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TIT FOR TAT,

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IN ONE SCENE,

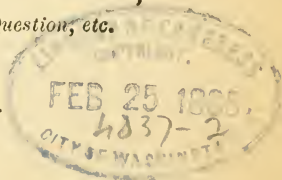
BY

IDA M. BUXTON,

— AUTHOR OF —

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TIT FOR TAT.

CHARACTERS.

LENA MORLEY,..... *A Young Lady*
RALPH DERWENT,..... *Her Lover*
TOM, *A Colored Servant*

TIME—THE PRESENT.

COSTUMES.—Modern. The hunchback is easily made by placing a folded shawl upon the shoulders, under the coat.

TIME OF PLAYING—TWENTY MINUTES.

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TIT FOR TAT.

SCENE I.—Interior of a sitting-room. Lena seated at table with letter in her hand.

Lena. How provoking and ridiculous it all is to be sure! Poor Aunt Mary, as much as I loved you I can but feel, that you were guilty of great injustice, when you bequeathed your fortune to us upon the condition that we marry each other. Of what were you thinking? The idea of expecting two strangers, as we are, to fall desperately in love at first sight, and get married merely to gratify one of your whims! Far be it from me to disrespect the wishes of the dead, but in this case I will rebel. Ah, a bright thought! I remember Aunt Mary once said, that this Ralph Derwent was extremely fastidious; now, I'll disguise myself and he shall know me as a coarse, dandy, country lass. I will do my best to horrify him, and if I can't make him break the conditions of the will, that is, refuse to marry me, then the money is mine, and I can live here quietly and happily. But the letter says he is to arrive at ten and it is nearly that time now, so I must array myself for his reception.

Enter Tom, L.

Tom. Hab yer been lookin' fur me, Miss Lena?

Lena. Yes, this morning I received a letter from Mr. Derwent, saying he would arrive here at ten o'clock; now you must make preparations for his reception.

Tom. He's a comin', eh? I allus knowed he'd tote himself roun' soon as de Missus was dead, tinks he's gwine to git all her prosperity, mabbe.

Lena. Property, you mean Tom.

Tom. It's all jes' de same; dere ain't no use talkin' to dis yere nigger, he knows all 'bout dat derangement, an' he's jes' bilin' to de ears wid mad, to see dis yer scala-nag, what nebber come near de Missus when she's sick, to see him comin' long now 'cos he tinks he kin fill his pockets wid money what don't b'long to him; I'se jes' bilin' ober, I am.

Lena. There is no necessity for you to boil too much. Perhaps we had better not denounce him until we see him.

Tom. 'Spose when he comes dere'll be a mighty big weddin'. He am a lucky sunflower dat feller am, what's got an aunt to do his courtin' fer him, it's mos' as good as habin' a mudder-in-law to do de bossin'. O ya-as, I'd a ben married years ago, if I'd only had somebody to ax de gal.

TIT FOR TAT.

Lena. Perhaps Mr. Derwent isn't quite so sure of a wife and a fortune as it appears. Now Tom, whatever happens to-day you are not to act the least bit surprised, now remember. *(exit, L.)*

Tom. Can't act s'prised! Dat's a mighty queer way to tell a feller. What she tinks I'se gwine to do? Not act s'prised! I'll bet de best banjo I ebber' owned, dat she's up to some ob her tectolum gimeraeks or odder. But golly, ef I don't fly roun' dat room nebber'll be ready; de old feller orter to bunk in de barn, dat's good enuf fer him. *(exit, L.)*

Enter Ralph, R.

Ralph. The same old place, not much change since I rambled over these lands when a mere boy. Ah! I have seen much in that time, travelled through many countries, and now to be summoned home on this peremptory notice. Poor Aunt Mary, I always thought she was the most eccentric mortal under the sun, but I never dreamed she would carry her oddity to this extent. *(taking letter from his pocket and examining it)* Here the lawyer informs me that she has left her whole fortune to myself and a niece of her husband, one Lena Morley, upon the condition that we marry. Egad! Then a fellow isn't to have the privilege of choosing his own wife, it's preposterous! I won't humor the silly wish, but, ha! ha! I have it! a capital idea! I'll disguise myself in the most horrible manner possible and appear before Miss Lena, and if I don't make her break the will my name isn't Ralph Derwent. The girl I don't want and won't have, but the money will be very acceptable, so here goes. Miss Lena, beware! *(exit, L.)*

Enter Lena, R., dressed in a most gaudy and unbecoming manner.

Lena. How will I do? Am I not charming? Won't he open his aristocratic eyes, when he sees the girl his aunt wished him to marry? This is quite romantic, I declare. Now let me see, I must throw aside every vestige of refinement, assume the very rudest manner, summon the whole vocabulary of slang to my aid, and make believe that I am extremely anxious to wed him. Ah, Mr. Ralph Derwent, you little know what is in store for you. *(pause a moment thoughtfully)* No, I am not doing wrong to deceive him in this manner: he has plenty of money while I am a penniless orphan; he never cared for Aunt Mary, while I watched at her bedside, willing to do her every bidding; it is not right that he should take all from me.

Enter Tom, R.

Tom. [*Stares at Lena for a moment, then bursts into laughter.*]

Lena. Well, Tom, you seem to be enjoying yourself, what is the matter?

Tom. Gollies, Miss Lena, what's de matter? Dats jes' what I wants ter know. Dis nigger nebber seed sich style as dat nohow, it squashes all de fashins I eber see: s'pose dat's your weddin' gown.

Lena. Didn't I tell you not to be surprised at any thing?

Tom. O gollies, I ain't s'prised nohow, but yer nebber done tole me not to laff. Guess Massa Derwent'll be mashed, when he sees you dis way. I'd jes' like ter mash him, I would.

Lena. Mr. Derwent has arrived of course?

Tom. Ya-as, he's in his room prinkin' hisself to death I s'pose.

Lena. Is he good lookin'?

Tom. Dere, dat's what you wimen allus axes fust. I dunno, 'cos I nebber seed him, he went right to his room an' won't let nobody in, right high toned, I kalkilate.

Lena. You may tell him I am ready to receive him. *(exit, L.*

Tom. *(busying himself dusting the chairs and arranging the furniture)* Golly, dat gal's up to some tantrum or odder; bet a muskeeter she gwine to play some o' her gimcracks on Massa Derwent; hope she will, golly if I don't. *(dusting chair)* I jes' wish I was one o'dem Roosianists what knows how to disemfacture dem bombazines, I'd jes' fisticate one under dis chair an' gib Massa Derwent an invite to sot hisself down, den gollies, I'd jes touch off dat yere bombazine an he'd be blowed to kingdom come in free minutes an' a half, den Miss Lena'd hold everyting, an' dis yere nigger nebber'd hab to tote hisself off somewhere else.

Enter Ralph dressed as a hunchback; wears green patch over one eye, coughs violently.

Ralph. Well Sambo, what are you doing?

Tom. Gollies, if here ain't de bery debbil himself!

Ralph. Why don't you answer, you stupid fellow?

Tom. I'se mindin' my own bizness dat's what I'se doin', an' I'd jes' like ter know what you am here fer, you old skar-crow; what circus am you a side show fer?

Ralph. Well, you are impudence personified.

Tom. Dat's a lie, I ain't neither; I'm a dispectable colored gemmen, an' ef you don't 'splain yerself in 'bout two minutes, I'll mash bof of yer eyes, I ain't gwine to hab any tramps roun' in dis yere region.

Ralph. Well Sambo—

Tom. My name ain't Sambo, I tell yer.

Ralph. What is it then?

Tom. Dat's fur you to find out; I was allus brung up to be preserved before strangers, s'pose you'd like to git my name to put down to a thousand dollar check, wouldn't yer? Yer don't play dat on dis yere chile, no sah?

Ralph. I've a mind to kick you down stairs you black rascal.

Tom. Yer jes' try it an' yer'll hab to wear a patch ober dat odder eye o' yourn; ef yer don't git out o' here yer'll git dissected in no time; if its col' vittles you's after, why don't you gwine inter de kitchen an' not come palanderin' roun' de parlor abusifyin' decent folks—git out o' dis I say.

Enter Lena, R.

Lena. What is the matter Tom?

Tom. I'se tryin' to keep peace an' drib dis yere rascal out ob de house.

Ralph. Madam, I am Mr. Derwent, nephew of the deceased mistress of this house.

Lena. *(aside)* Good heavens, this can't be Mr. Derwent! I would rather be a rag-picker all my days, than marry such a hideous man, but I'll carry out the farce now I've begun.

TIT FOR TAT.

Tom. Gollies, you am Mr. Derwent, am you? I'd sooner tink you was de debbil.

Ralph. May I inquire if Miss Lena Morley is at home?

Lena. (*assumes a coarse, rude tone and manner, and shakes her head at Tom who begins to laugh as soon as she speaks*) Val now I kinder reckon she is. So yoo're Mr. Derwent be ye? (*offering her hand*) Here, give us your paw old feller. (*Ralph draws back disdainfully*) What, you won't shake hands? Guess ye don't know who I be do ye? I'm Lena Morley.

Ralph. (*aside*) Great heavens! Did Aunt Mary expect me to marry this harum-scarum, rude, uncultivated heathen? I would rather relinquish every cent of the property, than to live with her half an hour.

Tom. (*aside*) Guess he's gwine to faint; don't tink he'll fall in lub wid Miss Lena. O, gollies, I knowed she was up to someting, but what am she dribin' at?

Lena. What ye thinkin' on? Nothin' very sweet I reckon judgin' from your looks; most fellers would look kinder jolly, if they was goin' to marry a good lookin' gal like me.

Ralph. (*aside*) I should think they would. (*to Lena*) Who said anything about getting married?

Lena. Why don't you know? You've got to marry me sure pop, an' I'm mighty glad on it, 'cos I've ben tryin' to ketch a feller for a long time, but somehow or other, I never could hitch onto one.

Ralph. (*aside*) I don't wonder that you couldn't.

Tom. (*aside*) What'll dat gal do nex'? (*to Lena*) Say, Miss Lena, ef you's gwine to marry for beauty you's foted it this time, he's a stunner dat's a fac'; got a lump on his back big enuf for nine camels, an' den such lubly eyes!

Ralph. You impudent scoundrel!

Lena. (*crossly*) There Tom, hold your tongue and go down stairs an' stay there till I holler for ye, do ye hear?

Tom. (*aside*) I believe she's gone teetotelum crazy; I'll go jes' far enuff so's I kin listen, dis conversation is very entertaining.

(*Tom hides at side scene*)

Lena. Val now, I'm rale glad you've come along; you ain't hansom, that's a fact, but then a gal might do wus, I s'pose. (*Ralph coughs violently*) My stars what a cough you've got; you won't live long with that graveyard hack hangin' onto ye.

Ralph. Well, Miss Lena, you are the most impertinent young lady I ever saw.

Lena. Seein' as you've tramped all over the world I s'pose I must be kind of a curiosity, ain't I? But look a here, when do you intend to git spliced? I'm ready any time you are. Say now, don't you think 'twould be better to put a pink patch over that eye, I don't tink green is very becoming to your complexion do you?

Ralph. There Miss, I have heard enoug of your impertinence; will retire to my room. Will you meet me here in an hour, and we will settle this disagreeable will affair?

Lena. Yes, of course I will; anything to oblige you.

(*exit Ralph, R.*)

Oh dear, what have I done! How dreadful to make fun of one so unfortunate. What happiness can all this money bring to him, a hunchback as he is. How thankful I am that nature gave me health and strength. Ought I to covet his money? I am heartily

ashamed of my unladylike conduct and will do all in my power in atonement. This very moment I'll write him a letter confessing my rudeness and asking pardon.

Tom. (*comes from his hiding-place*) I seen de whole show, had a perserved seat in de bargain. Dat was fine, no mistake; Miss Lena am a daisy, she am, dat's a fac'. Golly didn't his dander riz, thought he'd eat her sure as Dixey; dat yere nose ob his'n circumlated 'bout free feet in de air; guess he nebber seed sech a genteel lady afore, how she did talk and holler, wasn't she a fine picter, bust a button off my vest laffin' at her. Jes' like ter know what's a gwine ter be done next, guess I'll find out.

Enter Ralph, R., with note in his hand.

Ralph. Well here's a pretty scrape truly! I'm caught in my own trap. How laughable that both of us should try the same plan and how prettily she apologizes—this dainty note forms a strong contrast to her recent appearance. I wonder what she is really like, and shall I fancy her? Imagine her astonishment when she sees me in my own attire. How comical I must have looked in that disguise. Some one comes.

Enter Tom, L.

—It's that black rascal, I wonder if he'll know me.

Tom. Tunderation, if here ain't anudder feller prowlin' round sure's you're born. Say, look here you feller, who am you?

Ralph. (*aside*) He don't know me. (*to Tom*) Have you never seen me before Tom?

Tom. (*walks all around him, staring at him from head to foot*) Wal boss, don't tink I eber seed you, but tinks I seed you're picter once, gollies I'se sure I did, it was jes' like you, 'twas in de Rogue's Gallery in New York—I'se sure 'twas you.

Ralph. (*aside*) The stupid fool! (*aloud*) No, you are mistaken Tom, it was somewhere else you saw me.

Tom. (*thinking a moment*) I'se got it now boss, I'se got it, you am de feller what was disrested for stealing Zeke Jones' hens, dat's who you am, I knows for sure.

Ralph. No, you stupid fellow, I was never in Zeke Jones' hen yard in my life.

Tom. Dat's a fac', you didn't get inside 'cos Zeke cotched yer jes' as yer was gwine to pull out de ole yaller hen, an'—

Ralph. I believe you are the most ignorant man I ever saw.

Enter Lena, L.

—Miss Lena!

Lena. Sir, you have the advantage, I expected to meet Mr. Derwent here.

Tom. Shouldn't tink you'd want ter see him again Miss Lena; he am de lubliest man dat eber looked like a monkey; if I'se you I'd put him on de shelf for a ornament.

Lena. Tom, you may leave the room, when you are needed I will call you.

Tom. (aside) Gollies, I'se got ter take a back seat in dis show.

(exit, R.)

Lena. Now, sir, I will listen to you.

Ralph. You say you expected to meet Mr. Derwent, nor shall you be disappointed, he is before you.

Lena. Sir?

Ralph. I received your note releasing me from the engagement my aunt made for us, and apologizing for your part in our little farce, now I, too, have a confession to make similar to your own. My aunt's wishes provoked me and I came to you in disguise, you know the rest. Now Ralph Derwent comes to you as he really is, and asks your forgiveness, is it given?

Lena. Most freely sir. *(aside)* I am not at all inclined to break the conditions of the will now.

Ralph. (aside) How charming she is! I hope she will be as ready to marry me now as she was a few moments ago. *(to Lena)* Now I refuse to release you from the conditions of Aunt Mary's will and claim the fulfilment of her wishes, not from any mercenary motives, but because I have experienced what is know as "love at first sight." Do I plead in vain!

Lena. (giving him her hand) I am inclined to think aunt's whim as we have called it, a very nice one.

Ralph. (laughingly) And are you still anxious to 'ketch a feller?'

Lena. O, sir, please don't repeat those foolish words. Can you ever forgive me?

Ralph. Do I look angry? We have only played an excellent game of TIT FOR TAT.

Ames' Plays---Continued.


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ACT FIRST.—Coyotes in camp, the Cottrell emigrant train, Prairie Spirit causes surprise and fear, “a thousand dollars for the solving of the mystery,” attack by the Indians, Skipp in a fix, Black Eagle's vow, compact of Devine and Budgett, the prairie on fire. Home of the Cottrells, Budgett laying his plans, a little rifle practice, Budgett departs for the Coyote camp, “to-night the attack shall be made,” Skipp skips in, phrenology discussed, Bridgett's dander is up, “tell me I'm lousy will ye? examination of Patrick's head, “he hangs his banner on the outer walls,” engagement of Minnie and Fynes, the Prairie Spirit appears, the camp attacked, “for life and liberty.”

ACT SECOND.—Prisoners, Fynes buried alive, “he will be a kind of headstone to the Cottrell settlement,” Devine swears to marry Minnie, her scorn, Fynes left alone to die, Skipp safe and a skipping, thinks the buried man a ghost, rescue of Fynes, appearance of the Prairie Spirit, Skipp offers to examine her head, “well she is the first woman I ever saw who wouldn't wag her jaw—a good woman to marry,” Black Eagle on the trail, a mop solo, capture of Devine, torture at the stake, the Spirit appears, on the trail, a father's grief, “light dawus,” Skipp lectures on phrenology, examination of heads, Skipp recognized as a former minister, he is detained to marry Devine to Minnie, “I am an American—in detaining me you insult the American flag.”

ACT THIRD.—Minnie's despair, the traitor, hope raised to be banished, foiled, the forced marriage, “when Daniel Devine comes for his intended bride he shall find a bride of death,” the strange letter, hope again, trouble in the Coyote camp, a duel between Budgett and Devine, death of Budgett, Skipp tries to skip performing the marriage ceremony between Devine and Minnie, “according to the laws of phrenology you are not mated to wed together,” the Prairie Spirit, divorced by death, story of the Prairie Spirit, Black Eagle revenged, “all peace now—Great Spirit smile on the *Emigrant's Daughter*.”

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