love you always.

Jack. Oh, now, Uncle John, you—you—

Van C. Jack, if you love your brave little wife half as well as she deserves, I shall love *you* always. Amen!

Bert. (*solemnly*) Amen!

(*Enter MISS HARRINGTON.*)

Miss H. Is it a prayer-meeting? First, it is a play, then it is a prayer-meeting.

Nelle. (*wiping her eyes*) Oh, Lucy, it's all right! Jack's uncle has—

Van C. Whose uncle, young woman?

Nelle. Uncle John has forgiven us and he d—d—didn't scold a bit!

Miss H. (*petting her*) Of course not, dear. I knew he wouldn't. Don't cry, dear. It's all right!

Jack. There really isn't time to celebrate with tears. Uncle's train leaves at 8:30.

Nelle. You're not going tonight, Uncle John? Why, we've—we've just found you!

Van C. No, I am not going until tomorrow noon. I've just found myself, and I want to have a long conference with my niece relative to affairs domestic.

Miss H. Well, I have seen a Junior play at last! I think, Jack, it was a very fine play,—especially the villain!

Bert. (*looking at Miss Harrington*) I was the villain, but I am ready to be forgiven. Shall I kneel?

Van C. Forgive him, Miss Harrington. I recommend him to your good graces.

Miss H. If I do, we can have a hands-all round, everybody happy, God-bless-you-my-children ending, can't we? That's the way I love to have plays end. (*To Bert*) For the sake of the play, I forgive you.

Jack. (*Stepping to his wife's side*) Now, Uncle John, bless the bunch!

(*As Mr. Van Courtland spreads his arms aloft, Curtain.*)

Other Plays by Miss Woodman.

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