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TER	COOR (Maria)		•	Miss Margaret Murray.
THE	PARLOURMAID	(Ada)		Miss Maude Buchanan.
THE	KITCHENMAID	(Emily)		Miss Ethel Ross.

SCENE.—The Kitchen. TIME.—Evening, during the serving of dinner.

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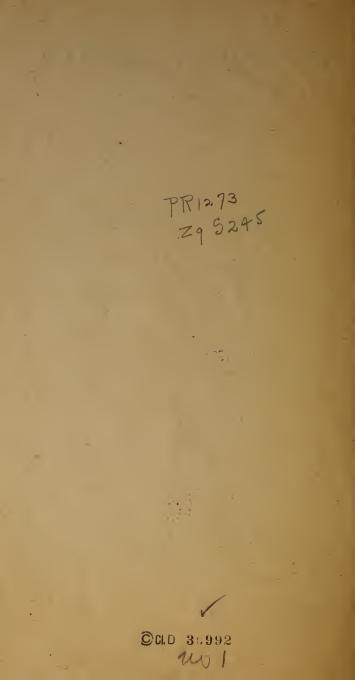


A DRAMATIC EPISODE

By FREDERIC SARGENT

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NEW YORK SAMUEL FRENCH Publisher 28-30 WEST 38th STREET London SAMUEL FRENCH LTD 26 Southampton Street STRAND



Produced at the Haymarket Theatre, London, in front of "Bunty Pulls the String," on March 19, 1912, with the following cast :---

MARK GRAFFHAM (a rising Barrister). . . Mr. Jerrold Robertshaw. MARY GRAFFHAM (his wife) Miss Vera Coburn. NOEL FROBISHER (their friend) . . . Mr. Owen Nares.

They are all in evening dress.

SCENE.—Drawing-room in Mr. and Mrs. Graffham's House in St. John's Wood.



SCENE.—Drawing-room in Mr. and Mrs. Graffham's house in St. John's Wood. It adjoins the diningroom, has a door R. and a curtained entrance C. Also there is a window L.C. The room is furnished in more or less the usual manner, but no special furniture is essential. It is just a pretty dainty drawing-room.

TIME.—Evening, just after dinner.

The Curtain rises on an empty stage. Voices are heard off L.

(MARY GRAFFHAM enters L.C. Moves over to R.C., followed by FROBISHER.)

MARY. How hot the dining-room was; I felt stifled.

GRAFFHAM (off stage). I'll be with you and Mary directly, Frobisher. I want to glance over a few notes for to-morrow.

FROBISHER (opening door up L.C. and entering with MARY). Right'o!

GRAFFHAM (off). Confound the servants! Why can't they leave things alone? Where are those papers?

MARY (*petulantly*). Oh, bother the papers.

(FROBISHER closes door.)

Can't he forget the case for half an hour?

FROBISHER. I thought dinner would never end. He may be here in a minute, and I have so much to say! MARY. Secrets?

FROBISHER (coming over to her). Yes, secrets I can keep no longer. Mary—

MARY. No, don't be foolish, please. (Comes down to below settee.)

FROBISHER (*bitterly*, *coming down*). How you can let me suffer so? You draw me to you with every fibre of your being, and yet, always—always you drive me back.

MARY. It is the only possible thing for me to do. FROBISHER. It is cruel. It is wicked of you. We were meant for each other.

MARY. Please stop this love-making, Noel. (*Moving down.*) Do you realize that my husband is in that room? (*Points to door* L.C.)

FROBISHER. Ah, you are afraid? (Steps to her.) MARY. Yes, of course I am. When you are in this mood I am very much afraid.

FROBISHER. You love me, and you are afraid.

MARY. You take a good deal for granted.

FROBISHER (steps to her). You do love me, Mary. MARY. Noel, if any one but you were to speak to me like this I should be very angry. As it is I ought to be angry. I am angry.

FROBISHER. Anything is better than indifference.

MARY. But I am not indifferent. I like you ever so much. You are our best friend—Mark's and mine.

FROBISHER. There can be no question of friendship now. (*Takes her hand.*) I love you, love you, love you.

MARY (stopping her ears). I won't listen. (Crosses to L.C.)

FROBISHER. But you shall listen (following her). Don't you see that the friendship which was so sweet has grown unbearable. I suffer torture when I think that another man has the right to your lips and not I. Your friendship is my curse, Mary.

MARY. Oh, stop, Noel. (Moves up to between chair and fire.) I am sorry----

FROBISHER. Sorry ! (Steps to her.) I want your love.

MARY. Do you want to ruin my life?

FROBISHER. No, no. But Mark is dead to everything but his ambition. You and I—— (Moves over to her.)

MARY. I will not listen to this. (Moves up to above table.) If you can't remember that you are my husband's friend you had better go away.

FROBISHER (pause). Do you mean that?

MARY. Yes, I do. (Petulantly moves over to L. end of settee.)

FROBISHER. I'll take you at your word : after tonight I shall never see you again.

MARY (startled). Noel !

FROBISHER. I have been offered a post abroad in Brazil. I shall take it.

(Pause.)

MARY (*passionately*). No, no, you must not go. FROBISHER (*moving up* C.). You confess then that you love me?

MARY. No, I don't. I don't know. I may not but—but Brazil is so far away. (Moves down R.)

FROBISHER (moves down to her). Then give me something more than this barren friendship. Make my life bearable. (Takes her hand.) Give me some inducement......

(MARY hears MARK GRAFFHAM approaching.)

MARY. Sh—sh, for God's sake stop.

(FROBISHER moves down L. MARY moves to R.C.)

(Enter MARK GRAFFHAM R. He is a big, middleaged man of interesting appearance, though not handsome. Pleasant and brusque in manner.)

GRAFFHAM (cheerfully). Well, I found them.

FROBISHER. Good. (Crosses to L.C.)

GRAFFHAM. But I say, Mary. I do wish you wouldn't let anybody touch my papers. (*Takes her* arm and moves over to L. with her.) This incessant tidying makes any method impossible.

MARY. I'm sorry, Mark.

GRAFFHAM (advancing with box of cigars). Have a cigar, Frobisher?

FROBISHER. Thanks. (Takes cigar, etc.)

GRAFFHAM. Cigarette, Mary?

MARY. No, I won't smoke, Mark. (She sits on stool L.)

GRAFFHAM (lighting pipe). It's a good world, Frobisher, isn't it, and I'm feeling very happy tonight. And so I ought to be. (Puffs his pipe. Sitting.) I'm a lucky man, Frobisher; lucky to have such a wife and such a friend. Yes. We're such good pals, the three of us. (He stretches out a hand to MARY.) But I owe you two an apology. I've just realized that during the whole of dinner I talked nothing but cases—cases, cases all the time. A barrister who is coming on is apt to be a bit of a bore. But I know you'll forgive me, both of you. Besides, there is some excuse for me. I haven't told you my best bit of news.

MARY. What is it, Mark?

FROBISHER. Fire away, old fellow.

GRAFFHAM. Well, you know I'm Junior Counsel for the prosecution in this big Divorce Case tomorrow. Well, my leader, Sir James Martell, was a bit seedy to-day, and there's a chance—just a chance, mind you—that I may be called in to take his place; what do you think of that?

FROBISHER. Ripping-fine.

MARY. Oh, Mark dear, I shall be so glad for your sake.

GRAFFHAM. For my sake? For both our sakes, my dear. They'll ring me up to-night if I'm wanted. By Jove, I'm on tenterhooks.

FROBISHER. I have something to tell you, Graffham.

GRAFFHAM (laughs). Well, it certainly is your turn, my boy.

FROBISHER. It is, that perhaps I shall never see you again.

GRAFFHAM (pause). What's that?

FROBISHER. A good post has been offered me in Brazil. I haven't yet quite decided. (He looks across at MARY.) But I rather think I shall take it. GRAFFHAM (whistles). You don't mean it?

FROBISHER. I do.

GRAFFHAM. I say that's bad news, Mary. (Puts pipe in pocket.) What do you say to that? Brazil! MARY. I am sorry.

GRAFFHAM. Sorry, why the word expresses nothing. It will mean the breaking up of everything. (Rises and goes over to c.)

FROBISHER. Just that.

GRAFFHAM. Good heavens, man, we can't let you go. Mary, we must persuade him not to go. MARY (*faintly*). Yes, of course.

FROBISHER (looking at her). I'm afraid I must.

GRAFFHAM. Nonsense, we can't spare you. To think that our pleasant little evenings must come to an end. Preposterous. Come, Mary, you must use that persuasive tongue of your's.

MARY. I'm afraid it would not be of any use.

GRAFFHAM. My dear, you don't know your own powers.

FROBISHER (recklessly). The fact is I have no control over the *circumstances* that are driving me away.

GRAFFHAM. Have you been getting into a scrape. FROBISHER. No, but in going away I shall avoid

a scrape.

GRAFFHAM. Oho, Oho! So that's the way the wind blows. Cherchez.

MARY (rises). Mark !

GRAFFHAM. It's all right, Mary. (Moves over to

FROBISHER). Frobisher and I quite understand each other. (Aside to FROBISHER.) A woman?

FROBISHER. Yes.

GRAFFHAM. Some impediment? FROBISHER. Married. GRAFFHAM. Married! That's the very devil! (Nodding towards MARY, who is standing apart.) Does Mary know?

FROBISHER. Yes, I told her.

GRAFFHAM (slowly). It is - the - very - devil! But, of course, that alters everything. You're doing the right thing, Frobisher, the plucky thing. You'll have to go.

FROBISHER. You think so ? GRAFFHAM. We shall be sorry to lose you, by Gad, but if you stayed it would be the devil's own business, not a doubt. Yes, yes, you must go to Brazil, my boy, and good luck go with you. It won't be for ever, though. In six months you will have forgotten all about it, and then you can come home. Mary! (Moves over to c. below table.)

MARY. Yes?

GRAFFHAM. We shall have to let him go. He has been telling me the circumstances. It's the only thing for him to do-to go away.

MARY. Why?

GRAFFHAM. Eh?

MARY. I think it weak to run away from a woman -weak and cruel. (Moves down L.)

GRAFFHAM (moves down to her). My dear, you're a child. (Puts his arm round her.) You don't understand these things as well as I do. Whichever way you look at it these illicit love affairs always end in disaster. The only thing to do is to cut them right out at the beginning. If you don't your position becomes so complicated that whatever you decide to do later is sure to be wrong. Look at this very case I have on hand now. My God, Frobisher, you'd be sorry one day if you didn't go. (Moves to c.)

FROBISHER. I suppose I should—one day. GRAFFHAM. Then, there's always the other man to consider, you know—the man in possession, I mean. Why I can imagine if— (*Pause, he looks at* MARY. Sits in arm-chair L.C.) Suppose now, Frobisher, suppose if, instead of being our very good friend, you were in love with my wife-with Mary.

(All laugh.)

MARY. Please, Mark, spare me.

(FROBISHER laughs.)

GRAFFHAM. Let us just imagine it for a moment. Suppose now that Mary were the lady who is making it necessary for you to go to Brazil. You'd have me to reckon with, you know.

FROBISHER (jocularly). I suppose I should.

(Be ready for telephone bell.)

GRAFFHAM (meditatively). I wonder what I'd do, if I found it out.

FROBISHER. Well, what would you do? (Sits settee R.C., facing GRAFFHAM.)

MARY (turning to GRAFFHAM). What a ridiculous, disagreeable subject.

GRAFFHAM. But it interests me, my dear Mary, professionally. Besides, it's an object lesson for Frobisher. It'll help him to come to a decision. (Rises, moves to above table.) Let us construct the situation.

(The telephone bell rings.)

Hello, there they are. (Drinks whisky and soda.) I'm as nervous as a cat. I wonder if the chance of my life has come at last. I won't be five minutes, Frobisher. (*Jovially*, at door.) I'll tell you what I'd do when I come back.

(Exit L.C.)

(FROBISHER rises, moves up to door L.C.)

MARY. Do you think he has any idea-

FROBISHER. Good heavens, no. He's quite blind. MARY. Don't go to Brazil, Noel, don't go.

FROBISHER (moves over to her). You have only to say the word-and I won't. But I can't keep up this pitiful pretence. It drives me mad. And now that I know you love me-----

MARY. Oh, for God's sake, don't say that. (Drops

into arm-chair.) I cannot listen. FROBISHER. You shall listen. (Bends over her, takes her hand.) I love you, I have always loved you. MARY. I thought you were my friend.

FROBISHER. That's not true. You knew I loved you. You wanted me to love you (moves round to L. of her), but you didn't want to give me anything more than friendship. You were lonely, neglected, you wanted a friend, and I filled the gap. Well, that sort of thing doesn't work. Some one has got to pay. I'm paying now. But I refuse to go on paying any longer, and so I'm going away.

MARY. I cannot bear it.

FROBISHER. You're paying too, because you've found that friendship isn't enough. Because you love me, Mary, just as I love you. (She sobs.) Oh, my darling, let us be happy together. Give yourself to me ? Mark need never know—a little care, a little discretion.

(MARY rises, moves away to R.C.)

MARY. Oh, my God, why did you say that? You have degraded me.

FROBISHER (follows her over). I love you so.

MARY. You don't understand.* You would never have said such a thing if you had understood. Don't you realize that I care for my husband?

FROBISHER. I know that you have affection.

MARY. More than that-I love Mark. I would

not hurt him for the world. But you brought something into my life that wasn't there. I have been lonely, I confess it. I was glad to have your friendship from the first. Mark is so busy, he hasn't time. And then, it isn't so much when you are away, but when you are here—when you are with me; do you understand me, Noel? It is a most hypnotic, your influence, I seem unable to resist. I cannot bear to think of your going to Brazil. (Moves over to c., holds out her hand.) Stay and be my friend. FROBISHER. We can't speak of friendship now.

FROBISHER. We can't speak of friendship now. It must be all or nothing. Let me teach you what love can be.

MARY. Sh-Mark will be coming back.

FROBISHER. No, no. Not yet. I'm starving for your love. Won't you give it to me? Mary, do you ask me to stay, *now*?

(They are both so absorbed that they do not hear MARK return. He stands a moment at door and realizes the situation from their facial expression. MARY, as though mesmerized, inclines her head.)

MARY. Yes, Noel.

(FROBISHER leans forward and kisses her on the lips. GRAFFHAM controls himself and retires, quietly closing door.)

Oh, Noel, what have you done? (Moves over to R. of settee and sinks on it.

FROBISHER. You are mine now, wherever you may go and whatever you may do, you are mine, all mine.

(He takes her passionately in his arms, but she breaks away from him.)

MARY (rising). No, no, I understand now. (Moves over to C.) I belong to my husband; I have been—— FROBISHER (coming towards her). Mary, darling. MARY. Don't touch me. (Crosses L.C.) Oh, don't -Oh, don't! (Moves over to settee, sinks on it sobbing.) Oh, whatever shall I do?

(MARK is heard outside. MARY composes herself.)

FROBISHER. Take care. (Moves over to c.) (To GRAFFHAM as he enters.) Well, Graffham. What's the news.

(Enter GRAFFHAM C. very jovially. He does not betray in any way that he has seen or overheard anything. Closes door, and stands there for a couple of seconds regarding them both.)

MARY. Tell us, Mark, what has happened? GRAFFHAM. As I was saying, Frobisher (*playfully*) (Comes down to above table. FROBISHER goes to fire.) before I went to the telephone. Suppose that I had discovered that you had fallen in love with Mary instead of the other married woman.

(FROBISHER looks up, rather startled.)

FROBISHER. Ha, ha, rather good.

MARY. Mark, please.

GRAFFHAM. My dear, the subject has become enormously interesting to me. I want to discover what would be my attitude under such circumstances. For example, the love-making might be entirely innocent. It might be the confession of a man who is going away with his honour unstained. Just as Frobisher here proposes to rush off to Brazil. Just so. It might be innocent and unreciprocated. If I discovered that you had fallen in love with Mary, who naturally would be unable to return the sentiment, and that you were going to Brazil in sheer misery of mind, you would have my deepest sympathy, my dear Frobisher.

FROBISHER (endeavouring to enter into the spirit of the game). Thank you. (Moves L.)

(MARY is silent.)

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GRAFFHAM. But perhaps the lady could reciprocate. Forgive me if I appear brutal—does the lady reciprocate, Frobisher?

FROBISHER (speaking with difficulty). I think she does.

GRAFFHAM. Well, well, there's another contingency. (Sits in arm-chair.) The passion is returned. It is still quite innocent, you know, but returned What would I do now if you and Mary loved each other devotedly, and I were the unfortunate bar to your happiness? What should I do—blow my brains out? No, I don't think so, eh? Self-sacrifice? No. You should still go to Brazil, my boy. I would trust to the healing hand of time.

FROBISHER (nervously). Quite so. (Moves up and over to c.)

MARY (who has recovered from her first fear, cross to fire L). Mark, dear, isn't all this rather foolish?

GRAFFHAM. On the contrary, *I* think it quite instructive. (*Rises.*) Have a whisky and soda, Frobisher.

FROBISHER. No, thank you. (Goes over to R. of table.)

MARY. But I want to know about Sir James Will he appear to-morrow?

GRAFFHAM. Eh? That's all right. That can wait. (Drinks, puts glass down. Comes down c. reflectively.) Now we come to a more complicated view of the question.

(MARY and FROBISHER start.)

I am not boring you, am I? Supposing, Frobisher, that you and Mary decided to indulge your guilty passion. (*Gets* L. *of table.*)

FROBISHER. Steady on, Graffham.

MARY. Mark, you are going too far. (Moves up to above table.) You are not in the Divorce Court now, you know.

GRAFFHAM. Well, we never know our luck, do we. My dear children, for the time being you are only *puppets* on which to hang my *arguments*. Besides, I want to show Frobisher beyond a doubt that he is doing the right thing in going to Brazil.

(FROBISHER turns away).

GRAFFHAM. Well, of course, you could take her with you.

MARY and FROBISHER (together). What?

GRAFFHAM. I say you could take her with you. You could both bury yourselves in Brazil for the rest of your lives, for you couldn't very well come back unless I were to get a divorce. No, no. I shouldn't get a divorce, and you would get heartily sick of each other. Your children, if you had any, would be illegitimate, and you would be socially ostracized everywhere except in Brazil. And even in Brazil, if it leaked out—and I think I should take care that it did leak out—and then, probably, I should come to Brazil one day and shoot you both.

(MARY starts.)

But that is only a possibility. I don't know. Anyhow, you wouldn't have a particularly pleasant time. MARY. I am going. (Moves up to door. GRAFF-

HAM stops her.)

GRAFFHAM. One moment, Mary. My case is nearly over, and you may be of help to us. There is only one alternative, Frobisher. Suppose you shirked the idea of banishment to Brazil and you decided to stay here and continue the—er—friendship. What would happen then? Instead of coming to this house as you do, the decent sound friend of both of us, let us imagine that you came here to make love to my wife, to cast a spell upon her, to win her heart away from me. MARY (coming down to L. of GRAFFHAM). No, no, don't say any more, Mark. It is horrid.

GRAFFHAM. Let us imagine all this and think what follows.

MARY. No, no.

GRAFFHAM. Well, you succeed, you win her loveor something you both call love-and instead of fighting it down, instead of recoiling at the first suggestion of dishonour, slowly you draw closer and closer together till your lips meet in a long, long kiss. (*Rises* and moves over to C.)

(MARY and FROBISHER stand spellbound.)

And so the intrigue begins. (Moves to c.) You can easily picture it. The furtive secret meetings—the sordid lies—the cheapness—the beastliness of it all. Gradually the atmosphere becomes tainted—something is wrong—nothing has been discovered—but there is a *feeling* that something is wrong—it is in the air. I am irritable, restless. I don't know what to think. I trust you, I *still trust* you both—and yet a cloud, a vague suspicion, just a vapour on the glass that clears, but returns again and again, till the glass is quite, quite clouded. Then, one day I find out ! I see you—in each other's arms—heart to heart and *lip* to *lip* ! My God, what would I do ?

MARY (faintly; breaks down). Stop, stop! I cannot bear any more.

GRAFFHAM. What would I do? Construct the situation. The embrace is over, you have fallen apart, and here I stand. I have seen and *know*, What would I do? What natural activity on my part's suggests itself to either of you?

(Both are silent for a moment, then MARY speaks faintly.)

MARY (moving a step forward). Would you kill me, Mark?

GRAFFHAM (very gently). No, my child. I would

sorrow for you that a wretched madness should have power to tear down the fabric of an affection that has grown stronger with the years. There would be only grief in my heart for you, Mary. But (turns to FROBISHER) for the wretched thing that had crept into my life to blight and destroy it there would be no softness-for the masked hypocrite who had stolen into my home to befoul its purity I would have no pity, no mercy. All the manhood there is in me would rise against him, when I looked into his damnable eyes. His penalty would be swift ; my fingers would be about his throat, and my bullet in his heart. (Works down R.C.) A couple of seconds and it would be all over. Just a step (he moves forward)-a little struggle (with a quick movement he forces FROBISHER on his knees)-and then- (Pulls a pipe-case out of his pocket and levels it at FROBISHER.)

MARY (wrought up to a hysterical pitch; rushes over to catch his arm). Mark! Don't! There has been no wrong done. I swear it. It was a moment's madness, that was all. I understand now. I love you, Mark, and you only. Don't shoot him.

GRAFFHAM. My dear, you have capped the situation beautifully. (Slowly takes pipe out of case and puts the pipe in his mouth; drops his grasp on FRO-BISHER, who rises.) I am sorry if I was rough, Frobisher, but my imagination is so vivid. I was carried away. I'm sure, my dear fellow, you realize that you are doing the only thing possible in going to Brazil. FROBISHER. I think—you're right. I've been

a---- Good-bye, Mrs. Graffham.

MARY. Good-bye. FROBISHER. Good-bye.

(Be ready with door slam.)

GRAFFHAM. Good-bye, old man. Let us know when your boat sails. We'll come and see you off. Anyway, I've got that brief. FROBISHER. Oh, I am glad. Good night. (Exit.) GRAFFHAM. Great chance, isn't it? MARY. Mark!

GRAFFHAM. My dear, do you know we worked up " that little situation very well. I think we have missed our vocations.

MARY. But, Mark, I must tell you that Mr. Frobisher-----

(GRAFFHAM puts her hands on his shoulders and looks into her eyes.)

GRAFFHAM. My dear Mary, my dear wife-----

(Door bang heard off L.)

Let Frobisher go to-----

CURTAIN.

Brazil !

Ŧ.

PROPERTY PLOT

- I. Green carpet, to cover stage.
- 2. Small table, with decanter of whisky

Syphon of soda. 2 Glasses on salver.

Silver cigar box, with cigars.

Silver cigarette box, with cigarettes. Matches and ash-tray.

- 3. Small Chippendale settee, with silk-covered cushion, and "The Queen."
- 4. Chippendale arm-chair (inlaid), velvet seat.
- 5. Large winged arm-chair (green plush).
- 6. Club fender. Fire alight.
- 7. Large table, with blue rose-bowl with roses. Three photograph frames.

Two books.

- 8. Bear-skin rug.
- 9. Small skin rug.
- 10. Writing bureau, with blotter, inkstand, pens, letters, etc., and one photograph frame.
- 11. Small Chippendale table (three drawers), with glass vase and flowers.
- 12. Louis stool.
- 13. Small Chippendale kidney table, with silver box, matches and ash-tray.
- 14. Single chairs (green leather seats).
- 15. Large Chippendale china cabinet, filled with old china and two blue vases on top.
- 16. Rug, outside door R.
- 17. Two photograph frames Three blue vases } on mantle.
- 18. Rug, outside door at back.
- 19. One pair of tapestry painted canvas curtains with valence.
- 20. Telephone bell off L. at back.
- 21. Door bang off R. at back.
- (S.) Gilt sconces, 2 electric candles with yellow silk sha des, alight (four iπ all).

For GRAFFHAM: Lawyer's brief, Official papers, Large pipe, in case,

LIGHTING PLOT

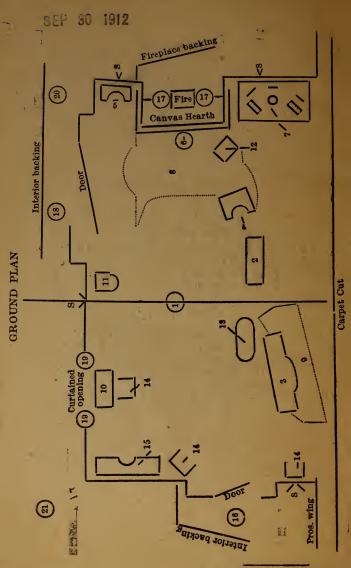
FLOAT.—Amber and White mixed, full up.
NO. I BATTEN.—Amber and White, Sections 2 and 3 full up.
LENGTHS.—One small length outside door at back, L.C. One small length outside door, down R. Four Sconces, alight.

LIME PLOT

P.S. PERCH.—One Light Amber and Frost in Top Lamp. One Medium Amber and Frost in Bottom Lamp.

O.P. PERCH.—One Light Amber and Frost in Top Lamp. One Medium Amber and Frost in Bottom Lamp.

FIREPLACE P.S.—One Dark Amber and One Light Pink and Frost.



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