

954
C5365
twe

UC-NRLF



\$B 287 403

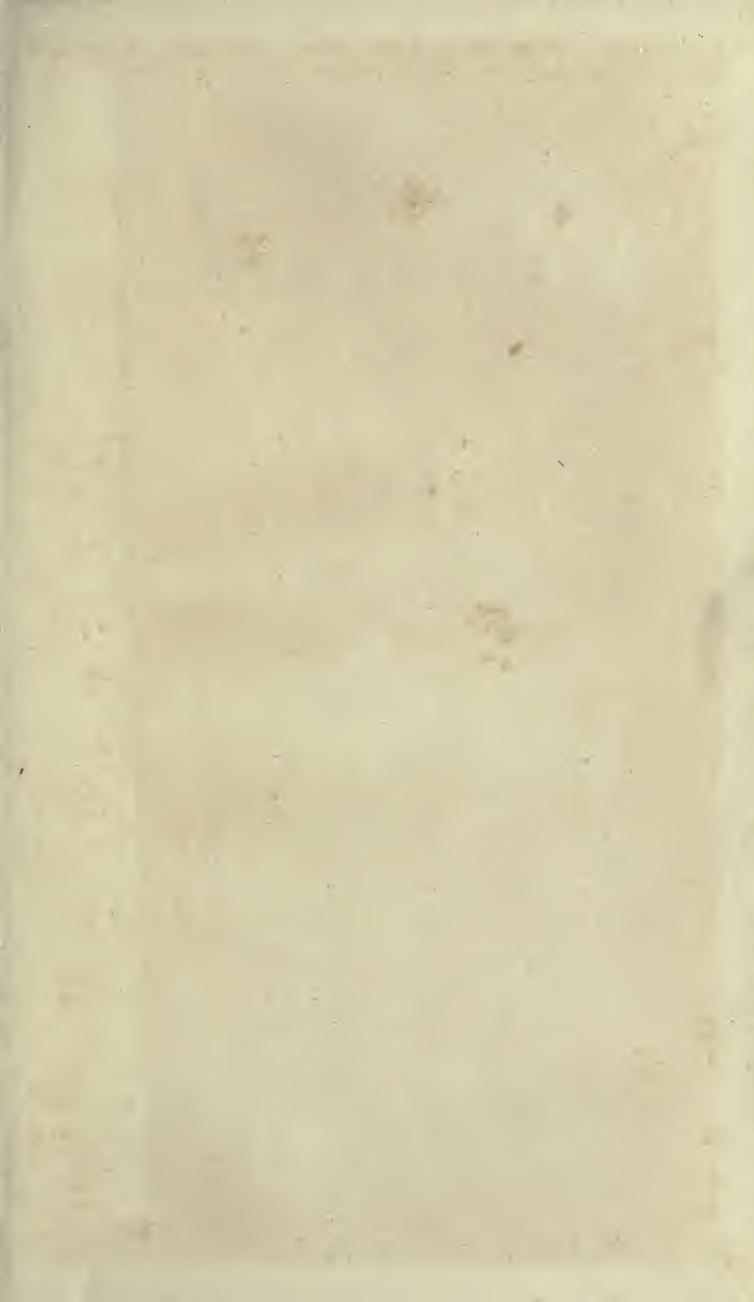
"Twenty Minutes!"


BY

H. L. CHILDE PEMBERTON



BERKELEY
LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF
CALIFORNIA





Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

“TWENTY MINUTES”

DRAWING-ROOM DUOLOGUES

ETC.

BY

HARRIET L. CHILDE PEMBERTON

AUTHOR OF “GEESE,” “HE, SHE, AND THE POKER,” ETC.

SIXTEENTH THOUSAND

LONDON :
SAMUEL FRENCH, LTD.,
PUBLISHERS,
26, SOUTHAMPTON STREET,
STRAND.

NEW YORK :
SAMUEL FRENCH,
PUBLISHERS,
28, WEST 38TH STREET.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

DEPARTMENT OF CHEMISTRY

1952

RESEARCH REPORT

NO. 100

BY

ROBERT M. HAYES

[The Rights of Translation and of Reproduction are reserved.]

954

C5365

twe

P R E F A C E.

THE following pieces have been written with a view to performance by amateurs, under the simplest possible conditions. Of course, a stage and footlights would tend to enhance their effect; but if these are not to be had, it does not affect the possibility of performance. I have myself taken part in several of them, simply standing up at the end of a drawing-room, without even the assistance of a curtain or of folding doors. In all the duologues (with the exception of "The Train de Luxe from Cannes"), and in the two monologues, the action of the piece takes the actors off the stage by any door out of the room which may be convenient. In "A Backward Child," "Shattered Nerves," and "Nicknames," the whole *mis-en-scène* consists of a table and two chairs, while in "Chatterboxes" nothing whatever is required. In "A Figure of Speech" there ought to be something that represents a window and a fireplace; but if quite impracticable, they might be dispensed with, without materially affecting the piece. To "The Train

de Luxe from Cannes" I have added a note with some suggestions which may help to simplify seeming difficulties as to representation. With regard to requisite "properties," too, they are all within the compass of anyone to obtain,—with the exception, perhaps, of the parrot in "The Science of Advertisement." This latter piece would, of course, be the better for a stage, as it involves more characters than the others, and consequently more action. But this, too, I have had played without one, with only folding doors between the actors and the audience.

The average time of performance of the duologues is a quarter of an hour; the monologues would hardly take so long; and I do not think that "The Science of Advertisement" takes more than thirty-five minutes.

H. L. C. P.

12 PORTMAN STREET,
LONDON, W.

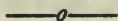
CONTENTS.

	PAGE
A BACKWARD CHILD (<i>Duologue</i>)	7
CHATTERBOXES (<i>Duologue</i>)	20
SHATTERED NERVES (<i>Duologue</i>)	31
THE "TRAIN DE LUXE" FROM CANNES (<i>Duologue</i>)	44
I AND MY FATHER-IN-LAW (<i>Monologue</i>)	57
A FIGURE OF SPEECH (<i>Duologue</i>)	64
MY MISSING SPECTACLES (<i>Monologue</i>)	80
NICKNAMES (<i>Duologue</i>)	87
THE SCIENCE OF ADVERTISEMENT	101

Any Wigs, Costumes or Properties required in the performance of these plays may be hired or purchased reasonably from Messrs. C. H. Fox, Ltd., 27, Wellington Street, Strand, London.

The Amateur Fee for each and every representation of this play is half-a-guinea, payable in advance to Messrs. SAMUEL FRENCH, LTD., 26, Southampton Street, Strand, London. No performance may take place unless a written authority has first been obtained.

A BACKWARD CHILD.



CHARACTERS :

MISS MILLIKEN (*Governess*).

FLORENCE (*aged twelve*).

Miss Milliken. (alone. Table, two chairs, books, &c.). My first morning with my new pupil! I always feel a little nervous the first morning with a new pupil. I never quite know how we are to begin—there is always an uncertainty how we shall go on,—not to mention an extreme doubt as to how we shall end. It's very like writing a novel. You haven't the least idea what your opening chapter will be; your middle drags on anyhow; and you conclude abruptly with a catastrophe. In all my previous situations as a governess I have concluded abruptly—with a catastrophe. I wonder how I shall get on with Florence? She seems a nice child,—a nice, quiet, well-behaved child. It is true I have only seen her in the presence of her parents. Her father spoils her, I can see. Her mother says she is a very observant child, but backward—sadly backward with her lessons. I'm not sorry for that. I detest for-

ward children. I have always been particularly successful with backward girls, and if she is observant, her backwardness—

(Enter Florence; skips behind Miss M.

Nearly tilts her backwards on her chair.)

Florence. Morning, Miss Milliken.

Miss M. Good morning, Florence. Do you think that this is a becoming way of greeting your governess the first—

F. Oh! I mustn't think. My Mamma says it isn't good for young people to worry themselves with thinking.

Miss M. But it is high time you began to think, my dear—a great, big girl like you!

F. That's just it. I'm growing so fast, don't you see. You can't expect body and brain to grow at the same time. My Mamma's doctor says so.

Miss M. I have nothing to do with the body; my business is to stimulate the brain. Sit down. *(Opens a book.)*

F. (still standing). Miss Milliken, may I ask you a riddle?

Miss M. A riddle?

F. Yes, a riddle. Why are you like a cup of strong tea? Made it myself.

Miss M. Made the strong tea yourself?

F. No, the riddle. Give it up? Like to know the answer? Because you stimulate the brain. Not bad—is it?

Miss M. (aside). Humph! for a backward

child! (*Aloud, sternly rapping the table.*) I must insist on your sitting down and beginning your lessons.

(*Florence wriggles into her chair, and puts her elbows on the table.*)

F. You know tea is like that. My Mamma's doctor says—

Miss M. Never mind what your Mamma's doctor says, and take your elbows off the table. (*F. tilts her chair back.*) I shall now proceed to ask you a few questions from the Book of General Knowledge, to see how far your education really has gone.

F. Oh! that's awfully old-fashioned and behind the times! Shall I tell you what you ought to do? You ought to lecture—

Miss M. Exactly; and *you* ought not.

F. Like they do at Girton, you know, and me take notes. My Cousin Lucy says—

Miss M. Never mind what your Cousin Lucy says. Don't tilt your chair.

F. Why not?

Miss M. Why not? Because you'll be over backwards directly.

F. I can't be more backward than I am! My Uncle John says I'm the most backward child he knows. Not bad—is it?

Miss M. Never mind what your Uncle John says, but attend to me. (*Questions at random from the book.*) On what sea-coast is the town of Joppa situated?

F. (*vaguely*). I don't know! "There was

a young lady of Joppa, who came a Society cropper—”

Miss M. A what?

F. Don't you know what a Society cropper is? Oh! you are behind the times! I say, Miss Milliken, do tell me what you think. When a person's in Society, like my Mamma, and when a person, who's her friend, comes a Society cropper, you know, like Mrs Ponsonby Masher, do you think it's fair to chuck her over?

Miss M. My dear, these are not questions I can discuss with a child like you.

F. That's because you're not in Society, you know; but I've heard my Mamma and my Aunt say—

Miss M. Never mind what your Mamma and your Aunt say. Attend to me. (*Questions from the book.*) What is the distance of the sun from the earth?

F. (*vaguely gazing into space.*) Let me see, as the blind man said!

Miss M. My dear, a blind man couldn't have said that.

F. Why couldn't he?

Miss M. Because it is nonsense.

F. Oh! but lots of people talk nonsense. My Papa often tells my Mamma not to talk nonsense.

Miss M. Never mind what your Papa says to your Mamma, but attend to me. (*Questions from the book.*) Which of our English kings lost his head?

F. Oh! lots of 'em!

Miss M. Only *one*, my dear, only one. Which was he?

F. Oh! you're not up to much! My Papa says most kings lose their heads in a great crisis. My Papa's a Radical, and I'm a Radical too. Are you?

Miss M. When I ask you a serious historical question, I don't expect you to treat it as a joke. Do you hear? Not one of my questions have you answered. You are, without exception, the most backward child I have ever had the misfortune to teach.

F. And you're more behind the times than most people. Where's the difference?

Miss M. Don't argue. Now, let me see if you can count. What does twice three make?

F. (*pertly*). Why, six of course. What else should it make?

Miss M. Don't take me up like that.

F. Then don't you put me down like that.

Miss M. Let me tell you, Florence, that repartee is highly unbecoming in a little girl. Now, about your grammar. I suppose you've been grounded in grammar?

F. Oh! you don't mean grounded; you mean floored. I've been floored in grammar heaps and heaps of times!

Miss M. I mean grounded.

F. No you don't.

Miss M. Yes I do, I tell you. Don't answer

me. (*Pause.*) How many parts of speech are there? (*Silence on the part of Florence.*) How many parts of speech are there? (*Continued silence on the part of Florence.*) How many parts of speech are there? (*Angrily.*) Why don't you answer?

F. You told me not to answer, so I shan't.

Miss M. I did not mean you were not to answer my questions.

F. Then why don't you say what you mean?

Miss M. The fact is, you *can't* answer! You are without exception the most backward child—
(*Florence makes a grab at the book out of Miss Milliken's hand.*)

Miss M. Give me back that book.

F. Not if I know it!

Miss M. But you don't know it—that's just it. Give it me back this minute.

(*Tries to get it back. Florence runs round table. Change places.*)

F. I don't believe you could answer the questions yourself. (*Questions at random from the book.*) Now—What's the use of a sun-dial?

Miss M. Every one knows *that*, I suppose. If you want to know the time—

F. "Ask the p'liceman. Every member of the force, Has a watch and chain of course, If you want to know the time, Ask the P'liceman."
(*Strikes an attitude. Horror of Miss M.*) Haven't you ever heard that, Miss Milliken? Oh! you are behind the times! I've heard it sung at the play. It's a Breach of Promise

Case,—I daresay you know what a “Breach of Promise” is, Miss Milliken—and she sings it in the witness box, you know; and there was a little wretch of a lawyer sitting just below, as it might be you, you know, Miss Milliken—and every now and then she bashed him on the head.

Miss M. She what?

F. Bashed—bashed him on the head.

Miss M. Conjugate the verb to bash.

F. Don't you know what “to bash” means? Oh! you are behind the times!

Miss M. Conjugate the verb to bash.

F. Present tense: I bash. Past tense: I bashed. Future tense: I shall bash.

(*Expressive action with the book over Miss M.'s head.*)

Miss M. (*apprehensively*). That'll do—that'll do. Now, stand still and let me hear you repeat some poetry.

F. (*skips to the front*). Oh! I can do lots of that. I'm an awfully clever actress—real jam, my Papa says—and he knows!

Miss M. Stop a minute. Put your hands behind you. (*F. reluctantly does so.*) Feet together—first position.

F. (*sulkily*). It's awfully behind the times to recite like that!

Miss M. I've no doubt you think your own way is best, but you must learn to do as you are told. Now, go on and say: “How doth the little busy bee—”

F. "How doth the little busy bee
Delight to bark and bite,
And gather honey every day
To eat it up at night."

Miss M. Stop! stop! stop! That's not right.

F. Yes, it is.

Miss M. No, it is not.

F. Indeed and indeed, Miss Milliken, I can show it you in the book, "Alice in Wonderland."

Miss M. Dr Watts didn't write "Alice in Wonderland," you little goose.

F. (*beginning to cry*). Oh, w-well—if you—d-don't—b-believe what I say—I shall g-go and t-tell my P-papa!

Miss M. (*aside*). Oh, bless the child! Now she's going to cry! This will never do my first morning. (*Aloud*.) Well, go on, my dear child, and say whatever you like.

F. May I say "The D-Duck and the K-Kangaroo"?

Miss M. The Duck and the what?

F. The Duck and the Kangaroo.

Miss M. I haven't the least idea who wrote it, but you may, if you like.

F. Don't you know the Duck and the Kangaroo? Oh! you are behind the times!

Miss M. (*severely*). Well, go on. Hands behind you—(*F. puts her hands behind her*)—feet together—first position.

F. (*showing signs of crying again*). But I

can't say "The Duck and the Kangaroo" like that, nobody could, not Toole nor Irving nor the whole boiling of them couldn't!

Miss M. Well, say it anyhow you like—only say it.

(Florence recites The Duck and the Kangaroo with occasional hesitation and lapses of memory. If preferred, any other nonsensical piece may be substituted.)

F. "Said the Duck to the Kangaroo,
'Good gracious! how you hop!
Over the land and water too,
As if you never would stop.
My life is a bore in this nasty pond,
And I long to get out in the world beyond;
Oh! take me a ride, oh! do,'
Said the Duck to the Kangaroo.

"Said the Kangaroo to the Duck,
(Pause. Florence at a loss. Then goes on rapidly.)

'I see but one objection,
Which is, if you'll pardon my being so bold,
Your feet are unpleasantly damp and cold,
And really might give me the rheu-
Matiz,' said the Kangaroo.

"Said the Duck: 'As I sat on the rocks,
I thought of it all completely,
And I've bought four pairs of worsted socks,
That fit my web feet neatly;

And I'll wrap myself in a cachemire cloak,
 And every day a cigar I'll smoke,
 And all for the sake of my own dear, true
 Love of a Kangaroo !'

"Said the Kangaroo : ' I'm ready,
 All in the moonlight pale ;
 But to keep me straight, dear Duck, sit steady,
 And quite at the end of my tail.'
 So away they went with a hop and a bound
 And they hopped the whole world three times
 round,
 And who so happy, oh who,
 As the Duck and the Kangaroo ?"

*(Florence imitates the hopping of a Kangaroo.
 Horror of Miss M. Tableau.)*

F. (after a pause). Don't you like it ?

Miss M. Like it ? Where, may I ask, did you learn such stuff ?

F. It's out of the Book of Nonsense.

Miss M. Just exactly what I should suppose. How dare you stand there and talk nonsense to me ? I insist on your apologising this very minute. Say : I am very sorry ; I beg your pardon, my dear Miss Milliken.

F. I am very sorry ; I beg your pardon—

Miss M. (prompting). My dear—

F. Miss Milliken. How long do you think it would take a kangaroo to hop round the world ?

Miss M. It couldn't be done—so don't ask silly questions.

F. Why couldn't it be done?

Miss M. Could a kangaroo hop over the sea? No. So there's an end of it.

F. But *I* think that when they came to the sea, most likely the duck—

Miss M. Never mind what you think. Sit down and don't speak another word till I tell you. I am going to set you a copy. (*Aside.*) This child is not only backward—she is a perfect idiot!

(*Begins to write, bending her head very low like a near-sighted person. F. examines Miss M.'s hair with interest across the table.*)

Miss M. (*looking up suddenly*). What do you want?

F. I was only looking at the colour of your hair.

Miss M. Then I beg you will desist. The colour of my hair is no concern of yours.

F. But I can't help noticing, you know; I'm so awfully observant. My Mamma always says I am, and your hair is *so* funny.

Miss M. Funny! funny! I have had my hair called many things,—yes, many things—golden tresses—raven locks—but never, no, never, did I hear it stigmatized as funny! What do you mean, Miss?

F. Well, it's not all one colour, you know. There's little bits of yellow, and little bits of brown, and at the roots it's quite white—

Miss M. And if my hair were all the colours of the rainbow, you ought not to make remarks.

Remember, there is nothing so impertinent as a personality.

F. What's a personality ?

Miss M. A rude remark on another person's appearance. (*Resumes her writing.*)

F. Miss Milliken, do you think they make hair-dye of poison ?

Miss M. (*without looking up*). Make hares die of poison ? Certainly not. It would be very unwholesome.

F. Ah, well ! my Mamma says they do—and it isn't wholesome. It brings on fits, so I'd advise you to be careful. Miss Milliken, how old are you ?

Miss M. Don't ask impertinent questions.

F. It was the first question you asked me. I don't care who knows how old I am. I was twelve last birthday.

Miss M. Then I wonder you are not ashamed to be so ignorant.

F. Oh ! don't you trouble yourself. I know a thing or two that would make you sit up and sneeze.

Miss M. Sit up and sneeze ! I wish you would sit up, sneezing or no sneezing. Your chest is as flat as a pancake, and your back is a regular hump ! You ought to be turned fore-side behind !

F. And if I was made inside out, you oughtn't to make remarks. Remember, there's nothing so impertinent as a personality.

Miss M. That is not at all the same thing.

It is very impertinent of you to make personal remarks, but for me it is different. I am here to make remarks.

F. Oh, I daresay. That's just what the little special constable said to the big costermonger—"If I kill you, you know, it's nothing, but if you kill me, by Jingo! it's murder!"

Miss M. (rising). Oh, well! If you are going to take to swearing, there is nothing more to be done. That is the last straw that will break—

F. The camel's back. Good old camel!

Miss M. (in a fury). Camel, Miss! Camel! I shall go and tell your Papa that you call me a camel, and if he has a spark of gentlemanly feeling, he will see me righted.

F. And I shall go and tell my Mamma that you call me a hunchback, and if she's got an atom of motherly pride she'll give you the sack.

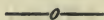
(Exeunt, if possible, by different doors. If not, they race for the door; Florence sets Miss M. on one side and gets out first.)

Miss M. (looking back). I really can *not* undertake such an exceedingly backward child!

F. (the same). I really can't stand an old duffer so awfully behind the times!

The Amateur Fee for each and every representation of this play is half-a-guinea, payable in advance to Messrs. SAMUEL FRENCH, LTD., 26, Southampton Street, Strand, London. No performance may take place unless a written authority has first been obtained.

CHATTERBOXES.



CHARACTERS :

VIOLET (*in her bonnet*).

GEORGINA.

Scene: A Drawing-room. Enter simultaneously from opposite sides, greeting each other.

Georgina. My dear Violet! I'm so glad you've come at last. You know, I've asked Mr Fitz-Faust, the Professor of Palmistry, on purpose to meet you——

Violet. So awfully kind of you, dearest. Ever since I met him at dinner, and found out he was a real Professor of Palmistry, I've been *dying* to meet him again——

G. And he has been here such an age, expecting you every moment, and now he has only five minutes——

V. Well, it isn't my fault, I assure you. If our idiot of a footman hadn't made a mistake about ordering the carriage, I should have been here an hour ago. And he came to us with a first-rate character, you know, and the man is a perfect fool, my dear! a perfect, absolute fool! Now, I'll just give you an instance——

G. You can tell me about the footman another time; but if you *really* want to have any talk with Professor Fitz-Faust about your hand, you had better come at once. He has to give a lecture in the country, and he has literally only five minutes more he can call his own——

V. Five! Why, he's a rich man, my dear. I've not had five minutes I could call my own the whole day! Not three! Two hours with my dressmaker to begin with, and you know what that is! Then a list of shopping commissions from my sister-in-law in the country, a yard long, dear, positively, I assure you; and not a single thing she couldn't have ordered just as well by post. Oh! I *do* think sisters-in-law in the country are enough to drive one crazy! Don't you think they are?

G. I haven't got a sister-in-law, you know, either in the country or in the town. But——

V. Oh, no! of course you haven't. How stupid of me to forget. But if you *had* a sister-in-law, what should you do about attending to her silly commissions? Where would you draw the line?

G. I shouldn't draw the line anywhere. I should put my foot down at once. But, Violet, if *you* don't draw the line in your conversation, the line will draw Mr Fitz-Faust—excuse my bad joke—but he has to catch a train——

V. *I* draw the line! My dear child, *I* don't want to stop here all day talking. Ever since I met Mr Fitz-Faust, and found out he was a *real* Professor of Palmistry, I've been *dying* to meet him again. I told you about my meeting him, didn't I? No? Oh, well it was the night I dined with the Finches——

G. What, the Finches of Durham—the rich people—the Gold-Finches, as they're called?

V. Oh, no! no! Not those horrid people.

Good gracious, no! We don't speak, ever since they behaved so atrociously to my brother Harry—this time last year. Don't you remember? Surely I must have told you the story?

G. Oh, yes, of course, of course. I remember perfectly; how stupid of me——

V. No, these people are Devonshire Finches, Bull-Finch or Finch-Bull, I never can remember which it is, a man with a beak, don't you know, and teeth——

G. And a chronic smile. I know. And isn't there some odd story about his wife having pawned her jewels——

V. Oh! I never heard *that*. I have been told some very queer stories about her. You remember the practical joke with the monkey and the mustard plaster,—and her bet with the Bishop about dancing in tights—but I never heard about her pawning her jewels. Do tell me.

G. Oh, it's perfectly true, I believe. But it's a long story (*pausing*), and if you really want to have a talk with Mr Fitz-Faust about your hand, you had better leave off chattering to me. Because, when a man has to catch a train at Waterloo——

V. (*crosses over, going towards door*). Me chattering! My dear Georgie, haven't I been saying ever since I came into the room, that I'm dying to meet Mr Fitz-Faust. (*Stopping and returning*). As I was telling you, I sat opposite to him at dinner, and I was so perfectly fascinated by his appearance, that at last I couldn't

help saying to my next neighbour, "Can you tell me who the mysterious looking man is with the dreamy blue eyes?" You know what peculiarly beautiful blue eyes he has?

G. Ye-e-s. His eyes are blue, certainly; and his hair is red.

V. Brown.

G. Red.

V. Brown.

G. Red—carrots. My dear Violet, you don't suppose I've been entertaining the man for an hour, and don't know the colour of his hair?

V. My dear Georgie! You don't suppose I've sat opposite to him for two hours, and never noticed whether his hair was brown or red?

G. Yes, quite likely you never noticed.

V. Quite likely I never noticed?

G. Yes, quite likely. You were evidently so taken up with gazing at his "peculiarly beautiful blue eyes," that you never got so far as his hair.

V. My dear Georgie! To hear you talk, one would think you imagined I was in love with Mr Fitz-Faust.

G. Oh, dear, no. I hold you guiltless of that!

V. Hold me guiltless of that? What do you mean?

G. Why, if you were in love with Mr Fitz-Faust, you'd be in a much greater hurry to hear what he has to say about your hand, instead of dawdling here, talking about nothing at all—

V. (*going*). Me talking! when I've been telling you ever since I came into the room that I'm

dying to see Mr Fitz-Faust again. Why on earth didn't you take me to him at once? And you said yourself he had only five minutes to spare, and that must be five minutes ago, and——

G. (*following V.*). Well, for goodness gracious' sake, go along into the next room—do.

V. (*at the door*). By the way, I wonder whether, after all, this *is* the Mr Fitz-Faust I met at dinner. (*Both come back.*)

G. What makes you think it isn't?

V. Because there are two.

G. This is the Professor.

V. But there are two Professors.

G. Well, this man's Christian name begins with an R. Will that help you?

V. Not a bit. They both begin with R. One is Rupert and the other Robert. Which did your servant announce?

G. I can't remember.

V. Well, try and think.

G. Mr Rupert Fitz-Faust—Mr Robert Fitz-Faust—Mr Rupert—Mr Robert—oh! I'm sure I don't know which it was! But which did you meet at dinner?

V. Oh, Rupert.

G. Then why not come into the other room and see for yourself if this is Rupert? You're just like my mother when she gets a letter in a handwriting she doesn't know. She turns it round, and she examines the postmark, and she holds it up to the light, and she wonders whom it can be from! "Well, open it and

see," I always say; but no, this never seems to occur to her except as a kind of last resource, when everything else has failed!

V. (*impatiently taking G. by the arm, and both going*). Well, who's talking now? I *do* wish you would come into the other room and let me have a chance of showing my hand to Mr Fitz-Faust before the five minutes is *quite* gone! (*At the door.*) By the way, there's just one thing I want to ask you. You don't happen to know if this Mr Fitz-Faust is married, do you?

G. (*remonstrating as they both return*). Now, what has that to do with your hand? I thought you merely wanted him to inspect it by the light of science. Of course, if you contemplate giving it away for good and all——

V. My dear Georgie! I should have thought you would have known better than make silly jokes like that. As if it could possibly matter to me if Mr Fitz-Faust is married or not!

G. Then why do you ask?

V. Simply as a means of finding out *which* it is. Because one of them is married.

G. But which?

V. Oh! the other one, of course.

G. Why of course?

V. *My* Mr Fitz-Faust—the one I met at dinner, I mean—is not married.

G. Sure?

V. Well—of course.

G. But why of course?

V. Really, Georgie, you're enough to pro-

voke a saint! The man I met at dinner wasn't married. I *know* he wasn't.

G. Well, I *hope* he wasn't, dear, after the fascination you seem to have found in his "peculiarly beautiful blue eyes."

V. I know he wasn't; he couldn't have been. He hadn't any wife with him.

G. *That* doesn't necessarily prove anything. But seriously, Violet, does it make any difference in your showing your hand to Mr Fitz-Faust, his being married or not?

V. Not the least in the world. Haven't I told you already it was only to find out whether it is the man I met at dinner—because——

G. Oh! you are so exactly like my mother and her letters! Why on earth don't you open him—

V. Why don't I do what?

G. I mean, why don't you go into the next room and settle the question by looking at him? He'll be going directly.

V. (*going*). Well, haven't I told you a hundred and fifty times that I'm dying——

G. (*following*). Yes, I really wonder you're not dead by this time.

V. (*at the door*). Well, it's all your fault. Every time I'm going you begin to talk. Don't you see (*returning*) my only reason for finding out which it is, is that, if it isn't the professor of palmistry, it's his brother.

G. He's a professor of palmistry too.

V. No; that's just what he isn't. *He* is a professor of phrenology.

G. Well, it's all the same thing.

V. All the same thing? My dear Georgie, do you know what phrenology is?

G. Perfectly. This sort of thing. (*Passes her hand over her head.*)

V. Exactly. And do you suppose I'd ever consent to place my head in any man's hands?

G. Oh! Why not a phrenologist as well as a hairdresser?

V. Well, a hairdresser is bad enough—always trying to make out one is gray as a badger and as bald as a crow. But a phrenologist is a hundred thousand times worse. His sole object is to discover that one's head is a mass of abnormal excrescences—all lumps and bumps and humps. Oh! it's disgusting, dear—positively disgusting! And when all is said and done, he doesn't pretend to tell more than one's character. Now, I don't care a fig for my character.

G. I'm sorry to hear that.

V. Fate! fate! Let me know my fate!

G. Well, Fate will be off to Waterloo in another minute.

V. Then it is the man of *hands* and not the man of *heads*.

G. (*pushing V. before her towards the door*). Haven't I been telling you so all along. Do go, for goodness' sake! (*At the door*). By the way, I wish you had heard what he said to Lady Mary.

V. Oh! did he tell Lady Mary her fortune?

(Both returning.) How delightful! *Do* tell me. Was it anything very extraordinary?

G. Well, first of all, he told her about that affair with the Japanese, which was very odd, you know, because I don't see how he *could* have known anything about that.

V. Very odd. I don't see how he could. Had you heard it before?

G. Oh, yes.

V. You had? I thought no one knew it but me. Who told you?

G. Oh, a dozen people at the time. It made rather a talk, you know.

V. What else did he tell her?

G. He told her that she had more heart than head——

V. That might easily be.

G. That she would be left three fortunes——

V. How awfully jolly!

G. That she would spend the first, lose the second, and the third—oh, the third—would prove her curse.

V. Prove her curse? How?

G. He didn't say *how*.

V. Oh! He ought to have said how.

G. Further, he told her that she would be in a bad balloon accident, and finally would marry a chemist.

V. A chemist? Why a chemist?

G. Well, why not?

V. Perhaps he meant a scientific man of some sort—a professor of chemistry.

G. He *said* a chemist.

V. (*looking at her own hand*). I wonder what it is in one's hand that shows one will marry a chemist.

G. If you're so anxious to know, why on earth don't you go and ask him? (*Looking through the door.*) Ah! too late! There he goes, tearing down the stair like a lunatic.

V. Gone!

G. Bang—there goes the front door. Gone! He has given you a liberal five minutes, and if he catches his train at Waterloo—

V. Well, it's all your fault.

G. All my fault?

V. Yes, all your fault, contradicting every single thing I said, and splitting straws about trifles.

G. You've no one but yourself to blame,—chatter, chatter, chatter, like a hundred and fifty thousand magpies.

V. Enough to make a saint swear!

G. Enough to drive any one out of one's senses!

V. I suppose you had your own reasons for wishing to keep us apart?

G. I suppose you had something better to do that made you so late?

V. Your manœuvres are entirely futile, I assure you.

G. The loss is nobody's but your own.

V. Loss? What do you mean by loss?

G. Loss of Mr Fitz-Faust.

I Pooh! Mr. Fitz-Faust may go to—
Waterloo, for all I care.

G. Well, he's gone there—so that's all right.
Only you won't get your fate foretold now.

V. No—I'm so glad!

G. Glad?

V. Yes, glad. If he's got nothing better to
tell me than that I shall be thrown out of a
balloon and marry a chemist,—I don't know
that I care so much!

G. Oh! who knows. You may be destined
to marry a duke—or an ambassador.

V. Well, do you know, Georgie, it's a very
curious thing, but I have been told more than
once that I should marry an *attaché*.

G. Ah, well! an *attaché* in the *hand*, you
know——

V. Is worth two ambassadors in the bush.

G. Exactly! Now shall I tell you what
Mr Fitz-Faust foretold for me?

V. Oh, *do*, there's a dear! Do you know
I've always thought there must be——

G. Hush! on one condition——

V. Yes——

G. That you'll come into the next room and
have some tea.

V. Delighted, my dear! Ever since I came in-
to the room I've been dying to have some tea——

G. (*both going*). Come along, then. (*To
audience.*) The only way to stop a chatterbox
is to give her something to put in her mouth.

(*Exeunt.*)

The Amateur Fee for each and every representation of this play is half-a-guinea, payable in advance to Messrs. SAMUEL FRENCH, LTD., 26, Southampton Street, Strand, London. No performance may take place unless a written authority has first been obtained.

SHATTERED NERVES.

A DUOLOGUE.

—o—

CHARACTERS:

MRS PIERCEY-SHARP, M.D.

LADY FLORA.

Scene: Mrs Piercey-Sharp's consulting-room.

Mrs Piercey-Sharp alone. (Looks at her watch.)
A quarter to three. I think I have kept Lady Flora waiting long enough to give her an idea of the extent of my medical practice. To judge by her letter she is an ordinary specimen of the modern *malade imaginaire*. (*Reads.*) "Dear Madam,—I am suffering from sleeplessness, low spirits, and extreme weakness; in fact, my nerves are completely shattered. I have tried *everything* and *everybody*, but nothing and nobody, not even Dr MacMuff himself, has done me any lasting good." I never heard of MacMuff doing anybody good yet. (*Reads.*) "So, having heard of you as a nervous specialist, I am anxious to try you." That's the worst of my patients—they *do* try me! Oh, dear! I'm sick of being consulted by these worrying women. I think I shall make a new departure and advertise myself, "Mrs Piercey-Sharp, consulting specialist for nervous young men." Oh! there are plenty of them about too. *Fin de*

siècle young men. I don't know how Mr Piercey-Sharp might like it, but as he does not practise (except on the banjo, and he's very much out of practice even on that), I don't see how he could expect to be called in for a consultation. (*Looks at her watch.*) Ten minutes to three. Yes, I can see her now. (*Rings.*) *After a pause, enter*

Lady Flora. (*Mrs P.-S. assumes professional manner*). So sorry not to have been able to see you sooner, but the fact is my last patient has only this moment left me.

Lady Flora (*in a very weak voice*). Yes, I've been waiting ever since two o'clock, and it's so bad for my nerves to be kept waiting.

Mrs P.-S. Ah! I see your nerves are shattered. Now if you could describe me your symptoms I should be better able to diagnose the case. (*Aside.*) Always use a long word to a nervous woman: it gives her confidence. (*Places a chair for Lady F., who turns its back to the light.*) Facing the light, if you please. (*Turns chair round.*)

Lady F. (*as before*). But I never face the light. It's so bad for my nerves to face the light. (*Submits all the same, and sits.*) And now I'll try and tell you something of what I feel.

Mrs P.-S. I beg your pardon, but could you raise your voice a little. I can hardly hear what you say.

Lady F. I don't think I could. It's so bad for my nerves for me to raise my voice. But

as I was saying, sometimes I feel as if—as if I didn't feel anything at all. And sometimes I feel as if I'd got nothing at all in my head—no brains whatever, in fact; and that *can't* be right. And sometimes I feel as if my head were going round and round and round! (*While describing her case her voice improves.*)

Mrs P.-S. Like a weathercock; just so. Oh, your nerves are quite shattered.

Lady F. (quite pleased). That's just it. And sometimes, particularly at night, I feel as if I were being smothered—and it's so bad for my nerves for me to feel smothered. And then I scream, shriek, yell, and then I wake up.

Mrs P.-S. (aside). Yes, wake up the household, I suppose. (*Aloud.*) Oh, your nerves are decidedly shattered.

Lady F. That's just what it is. And sometimes I feel—oh! so bad! as if I couldn't stand anything. If my maid runs a hairpin into me, I throw the brushes at her, simply. I pay her extra—so she understands—but it's very bad for my nerves for me to have to throw the brushes at her.

Mrs P.-S. Nothing could be worse, except, perhaps, to have the brushes thrown at you. Oh, your nerves are completely shattered.

Lady F. That's just what it is! (*Aside.*) Dear me! what a comfort it is to have found someone who thoroughly understands me at last. It's so bad for my nerves not to be understood. (*Aloud.*) Well, and then I take

cold very easily, and my whole life is positively spent in avoiding draughts.

Mrs P.-S. Ah! you must have enough to do.

Lady F. I have. It's so bad for my nerves to be in a draught, and people are too inconsiderate! They will put me to sit either between two doors or two windows, or a window and a door, or a door and a fireplace, or two fireplaces, or two fans, and you've no idea what a draught two fans can create! And they will not see the necessity for stopping up the keyholes. But the amount of air that comes in by the keyhole is sometimes enough to bring on inflammation of the wind-pipe! (*In her excitement she speaks very loud.*)

Mrs P.-S. (*putting her hands to her ears*). I beg your pardon, but could you control your voice a little? I am not deaf. (*Aside.*) Shattered nerves!

Lady F. (*fretfully*). But it's so bad for my nerves for me to control my voice. And so, as I was saying, the only thing for me to do in a draught, is to breathe through the nose, and not speak.

Mrs P.-S. (*aside*). Safe, if not sociable! (*Aloud.*) My dear Lady Flora, there is no doubt of it, your nerves are completely shattered—com-pletely. Now I should like to ask you a few questions. (*Pauses; then suddenly.*) What do you drink?

Lady F. Linseed tea—very weak. You see there's nothing else I can touch with any safety. Wine — well nobody in their

senses drinks wine—nowadays. Coffee, cocoa, milk, they're all played out, aren't they? Tea—well tea is sheer poison, unless each person has a separate pot. Hot water is too weakening, cold water too bracing. Sir Maximilian Croker ordered me ammoniated quinine at all my meals, and I took it for a year, till I found myself getting deaf, so I went to MacMuff, and *he* said if I'd taken it another week I should have been dead! And he told me linseed tea is the *only* thing for *everybody*—and I hear they've a perfectly excellent recipe for it at the clubs!

Mrs P.-S. (making a note). Ah! MacMuff has taken shares in a linseed tea plantation. Now—what time do you go to bed?

Lady F. Oh, I've given up going to bed. You see, about two months ago I had a pain in my elbow—here, just on the bone. Such a funnypain!

Mrs P.-S. Hum! funny bone, funny pain. Naturally. Yes?

Lady F. Well, I tried everything; and at last I went to Miss Hartmann—you know—Japanese gymnastics. And she told me that my elbows were very congested, and that the worst thing for me, with my congested elbows, was to sleep in a bed, and that we should *all* be much healthier if we slept in hammocks. So I've had one hung from the ceiling of my room; and she said the higher the better,—the getting in and out would be such good exercise.

Mrs P.-S. (making a note). Miss Hartmann has a brother in the stores who gets a commission on every hammock he sells. Now—do you take a hot or a cold bath?

Lady F. Oh, neither. I gave up bathing ages ago! It's so bad for my nerves to take a bath. You know Croker never allows any of his patients to do it. He says that no one who takes a bath can possibly be in a good state of health.

Mrs P.-S. I know he does. And he prescribes spirits of wine, doesn't he?

Lady F. Eau de Cologne. He orders all his patients to rub themselves from head to foot with Eau de Cologne.

Mrs P.-S. (making a note.) Hum. Lady Croker's money was made in Eau de Cologne. Now—what sort of clothing do you wear. You've not given *that* up, I see.

Lady F. Well—no. I went to a man in Paris—I forget his name—and he told me that the less clothing I wore the better; but I thought on the whole it would be such a shock—

Mrs P.-S. To your friends. I think you were perfectly right. (*Makes a note.*) And now—what about your diet?

Lady F. Oh! I've tried everything. I used to be told that little and often was the thing for me; but now I find that much and often suits me best.

Mrs P.-S. Just what I should imagine with shattered nerves—like yours.

Lady F. At eight, when I'm called, buttered toast and two cups of tea—linseed tea, you

know. At nine, when I'm half through my dressing, Brand's essence; at ten, breakfast——

Mrs P.-S. And what do you understand by breakfast?

Lady F. Poached eggs, broiled ham, kidneys, muffin, pickled sardines, marmalade, and that sort of thing. At half-past eleven more Brand's essence; at half-past twelve a glass of port wine——

Mrs P.-S. Port wine? I thought you told me you never drank anything but linseed tea?

Lady F. Oh, well, it's only on Mondays when I go through the weekly bills. It's *so* bad for my nerves to go through the weekly bills!

Mrs P.-S. Nothing could be worse, (*aside*) except perhaps to go through the Bankruptcy Court. (*Aloud.*) What time do you have luncheon?

Lady F. Two o'clock (*dejectedly*), and I can *not* say I have much appetite for my luncheon!

Mrs P.-S. Ah! I'm not surprised to hear that. (*Makes a note.*)

Lady F. At three I have a cup of coffee——

Mrs P.-S. Coffee?

Lady F. Oh, well, it's only when I have friends to luncheon. It's *so* bad for my nerves to have friends!

Mrs P.-S. Nothing could be worse, (*aside*) except, perhaps, to have enemies. Yes?

Lady F. After that I get on pretty well through the afternoon with a few meat lozenges, till five o'clock tea — linseed tea, of course —

when I make a point of eating a good meal of bread and butter and cake, and I generally *force* myself to eat some sandwiches, as it is such a long time to go without food till dinner, and it's *so* bad for my nerves to go without food. Eight o'clock dinner, as a rule. Of course if it is later I have a cup of beef tea while I'm dressing. Arrowroot when I go to bed, and sandwiches by my bedside in case I should wake in the night and feel hungry.

Mrs P.-S. But—tell me now—do you ever feel *hungry*?

Lady F. *Never*—in the ordinary sense of the term. You understand I don't eat because I'm hungry. It's so bad for my nerves for me to be hungry.

Mrs P.-S. Ah! Your nerves are—more than shattered! Now let me see. (*Counts on her fingers.*) Tea and buttered toast at eight; Brand's essence at nine; breakfast at ten; more Brand at half-past eleven; port wine at half-past twelve—

Lady F. Only on Mondays—

Mrs P.-S. Luncheon at two; coffee at three; meat lozenges at four; tea with sandwiches at five; dinner at eight; arrowroot at bedtime; sandwiches in the night. Is that all?

Lady F. (*considering*). Yes—that's all.

Mrs P.-S. You're sure that is all?

Lady F. Yes. Now, do you consider that much?

Mrs P.-S. A good deal — for one whose nerves are shattered—like yours.

Lady F. I see you understand my case. Now, isn't it hard that I, of all people in the world, should be such a martyr to my nerves? Dear Mrs Piercey-Sharp, if I were careless or imprudent, like some persons I know, I could understand it. But I positively assure you my nerves are never out of my thoughts for a moment.

Mrs P.-S. You needn't tell me that.

Lady F. (*in a tone of the deepest self-interest*). I never accept an invitation, I never engage in any occupation, I never take up a new book, I never form a fresh friendship, without considering the effect it may have on my nerves. I assure you I'm not exaggerating.

Mrs P.-S. No, no, no; I don't suppose you are.

Lady F. (*as before*). I have specifics for every infection, antidotes for every poison. I—(*in a tone of triumph*)—I have got a microbe-killer!

Mrs P.-S. Ah—you have. I hope it's properly broken in?

Lady F. (*nervously*). Oh—well—I believe it is. But is that very important?

Mrs P.-S. Of the utmost importance. Don't you see, if your microbe-killer isn't properly broken in, instead of killing the microbe, it might kill you.

Lady F. Might it really?

Mrs P.-S. Oh, it's very well known! There's nothing so dangerous as an untrained microbe-killer. We don't understand much as yet about their manners and customs—but they're not things to play tricks with or make pets of.

Well—I think I *quite* understand your case. (*Assumes very professional manner.*) You are suffering, Lady Flora, from (*Lady F. shows the greatest interest*)—from an attack of acute self-concentration which has resulted in a very dilapidated state of the nerves. Now, if you will follow the regimen which I shall prescribe, I think we shall see a marked improvement in the course of the next few weeks. In the first place, I must restrict you to three meals a day—breakfast, luncheon, and dinner——

Lady F. But I shall feel so hungry—and it's so bad for my nerves to feel hungry.

Mrs P.-S. Not at all. It's so bad for your nerves *not* to feel hungry. Secondly, I should like you to take an iced shower-bath every morning at six——

Lady F. An iced shower-bath? But I shall be knocked silly.

Mrs P.-S. Not at all; you're too far gone for that. And, most important of all—I must insist on your going through my new method——

Lady F. (eagerly). And that is——

Mrs P.-S. Shaking—a good sound shaking two or three times a day. Never heard of it? No, I daresay not. It's *quite* new. But it's far more efficacious than massage, or gymnastics, or hypnotism for shattered nerves—like yours.

Lady F. (rather bewildered). But—but—how am I to get it done?

Mrs P.-S. Oh, it's very easily done. Your maid, at whom you throw the brushes, might

do it for you ; or your husband, he's bigger and stronger most likely ; or—I'll come and do it myself, if you like.

Lady F. Oh thanks ; but I'll see if I can get it done at home first,—if you will write full instructions.

Mrs P.-S. Oh yes, I'll write full instructions. Finally, avoid specifics against infection, destroy your antidotes to poison, and have nothing whatever to do with the microbe-killer.

Lady F. But I shall never feel safe ! and it's so bad for my nerves not to feel safe !

Mrs P.-S. Not at all ; you'll feel ever so much safer. Give up worrying your nerves and your nerves will give up worrying you. It's the simplest thing in the world.

Lady F. (*annoyed*). I don't believe you *do* understand my case after all. Perhaps you will be so good as to tell me what you really believe to be the matter with me.

Mrs P.-S. My dear lady, there is *nothing whatever* the matter with you.

Lady F. (*rising in anger*). Nothing the matter with me ?

Mrs P.-S. Nothing whatever. (*Rises also.*)

Lady F. (*as before*). Do you call nerves nothing ?

Mrs P.-S. Not much.

Lady F. Not much ! I should like to know how you'd like to have such nerves as mine !

Mrs P.-S. Oh, I wouldn't have them on any account—not if you'd pay me to have them,

I wouldn't! They are sometimes temper, sometimes selfishness,—very often a disordered liver, the result of over-eating. Oh yes! I know I'm brutal, but brutality is the only cure for shattered nerves—like yours.

Lady F. I don't know what you mean by brutality; but let me tell you, Mrs Piercey-Sharp, it is a very great *impertinence* to say what you think, and it is exceedingly bad for my nerves——

Mrs P.-S. Not at all. It's the best thing in the world for your nerves for me to say what I think.

Lady F. (excited). Don't contradict me; it's exceedingly bad for my nerves to be contradicted.

Mrs P.-S. Not at all; it's the best thing in the world for your nerves, to be contradicted. And as my fee for a first consultation is three guineas, I am bound for that to give my patients an *honest* opinion. (*Bows.*)

Lady F. (very excited). Three guineas? You expect me to pay you three guineas for telling me I've nothing the matter with me? Why, do you know that Croker and MacMuff themselves don't take more for telling me I've every complaint under the sun?

Mrs P.-S. If you were satisfied with Croker and MacMuff, why did you come to me?

Lady F. (as before). Why did I come to you? I really don't know why I *did* come to you! Because—because—I wanted change.

Mrs P.-S. Hum! Pity—you could hardly

expect a specialist to give change for three guineas! (*Looks at her watch.*) Very sorry, Lady Flora, but I have an appointment at half-past three, and I think my carriage is at the door.

Lady F. (wildly excited). Oh yes! dismiss my case—that's all of a piece with the rest. Now, Croker and MacMuff would sit and listen to me by the hour. Oh! these women doctors are no good at all! I shall go back to the men. It's the worst thing in the world for my nerves, not to be listened to. (*Going.*) Do you still persist I have nothing the matter with me?

Mrs P.-S. Nothing whatever, if you'd only believe it.

Lady F. I won't believe it. I don't wish to believe it. There'd be an end of my nerves altogether if I believed it!

Mrs P.-S. Yes, there would be an end of your nerves—your shattered nerves!

Lady F. I know it, and it would be the worst thing in the world for my nerves if there was to be an end of them! (*At the door.*) Good morning, Mrs Piercey-Sharp. You won't be surprised if I let the whole of London know what I think of *you*.

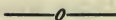
Mrs P.-S. (following). I shall be greatly indebted to you Lady Flora. My fortune will be made. (*Aside.*) I thought the truth would do it! There's nothing pays like novelty. Now, she may go back to Croker and MacMuff, and I—I shall prescribe for "the Nervous Man!"

(*Exeunt.*)

The Amateur Fee for each and every representation of this play is half-a-guinea, payable in advance to Messrs. SAMUEL FRENCH, LTD., 26, Southampton Street, Strand, London. No performance may take place unless a written authority has first been obtained.

THE "TRAIN DE LUXE" FROM CANNES.

A DUOLOGUE.



CHARACTERS :

MADAME DE ROCHEVILLE (*A Widow*).

CAPTAIN HAMILTON-SCOTT.

∴ sleeping-car for two in the "Train de luxe" from the south of France. Two berths one over the other. Time 9 p.m. Madame de Rocheville alone.

Mdme. de R. (looking at her watch). Nine o'clock. Well, I'm tired to death, and I shan't be sorry to go to sleep. In the whole of my life—not even when M. de Rocheville was alive—have I ever been so worried as in these last few hours. And after the charming time I was having at Monte Carlo too. Why, I've thrown up a hundred and fifty engagements to come back to Cannes to look after Clara; for after all, she *is* my niece, and I am her aunt and guardian, though it is supremely ridiculous, of course, that I should be, considering I'm not more than—than ten years older than she is. And what is the result of my self-sacrifice? I return to Cannes to be told that Clara has this morning eloped with a Captain Hamilton-

Scott, and to find every clique in the place, French, English, American, united for once, and all up in arms — *not* with Clara, *not* with the man, but with *me*. What right had I to go off and amuse myself and leave poor little Clara behind? What could I expect if I left a pretty girl of seventeen to look after herself? Expect! Why, for one thing, I never expected any relation of *mine* to make a fool of herself. Ever since I left, this Captain Hamilton-Scott seems to have been paying her attention, till her silly little head has been turned. Clara is just one of those romantic girls with money who, sooner or later, *must* fall a prey to a fortune-hunter; but as I'm really fond of the child, I'd rather it were later than sooner. So when she wrote to me, "We are perfectly devoted, and he is so good-looking. Will you give your consent?" what could I do but wire back, "Certainly not." He's after her money, of course. I never heard of any Captain Hamilton-Scott. I knew a Captain Hamilton — once. (*Sighs and pauses.*) For the matter of that, I've known hundreds of Hamiltons and thousands of Scotts; but a Hamilton-Scott — never. There is "adventurer" stamped on every letter of the combination. And I give up *everything* to rescue Clara from the jaws of this monster. Come straight away by an early train after a ball, arrive in Cannes half dead and entirely bored, to find Clara *gone*.

46 *The "Train de Luxe" from Cannes.*

Such an elopement as the child had planned too! *She* goes off by the train this morning—she and somebody's governess who is traveling the same route—and *he* is to follow to-night by the *train de luxe*. Hum! So you're in the train, are you, Captain Hamilton-Scott, and you think you are going to meet Clara on the Paris platform and be married quietly in England whether her aunt likes it or not. Don't you flatter yourself. I'm in the train too. Like your conscience, if you've got one, I shall make a coward of you yet. (*Yawns.*) Oh, what a bore it all is! No wonder I'm sleepy. Whatever possessed my brother George to make a guardian of *me*. Well, if I'm to have all the worry of it, I'll be a guardian with a vengeance. I'll be a tyrant, a marplot, a killjoy; I'll cut off the supplies; I'll stop her allowance; I'll intercept their letters; I'll—(*yawns*)—I'll go to bed. (*Takes off her jacket.*) I was awfully lucky to get a place at all at the last minute. The train is simply crammed. I asked the conductor who had taken the second place, and he said a German lady, who would not have finished her coffee for another hour. So much the better for me. I can take my choice and make myself comfortable. (*Takes off her hat and contemplates the berths.*) Shall I remain below or go aloft? Aloft, I think; it's safer. If I stay below, the German will most likely sit upon *me*, or put her bag on my head, or

The "Train de Luxe" from Cannes. 47

smother me with her plaid. Of course she'll have a plaid; all Germans have plaids. (*Feels the sheets.*) Wringing wet! They always are. I must go to bed in my Newmarket—(*puts on Newmarket coat*)—and my cap—(*takes a travelling-cap from her bag: puts it on*)—and my boots. No. I really *can't* go to bed in my boots! (*Unbuttons her boots and puts them in a corner of the compartment.*) Now, how am I to get aloft? (*Calls the conductor. Steps brought in. She climbs to the upper berth, and the steps are removed.*) Really, this is rather jolly. (*Arranges pillow under her head.*) Rocked by the gentle motion of the train—(*drowsily*)—wonder who Captain Hamilton-Scott is? Of course he's nobody; but still he must be—somebody—(*more drowsily, eyes shut*)—funny my first love—should have been—Captain Hamilton; and—Clara's first love—should be—Captain Hamilton-Scott. Must be some—attraction—Hamiltons and Claras. (*Sleeps.*)

(*Enter Captain Hamilton-Scott, with Gladstone bag and plaid rug.*)

Capt. H.-S. This is what they call a *train de luxe*! The luxury of a badly cooked dinner; the luxury of wine ordinary—very ordinary! the luxury of a bed five feet two; (*feels the sheets*) sheets wringing wet, that of course; smoking forbidden, that *de rigueur*. And I suppose I'm deuced lucky to have got a place at all at the last minute. Train crammed. Asked the conductor who'd taken the second

48 *The "Train de Luxe" from Cannes.*

place, and he said, "A little English milord, returning to school; gone to bed an hour ago." Eton boy, I suppose. (*Glances at upper berth. Just sees a cap and part of a long coat.*) Seems he *has* gone to bed, taken the best place, and made himself jolly comfortable too, the young rascal! Hum. If I'd known all I was in for, I'll be hanged if I'd gone through with it in this fashion; no, not even with the thought of Clara at the end of it! Clara—Clara—odd at my age that I should be playing the fool for a girl of seventeen. People think it's her money, of course. But it isn't. It was her name—Clara Carew—that attracted me at first. I knew another Clara Carew once, and something in this Clara's eyes reminded me of something in the other Clara's eyes. Hum. I wonder what has become of her—the other one, I mean. Oh, Lord! how I was in love with her once! And she led me the life of a dog, and the consequence was I—I went to the dogs, of course. (*Yawns.*) And here I am at eight-and-thirty, playing this fool's game of an elopement with an heiress of seventeen, just because her name is Clara Carew, and she's got the trick of looking like my first love. Nobody believes that, of course; her aunt and guardian will believe it least of all. And it doesn't look well, I admit. (*Yawns.*) I'm too sleepy to puzzle it out now. (*Takes off his boots.*) Beastly cold! I shan't sleep, I know—be shaken to death down here. Confound that boy. I've half a mind to pull

The "Train de Luxe" from Cannes. 49

him down. Poor little beggar! He's sleeping the sleep of the innocent. (*Rolls himself in the plaid, over head and all, and stretches himself on the lower berth.*) Shan't sleep—know I shan't. (*Drowsily.*) Wonder if Clara Carew is—any relation to the other one? Of course she can't be—but still—she might be. (*Very drowsily shuts his eyes.*) Funny my first love should be Clara—an' my last love Clara. Some a'traction—for me and Claras. (*Sleeps.*)

(Interval, during which the night is supposed to pass while the journey continues. Soft Music. If possible, lower a curtain, and when it is raised again let the light be rather stronger.)

Mdme. de R. (waking). Dear me! it's getting quite light; we shall be in Paris before long. And really I have had quite a comfortable night. (*Sits up.*) Well, as there isn't too much time to lose, and I don't like being hurried, I may as well put my boots on. Where *are* my boots? Oh, I remember—they're down below. And that fool of a conductor has taken away the steps. I suppose I must jump. (*Prepares to jump, and then recoils.*) No. I can't jump; all my hair would come off—I mean—come down. I wonder if my companion would hand them up? (*Peers over the side.*) Fast asleep! How those Germans do sleep! And didn't I say she would have a plaid. Well it will be a kindness to wake her. We shall be in Paris before we know where we are. (*Leans*

over the side.) Don't you think you had better wake up? We shall be in Paris directly.

Capt. H.-S. (waking). Be in Paris directly? Why, I've only just got to sleep. It's all very fine for you—you managed to get the best place, you little monkey!

Mdme. de R. (aside). Little monkey! Well, it's the first time in my life I've been called a little monkey. What extraordinary people these Germans are! (*Aloud.*) I beg your pardon, but would you mind handing me up my boots?

Capt. H.-S. Hand you up your boots? You're a cool hand, anyhow.

Mdme. de R. (impatiently). Cool feet, if you like! Do be so good as to hand me up my boots.

Capt. H.-S. Why don't you jump down and get them?

Mdme. de R. I'm afraid of spraining my ankle!

Capt. H.-S. Muff, eh?

Mdme. de R. No—not a muff—boots—boots. (*Aside.*) She doesn't understand English, I suppose. Oh, what is the German for boots?

Capt. H.-S. Why, you're not half a boy!

Mdme. de R. Half a boy! I'm not a bit of a boy. What should make you think I am?

Capt. H.-S. The conductor says you are a young milord returning to school.

Mdme. de R. A young milord returning to school? Either you or the conductor must be mad. I am Madame de Rocheville.

The "Train de Luxe" from Cannes. 51

Capt. H.-S. (aside, horror-stricken). Madame de Rocheville! The aunt and guardian. Good heavens! and I called her a little monkey! What shall I do?

Mdme. de R. The conductor told me that you were a German lady.

Capt. H.-S. (aside). A German lady. I must keep that up. *(Aloud.)* Ya! ya! *(Remains in his berth completely enveloped in his plaid, even over his head.)*

Mdme. de R. And now that you understand I am not a boy, but *Mdme. de Rocheville*, perhaps you would be so kind as to hand me up my boots.

Capt. H.-S. Das weiss ich nicht. *(Aside.)* My only chance is to keep her up there.

Mdme. de R. (aside.) Oh, what is the German for boots? *(Aloud.)* Boots—boots—it is a very simple thing I am asking.

Capt. H.-S. Das weiss ich nicht.

Mdme. de R. It is. *(Aside.)* What is the German for boots? *(Aloud.)* What am I to do when I get to Paris if I haven't got my boots on?

Capt. H.-S. Das weiss ich nicht.

Mdme. de R. (aside.) Well, I can't sit here for ever trying to remember what the German for boots is. I must make a spring.

(Gathers herself together and jumps down.)

Capt. H.-S. is so surprised that he sits up suddenly, throwing off his plaid. Mdme. de R. screams and covers her face with her hands.)

52 *The "Train de Luxe" from Cannes.*

Mdme. de R. It's a man! What do you mean by calling yourself a German lady?

Capt. H.-S. My dear Madam, *I* never said so. Please to recollect it was *you* who said so—

Mdme. de R. It was that wicked conductor. Perfidious villain!

Capt. H.-S. And he said you were a boy! He has played a trick upon us both. It is really most embarrassing!

Mdme. de R. (*still with her hands over her face*). It is more than embarrassing! And I want to put my boots on! Please to look the other way while I put my boots on.

Capt. H.-S. Oh, certainly.

(*He turns his back. She sits on the edge of the lower berth and begins to put her boots on. Pause.*)

Mdme. de R. I beg your pardon, but have you got such a thing as a button-hook?

Capt. H.-S. I believe I have.

Mdme. de R. Would you mind lending it to me?

Capt. H.-S. I shall be most happy.

(*Opens bag and gets out button-hook. Hands it to her without turning round.*)

Mdme. de R. Thanks. (*Aside.*) It's the most embarrassing situation I have ever been placed in! I, an aunt and a guardian! If I weren't an aunt and a guardian of course it wouldn't matter. Why was I ever made an aunt and a guardian?

Capt. H.-S. (aside). It's the most deuced awkward thing that has ever happened to me in my life. Madame de Rocheville, too, of all people in the world! She must be upon our track! Oh, I wish I hadn't been such a confounded fool as to consent to an elopement. Elopements are altogether played out—out of date altogether. (*Aloud.*) Oh, Clara! Clara!—

Mdme. de R. (turning sharply on him). Don't call me Clara, Sir.

Capt. H.-S. (turning in surprise and facing her). My dear Madam, I wasn't addressing you! I shouldn't have presumed—I—I shouldn't have dared—I—I haven't the pleasure—I—I—"

(*Breaks off nervously as she looks fixedly at him. A pause, during which each stares at the other. Mutual recognition gradually steals over their features.*)

Mdme. de R. (with a fascinating smile). Surely I used to have the pleasure of knowing you? a few years ago? Captain Hamilton? (*He bows.*) How d'you do? Have you quite forgotten Clara Carew?

Capt. H.-S. Forgotten! I have never forgotten. (*She holds out her hand, which he takes solemnly. Pause.*) Why did you frighten me by telling me you were Mdme. de Rocheville?

Mdme. de R. I am Madame de Rocheville. Why shouldn't I be? Didn't you know I had married the Marquis de Rocheville?

Capt. H.-S. (coldly). I knew nothing about you.

54 *The "Train de Luxe" from Cannes.*

Mdme. de R. Well, I did; but he has been dead three years.

Capt. H.-S. But the Madame de Rocheville I was thinking of is an aunt, and a guardian.

Mdme. de R. And why shouldn't I be an aunt and a guardian, if I choose? (*Aside.*) What does *he* know about it? Can it be? Is it likely, I wonder? (*Aloud.*) Captain Hamilton, you've—you've not turned into—into Hamilton-Scott, have you, by any chance?

Capt. H.-S. Why shouldn't I have turned into Hamilton-Scott, if I choose?

Mdme. de R. But have you?

Capt. H.-S. And if I have—what then?

Mdme. de R. (*impatiently, stamping her foot.*) But *have* you?

Capt. H.-S. I have. I took the name of Scott two years ago on the death of an uncle. (*Aside.*) The sooner we have it out the better!

Mdme. de R. Ah? I knew you were in the train somewhere, but I never thought Fate would deliver you into my hands like this! And you can tell me to my face that you have never forgotten me? *You*, who are running away with my niece and ward—a child of seventeen. Captain Hamilton-Scott, you ought to be ashamed of yourself!

Capt. H.-S. Perhaps I am, Madame; but at least it is not for *you* to tell me so.

Mdme. de R. Not for me to tell you so?

Capt. H.-S. No; not for you to tell me so. *You* at least might believe that for me there

was still some magic in a name—and a look. Have you never been told that your niece resembles you?

Mdme. de R. I shall never give my consent to your marrying my niece—so don't think it. Never!

Capt. H.-S. Dog in the manger!

Mdme. de R. What do you imply by that?

Capt. H.-S. I leave the interpretation to your own conscience.

Mdme. de R. Oh, gracious! We shall be in Paris in a few minutes, and I've not yet buttoned my boots!

Capt. H.-S. Can I be of any assistance to you?

Mdme. de R. Oh, thanks; if you wouldn't mind. (*He kneels down and begins to button her boots.*)

Capt. H.-S. (*pausing*). Ah! I little thought that I should ever kneel at your feet again!

Mdme. de R. How nicely you do use a button-hook?

Capt. H.-S. (*flinging it to the other side of the carriage*). You're just the same as you used to be! Flippant! Heartless! Enough to drive a fellow mad!

Mdme. de R. And you're just the same as you used to be—just the same—touchy, tiresome, exacting.

Capt. H.-S. I, the same. Why I've been to the dogs since last I saw you!

Mdme. de R. Ah, you have? And back again? After such a journey you could hardly

56 *The "Train de Luxe" from Cannes.*

expect me to let you marry my poor little niece, could you ?

Capt. H.-S. Perhaps not ; but it would be no reason—would it—why you should not let me, let me—Clara, do you think I want a copy now I have found the original ?

Mdme. de R. I don't know. What business had you to be content at all with a copy ? Ah ! Here we are in Paris. Thanks *so* much for the button-hook.

Capt. H.-S. It was a little thing to place at your disposal—mayn't I place something more—all I have ?

Mdme. de R. We'll talk about that when we get to the hotel. Only one thing remember. I shall never give my consent to your marrying my niece.

Capt. H.-S. That I quite understand—and if you will only give your consent to something else I shall never regret this long journey in a detestable "Train de Luxe" !

[It would be best to play this duologue between folding doors, which could be shut during the pause in the middle and at the close, as the action of the piece does not, as in some of the others, take the actors naturally off the stage. The sleeping-cars would not be so difficult to arrange as might seem on first thoughts. A sofa placed against the wall would make the lower one ; while a little ingenuity on the part of a local carpenter would contrive the upper one. Two uprights with boards across and a mattress would be quite sufficient, so long as it was secure.]

The Amateur Fee for each and every representation of this play is half-a-guinea, payable in advance to Messrs. SAMUEL FRENCH, LTD., 26, Southampton Street, Strand, London. No performance may take place unless a written authority has first been obtained.

I AND MY FATHER-IN-LAW.

A MONOLOGUE.

—o—

(*Alone, pacing the room.*)

I knew it must come to this at last! Jack and I have had a row, and with all the meanness of a man he has managed to get the last word by bouncing out of the room and banging the door. And all for what, if you please? All for just nothing at all. But that's always the way. Everything is always about nothing. Just because—what do you think—simply because—merely because—I've overdrawn my account for the third time in the last twelve-month! The first time it occurred he paid up like a man and placed a fresh sum to my credit. The next time he grumbled, like a man; but when I said: Jack dear, do it the second time, he did it the second time. And now that it has occurred again he has been swearing—like a man; oh very like a man! and when I began: Jack *darling* do it the third time, he replied he'd be hanged if he would! It was in vain I argued that I *must* dress, *must* give to charities, *must* have everything I want. He answered that I must cut my coat according to my cloth, and that charity ought to begin at home, and all those ridiculous old platitudes

which people always fall back upon when they're angry. And then he bounced out of the room and his last words were : It's no use *my* talking. I shall send my father to you and perhaps *he'll* be able to make you listen to reason. (*Flings herself into a chair.*) Oh! I'm the most miserable of women! I've quarrelled with Jack; I've not got a sixpence; and Sir John is coming to make me listen to reason! I don't want to listen to reason, I don't want to see Sir John! I can manage Jack all right by myself, but Sir John terrifies me out of my senses. The first time he came to see us after we were married, he asked me if I kept a meat-book; and he hoped I should always be content with a low rate of interest for my money. I said: Dear Sir John, I will never condescend to anything low, I like all things high—high game, high steppers, high rate of interest. I believe he observed after that he was afraid I was flippant, and he trusted Jack wouldn't find out that he had made a very poor bargain. And *this* is the man who is coming to make me listen to reason! Hush! there's the bell! (*Listens.*) Surely he can't be coming already. No; I don't think it was the front door bell after all. It was only the muffin-man. Now, how shall I take Sir John; I think I'll try the pathetic, on my knees—so (*kneels*), hands clasped—so (*clasps her hands*). "Yes, I know! I know! call me anything you please—foolish, idiotic, mad as a hundred hatters—I'm all that and

worse! I've nothing to say for myself; I've nothing to plead as an excuse. But consider my youth, consider my inexperience, consider the atmosphere in which I was brought up! Why, in my family we were taught to chuck away pounds as if they were farthings; taught, think of that! Oh! instead of gazing at me with that stern countenance, take me and teach me to do better. You *could* teach me if you would; and I—I would learn, oh so willingly!" Here I shall break down utterly, so—(*Collapses on the floor.*) And then he will take me by the two hands—so (*extends her hands*)—and raise me up tenderly—so (*rises slowly to her feet*)—and kiss me kindly on both cheeks, so—(*makes as if she were being kissed*)—and then he will say: "Bless you my dear child;" and so the victory will remain with me. Yes; only I can't *quite* fancy Sir John blessing me. Hush! there's the bell. (*Listens.*) It *is* the front door this time. He's really coming. (*Stands waiting.*) No. He doesn't seem to be coming after all. I wonder who it is. (*Looks out of the window.*) Only old Lady Alicia leaving her cards! Now, how shall I take Sir John? (*Reflects.*) I think I shall try the indignant, very upright, so—(*draws herself up*)—head well back, so—(*throws her head back*). "Let me tell you, Sir John, once for all, that I am not accustomed to be addressed in such terms as foolish, idiotic, much less as mad as a hundred hatters; and

I must insist—yes, I must insist—on your giving me the explanation I have a right to expect. When I—no, don't interrupt me, please—when I did your son the honour of marrying him, it was on the distinct understanding that I was to do as I liked. In *my* family we understand the value of money every bit as well as you, only we understand it in a somewhat different way. But if the manner of my upbringing was to be flung in my teeth as a cause of complaint, you should have had it put in the settlements. As this was not done, neither my husband nor my father-in-law has any right to call my conduct in question, and that there may be no mistake, I take this opportunity of putting my foot down at once." Here I shall stamp my foot. (*Stamps.*) Sir John's breath will be quite taken away, he will spread out his hands in a deprecating kind of way, so—(*spreads out her hands*)—and will murmur hurriedly: "My dear lady, I assure you I meant nothing of the kind." And the victory will remain with me. Yes; only I can't *quite* fancy Sir John's breath being taken away. Hush! there's the bell. This must be him. (*Listens.*) He's had plenty of time to get Jack's message. (*Stands waiting.*) No; he doesn't seem to be coming after all. I suppose it was only the post. Now, how *shall* I take Sir John? (*Reflects.*) I think—yes, I know, I'll try the familiar and the pert. Throw myself into a chair, so—

(throws herself into a chair) — look at him archly, so—*(looks over her shoulder)*. “You know you don’t mean it, really. You were never hard upon a woman in your life, Sir John. I’m sure you never were. Now look here, it’s no use pretending that you’re not like the rest of them. You *like* to see a pretty woman well-dressed. Nonsense! don’t talk to me; of course you do! A man of your taste and all. Eh? Aha! I’ve found you out.” Here I shall shake my finger at him, so—*(shakes her finger)*. “And I’m not a bit afraid of you, you know, not a bit. No; I never was; from the very first I always thought you and I would understand each other. And I’m sure we do, don’t we, perfectly. Now, give me a kiss and let’s make it up. That’s right. I’m sure you feel better now, don’t you?” If I had a fan I should tap him with it here. Then Sir John will chuck me under the chin, so—*(chucks herself under the chin)*—and call me “a little puss!” And so the victory will remain with me. *(Rises.)* Yes; only I can’t quite fancy Sir John chucking me under the chin, or calling me “a little puss.” Hush! there’s somebody coming upstairs. It must be him. There can’t be any mistake this time. I hear the tramp of feet! *(Stands waiting.)* No; it’s only the servant. *(Turns as if addressing someone at the door.)* What is it? A letter? Give it to me. *(A letter is handed in to her; continues as if still*

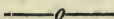
addressing some one at the door.) What? I can't hear what you say. A gentleman wants to know if I will see him? Didn't he give his name? What? He didn't give his name because he said I should understand? (*Aside.*) Yes, of course, I understand. Why didn't you say I was not at home? What? I hadn't given any orders. Well, say I'm very sorry, but I can't see anyone this afternoon. What? I wish you would speak a little more distinctly. Very particular? Yes, I know he's very particular; that's why I don't want to see him. Say I'm very sorry, but I can't see anyone this afternoon. That will do. (*To herself again.*) I wonder if he'll take offence at such a message. It's rather a dreadful thing to say to one's father-in-law. Falls rather flat, too, after the way in which I meant to receive him. (*Whilst talking she opens her letter.*) Hullo! why, what in the name of fortune is this? (*Reads.*) "Dear Madam,—We have the honour to inform you that, under the will of the late Mr Puffin, you are become entitled to fifteen thousand pounds, free of legacy duty, which will be paid into your account, so soon as the necessary formalities have been gone through. One of our firm will wait upon you with this letter to take any instructions you may have to make. We remain, Madam, yours obediently, Brown, Jones & Robinson." Dear old Mr Puffin! I lent him a hymn-book once in church, and he always *said* he would re-

member me in his will ; but, of course, I never thought he would. Fifteen thousand pounds ! *Now*, let Sir John come and make me listen to reason ! I shall know how to take him. (*Walks round triumphantly, brandishing the letter : stops suddenly.*) One of the firm would call. Then it was one of the firm who wanted to see me. Oh, dear ! Oh, dear ! I hope my message wasn't given correctly. Don't want to see him ; of course I want to see him most particularly. Perhaps he's not gone yet ; I'd better go down myself and see. (*Exit in a great hurry.*)

The Amateur Fee for each and every representation of this play is half-a-guinea, payable in advance to Messrs. SAMUEL FRENCH, LTD., 26, Southampton Street, Strand, London. No performance may take place unless a written authority has first been obtained.

A FIGURE OF SPEECH:

A DUOLOGUE.



CHARACTERS:

SOLOMON BOODLE (*An elderly bachelor*).

JANE BOODLE (*his sister, also elderly*).

Scene: Any room. Door on one side. Window at back. Fire-place. Solomon Boodle alone, seated at a writing-table. Reads from a sheet of paper in his hand.

“A marriage is arranged and will shortly take place between Solomon Boodle, Esq., and Miss Cleopatra B. Scraggs, of New York.” Yes, I think that reads very well. Now I will just address the envelope to the editor of the *Morning Post*, and then I will post it myself before I break the news of my engagement to my sister Jane. I really don’t quite know how Jane may take it; she has been a very good sister to me, and we have put up our horses together for so long that I think—yes, I certainly think it would be better to post this before I tell her of my engagement. It will strengthen my position a good deal, and I sometimes feel in the presence of Jane as if my position required strengthening. (*Directs and stamps the envelope. Then goes towards the door*

as if about to leave the room. Enter Jane very briskly almost knocking him down. She has the "Morning Post" in her hand. Solomon retreats nervously, hiding his letter behind his back.)

Jane. I've no patience! I really haven't!

S. No you never had, Jane. That's a very old story.

J. It's the truth, and though you are as meek as Moses, I think this will ruffle even *you*. We don't think alike on every subject, I know, Solomon, but we always *have* agreed that matrimony is a mistake, haven't we.

S. Oh yes, certainly, we always *have* agreed.

J. And that the older people grow, the bigger mistake it is. Now just listen to this. (*Reads from the "Morning Post."*) "A marriage is arranged, and will shortly take place between Sir Henry Greenacre, and Miss Cornelia Slamm, of New York." What do you think of that?

S. (*aside*). It's the counterpart of my own case. (*Aloud nervously*.) Why, it's Henry Greenacre!

J. Well of course it is. Haven't I just read it? What I ask is, what do you think of that?

S. What do I think of it? (*Blows his nose nervously*.) What do *I* think; well, really. What do *you* think, yourself, Jane?

J. What do *I* think? Why, that there's no fool like an old fool.

S. Oh! you would hardly call Henry Greenacre old, would you Jane? Remember, he and I were boys together.

J. Well, I'll say there's no fool like an elderly fool, Solomon, if you prefer it. You can hardly deny Sir Henry Greenacre is elderly. Why, he wanted to marry me thirty years ago.

S. (*blowing his nose again nervously*). Ah! yes, yes, to be sure, so he did. I'd forgotten that now, Jane; upon my word I had. (*Tries to edge slowly nearer the door.*)

J. I daresay you have, but I haven't. It was perfectly rational that Henry Greenacre should want to marry me, thirty years ago, perfectly rational from *his* point of view. But it would be perfectly irrational if he wanted to marry me now.

S. Perfectly——

J. (*turning sharply on him*). And it is absolutely unnatural that he should want to marry anyone else! (*Solomon makes no answer, but blows his nose nervously again.*) Solomon, you've got a cold.

S. Thank you, Jane; no, I think not.

J. Nonsense, don't talk to me. You've blown your nose three times. Folks don't blow their noses three times in five minutes for nothing. Where are you going? Not out, surely?

S. Well, I was thinking of taking a little turn in the sunshine, Jane——

J. What, with a cold? I've no patience!

S. Just a little turn in the sunshine, Jane; it will do me good, positively it will.

J. Sunshine? Fiddlesticks! There's no sunshine. It's raining.

S. Is it indeed? I wasn't aware. Still I

think I won't forego my usual constitutional, Jane; just as far as the post office and back. (*Nearly reaches the door, when Jane interposes.*)

J. What! go out in the rain with a cold upon you like that? I've no patience! If you have any letters to post give them to me.

S. (*trying to slip the letter into his pocket*). Thank you, Jane, you're very kind, but it's not worth while for you to go out in the rain. (*Aside.*) I'll take it myself, later.

J. Give it to me, Solomon; give it to me. I've got half-a-dozen things to do out of doors, rain or no rain, and the post-office is all on the way. Give it to me. (*She takes the letter from him after a feeble resistance on his part. Looks at the address.*) The Editor of the *Morning Post*. What are you writing to him about?

S. (*looking out of the window with his back towards her*). Oh, nothing, my dear; nothing. Dear me, Jane, how wonderfully those carnations have improved since they have been planted out, haven't they?

J. (*observing him keenly*). What's the matter with you this morning, Solomon? You're not well.

S. (*irritably*). I beg your pardon, my dear Jane, I am perfectly well.

J. Perfectly well? I've no patience! If you were perfectly well your head wouldn't be in such a muddle.

S. (*as before*). I am not aware that my observation on the carnations betokens a muddled head.

J. Oh, it's all very well to make the carnations into a scape-goat——

S. My dear Jane, if we talk of muddles, can there be any greater muddle than to confuse a carnation with a scapegoat? Can there?

J. Oh, don't ramble on like that. I've no patience! (*Tapping the letter severely.*) Would you have wasted an envelope, a stamp, too, and have put *nothing* inside, if your head hadn't been in a muddle?

S. Oh—well—when I said nothing, I meant—a figure of speech—merely.

J. Oh! You've sent a figure of speech to the *Morning Post*. Well, I'm glad to hear it is only that. I was beginning to think that perhaps *your* marriage "had been arranged and would shortly take place." Now, what is it?

S. (*feebly*). What is what?

J. What's your figure of speech to the Editor of the *Morning Post*?

S. (*as before*). Would you mind, Jane, taking the letter to the post at once—I'll tell you what it's about after—but I want to catch the next post. (*Sinks into a chair and wipes his head with his handkerchief.*)

J. (*eyeing him critically*). Didn't I say your head was in a muddle, Solomon? The London post doesn't go out till this evening. Tell me what you're sending to the *Morning Post*. I'm not going to post your letter in the dark.

S. I don't want you to post my letter in the dark. I want you to post it *now*.

J. Solomon, I'd advise you not to give me crooked answers——

S. (irritably). And I'd advise you not to ask me cross questions. You're in a very bad temper this morning, Jane.

J. I've a right to be in a bad temper, after reading that ridiculous announcement about Henry Greenacre and Cornelia Slamm of New York! (*Solomon gets up and pokes the fire.*) And if you weren't feeling ill you'd see it in the same light as I do (*sarcastically*), unless, perhaps, you're sending a similar announcement to the *Morning Post*. If you *are*, Solomon, it's no use beating about the bush——

S. (irritably). I'm not beating about the bush, I'm poking the fire——

J. Because in twenty-four hours I shall be reading it for myself: "A marriage is arranged and will shortly take place between Solomon Boodle, Esq., and Mary Ann Snooks——

S. (excitedly). No! Miss Cleopatra B. Scraggs, of New York. Oh Lord! I've done it now! (*Sinks into arm-chair.*)

J. You haven't?

S. I have. I've let the cat out of the bag!

J. What cat?

S. Cleopatra! No! no! That's only a figure of speech. Cleopatra B. Scraggs is *not* a cat, she is an angel!

J. That must be a figure of speech too. An angel would never think of marrying you, Solomon. She would look higher, naturally.

Now, because you've lost your head there's no reason why I should lose mine. (*Sits down facing him.*) Do you mean to tell me that you think you are engaged to be married?

S. There's no thinking about it.

J. No; I can hardly believe you can have given it serious thought. To whom do you think you're engaged?

S. To whom do I *think* I am engaged? To Miss Cleopatra B. Scraggs of New York. I *am* engaged to her, Jane—and she is engaged to me!

J. Yes—that's more likely. Cleopatra Scraggs! Why, it's worse than Cornelia Slamm!

S. (*fretfully*). No, I don't think it's worse. There mayn't be much to choose between them, but I don't think it's worse.

J. A Boodle marry a Scraggs! Come, Solomon, say it's a figure of speech—say it's a figure of speech——

S. A figure of speech. (*Ecstatically*). Ah! you should see my Cleopatra! A figure indeed—a fine figure of a woman—and as for speech—such words, Jane, such turns of phrases, such a pronunciation—I don't know anything like it in the English language.

J. I should be sorry for the English language if you did. (*Gets up and paces the room.*) I've no patience! Solomon, when your god-parents gave you that name, they fondly hoped you would live up to it! If they could only hear you now, twaddling on about a figure of speech!

Solomon Boodle, you are a—can you remember what rhymes with Boodle?

S. (*considering*). Why, yes, to be sure, Jane—I have it, Yankce-doodle! Ah! we shall indeed rhyme together—our life will be one long poem—

J. One long parody of a poem! I've no patience! No, Solomon; the word I meant that rhymes with Boodle is an English word that begins with an N. Now, will you leave off figures of speech and flowers of rhetoric, and if you *are* engaged to Cleopatra Scraggs—which I don't altogether believe—be so good as to tell me one thing. Where did you meet her first?

S. On the Pier at Brighton.

J. On the Pier at Brighton! Well, I don't see how you can make a poem out of a beginning like that.

S. Yes—on the Pier at Brighton, I was walking with—by the way it was Henry Greenacre—

J. What, Sir Henry Greenacre who is engaged to Miss Slamm?

S. To be sure—there was Greenacre and Lord Tom Noddy and me; and Greenacre stopped and spoke to a lady—and then he turned towards us, and he said, "Miss Scraggs, allow me to introduce my two oldest friends, Lord Thomas Noddy—Mr Boodle—"

J. And she took you for Lord Tom Noddy, of course. I said I didn't believe you were engaged!

S. Jane! why should you insult me by supposing she mistook me for Tom?

J. Because she looked for the title, Solomon, and she thought you more likely to adorn it than Lord Thomas. She could get plain Solomon Boodle in New York.

S. Jane! why should you humiliate me by calling me plain Solomon Boodle?

J. Not you. I say she took Lord Thomas for plain—and so he is. Now, since when do you imagine that you have been engaged to Miss Scraggs?

S. Well, Jane, if you insist upon knowing, I proposed to her two or three days ago——

J. Yes; but a proposal does not necessarily constitute an engagement—especially in your case. You've done this sort of thing once or twice before, you know, Solomon. The question is: Has Miss Scraggs accepted your proposal?

S. (*nervously*). She has as good as done so—as *good* as done so.

J. Now, Solomon, no more figures of speech, if you please! As good as done generally means as good as *not* done. Did she say yes?

S. No; she said—

J. She said no? There!—

S. No, she didn't say no. She said: Mr Boodle, I will think it over, and give you my answer in a few days.

J. Didn't I say you weren't engaged?

S. You don't mean that you think by her not pronouncing a decided "Yes" that I have lost her?

J. "She who hesitates is lost." We have it on the best authority. Cleopatra Scraggs hesitated, therefore she is lost; that's logic, I fancy. And do you mean to tell me that in the face of that answer, "Mr Boodle, I will think it over," you presumed to send this paragraph to the *Morning Post* about a marriage being arranged and shortly taking place?

S. To tell you the truth, dear Jane, not knowing quite how you would take it—

J. You might have known, seeing how I have taken a similar situation at least three times before in your history.

S. I thought it would strengthen my position with regard to you.

J. It would have weakened your position with regard to Miss Scraggs. She may or may not intend to accept you, but she won't like it taken for granted. We none of us do. (*Aside.*) I think I shall post the announcement after all. (*Moves towards the door.*)

S. Where are you going, Jane?

J. To the post office, to be sure. Didn't you say you wanted this letter posted?

S. Not if you think it will weaken my position with Cleopatra. Not that I believe for one moment that it will. Cleopatra! Cleopatra! Ah, Jane, is it not a name full of suggestion?

J. Very—and so is Solomon; but put the two together, "I, Solomon, take thee, Cleopatra," and could anything be more ridiculous?

S. And pray, Jane, why ridiculous? Do you

imagine that every name is ridiculous that isn't as short as your own? Cleopatra! Cleopatra! The name in itself suggests a dream of beauty!

J. (turning on him). And what good will a dream of beauty do you? Will a dream of beauty mend your socks, have your shirts properly aired, or sew the buttons on your gloves? Will a dream of beauty see that your egg is boiled three minutes and a half, and your toast brought up fresh and fresh? Will a dream of beauty put your feet in mustard when you have a cold, or rub your chest with Elliman? Will a dream of beauty consider your comforts or expect you to consider hers? Will a dream of beauty sit soberly by the fireside, or take you mooning round the garden when the dew is falling? I've no patience! If you want a dream of beauty, go to sleep, Solomon, go to sleep, and wake up more like yourself—a wiser man—and remember that it is best to suffer “present ills, than fly to those we know not of.”

S. (comes nearer, and tries to take her hand). Really, my dear Jane, I never meant to imply that you are “a present ill.” I never went so far as that, Jane; indeed I never did. Who is indulging in figures of speech now?

J. Then why should you want to fly to Cleopatra Scraggs? You don't suppose that the situation of perpetual gooseberry would quite suit me, do you? No; you can't expect me to play second fiddle when I've always—

S. Bossed the show! Ah! you don't know

that phrase, Jane. But I picked it up from Cleopatra.

J. A New York figure of speech, I suppose. Well, if that's the sort of thing you have picked up from Miss Scraggs, I think you had better drop it. Ah! there's the postman.

S. The postman! That means a letter for me—Cleopatra's answer, of course. Oh, Jane! I feel so nervous. (*Goes towards the door, but Jane interposes.*)

J. No, Solomon, you won't go out into the passage with a cold. I'll fetch the letters. (*Places her back against the door.*) But first, in case you find yourself more engaged than at present you seem to be, what do you expect me to do?

S. Wouldn't it be time enough to talk that over when we see what sort of an answer it is? I feel so nervous, Jane.

J. Time enough for you, Solomon, but not for me. Before I fetch that letter, be so good as to tell me what position you expect me to take up.

S. For the present, Jane, I should be obliged if you would take up your usual position in the chair there by the fireplace. I feel so nervous, and you make me more so by your unexpected questions.

J. That's all very fine; but what am I to do if your Dream of Beauty claims my chair?

S. (*feebly*). Oh, do whatever you like, Jane! I feel so nervous.

J. Whatever I like! If I were to do what I like, do you know what it would be?

S. Oh, don't ask me riddles at such a moment! It is inhuman! Let me know the worst, Jane, let me know the worst. (*Makes again for the door. Jane interposes.*)

J. If I were to do what I liked, I should give Cleopatra Scraggs the sack and get you out of it.

S. (*helplessly*). I'm not in any sack, Jane. I'm not, indeed. Oh, Jane! dear Jane, this is no moment for figures of speech! Let me know the worst.

J. And if the worst comes to the worst, you're sure you wouldn't like me to get you out of it? (*Solomon trembles all over with nervousness.*) It wouldn't be the first time, you know, Solomon. (*Pauses.*) When you thought you were engaged to your cousin Sophia, I got you out of it—remember? And when you thought you were engaged to Mrs Mayne-Chance, the golden-haired widow, I got you out of that—remember? And when you thought you were engaged to Juliette de Vere, the actress, I got you out of that too—remember?

S. Yes, I remember perfectly. You have been a very good sister to me, Jane, a very good sister. (*Comes nearer.*) And do you know, Jane, it has always been a mystery to me how you did it.

J. (*laughing*). Would you like to know how I did the trick, Solomon? I don't mind telling you now. You see I had to guard against letting you in for breach of promise, or anything of that sort.

S. Yes, that was the cleverness of it.

J. Exactly. That was the cleverness of it. Well, in the case of your cousin Sophia, I put it about that you had only two hundred a year, and couldn't settle that. Naturally, Sophia's mother made her break it off.

S. My dear Jane, how could you?

J. That was the cleverness of it. In the case of Mrs Mayne-Chance, I told her that you drank, and as she had already had one husband who drank, she naturally didn't wish to have another.

S. My dear Jane, how could you dare?

J. That was the cleverness of it. And in the case of Juliette de Vere, the actress, well, I simply introduced her to a handsomer man than you.

S. My dear Jane, how could you presume?

J. Oh! that was the cleverness of it. (*Opens the door.*)

S. Where are you going?

J. To get the letters. (*Pauses.*) You're sure you wouldn't like me to get you out of it?

S. (*indignantly*). Jane, how can you! (*Calling her back.*) Jane! Jane!

J. Well.

S. (*confidentially*). My dear Jane, if—if—I only say if—if Miss Scraggs' answer should not be everything we could wish, do you think you have quite exhausted the list of your subterfuges?

J. No; I don't suppose so. (*Considers.*) For instance, I might give out that you were a

lunatic, or a gambler. There's not much difference to my mind.

S. Thank you, Jane; thank you. Suppose we read Miss Scraggs' answer first. (*Exit Jane. Returns immediately with a letter.*)

J. There is only one letter for you. (*Hands it to him.*)

S. Only one in the world for me. You say truly, Jane. (*Looks at the address.*) Why, this isn't from Cleopatra.

J. I see it isn't. It's Sir Henry Greenacre's handwriting.

S. To tell of his stupid engagement, I suppose. Who cares to hear about that! (*Sits down miserably in a chair, and tosses the letter to Jane.*) You can read it, if you like. It interests you more than me.

J. Interests me! I've no patience. (*Opens the letter and reads.*)—"My dear old friends." It's for us both, you see. "I wish to be the first to inform you of my newly-found happiness." Rather late in the day. "My newly-found happiness, and all the more so as I see that the papers, with their usual officiousness, have already announced the fact of my approaching marriage, and not only so, but with their usual inaccuracy have made an egregious blunder of the lady's name. I am engaged to be married—*not* as the papers have it, to Miss Cornelia Slamm of New York, but to Miss Cleopatra Scraggs.

S. (*bounding out of his chair*). What?

J. Miss Cleopatra Scraggs.

S. Let me see. (*Snatches the letter out of Jane's hand.*) "Engaged to be married, *not* as the papers have it, to Miss Cornelia Slamm of New York, but to Miss Cleopatra Scraggs." (*Drops back into his chair.*) Then her answer to me the other day: Mr Boodle, I will think it over, was—

J. A figure of speech, I should say, Solomon. Decidedly a figure of speech. Well, as I said before, there's no fool like an old fool—but better him than you. Didn't I tell you you weren't engaged?

S. You did, Jane, you did.

J. Didn't I tell you she wanted a title?

S. You did indeed, Jane, you did indeed! And you were right, as you always are. (*Shakes his head.*) My dream of beauty is dissipated!

J. Well, that will be for Henry Greenacre to find out. We mustn't judge too harshly. As for you and me, Solomon (*draws his arm through hers*), we always have agreed that matrimony is a mistake—haven't we?

S. (*with conviction*). Not only have, but always will, Jane.

J. (*laughing, and holding up the letter to the "Morning Post"*). And this announcement about your marriage arranged, that will shortly take place.

S. (*gaily*). A figure of speech, Jane, a figure of speech—nothing more.

(*Curtain, or exit arm in arm.*)

The Amateur Fee for each and every representation of this play is half-a-guinea, payable in advance to Messrs. SAMUEL FRENCH, LTD., 26, Southampton Street, Strand, London. No performance may take place unless a written authority has first been obtained.

MY MISSING SPECTACLES.

A MONOLOGUE.

—o—

(Enter Aunt Maria, looking for her spectacles.

They are all the while pushed up on to her forehead, a fact of which she is not aware.)

Aunt Maria. I can't think what has become of my spectacles. They are not in my pocket, they are not in my work-basket, and I can't find them upstairs. I strongly suspect that naughty boy George has been playing me a practical joke, and hidden them away somewhere in here. I let him have this room to himself, and I don't very often come in here. Oh dear! oh dear! what it is to have a nephew spending his holidays with one! Nobody knows till they have tried. It was all very well when he was six—he was younger then, so was I. But now that he is sixteen—why, he has actually had visiting cards printed—he would smoke if I'd let him, monkey! and I've good reason to suspect that he has started a serious flirtation. Humph! There are *some* things I can see without my spectacles, Master George. All the same, I'd give anything to find them again. I wonder where they are. I'm sure he has hidden them somewhere. *(Searches along the chimney-piece.)* Ah! here they are. No, they're not. What

have I got hold of, I wonder? (*Takes up a pipe and holds it to the light.*) Why, I do believe it's a pipe—a nasty, disgusting pipe! (*Turns it round.*) Yes, it is; it's a pipe! I can see that without my spectacles. No, Master George, I shan't let you smoke pipes so long as you spend your holidays with me. I shall confiscate the pipe. (*Puts the pipe in her pocket.*) Now, where in the world can those spectacles be? I'm certain he has hidden them somewhere. He thinks I keep too sharp an eye upon him. (*Continues to search along the chimney-piece.*) Well, they don't seem to be here, anyhow. Very odd. Whose photograph is this, I wonder? It is a photograph; I can see that without my spectacles. (*Takes up the photograph, and holds it in various positions till she gets a good light on it.*) Oh! oh! oh! if it isn't an actress—a be-dizened actress! Tights, too. Oh, yes, I can see that without my spectacles. No, Master George, I shan't allow you to have actresses' photographs so long as you spend your holidays with me. I shall confiscate the actress. (*Puts the photograph in her pocket.*) Now, where in the world can those spectacles be? I am positive he has hidden them somewhere. If I wasn't before, I am now. Actresses indeed! (*Searches the sofa. Discovers the "Pink 'un" behind the cushions.*) Newspapers! Now, how often have I told George that I will *not* have newspapers hidden away behind the sofa-cushions. It is just what his father

used to do. Most curious how family traits come out. What do they want to hide them away for? (*Thumps the cushions and re-arranges them. Holds up the paper.*) *The Sporting Times*. A nice sort of paper to be lying about in *my* house. Such a colour, too—a pink one! *Sporting Times* indeed! Oh yes, I can see that without my spectacles. It's printed large enough for the blind. No, Master George, I shan't allow you to read *The Sporting Times* so long as you spend your holidays with me. I shall confiscate *The Sporting Times*. (*Puts the paper in her pocket.*) Now where in the world can those spectacles be? I'm convinced he has hidden them somewhere. He thinks I can't see without my spectacles, but can't I? (*Continues her search. Comes upon a bottle of soda-water and a brandy-flask. Starts back in horror and points melodramatically.*) There—what do I see? Bottles! Bottles! Oh! I can see them without my spectacles! (*Takes up the soda-water bottle.*) Soda-water, well, that won't do him much harm. It's lowering, but his vitality will be all the better for being lowered. (*Takes up the brandy-flask.*) Brandy! That is poison! (*Smells it.*) Oh yes, there is no doubt about it; this is brandy. I can smell that without my spectacles. No, Master George, I shan't allow you to drink brandy so long as you spend your holidays with me. I shall confiscate the brandy—(*puts the brandy-flask in her pocket*)—and you may finish the soda-water if you like.

Now where in the world can those tiresome spectacles be? The longer I search the more positive I am that George has hidden them somewhere. (*Searches the writing-table. Sits and looks carefully through the blotting-book.*) Not here, not here. Hum. A bill. Cannot see what it is for—(*Holds up the bill and vainly tries to make out*)—but it has got no receipt-stamp on it, so it's not paid. I can see that much without my spectacles. I shall confiscate it, and send it by the next mail to George's father in India. (*Turns over another leaf.*) Another bill—cannot see what this is for, but this has got no stamp either, so *that's* not paid. I shall send them both by the next mail to George's father in India. (*Puts both bills in her pocket.*) Oh, bother those spectacles! where *can* they be? Aha! a letter—a half-finished letter—in George's handwriting. I can see that much without my spectacles.

Now, am I justified in perusing George's correspondence? Yes, on the whole, I think I am; seeing that George is spending his holidays with me, that he is only sixteen, and that he has horribly precocious tastes for pipes, brandy, pink papers, and ladies in tights, I think I cannot be too careful in exercising a wise supervision over the acquaintances he makes and the individuals to whom he pens epistles. (*Takes the letter and holds it at every possible angle, vainly trying to read it.*) Only, how *am* I to peruse it without my spectacles? (*Tries*

again, with the same result.) Oh, that cowardly boy! That is why he has hidden my spectacles—that I might not be able to peruse his letter. But I'll be even with him yet. I *will* peruse it. (*Tries again.*) There is a big M—I can make that out, and a very big D, and a curl that looks like the tail of a g. Beginning with D and ending with g—what can that be, I wonder? I have it. It is “My darling”—I'm sure it is—I'm certain it is—I'm positive it is! But My Darling who? Oh, if I could only find my spectacles! *If I could only find my spectacles!* I will find them. (*Dashes wildly round the room, displacing everything.*) No, they are not anywhere here. They must be in my pocket, after all. (*Turns everything out of her pocket, pipe, photograph, brandy flask, newspaper, bills; turns the pocket inside out.*) Not even there! Foiled, outwitted, baffled by a boy! (*Drops into a chair and clasps her forehead with her hands. Suddenly feels her spectacles. Snatches them off. Holds them at arms' length and stares at them as if they were uncanny.*) Now, how in the world can they have got there? Who can have put them there? Not I, I'm certain. George must have done it, as a practical joke, when I was asleep after luncheon. Oh! he's quite capable of it—quite. A boy who can smoke pipes, and have actresses' photographs, and read pink papers, and write love-letters—Ah! that reminds me; I can peruse that epistle now. I said I would find

my spectacles, and I *have*. (*Draws chair forward, puts on spectacles, and reads.*) "My Darling"—didn't I say it was "darling"? "My Darling Bella." Now, who can his darling Bella be? I don't know anyone of the name of Bella. (*Reads.*) "You don't know how I adore you." Oh, George! what a disgraceful sentiment! (*Reads.*) "And how I am counting the minutes till I can see you. I will meet you to-morrow at the Aquarium, and we will have a real good time, won't we? I shall tell my Aunt that I have an appointment with the dentist"—Tell your Aunt you have an appointment with the dentist, you wicked, wicked boy! Oh, George! George! what do you think will become of you? And I've always done my best to impress upon you the feelings of a gentleman. Oh! I do hope—yes, I do most devoutly hope and trust you will be kept awake all night with the toothache. Yes, I *do*! It will be a judgment on you—a fit and proper judgment. (*Listening.*) Oh dear! I do believe that's George whistling in the passage. He mustn't find me here, confiscating his property and reading his correspondence. That would never do; it would spoil everything. (*Starts up from her chair.*) But I shall confiscate this letter. (*Puts the letter in her pocket.*) "Darling Bella" indeed! and then *she* won't get it, anyway, even if he doesn't have the toothache, which I sincerely trust he will. (*Stumbles over the pipe, brandy*

flask, &c., which she has dropped on the floor.)
O Lord! what am I to do with all these?
(Picks them up hurriedly and thrusts them all into her pocket again.) He'll think the cat has been here, or a ghost, walking off with all his things. I can't get them into my pocket. It's very odd, I got them in before. *(Inadvertently pushes spectacles up on her forehead as before.)*
Oh, well, I can't bother to find my pocket; I shall have George here in another minute. *(Gathers the things up in her hands, dropping one as fast as she gets another. Finally carries them all to the door.)* Now, Master George, don't you attempt to play practical jokes with your Aunt's spectacles again. They're sure to recoil on your own head if you do. Remember, too, there are some things I can see without spectacles, and *(looks helplessly round)* I don't know *now* where they are. I thought I had found them—I certainly thought I had found them. I can't begin to look for them all over again, and George upon me, too! Gracious goodness! there he is! *(Drops all the confiscated property and bolts.)*

The Amateur Fee for each and every representation of this play is half-a-guinea, payable in advance to Messrs. SAMUEL FRENCH, LTD., 26, Southampton Street, Strand, London. No performance may take place unless a written authority has first been obtained.

NICKNAMES.

—o—

CHARACTERS :

JULIANA (*otherwise Pussy*).

ANASTATIA (*otherwise Nan, her married sister*).

(*Scene : A Drawing-room in Juliana's Flat.*

Enter Anastatia in her bonnet.)

Anastatia. Yes ; Juliana has got very nice rooms, certainly ; rather more expensively furnished than she can afford, I should say, but nice—undoubtedly nice—more's the pity ! It may seem captious on my part, but I freely confess that had I found a look-out over chimney pots and potent kitchen odours in the passage, I should have been a great deal better pleased. There would then have been more chance of persuading her to leave this flat and live with us. This life of independence is so exceedingly objectionable. It is positively shocking ! As I said to John only yesterday at breakfast—or was it at dinner ? no, I think it was breakfast—“that any young woman should *wish* to live alone is a sign that her moral sense is not in the right place ; and it is my duty to rescue my sister before her moral sense has become permanently dislocated.” But here, in the lap of luxury, what am I to go upon ? How am I to bring it home

to her? (*Looking round.*) Her surroundings really appear so exceedingly correct! (*Examines books on table.*) "Tennyson"—John's present to her last birthday; "Work and Wages." Humph! I wonder how much she understands of either! (*Turns over newspapers.*) *Standard, Queen, Spectator*, last week's number I forwarded; just the very papers she would see with us. I wish I had something to go upon. There *must be* something if I could only find it! (*Takes up photographs.*) Mine—John's—mine again—me and baby—Aunt Susan—very correct; *too* correct, I am inclined to think. Aha! what is this? (*Picks up telegram from the floor.*) A telegram. (*Reads.*) "Do not expect me—do not expect me, to-night. — Tommy." Good heavens! Has it come to this already? I have something to go upon now; I have something to bring home to her now! I've a telegram to go upon, and a Tommy to bring home to her. Apparently she is quite prepared to bring him home to herself! Oh! I was indeed right. Juliana's moral sense can *not* be in the right place. But I mustn't let her suspect my discovery. (*Puts telegram in her pocket.*) I must draw her on to implicate herself and then—— (*Enter Juliana.*)

J. Hullo, Nan; how are you?

A. Quite well, dear, thank you. (*Goes to embrace J., who languidly drops into a chair.*) Your servant said you would be in directly, so I thought I might come in and wait.

J. Delighted. (*Aside.*) Lucky I didn't leave cigarettes and Tommy's banjo about! Sorry I wasn't in, Nan; only just back from *Matinée* at Gaiety.

A. Indeed. Do you go to the theatre alone?

J. No; took Cooley.

A. (*aside.*) Now, I wonder whether "Cooley" is a man or a woman? These detestable nicknames! (*Aloud.*) And *who* is Cooley?

J. One of my pals. Sit down, Nan, won't you. How's Jack? (*A. Sits.*)

A. *John* is very well, thank you, dear; you know my dislike of nicknames, and Jack is so peculiarly repulsive —

J. Oh, no; don't think he is; least, you oughtn't to say so, Nan. And how's little Dot?

A. Dorothea has grown so fast lately that I am thankful to say the ridiculous nickname is no longer applicable.

J. Pity; Dorothea's so frightful —

A. Frightful! Most people consider the child an angel of beauty!

J. (*quite unmoved.*) How are Tweedledum and Tweedledee. Beg pardon, Nan; *can't* call them anything else. Don't remember their names.

A. (*stiffly.*) If you mean the twins, they are quite well, thank you. But when children have been christened Anastatius and Alexander, I really can *not* see the sense of calling them Tweedledum and Tweedledee!

J. Can't you now, really? D'you know—think most people would.

A. There is not even the excuse of brevity, that one poor prop by which nicknames usually take their stand.

J. Soon dwindle down to Dum and Dee.

A. (*indignantly*). I daresay! and from that get corrupted into Dumb and Deaf; and so my boys would be branded with infirmities by which they are *not* afflicted. I know how misapprehensions may be traced to a miserable nickname!

J. All right. Let's talk of something else. How d'you like my flat, Nan?

A. One word more before we quit the subject. Don't call me "Nan."

J. Not call you "Nan?"

A. No; *don't* call me Nan.

J. But I've called you Nan all my life.

A. Then the sooner you leave off the better. The bad habits of a day are hard enough to uproot, but the bad habits of a lifetime——

J. (*interrupting*). Bad habits of a fiddlestick. What d'you expect me to call you?

A. Anastatia, of course.

J. (*drawing a long breath*). An-as-ta-tia! Mean it? Seriously?

A. Do I ever jest?

J. Can't say you do. (*Pause. J. draws a long breath again.*) Anastatia, how d'you like my flat?

A. Well, it seems nice enough—(*pointedly*)—so far as it goes.

J. How d'you know how far it goes? Been over it already—my absence?

A. You misunderstand me. I was referring, not to its area, but to its—its—. In fact, however nice your flat may be, dear Juliana, I cannot quite sanction——

J. One word before we proceed. Don't call me Juliana.

A. Not call you Juliana?

J. No. Don't call me Juliana.

A. But I have *always* called you Juliana.

J. I know. Sooner you leave off the better. Bad habits of a day—hard enough, you know—but bad habits of a lifetime——

A. (*interrupting*). Don't talk to me of bad habits. What do you expect me to call you?

J. Pussy.

A. What?

J. Pussy.

A. You expect me—*me*, with my peculiar horror of nicknames—to call you Pussy?

J. Why not? All my pals call me Pussy.

A. I daresay your "pals" do—(*pointedly*)—male as well as female, I don't doubt. But you don't class *me* as "a pal," I suppose.

J. No, don't say I do.

A. I should hope not. And your "pals" may call you what they please, but I shall not exchange the good old family name of Juliana for a pert nickname. Pussy, indeed!

J. All right; then I can call you Nan.

A. (*stiffly*). As you please.

J. And I can call John, Jack.

A. No, you won't!

J. And I can call the children Dot and Dum and Dee.

A. No, you will *not*. (*Aside.*) I suppose I shall have to concede the point for the present, or I shall never persuade her to give up living alone. (*Aloud, with a show of conciliation.*) Well, well, we won't discuss that now. Give and take, give and take, as I always say to the children, and compromise is the creed of all sensible people.

J. Capital! To return to our muttoms. Anas-tatia, how d'you like my flat?

A. Pretty well—P-Pussy, pretty well.

J. Glad you've not fallen in love with it. Fact is—getting bored with it myself.

A. (*aside*). This is better luck than I expected! (*Aloud.*) I'm not surprised, my dear, but of course I was determined all along to express no opinion.

J. Poky, isn't it?

A. Since you ask me—that is just what I should call it—poky.

J. Then we've no lift, and I can't stand eighty-five steps every time I go out.

A. It's enough to bring on heart disease!

J. Three times a day,—that's my average going out—lowest average. Five hundred and ten steps—down and up—three thousand five hundred and seventy steps a week—down and up.

A. It's a positive Eiffel Tower! Now there is just the charm of our dear, old, rambling country-house: only *one* storey dear, think of that!

J. (*turning over papers on table as if looking for something*). Then—what with other people tramping up and down staircase—and cards for me—getting mixed—with cards for other people—and my walls—torn open—find escape—other people's gas—it's not like living alone. (*Aside.*) Wonder what's become of Tommy's telegram? (*Aloud.*) Sooner live in a Hotel, any day.

A. (*aside*). A Hotel! Oh my goodness! Juliana in a hotel. What an idea! (*Aloud.*) After all, P-Pussy, darling—if to be alone is what one desires there is no loneliness like that which one can find in the centre of a family. (*Aside.*) I think I have led up to that rather effectively.

J. Shouldn't have thought so, if you hadn't told me; sorry to hear that's your experience. Afraid doesn't speak well for John and Dorothea and Anastatius and Alexander. (*Draws a long breath.*) Declare if I had to say it often, would be worse than eighty-five steps!

A. (*disconcerted*). Oh—I wasn't speaking from my own experience.

J. Couldn't speak from any one else's. (*Aside, looking about the floor*). What can have become of Tommy's telegram? Read it in such a hurry. Don't remember if it said 'coming' or 'not coming.' And Coeey waiting to know if I'll dine at the Bachelors!

A. (*aside*). If Juliana is going to live in a Hotel, the sooner I come to the point the better. P-Pussy?

J. Yes, An-as-tatia.

A. Would you give me your attention for a moment? Thank you. Now I wish to make myself plain—

J. No need, dear. Nature made you that—

A. When I say plain, I mean intelligible. Now what do you suppose was my *object* in coming here to-day? Primarily *you*, of course—

J. Not an object. Decline to be classed as an object—

A. When I say object I mean motive; and the motive of my visit to-day was to bring you a proposal—

J. Don't want to hear it from *you*.

A. Don't want to hear it from *me*?

J. No. Tell him to come himself.

A. Tell *him*? Tell *who*?

J. I don't know—whichever he is—tell him to propose in person.

A. I don't mean a proposal of marriage.

J. Oh!—disappointed. Fact is—getting tired of living alone.

A. When I say proposal I mean a proposition.

J. Euclid? Don't understand it.

A. You are tired of living alone. Of course you are. Home life is every true woman's natural atmosphere. This natural atmosphere I offer to you. My dear child, come and make your home with *me*.

J. Oh Lord!—I mean—oh thanks—awfully.
(*Aside.*) Now how am I to get out of this?

A. You have tried a flat—it has failed; You have courted solitude; it palls. *I* will not fail you, and life with me will not—

J. Pall. (*Aside.*) Oh! but it would.

A. (*effusively*). Let us agree to try one another.

J. (*always impassive*). Oh we should—not a doubt of it—awfully!

A. My arms are open to receive you.

J. And Jack?

A. John.

J. John. Are John's arms open to receive me too?

A. Of course. I would not have made this offer without consulting him.

J. Good old Jack!

A. John.

J. John. (*Aside.*) Now how am I to get out of this? (*Aloud.*) It's awfully kind of you, but I'm afraid you won't bargain to have us all.

A. All? You can bring your maid of course, but you won't require any other servants.

J. Don't mean servants—but there's—Fitz and Muffin and Jumbo—and Tommy.

A. (*aside*). Tommy! (*Aloud.*) And pray who are Fitz and Muffin and Jumbo and Tommy? Pals?

J. Not exactly—only dogs—and Tommy's a cat.

A. Oh. (*Aside.*) No, the telegram could not have been from the cat.

J. Tommy's awfully nasty with children. Afraid he'd tear Dorothea and Anastatius and Alexander (*heaves a sigh*) to little bits.

A. Couldn't you give Tommy away?

J. Couldn't! Beloved beast!

A. (*aside*). Evidently recalls tender memories. (*Aloud.*) Well, well, we won't discuss that now. Anyhow you'll come. Let us consider that as settled.

J. Thanks — awfully! (*Aside.*) Now how am I to get out of this? (*Aloud.*) If you take me—won't mind taking me—just as I am—bad habits and all?

A. Bad habits? I trust you have not contracted any bad habits, my dear.

J. Afraid you'll think so.

A. (*severely.*) You don't *smoke*, Juliana?

J. Yes, Nan, I do. What's more — don't mean to give it up.

A. But consider the bad example you would set to Dorothea, Anastatius, and Alexander.

J. I know. Better think twice before you let wolf like me into your sheepfold. (*Aside.*) Think—smoke 'll choke her.

A. (*aside*). I suppose I must swallow it! (*Aloud.*) Well, well, we won't discuss that now. I can only hope that the healthier moral atmosphere you will breathe with us will purify your taste above tobacco.

J. (*aside.*) Smoke hasn't choked her after

all. Now, how *am* I to get out of this? (*Aloud after slight pause.*) It's awfully kind of you, *Nan*. (*gesture of protest on part of A.*)—awfully kind of *Jack*, too (*A. murmurs "John"*)—but don't you think—shall be in the way? See—*Dot's* growing so fast——

A. My dear, must I remind you again that I hold nicknames in peculiar horror. When you come to live with us I trust you will so far respect my wishes as to call the children——

J. Dorothea and Anastatius, and Alexander? Don't expect me—call them that *every* day?

A. Certainly. Why not?

J. Dorothea and Anastatius, and Alexander, *all* day and *every* day? Monday morning till Saturday night? Sundays too? No. Should die of it. Sooner stay here with three thousand five hundred and seventy steps! (*Rising.*) Look here, *Nan*. If I make my home with you—must be on distinct understanding—doesn't entail extra exertion over your ridiculous names. Let it be: *Nan*, *Jack*, *Dot*, *Dum*, and *Dee*—I'll come—perhaps. But if it's to be: *Anastatia*, *John*, *Dorothea*, *Anastatius*, and *Alexander*—can't do it at the price. That's my *ultapomatum*—as the hairdresser said when they asked him for an estimate of wigs!

A. (*rising*). Never! *Juliana*, you expect too much.

J. All right, *Nan*. But give and take, you know, give and take, as you always say to the——

A. Give and take, indeed. *Me* give, and *you*

take, that's what you mean. Look here, Juliana, I have swallowed your smoke——

J. And I thought — would have choked you——

A. I have swallowed your cats and dogs——

J. And they don't agree——

A. I will swallow no more!

J. Can't digest my compromise. Capital!

A. To hear you talk one would think you gained nothing by the arrangement.

J. Don't see that I do.

A. You don't see that you do? Pray, is it nothing to gain the privilege of family life?

J. Not if family life is weighted with family names. However, compromise, you know—creed of all sensible people—and I'm willing to compromise——

A. (*severely*). To compromise yourself. I should say you are! When I came to make you the offer of a home, I little thought to be confronted at the outset with the proof of how sadly the better influences of that home are needed! (*Takes telegram from her pocket and flourishes it in J.'s face.*) What have you to say to that?

J. Tommy's telegram! What's the meaning of this?

A. Meaning of this? The meaning is plain enough, I should say.

J. Let's have a look. (*Reads.*) "Do *not* expect me to-night."

A. I repeat, what have you to say to that?

J. Say? Why—if you'd been good enough—leave telegram where you found it.

A. I found it on the floor.

J. Then why not leave it on the floor? And poor Cooley waiting all this time to know if I'll dine at the Bachelor's!

A. "Tommy" one moment and "Cooley" the next, and you can stand there and talk to me like that——

J. Can talk just as well sitting, of course; only, let me wire to Cooley first——

A. (*detaining her.*) Not till you tell me who "Cooley" is.

J. Cooley? Cooley's Lady Constance Jinks—married Tim Jinks in the Guards, you know. High Jinks they call her, because she's always up to larks—and he's called Low Jinks, because he's got a liver and is always in the dumps.

A. Detestable jargon of nicknames! (*Suspiciously.*) So "Cooley" is a woman, is she? Humph! Perhaps you'll tell me next that "Tommy" is a woman? (*Points severely to the telegram.*)

J. Why, of course she is. What else should she be?

A. What else should she be? Why, a man, I should say.

J. But she isn't. *You* know her, Nan. Girl who does tumbling tricks and plays on the mandolin.

A. I do not know any girl who does tumbling tricks or who plays on the mandolin.

J. Yes, you do. What's-her-name—Altamont.

A. You don't mean Irene? Don't tell me that any Altamont would condescend to be nicknamed Tommy!

J. Well, nobody could expect anybody to call anybody Irene Altamont.

A. I should think it preferable to being known by a detestable nickname that leaves it an open question whether the bearer be a man or a woman, a dog or a cat! (*Aside.*) So there's nothing to bring home to her after all! (*Aloud.*) Well, Juliana, good-bye. I must be going or I shall miss my train. Think over my offer of a home, and let this be a lesson to you of the truth of what I said, how misapprehensions may be traced to a miserable nickname!

J. All right. Good-bye, Nan. Thanks awfully. My love to Jack, and Dot, and Dum, and Dee. Oh! I say, Nan, as you pass Post Office, just wire for me to Cooey, will you?

A. Wire for you to——

J. Cooey.

A. What do you want said?

J. "Lady Cooey Jinks, Hans Place.—Will dine.—Pussy." There you are. (*Gives sixpence.*) Thanks awfully. Must fly and dress. Ta-ta. (*Exit leisurely.*)

A. "Lady Cooey Jinks, Hans Place.—Will dine.—Pussy." Certainly not! I shall put, "Lady Constance Jinks, Hans Place.—Have much pleasure in accepting your kind invitation to dinner.—Juliana." Humph! that's more than sixpence! (*Exit.*)

The Amateur Fee for each and every representation of this play is half-a-guinea, payable in advance to Messrs. SAMUEL FRENCH, LTD., 26, Southampton Street, Strand, London. No performance may take place unless a written authority has first been obtained.

THE SCIENCE OF ADVERTISEMENT.

CHARACTERS.

MRS DELAMERE (*a young widow*).

MISS FITKINS (*her companion*).

AN ELDERLY LADY.

PERCY PENRHYN (*in love with Mrs Delamere*).

JEMMY FITZBRASS (*his friend*).

(Mrs Delamere's drawing-room. Doors left and centre. A green parrot in a cage. Some water-colour sketches and two dolls put on one side in a corner of the room. Mrs Delamere and Miss Fitkins seated at a table on which is an M.S., etc.)

Mrs Delamere. There! I think I've done a very good morning's work. In a few days my book will be ready for the press. Miss Fitkins, have you done as I asked you, and found me a title?

Miss Fitkins. Let me see, Mrs Delamere. Your incomparable contribution to literature has for its object the practical application of advertisement to the needs of domestic life, has it not?

Mrs D. Exactly. Advertise for everything you want in exchange for what you want to get rid of. Only not just now and then, you

know, as the fancy takes you, but systematically. Properly understood, it practically reduces the necessity for buying to almost nothing.

Miss F. Shall we say does away with the necessity of buying altogether, Mrs Delamere.

Mrs D. Look at my piano. I got that in exchange for some rusty old pistols that belonged to the late Mr Delamere's great-great-aunt.

Miss F. Shall we say uncle, Mrs Delamere?

Mrs D. Uncle, if you prefer it. It doesn't affect the value of the exchange. The point is that I don't use firearms. I'm not musical, myself; but they tell me it's a good one, and one must have a piano, and at anyrate the *case* looks well. Then there's the side-board in the dining-room; Chippendale every bit of it, you know—only cost me a rare edition of Cato.

Miss F. Shall we say Plato, Mrs Delamere?

Mrs D. Plato, certainly; if you prefer it, but that doesn't affect the value of the exchange does it? The point is, I don't read Greek. Then there's that clock—Louis XIV. in Buhl's best style, you know—got it in exchange for some hideous Chinese idols that disgraced the chimney-piece.

Miss F. Shall we say that disgrace our present civilization, Mrs Delamere?

Mrs D. (impatiently). If you prefer it, but that doesn't affect the value of the exchange. The point is that Chinese idols get on my

nerves. And so on, and so on. I've furnished nearly the whole of my rooms in this way.

Miss F. A decidedly new departure in the study of domestic economy, Mrs Delamere. May I suggest "Exchange no robbery" as a suitable title for your little volume?

Mrs D. It hardly covers the whole ground.

Miss F. I see. The field is too vast, Mrs Delamere. What do you say to "Ask! ask! ask!" (*Mrs D. shakes her head.*) Or: "Give! give! give!"

Mrs D. I think that you hardly perceive the end that I have in view.

Miss F. Pardon me, Mrs Delamere. I apprehend that you have two ends in view and that your object is to make them meet.

Mrs D. But you musn't run away with the idea that I'm economical myself, because I'm not a bit, you know.

Miss F. There is no reason that you should be, Mrs Delamere. I apprehend that I should not have accepted the position of companion to you if there had been.

Mrs D. But it's my great idea to try and prove a grand principle which may be of use to those who are obliged to be economical. It's unselfish, isn't it?

Miss F. Decidedly, Mrs Delamere.

Mrs D. And unworldly, isn't it?

Miss F. Undoubtedly, Mrs Delamere.

Mrs D. And philanthropic?

Miss F. Wonderfully so, Mrs Delamere.

Mrs D. It's so nice to feel of some use to one's poor fellow creatures, and to be able to contribute some scheme to the general fund.

Miss F. Shall we say some fund to the general scheme, Mrs Delamere, — General Booth's scheme?

Mrs D. Nothing is anything now-a-days without a scheme.

Miss F. So true, Mrs Delamere. And shall we say nobody is anybody without a scheme?

Mrs D. (*meditatively*). I'm quite convinced there is a great deal of undeveloped science in advertisement, properly understood, and when I publish my little book people will be forced to admit that there really *is* something in my scheme! They may call me mad,—do you think they *will* call me mad, Miss Fitkins?

Miss F. Impossible, Mrs Delamere.

Mrs D. I shouldn't mind if they did.

Miss F. Though just within the bounds of probability of course, Mrs Delamere.

Mrs D. (*taking up newspaper*). I wonder if anyone will answer my to-day's advertisements. (*Reads.*) "I want some real old lace, a green parrot in exchange." "I have some water-colour sketches to exchange for a watch-bracelet." "If anyone has a real sable muff I will give in exchange two dressed dolls." All signed "Cherryblossom," and who knows who "Cherryblossom" is?

Miss F. Really, Mrs Delamere, I don't

think you will find a better title for your invaluable look than the one I suggested just now: Exchange no robbery.

Mrs D. It doesn't cover the ground. There are the losses you see.

Miss F. I am surprised to hear you, Mrs Delamere. I had apprehended that the scheme was one of absolute gain.

Mrs D. So it is, so it is.

Miss F. Yet you speak of losses.

Mrs D. (*impatently*). Yes, to be sure; things lost, of course, for which advertisement is necessary. (*Sound of voices outside.*) Dear me! I wonder what all that talking is about. Miss Fitkins, kindly go and see, will you.

Miss F. Certainly, Mrs Delamere. (*Miss Fitkins goes to E. C. and returns.*) A person asking to see you, Mrs Delamere.

Mrs D. A person? What sort of a person? Man or woman?

Miss F. I apprehend that a *person* is invariably a woman, Mrs Delamere, though we may safely lay it down that a woman, of course, is not invariably a person.

Mrs D. Tell the person to call again, I'm busy. (*Miss F. going.*) What does she want?

Miss F. She seems to be connected with lace, Mrs Delamere.

Mrs D. Lace? Then she's come to answer the advertisement! Tell her to come in, tell her to come in by all means. (*Miss F. goes again to E. C.*) I knew it, I was

positive of it! Lace versus parrot! Isn't it delightful! (*Enter Elderly Lady with Miss Fitkins.*) Good morning—good morning. As I have not had the pleasure of meeting you before may I assume that your visit is in answer to my advertisement.

Elderly Lady. (*interrogatively*). Cherry-blossom?

Mrs D. Cherryblossom.

E. L. Old lace wanted?

Mrs D. Old lace wanted.

E. L. Green parrot in exchange?

Mrs D. Green parrot in exchange.

E. L. Lots of lace—old woman—no use to me—love parrots, adore parrots, dote on parrots. There's lace, where's bird?

Mrs D. Miss Fitkins. (*Signs to Miss F. who places the parrot in cage on the table. Mrs D. examines the lace.*) Exquisite!

E. L. (*examining parrot*). Beautiful!

Mrs D. Priceless!

E. L. Splendid!

Mrs D. It will be the envy of all my friends!

E. L. It will be the plague of all my neighbours!

Mrs D. So charmingly yellow!

E. L. Gloriously green!

Mrs D. (*surprised*). Green? Yellow.

E. L. Green. Look at it. (*Points to parrot.*)

Mrs D. Oh! *you* mean the parrot. (*Examining lace as before.*) Hundreds and hundreds of years old!

E. L. (*examining parrot as before*). Hundreds of years old?

Mrs D. Why yes, I should say so.

E. L. Don't tell me it's hundreds of years old!

Mrs D. But that's the very thing. Look at it. (*Points to lace.*)

E. L. Oh! *you* mean the lace. (*Parrot chuckles.*) Excellent imitation!

Mrs D. Imitation?

E. L. Why yes; what else d'you call it?

Mrs D. Imitation! Don't tell me it's imitation!

E. L. But that's the very thing. Listen to it. (*Points to parrot.*)

Mrs D. Oh! *you* mean the parrot. (*Examining lace as before.*) Well, one doesn't get such a bargain every day in the week. My friends positively won't believe me. They'll die of disgust, won't it be delightful? Really it is too exquisite. It ought to be under a glass case.

E. L. (*examining parrot as before*). Time enough for that when it's stuffed. Does very well in a cage.

Mrs D. (*as before*). Of real historical value, I haven't a doubt. Oh! what a story it might tell if only it could speak. (*Holding up lace and apostrophizing it.*) I wonder what you were in a previous state of existence?

E. L. (*apostrophizing parrot*). What you were in a previous state of existence? A

chattering, flighty, feather-headed woman, I shouldn't wonder. But someone's heart was true to Poll, even then, I daresay. Someone's heart is true to Poll now. (*Looks significantly at Mrs D.*) Good morning, Mrs Delamere. Remember, parrots apart, fine feathers don't always make fine birds. Yet that whatever happens *his* heart is true to—

Mrs D. Miss Fitkins? ^o

Miss F. Certainly, Mrs Delamere.

Mrs D. The lady would like a cab called for the parrot.

Miss F. Certainly, Mrs Delamere.

E. L. Stop, Parrot shall call his own cab. (*Goes towards E. C. cage in hand. At the door, turns, and says impressively.*) Remember, Mrs Delamere, whatever happens you will find that his heart is true to—

Mrs D. Poll, yes, I know. I'm so glad to hear it. I'm sure Poll will have a most happy home. Thanks so much. Good-morning. (*Aside.*) I think she must be mad! (*Elderly lady goes out followed by Miss Fitkins.*) Well, certainly, I'm most awfully lucky! I really must add another paragraph to my book. (*Seats herself at the table and writes:*) "Even valuable articles—such as—old lace—may be had—in this comparatively—inex-pen-sive—Why, I declare! here's a letter I've never opened all the morning! ^o From Papa too! (*Reads.*) "My dear Gwendolen a word in season we are told is good." (So are oysters

and pheasants; but they've a close season—whereas a word seems to be in season all the year round!) “And I am sure you will listen patiently to the advice of your old father and accept my age and the position in which I stand towards yourself as excuse for what in anyone else might be deemed impertinence.” (It's the usual excuse for prosiness and personalities anyhow.) “I am old-fashioned enough to maintain that women are not formed for independence—that in fact—um—um.” (Oh bother all this!) “In plain words I should like to see you married again.”—(I daresay!)—“And it has caused me real trouble that you have not received Percy Penrhyn.”—(Percy Penrhyn indeed!)—“Percy Penrhyn's attentions in the way I had hoped you would.”—(Dear old Dad! what is he dreaming of!)—“Good-looking”—(Never could see it.)—“Well off”—(I'm very well off as I am.)—“um—um—um—solitary life—fate of flirts—um—um. Hoping you are well this cold weather. Your affectionate Father.” Oh dear! will Papa never leave off troubling himself about my future? Does he imagine I'm independent? What's Fitkins here for? Why, I'm dependent on Fitkins for everything. That really was rather a good title she suggested for my book. “Exchange no robbery.” Percy Penrhyn indeed! Poor dear old Dad! He means well—oh, of course,—that's the worst of it. I never trained up my parent in the way he should go—and this is the

result. He's a well-meaning person. I never mean anything. I flirt with Percy, of course—it amuses me—but I don't *mean* anything. (*Rising and coming forward.*) No! If Percy Penrhyn really cares for me, let him do something great to show it. I will throw down my glove into the lion's den, and he shall go down like Daniel to pick it up—(*Jemmy Fitzbrass appears in the doorway E. C., but disguised so that she does not recognise him.*)

Fitz. Will you permit me to come in, Madam?

Mrs D. (*startled*). Come in? Yes—no—I'm not sure. Where's Miss Fitkins?

Fitz. I haven't the smallest idea. (*Advances.*) Have I the honour of addressing "Cherry-blossom," who advertises for a watch-bracelet?

Mrs D. Oh yes! in exchange for some water-colour sketches—

Fitz. Precisely so, Madam, and I have ventured to call in the hope—

Mrs D. But I think Miss Fitkins had better be present. I'm dependent on Fitkins for everything—

Fitz. Indeed. I thought Fitkins was dependent on you. (*Mrs D. stares ; he goes on rapidly.*) So, as you are the lady who offers some water-colour sketches in exchange for a watch-bracelet, I have ventured to call in the hope of concluding a satisfactory bargain. Allow me, Madam. (*Presents her with a watch-bracelet.*)

Mrs D. How sweet! Just the very thing! If it had been made for me it couldn't have

been better! are you negotiating the bargain for some poor person?

Fitz. (aside). Well, I don't know if poor Percy would like to be called a poor person! (*Aloud.*) Oh dear no, Madam. By profession I am a speculator; by nature and taste an artist; by necessity, turning nature and taste to account, a worker in gold. Nineteenth century Benvenuto Cellini and consequently an anachronism. When I meet with a lady of your original way of thinking, my heart leaps for joy. It is by you, and such as you, that anachronisms, such as I, live. (*Bows.*) Mr Charles Chattaway at your service, Madam and I am proud to make your acquaintance.

Mrs D. (aside). Dosen't quite know his place, I think. (*Aloud.*) This really is most beautifully designed.

Fitz. One of many trifles, Madam; designed in odd and idle moments—when the tea is standing—when I cannot sleep—when my wife is putting on her bonnet. But my true love is for the divine art of painting, and I fully appreciate real art treasures such as these. (*Points to sketches.*)

Mrs D. How awfully funny? Now to me these are trifles and this an art treasure.

Fitz. Then, Madam, we are even. Permit me to invest you with this trifle. (*Aside.*) Percy's words were "clasp it on her wrist," and by George! I will. It's a neat little wrist. (*He clasps the bracelet and surveys it with exaggerated*

admiration holding Mrs D.'s hand.) Excuse the feelings of an artist, Madam! excuse the feelings of an artist!—but anything more perfectly adapted than this bracelet to a wrist so exquisitely turned could not well be imagined.

Mrs D. (angrily extricating her hand). Mr Chatterpie—I did not ask your opinion on my wrist as an artist or otherwise. (*Aside.*) Insufferable bore! I wish he'd take the drawings and be off.

Fitz. No offence meant, Madam, none taken, I trust. Would you permit me, Madam, to glance over this invaluable collection of sketches. (*Takes up sketches.*) Much obliged. Take a seat? Thank you with pleasure. (*Sits.*)

Mrs D. (aside). Impertinent wretch! I never asked him to sit.

Fitz. (examining sketches critically). Good—very good, indeed. A leetle more depth of colouring required here. Foreground excellent. A slight wash of cobalt would improve this distance—throw it back. Would you allow me, Madam, to make a suggestion?

Mrs D. (with an annoyed air). There's not the smallest necessity. I've taken your bracelet without any suggestions, you know, and a bargain's a bargain.

Fitz. But if I might just give a hint.

Mrs D. If you would take a hint it would be more to the point.

Fitz. In the cause of art, you know, in the cause of art. If you would only take a chair,

Madam, you would be so much better able to see what I am anxious to point out.

Mrs D. (much offended.) Mr—Chatter—box—I am not accustomed to be invited to sit in my own house. If I stand, it is because I prefer standing. As, however, you seem to have made yourself so thoroughly at home, pray don't let me disturb you on any account; but I have other things to attend to. I wish you good morning. (*Exit Mrs D., L. E.*)

Fitz. (alone.) Well, hang it! When Percy Penrhyn sent me on this fool's errand, I didn't think I should have got so much fun out of the whole business. There's no one like you, Fitzbrass, my boy, for doing a thing of this sort. My get-up is perfect, and she didn't recognise me a bit. (*Looks at himself in the glass and removes his wig; at the same moment enter Miss Fitkins, L. E., as if looking for something on the floor.*) Now I suppose I must carry these art treasures to poor lovesick Percy. Good heavens! what awful daubs they are! Is it a law of nature that a lover must be a fool? (*Turns and perceives Miss F.*) Dear Miss Fitkins! How d'ye do?

Miss F. Mr Fitzbrass!

Fitz. Lost something?

Miss F. So discerning of you, Mr Fitzbrass! Mrs Delamere, I am sorry to say, has lost—

Fitz. Her head?

Miss F. Penetrating as usual, Mr Fitzbrass! But there is something else just at present,

shall we say, on the carpet. Mrs Delamere has lost her—

Fitz. Her temper?

Miss F. Penetrating again, Mr Fitzbrass, but—

Fitz. Dear Miss Fitkins! If Mrs Delamere's head or Mrs Delamere's temper could be found and restored to her, I would go down on my knees to look for them. Mrs Delamere with no head and less temper must be such a bore for you!

Miss F. Facetious as usual, Mr Fitzbrass. Mrs Delamere's losses do not end with her head or her temper. She has lost—

Fitz. Not her heart, surely?

Miss F. There I am not so certain, Mr Fitzbrass; but she has lost, what may be—shall we say?—very near her heart. She has lost a ring. Four eyes are better than two, Mr Fitzbrass; would you mind taking that side of the room, while I take this? (*They search round different ways.*)

Fitz. What kind of a ring?

Miss F. Her wedding ring, Mr Fitzbrass. Awkward, is it not?

Fitz. Deuced! How long has she lost it?

Miss F. A day or so,—possibly longer.

Fitz. Haven't you searched here before?

Miss F. Twenty times, Mr Fitzbrass, but the fact is, it has got on her nerves.

Fitz. Ah! then you'll never find it. There's nothing so difficult to get at as the nerves.

Miss F. And when Mrs Delamere is put out

she insists on a fresh search being made for the ring.

Fitz. Then she's put out at present? What's put her out? (*They meet in their search face to face in the middle of the room.*)

Miss F. Shall we say the offensive manners of a vulgar stranger who pushed himself into her presence on the pretext of answering an advertisement. But she lays herself open to misconstruction.

Fitz. (aside). If it comes to that, so have I.

Miss F. By the way, I don't think she knows you are here.

Fitz. I don't think she does.

Miss F. Shall I go and tell her?

Fitz. Not on any account. I'm *not* here. Dear Miss Fitkins, don't breathe it; *I* am the vulgar stranger with the offensive manners.

Miss F. Not you, Mr Fitzbrass!

Fitz. *I* am Charles Chattaway. *I* brought her a watch-bracelet.

Miss F. What for?

Fitz. *Who* for? might be more to the point. *I* criticised her drawings—

Miss F. You didn't?

Fitz. I did. *I* took a chair—

Miss F. Why?

Fitz. Can't explain. Secret's not mine. Only don't breathe it. (*Aside.*) I think poor Percy might like to know about that lost ring. (*Aloud.*) You'll promise me, dear Miss Fitkins— not a breath!

Miss F. Certainly, Mr Fitzbrass; only why not a breath?

Fitz. (at the door). Might take the wind out of somebody's sails. You understand. Good-bye.
(Exit, E. C., with sketches.)

Miss F. I apprehend a mystery and it goes without saying that a man is behind it all. There's a man behind the piano. There's a man behind the sideboard. That old lace masks a man—

(Enter Mrs D., L. E.).

Mrs D. Oh! He *has* gone. I never had to do with such a presumptuous idiot in my life. Not found my lost ring, I suppose, Miss Fitkins?

Miss F. Sorry to say not, Mrs Delamere.

Mrs D. What am I do?

Miss F. (archly). Get another, I should say, Mrs Delamere.

Mrs D. That's easier said than done.

Miss F. For some ladies, I daresay, Mrs Delamere, but hardly for you.

Mrs D. But how? Through whom?

Miss F. Through a gentleman, I apprehend, Mrs Delamere.

Mrs D. But I could never think of proposing—

Miss F. No; but he might. You have advertised it, of course?

Mrs D. Of course. And offered a reward.

Miss F. And the terms of the reward?

Mrs D. I didn't offer any particular reward; I only put "shall be rewarded."

Miss F. Very wise, Mrs Delamere. The reward would depend so much on the individual who replaced the ring, would it not? Did I understand you to say you might have lost it in church?

Mrs D. In church, very likely.

Miss F. Then you will very likely find it in church, Mrs Delamere.

Mrs D. That is as it may be. In the meantime kindly go and search once more in my bedroom. (*Voices outside.*)

Miss F. Certainly, Mrs Delamere. (*At the door.*) Somebody else to see you.

Mrs D. Whoever it is can come in. (*Exit Miss F. E. C.*) Really these continued excitements are almost more than I can bear! Talk of the excitements of the Stock Exchange! This beats it all! (*Enter Percy Penrhyn disguised as an old man. He carries a large box which he deposits at the back of the stage. Retains a muff-box in his hand.*)

Percy. Hem! Hem!

Mrs D. Oh! Good morning. (*Aside.*) Now what in the name of fortune can *he* want?

Percy (*in a feigned voice*). I beg pardon if I intrude, but I think you have advertised for a muff, ma'am.

Mrs D. Oh yes! a real sable muff. (*Aside.*) Now who would ever have thought that this old fellow was—the muff!

Percy. Perhaps you may think it strange that one of my age—and—appearance should under-

stand what is requisite—hem—and commendable in a muff—but you will find it very good fur—very good fur indeed.

Mrs D. Oh! it's beautiful fur. (*Aside.*) How in the world can I offer two dressed dolls to an old fellow like this? (*Aloud.*) Oh! it's lovely, perfectly lovely—but I don't think you could quite have understood the advertisement. I offered in exchange two dressed dolls. Do you—I mean—did *you* mean—that is, will you—

Percy. It seems a little incongruous, I admit, but you see I make it a business to answer advertisements, and I risk the consequences. Hem! Hem!

Mrs D. You have grandchildren—I daresay?

Percy. (*aside.*) Happy thought! (*Aloud.*) Yes, I have grand children, of all ages—and sizes—and shapes—a large assortment on hand—(*Aside.*) What the dickens am I to say next? (*Aloud.*) I am sure you will find it very good fur—very good fur indeed. In fact I make it a business to answer all advertisements,—and I run all the risks. (*Takes the dolls.*)

Mrs D. (*aside.*) If he makes it a business of course he expects to be paid. Now I wouldn't mind paying if he'd get me back my wedding ring. (*Aloud.*) You say you make it a business. Do you find it answer?

Percy. Perfectly. I answer—it answers—like an echo. I rarely fail. I have negotiated exchanges of all kinds; I have recovered lost articles of great value.

Mrs. D. (nervously). I have lost something of great value—to me at least. In fact it's my wedding-ring, and it's very awkward, as I have been married, to be without my wedding-ring, you know. I don't know what people will think. Do you think you could recover that for me? I wouldn't mind *what* price I paid!

Percy. (earnestly). Wouldn't you? I haven't a doubt I can, and if before to-morrow I have not brought you back your ring I will give you leave to laugh at me for an impostor and to treat me accordingly!

Mrs D. (aside). How very earnest he becomes over a matter of business. (*Aloud.*) You are very wonderful. Is nothing too hard for you?

Percy. Nothing! If you advertise "lost," I will recover—even a wedding-ring! If you advertise "wanted," I would procure the desired article, even though it might be a husband!

Mrs D. (laughing). Supposing I wanted anything so useless as a husband, how would this sound? "I want a Husband. I will give my Liberty in exchange." Ha! Ha!

Percy. (very earnestly). Do you? Will you?

Mrs D. (aside). I don't like his manner. Where's Miss Fitkins, I wonder?

Percy. (as before). And can you suppose I would not answer *that* advertisement on the spot? (*Partly pulls off his beard and bald head.*

Mrs D. screams.) Gwendolen! Mrs Delamere! Don't you know me?

Mrs D. Percy! Mr Penrhyn! Good Heavens! What is the meaning of this strange—this unaccountable—I am totally at a loss to understand your extraordinary conduct. Explain yourself, Mr Penrhyn!

Percy. (on one knee, still clasping the dolls). Mrs Delamere, won't you forgive me? Won't you make the exchange to which you referred just now?

Mrs D. No, Mr Penrhyn, I won't. I said "supposing" and "if," and I spoke simply in jest. I have not advertised for a husband yet. When I do, it will be time enough for you to answer the advertisement. Now, pray get up and don't make yourself ridiculous. You have behaved in a most ungentlemanlike way. You have forced yourself into my presence and taken a mean advantage. Yes, Sir, I repeat it, a mean advantage——

Percy. But let me explain—

Mrs D. I won't let you explain. Nothing can excuse your unwarrantable behaviour in thrusting yourself into my presence. The best thing you can do is to go, and I beg you will do so at once.

Percy. But if you only knew—

Mrs D. I do know. I wish I didn't. Am I to be compelled to leave the room first? Because if you don't, I shall.

Percy. (with great passion). No, I will not

annoy you by my presence a moment longer. I will only say that if you will look in that box, (*points to box*) you will find proofs of a stronger devotion than is shown by most men—a constant desire to gratify your slightest wish at any cost! (*Rushes out E. C., hugging the dolls, his beard and bald head all awry.*)

Mrs D. (marching up and down). Insinuating, unscrupulous, horrid, unprincipled wretch. Forcing himself into my presence in that mean, unmanly way! And this is the man my father would like me to marry! ..Man did I say? Serpent! Devotion, such as is shown by few other men—a constant desire to gratify my slightest wish!—the language of an unmitigated serpent? (*Nearly tumbles over the box.*) Bother the box! What business has he to leave a box here? What did he mean by telling me to look in that box? Of course I don't care, he's mad—he must be mad—but still I should just like to see. (*Pulls the box forward and opens it.*) What are these? Sketches! Humph! the artist hasn't much notion of colour. Why, they're not—yes, they are—no, they're not—yes, they *are*. They're my own that chattering idiot took in exchange for the bracelet, and here are the old Greek books, and the hideous Chinese idols, and—good gracious—firearms! (*Screams and drops a pistol.*) The late Mr Delamere's great-aunt's pistols! Now, what does it all mean? How have they all got together like this? (*Suddenly*

springing up.) Oh! I know what it means! Percy has answered all my advertisements himself! He has made me presents of all these beautiful things and taken my rubbish himself. And there have I been writing a book about my scheme, and there's no scheme at all in it. I shall tear the whole thing up. (*Tears up MS. and throws it on the floor.*) And it *was* very nice and devoted of him; and there are *not* many men who would do as much; and he really is not at all bad-looking; and of course it was only natural he should come and see how I took it; and the sable muff and all! And I've sent him away, and I wouldn't listen, and he can revenge himself by making a good story out of the whole thing, and I shall be laughed at all over London, and oh, Percy! Percy! I wish you'd come back and we'd keep the secret of my scheme between us! (*Begins to cry. Enter Miss Fitkins, E.C.*) Oh! there's Miss Fitkins! I musn't let her see me like this. (*Exit Mrs D., L. E.*)

Miss F. Humph! Mrs Delamere avoiding my scrutiny. Mrs Delamere's drawing-room carpet scattered with promiscuous articles; whether I may breathe it or not, there is something in the wind. (*Percy enters quietly, E. C.*) Mrs Delamere is negotiating another exchange—the exchange of my companionship for that of—(*perceives Percy*) Mr Penrhyn!

Percy. If she only would exchange your companionship for mine! (*Aside.*) She has

opened the box, I see. (*Aloud.*) Has Mrs Delamere gone out?

Miss F. Gone out? Yes, Mr Penrhyn. Gone out of her mind, I should say.

Percy. Not so bad as that, I hope. I've found her lost ring. Do you think she would be very angry at seeing me again?

Miss F. Impossible to say, Mr Penrhyn. I heard Mrs Delamere express a wish that you would return.

Percy. Oh, she did. (*Aside.*) Then I shall have another try with the ring. (*Aloud.*) Would you mind letting Mrs Delamere know that I am here. She needn't see me, of course, if she'd rather not.

Miss F. Certainly, Mr Penrhyn. (*Exit Miss F., L. E.*)

Percy. (alone). So! she wished me back again. So far, so good. But I can't for the life of me resist teasing her a little to pay her out for the shameful way in which she has treated me all along. (*Enter Mrs D. Percy takes no notice.*)

Mrs D. What is the matter, Mr Penrhyn? (*Pauses.*) Has anything happened to put you out? (*Pauses.*) Percy—are you dumb?

Percy. (aside). It's "Percy" this time.

Mrs D. I'm afraid the way I treated you just now may have made you angry.

Percy. (aside). Oh, you're beginning to think so!

Mrs D. Isn't it true, Percy?

Percy. (turning towards her). Yes ; since you oblige me to speak, it is ; and I am come to tell you that you shall not enjoy the pleasure of triumphing over me. You shall not boast that you have driven me away. I shall have great difficulty in conquering my love for you, but I *shall* conquer it ; and I would rather cut my throat than be guilty of the weakness of returning again to see you. (*Going.*)

Mrs D. But I want to tell you that the real reason—(*Following him.*)

Percy. I'd rather not hear it. (*Going.*)

Mrs D. But I assure you—

Percy. I tell you—no—

Mrs D. But listen !

Percy. I don't want to listen.

Mrs D. But Percy—

Percy. No !

Mrs D. Stop, do !

Percy. No, I tell you.

Mrs D. Half-a-Minute.

Percy. (at the door). I can't.

Mrs D. (at the door). Just two words.

Percy. There's nothing more to be said.

Mrs D. (coming back). Very well. If you won't listen—go.

Percy. (following). Let's hear then ?

Mrs D. (as before). Don't choose to tell you now.

Percy. (as before). Tell me—

Mrs D. No ; shan't say anything.

Percy. Please do !

Mrs D. No.

Percy. I entreat you!

Mrs D. No, I tell you.

Percy. Gwendolen!

Mrs D. Don't call me Gwendolen.

Percy. For pity's sake!

Mrs D. I won't.

Percy. (*turning and going.*) Very well. You have seen me for the last time. I shall go far, far away—to die of grief and love (*going.*)

Mrs D. (*following.*) Percy!

Percy. Oh, don't call me Percy, please.

Mrs D. Where are you going?

Percy. Where I told you.

Mrs D. Going to die?

Percy. Yes—to die—since you wish it.

Mrs D. I? I wish you to die?

Percy. Well, if you didn't, you'd give me the explanation I ask for.

Mrs D. Give me yours first. That box of things justifies me in asking. Afterwards you shall have mine.

Percy. I have little to explain. Cast down by your uncertain behaviour I thought I would do something great to prove my devotion. I knew your scheme.

Mrs D. Don't talk about my scheme. I hate it!

Percy. And I watched for your signature—"Cherryblossom." It was I who sent the piano—and the Chippendale sideboard—

Mrs D. You did!

Percy. I got my Aunt who is very fond of me and of parrots to bring you the lace—

Mrs D. Your Aunt!

Percy. And I sent my friend Jemmy Fitzbrass—

Mrs D. Mr Fitzbrass!

Percy. Yes, and there perhaps I was to blame—but when I came myself with the muff I hardly thought you would have been so *very* angry at the little deception I had practised. But of course you were quite justified.

Mrs D. No I wasn't—and I've been a great goose—and I treated you shamefully—and I'm very sorry—and I want to know if you'll forgive me?

Percy. (aside). Oh hang it, you know! I can't stand this sort of thing from her! *(Aloud.)* Me? I've nothing to forgive. I came to ask *your* forgiveness, and to see if I couldn't buy my pardon by bringing you *this*. *(Holds up her ring.)*

Mrs D. My wedding ring! Oh, I never expected that, and I don't deserve it!

Percy. You'll grant me the promised reward, won't you?

Mrs D. There wasn't any particular reward promised.

Percy. Then may I be allowed to claim one?

Mrs D. Yes.

Percy. May I claim the privilege of replacing the ring on your finger? May I,

Gwendolen? I may call you Gwendolen now, mayn't I?

Mrs D. Yes, if you like, Percy. I *will* call you Percy now. (*A pause.*) And you'll promise me never to say a single word again about that silly scheme of mine.

Percy. Just as you like about that, dearest, but I shall bless it to my dying day. It was my only chance of success.

Mrs D. But I made such exchanges! And Miss Fitkins knows. (*Enter Miss Fitkins.*)

Percy. Ah!—here she comes! Miss Fitkins, Mrs Delamere says that you know—

Miss F. (*significantly.*) I apprehend I do, Mr Penrhyn, and I have come to inform Mrs Delamere that I have taken a leaf out of her book.

Mrs D. (*pointing to torn MS. on the floor.*) You're welcome to as many as you like. My scheme has fallen to the ground.

Miss F. You misapprehend me, Mrs Delamere. Shall we say, I have followed your lead. I have advertised for a husband.

Mrs D. I never advertised for a husband.

Miss F. Not intentionally perhaps, Mrs Delamere. I did. I put an advertisement in the *Matrimonial Herald*

Mrs D. Well,—I hope you may find it answer.

Miss F. (*triumphantly.*) It *has* answered, Mrs Delamere. There it is. (*Holds up a photograph.*)

Mrs D. Oh—really? Then—I am to congratulate you? Dear Miss Fitkins, I'm sure I wish you every happiness. (*Shakes hands with Miss F.*)

Miss F. Thank you, Mrs Delamere. The same to you—and many of them.

Percy. (*taking Mrs D.'s hands in his.*) You won't mind my saying, just this once,—will you—

Mrs D. I think I'd rather you didn't—

Percy. Just this once—and I'm sure Miss Fitkins will agree with me—that this really has been the Science of Advertisement—

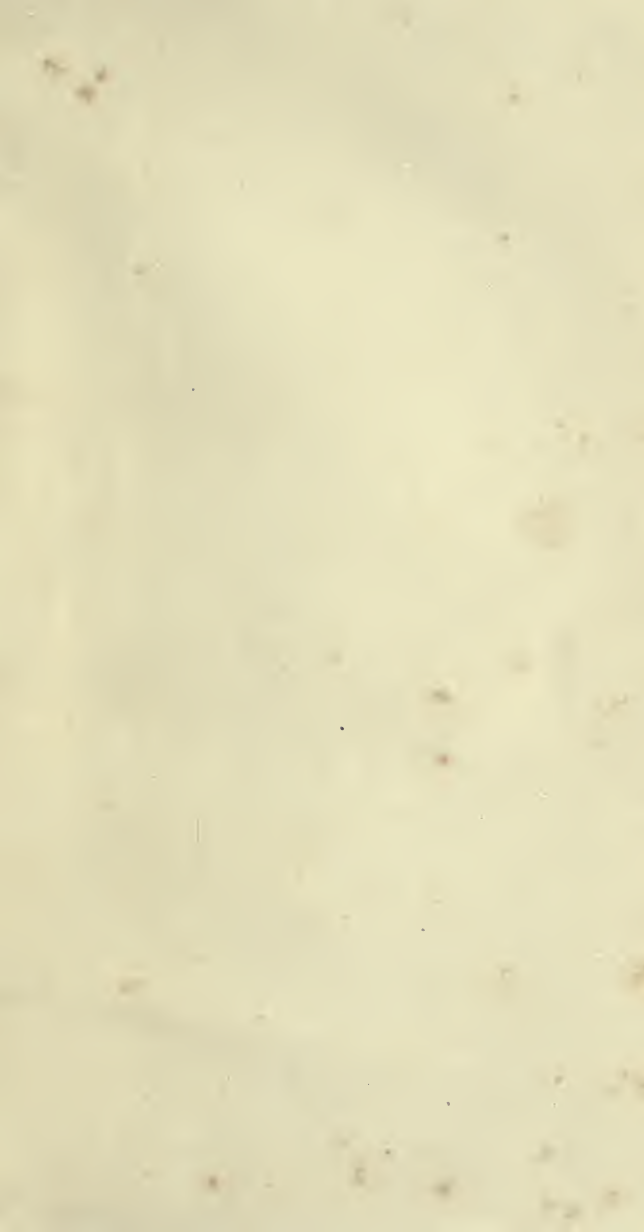
All. Properly understood.

Curtain.

MRS D.

PERCY.

MISS F.





YA 08751

