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Putting It Up To Patty

—BY—

SEYMOUR S. TIBBALS



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Denver, Colo.

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Putting It Up To Patty

A Comedy Drama

By

SEYMOUR S. TIBBALS

Author of

"Getting Even With Reggie," "Somewhere in France,"
"Sergeant Jim of the U. S. Marines," etc.

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ELDRIDGE ENTERTAINMENT HOUSE

FRANKLIN, OHIO

DENVER, COLO.

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THE PLAYERS

WILLIAM WEBSTER, owner of Meadowbrook Farm

SETH WILSON, the nearest neighbor

JOHN MATTHEWS, a real fellow

DAN DICKSON, proprietor of the village drug store

HIRAM HUCKINS, Hulda's husband

PATRICIA WEBSTER, a farmer's daughter with a college
education

"AUNT MARY" WEBSTER, William's sister

MARY JANE STOKES, a village belle

HULDA HUCKINS, who looks after Hiram

DEC 30 1922

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no 1

Putting It Up To Patty

ACT I.

(The sitting room at Meadowbrook Farm. As this interior setting is used for the entire play it should be made as attractive as possible. Center door with doors right and left. Garden backing, to be seen through the center door. The room is furnished comfortably, but not elaborately. The action takes place in the home of a successful farmer and the atmosphere should be that of an American farm house. Piano or phonograph up-stage, center table with books and magazines. A few good pictures on the walls. Rocking chairs and a couch. The play opens on an afternoon early in June. Characters wear summer costumes throughout the play.)

(At rise of curtain, William Webster and Seth Wilson are discovered playing checkers, the board resting on a little stand placed well to the left of the stage and near footlights. Aunt Mary is knitting in rocking chair at right of table. For a few seconds there is complete silence, the men studying the checker board intently.)

WILLIAM—*(jumps two men, then leans back in his chair)* I guess that puts a crimp in you, Seth.

SETH—*(scratching his head)* It sure does, William. Don't see how I come to overlook that. *(Studies a bit, then makes move.)*

WILLIAM—*(jumps another man)* Better give up the idea of gettin' a king and look after your defenses.

SETH—I thought you'd jump the other way.

WILLIAM—Not much. It's a good thing, Seth, in a checker game, to know which way to jump.

SETH—A good thing to know in the game of life, too, William. Some folks make an awful mistake in jumpin' the wrong way—'specially when they jump into matrimony. (*Seth moves again.*)

WILLIAM—(*studies a moment, then moves*) Ain't thinkin' about gettin' married, are you?

SETH—(*jumps clear across the board, taking three men.*) Oh, ho! Thought I'd get your mind off the game. Gimme a king!

WILLIAM—You talk too much when you play checkers.

SETH—Ain't no rule against talkin' as I ever heard of. (*Pause.*) Your move.

WILLIAM—(*a little testily*) I know it's my move. Ain't no rule to make a fellow move till he gets ready, is there?

AUNT MARY—(*looks over her glasses and smiles*) Boys, boys!

WILLIAM—When I play checkers I keep my mind on the game. I like the feller I'm playin' with to do the same.

SETH—Never mind about me, William. Go ahead and move.

WILLIAM—I'll move when I get good and ready.

AUNT M.—Now, William. Seth must be getting the best of you.

WILLIAM—I can take care of myself, I reckon. (*Moves.*)

SETH—(*leans back and surveys board deliberately*) Got your fingers off that man? Sure you meant that move?

WILLIAM—I ain't askin' no favors, Seth. That's my move.

SETH—Then you're beat, William. Jest watch me. (*Jumps three men and again lands in the king row.*) Now what do ye know about that? Another king!

WILLIAM—(*laughs*) Serves me right for gettin' mad.

SETH—It's a big thing in a checker game to keep your temper.

WILLIAM—Same in the game of life, Seth.

AUNT MARY—About as important as knowing which way to jump, eh, William?

WILLIAM—(*sweeps men off board*) Pretty good lesson to learn. Keep cool and watch which way you jump. That's two games you won, Seth. (*Pushes back chair.*)

SETH—Ain't goin' to quit, are you?

WILLIAM—I know when I've got enough. But I'll play you again tomorrow. Got something I want to talk to you about.

SETH—Course I'll help you with your threshin', William. I always do, don't I?

WILLIAM—Tain't the threshin' that's worryin' me. It's Patty.

AUNT M.—(*looks up quickly*) Now, William, I wouldn't discuss Patty with anybody—not even Seth.

WILLIAM—Seth's my oldest and best friend.

AUNT M.—But he's never had any experience with girls.

SETH—Oh, ain't I? They nigh ruined me when I was a young man. Why, I loved 'em all fer a while, and then when I wanted to marry and settle down the gals I wanted I couldn't get and those I could get the devil wouldn't have.

AUNT M.—That's just it. You let your opportunity slip and became a confirmed old bachelor. A bachelor can't understand a girl like Patty.

SETH—Maybe so, and maybe not. Advice is cheap, you know, and most anybody can give it. What's the matter with Patty, William?

WILLIAM—Too much education, I say.

AUNT M.—Nonsense! You can't have too much education. Can you, Seth?

SETH—(*stacks up the checkers*) Some kinds, yes. This morbid stuff a girl picks up in the city is all wrong.

WILLIAM—That's what I say.

AUNT M.—Her college training has changed Patty's view of life. She is different from us. We don't understand her, that's all.

SETH—(*has stacked up a dozen checkers*) Something like this. Here's Patty's innocent childhood spent on the farm,—way down here on the bottom of this pile. Later she goes to town to high school and we pile on more education—that makes her life wobble a bit. (*Adds a few checkers to the stack.*) Then she goes away to the city to college. Here she learns to dance, (*puts on a checker*) to play bridge (*adds another*), goes to the theatre and joy-rides with the idle rich (*adds another*). She learns a new cult instead of the old-fashioned religion she was taught here at home. (*Adds another.*) Her foundations are undermined. She is told that farming is drudgery; that a man who works with his hands is a cad, that honest toil is a disgrace, that to be a wife, a housekeeper and a mother is slavery. She goes to the races and reads rotton books. The weakened foundation of her faith crumbles (*adds a few more checkers and the entire pile totters and falls*), and down comes the whole shebang. (*Pause.*) No, Aunt Mary, I may not know much about girls, but I know something about what the modern city life is doing to them.

WILLIAM—(*rises*) And that's just what has happened to my little girl, my poor little motherless Patty. I thought I was being good and kind to her. I thought I was giving her advantages, when all the time I was piling up foolishness to fall like Seth's pile of checkers.

AUNT M.—Now, don't get excited, William. Patty hasn't hurt herself or anybody else, yet. She'll come out all right. Patty comes of a good family. Blood will tell.

WILLIAM—But, does it? What do the newspapers say about the sons of the influential and rich old families? Only this morning I read—

(Patty is heard singing a few bars of one of the latest popular songs.)

AUNT M.—Hush! She is coming. Don't let her know we were discussing her. The worst thing that can happen to children is to discuss them before themselves.

(Enter Patty, C. D., wearing tennis costume and carrying racquet.)

PATTY—(tossing her hat on couch) Hello! Another terrible checker contest! Dad, I'm afraid you and Mr. Wilson will wear yourselves out with such dissipation. Don't you ever get tired of that silly old game? Why, I played that when I was a kid.

SETH—Why the Mr. Wilson, Patty?

PATTY—No particular reason, only Uncle Seth sounds so cheap and familiar, and you know you really are *not* my Uncle Seth.

SETH—Not really, Patty. But I've been Uncle Seth ever since you were old enough to lisp my name and put out your chubby fingers to be kissed. Maybe you'd rather I didn't call you Patty. Perhaps Miss Webster would suit you better.

PATTY—Oh, hardly that. You're spoofing me. But why not Patricia?

AUNT M.—What's spoofing?

WILLIAM—Some darned nonsense she picked up at that exclusive boarding school.

PATTY—Spoofing is an English term for making fun of or ridiculing. It's quite the proper word to use among smart folk, Aunt Mary.

SETH—(laughs) Oh, my little Patty. How you *have* grown up.

PATTY—I thought it was to be Patricia.

SETH—No, no. I'll call you Miss Webster.

WILLIAM—Now, look here, Patty. There is no sense in a girl acting the fool.

PATTY—Father, you forget yourself. You can't talk—

WILLIAM—(*starts toward her*) What does this mean? Who are you talking to?

PATTY—You mean to whom are you talking. Really, father, you must be more careful of your English. It humiliates me to have you so careless of your speech. (*Picks up hat and starts off.*)

WILLIAM—Patty!

PATTY—(*turns in door*) Yes, father. (*languidly.*)

WILLIAM—I—I want to have a long talk with you.

PATTY—Sorry, but I'm going to town to meet Mary Jane. The battery on my car needs attention, too. So, if I'm late, Aunt Mary, don't wait supper on me. (*She throws kiss at William.*) Bye-bye, Daddy. Don't get all nervous over your thrilling checker game with Mr. Wilson. (*Laughs as she goes out.*)

WILLIAM—(*goes to door and looks after her, then shakes head sadly, and comes down stage to behind Aunt Mary.*) My little Patty! It's no joke.

SETH—It's worse than I thought it was.

AUNT M.—I tell you she will get over it.

WILLIAM—(*drops into chair*) She's got to get over it. It's a crime to let a girl spoil her life like that.

AUNT M.—You don't understand her, William. She is only ambitious. She has seen what life means beyond the limits of the farm. You have sent her out into the world. You have shown her how people live in the circles of wealth and culture. You cannot blame her for wanting the ease and luxury of the rich men's daughters, with whom she has associated. Every girl wants to feather her nest.

WILLIAM—Feather her nest? For Heaven's sake, Mary, where did you get that idea? Isn't this old home nest good enough for our Patty? (*Drops into chair.*)

AUNT M.—It certainly is, William. But she doesn't realize it—yet.

SETH—That's it. Mary's right. Little Patty has been blinded by the bright lights. It's up to us to restore her sight.

WILLIAM—I'll make her see. She's my child. She used to obey me and she'll obey me now.

SETH—The long and short of it is, she's far too good looking, William.

WILLIAM—Truth is truth, though she's my daughter. You're right, Seth, she's too good looking. Sometimes when I've taken her up to market, I've seen the folks turn their backs on the cattle and stare at her instead.

SETH—What are the consequences? She looks in the glass and sees herself, and then she gets miserable and uppish because there ain't anybody in these parts good enough for her to marry.

AUNT M.—It's a strange thing to me, where she gets her good looks. She isn't a bit like her poor, dead mother.

SETH—No, she don't get her looks from her.

AUNT M.—It's one of those things you can't account for. It's just like seeing a beautiful flower blooming on an old cabbage-stump.

WILLIAM—People have said that she takes after me a trifle.

SETH—You weren't fool enough to believe that, I hope. Why, she's no more like you than you're like a sweet-scented rose—not so much.

WILLIAM—You haven't a nice way of putting things Seth.

SETH—I'm no flatterer—never was. And you can't please everybody. If I said Patricia took after you, I don't s'pose she'd ever speak to me again.

WILLIAM—The worst of it is she won't settle down. There's young Jim Miller after her now, and she won't look at him. He's a decent young fellow, is Jim, and she's gone and named one of the pigs after him, and the way she mixes them up together is disgraceful.

SETH—If she was my girl she should marry young Jim. What's wrong with him?

AUNT M.—She looks higher. She's always reading romantic books full of love tales, and she's never tired of talking of a girl her mother knew that went on the stage and married a baronet. She calls this sitting room the drawing room.

WILLIAM—Yes, and she'll sit here in her drawing room till she's past the marrying age, and then she'll turn 'round and blame me. She wants to be taught a lesson. She needs to be shown her position in life, not go about turning up her nose at clean young men and naming pigs after them. I'll take her in hand. I'll make her obey me.

SETH—Wait, William. The spanking and the closet won't answer now. She isn't our little Patty any more. It's Patricia you have to deal with now.

WILLIAM—Yes, but how?

SETH—Let me think it out. There's a way to save our little girl. (*Rises.*) I'm going down to the brook a spell to wrestle with this problem. I always find the way down there under the big elm. This is one of those times, William, when you've got to be sure which way to jump. (*Exit C. D.*)

AUNT M.—You can safely leave it to Seth. He loves Patty as much as we do.

(*Seth appears at door.*)

SETH—You're goin' to have company, William. As queer a looking couple as I ever saw outside a circus sideshow. Saw 'em turn in at the gate a moment ago. Come and look.

WILLIAM—(*getting up and going to C. D.*) Tramps or gypsies I reckon. (*Looks off stage.*) What do you think of that, now? Hey, Mary, come here.

(*Aunt M. rises and goes to door.*)

WILLIAM—(*laughs heartily*) Freaks! By gehosophat! They're freaks. Some street fair must have stranded in the village.

AUNT M.—For the land's sake. What do you suppose they can want here?

SETH—Looks to me like a square meal and a pair of old shoes wouldn't come amiss.

AUNT M.—(*goes back to chair and knits*) Let 'em come in, William. You know what the Good Book says: "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares."

WILLIAM—(*comes back down stage*) If they are angels, Mary, they are fallen angels and they've dropped a long ways.

SETH—(*steps inside*) I think I'll stick around a bit and see what they want.

(*Hiram and Hulda Huckins appear in doorway. Hiram should be short and stout, Hulda tall and thin. Hiram carries a bird cage and a golf bag and clubs. He should wear an old golf suit or a worn uniform. Hulda carries a large suit case and a big hat box. She is dressed in a gaudy, large-figured gown and her hat droops to one side. They stand in doorway for a moment before speaking.*)

HULDA—How d'ye do. (*Bows.*) Be you wantin' any help?

AUNT M.—Won't you come in?

HULDA—Thank ye. Hiram, leave the bird outside.

HIRAM—'Fraid the cat might git it.

HULDA—Them's golf clubs. Good ones, too.

SETH—Let me take care of it. (*Takes bird cage and places it on the table as Hulda and Hiram come down and stand awkwardly in center of stage.*)

WILLIAM—What do you want?

HULDA—Work.

HIRAM—She does. (*Points to Hulda.*)

HULDA—He can work, too. Hiram is a good worker.

WILLIAM—Yes he looks it. What's those tools he's got?

WILLIAM—Can he use 'em?

HIRAM—No.

HULDA—He can learn. Everybody has to learn to play golf.

SETH—Let him try 'em out in the melon patch, William.

WILLIAM—We don't have any use for golf clubs at Meadowbrook Farm. Hoes come in handier here.

HULDA—Hiram can hoe. He is a fine gardener.

HIRAM—Hurts my back to hoe.

AUNT M.—Put down that heavy bag, my good woman. You must be tired.

HULDA—(*puts down suit case and hat box*) Thank ye, ma'am. I ain't so tired myself, but I'm sorry for Hiram. It's hard for him to walk very far.

HIRAM—I ain't tired anywhere but my feet.

AUNT M.—You said you wanted work?

HIRAM—She did. (*Points to Hulda.*)

(*Seth nods his head sadly and slips out C. D.*)

WILLIAM—Ever work on a farm?

HULDA—I've worked everywhere.

WILLIAM—(*to Hiram*) And you?

HIRAM—Well, I go where Hulda goes.

AUNT M.—What's your name?

HULDA—Hulda Huckins and —

HIRAM—I'm just Hiram.

WILLIAM—Yes, you look it. Where did you work last?

HULDA—At the Brookside Country Club.

AUNT M.—What did you do?

HULDA—Everything.

WILLIAM—(*to Hiram*) And you?

HIRAM—Nuthin'.

WILLIAM—(*turning away*) We can't use you.

HULDA—(*pathetically*) Please, sir, I can work. I am not afraid to work. I can cook, wash, keep house. Hiram can work, too, when he isn't sick.

WILLIAM—That's the trouble. He's lazy. I can see it sticking out all over him.

HULDA—That's not laziness. It's golf clubs you see stickin' out. A feller at the Country Club gave 'em to him. He got mad 'cause he missed the little ball and threw his clubs away. Hiram picked 'em up and he's kept 'em ever since.

WILLIAM—Well, we can't use him on this farm. Better move along.

AUNT M.—Wait a minute, William. You know what the Good Book says.

WILLIAM—Yes, and you heard what I said about 'em fallin' a long ways.

HULDA—Please, sir, let us work for a couple of days. We're tired and hungry.

HIRAM—I'll learn ye to play golf.

WILLIAM—Don't want to learn. If some of these city fellers who work so hard for exercise on the golf course would come out into the country and help at harvest time, they'd get some real exercise.

HIRAM—But no fun.

WILLIAM—Fun! Do you think life is all fun?

HIRAM—No. But most city fellers do.

AUNT M.—We'll give you your supper and a night's rest, anyway.

HIRAM—That's something.

WILLIAM—I don't like the way you talk.

HULDA—Please, sir, Hiram is all right. He don't mean nothin' wrong. It's just his way. I kin work enough for the two of us and Hiram can help. He's real useful on a farm. He can feed the chickens, churn the butter and when he's feelin' pert he can carry some wood. He don't mean nuthin' wrong.

WILLIAM—(*crosses and stands in front of Hulda*) It's the same old story, Hulda, I can see at once. You are another good woman married to a no-account husband. I suppose you're married.

AUNT M.—Good gracious, William. Of course they're married.

HULDA—You don't suppose I'd be totin' him around if he wasn't my husband?

WILLIAM—He's excess baggage any way you look at it.

HIRAM—Well, she took me for better or for worse.

WILLIAM—She got stung. Listen to me, you shrimp. We take a man on here and ask no questions. We know when he sticks a plow into the ground whether he understands his business or not. He may be a convict tryin' to get a new start, or a banker savin' his last lung, or a hunted criminal dodgin' the police—we don't care. A good many fine farm hands have made their mistakes in the city. All we care about is, will they stand the gaff? Will they give an honest day's work for an honest day's pay?

HULDA—Yes, sir, I will.

WILLIAM—I know you will. The woman almost always does.

HIRAM—I'll help Hulda all I kin.

AUNT M.—That's a good little man.

WILLIAM—Oh, shucks! I ain't got any confidence in him.

AUNT M.—Let me try them for a few days, William. We do need extra help with all the fruit to can. (*Rises.*) Come with me, Hulda. (*Exit R.*)

HULDA—(*Picks up box and suit case*) I'll show you, sir, that we can earn our board. I'll work hard. Come on, Hiram. (*Exit R.*)

(*Hiram stands looking after her for a moment, and then crosses to right. At exit he turns, looks at bird cage and goes back to table. Picks up cage. Exit.*)

WILLIAM—He ain't worth a tinker's dam and I know it.

(*Enter Seth.*)

SETH—I've got it, William. I've got it.

WILLIAM—Got what?

SETH—A way out of your difficulty.

WILLIAM—What are you talking about?

SETH—(*crosses to table on which is checker board*)
Come over here and sit down.

(*William crosses to table and both sit.*)

SETH—My plan is to put it up to Patty.

WILLIAM—I don't get you.

SETH—Well, to speak plainly, old friend. Our Patty is just spoiled.

WILLIAM—(*playing with checkers*) I'm glad you said "Our Patty," Seth. That makes you jointly responsible.

SETH—I'll take my share of the blame. We've been a couple of old fools about the girl. Most men of our age are, where a pretty young lady is concerned.

WILLIAM—Oh, I don't know. I've given her every opportunity I could. I've tried to be good to her.

SETH—That's just it. You've been too good to her. You've spoiled her. But the case is not hopeless. She'll come around.

WILLIAM—That's what Mary says.

SETH—Yes. But not Mary's way. Mary's like us; she helps to spoil her.

WILLIAM—What's your idea, Seth?

SETH—My idea's to let her have her own way.

WILLIAM—(*knocks over stack of checkers*) Shucks! You're worse than I thought you were.

SETH—Wait a minute. You can't break Patty like you would a stubborn filly. Girls are like colts. The more you try to drive 'em, the harder they struggle to get away.

WILLIAM—You never raised a girl.

SETH—That's why I know how to do it. It takes an old maid school teacher to get the best results in the school room.

WILLIAM—Maybe so. But I can't see how you're going to make a sensible woman out of Patty by lettin' the girl have her own way.

SETH—Let's figure a little on this here problem. What's the matter with Patty?

WILLIAM—You just said she was spoiled.

SETH—Yep! Got too many highbrow ideas at that exclusive boarding school. Thinks she's above us ordinary farm folks. Too much education has turned her head. Do you know what she's plannin' to do?

WILLIAM—Good lord, Seth! No man ever knows what a girl like Patty is goin' to do.

SETH—Well, what do you calculate she wants to do?

WILLIAM—Get married, I hope. Every girl wants to get married.

SETH—They ought to. There's nothin' in single blessedness. Bein' an old bachelor I ought to know. But Patty ain't figgerin' on marryin' a farmer. Nothin' like that, William. She's got her head set on a highbrow, a count or somethin'. I'll bet my brindle calf she's made up her mind to marry a title and live abroad.

WILLIAM—Shucks, Seth! You almost make me mad. My little girl isn't a fool. But suppose she has such a crazy idea. You say you'll cure her by letting her have her own way?

SETH—Not exactly. Just lay a nice little trap and see if she's got enough sense to avoid it.

WILLIAM—Go on. I'm listenin'.

SETH—Patty has been fed up on this smart set stuff. She's been readin' novels with lords for heroes. She's had a glimpse of high life down east. The lot of a farmer's wife looks slow to her. She'd rather play bridge than skim cream. She thinks the manicured dandy of the city is better than the sunburned lad of the pasture. All right; let her go on thinking so until she wakes up.

WILLIAM—Who's goin' to wake her?

SETH—Her Uncle Seth. I've loved Patty ever since

she was a kid in gingham dresses. I've got a plan.

WILLIAM—Subject to my approval, I reckon.?

SETH—Sure.

WILLIAM—Let's have it.

SETH—I've got a nephew who shows signs of havin' some sense, though he's only twenty-four. He's been goin' to the State University and has completed the course in agriculture.

WILLIAM—Another one of those Agricultural Experiment Station farmers, eh? One of those sweet boy graduates who thinks he can tell an old man who has spent his life on the farm, how to raise corn. I'd about as soon Patty would marry a professional golf player.

SETH—Those are harsh words, William, but I'll let 'em pass. My idea is to have John Matthews, that's my nephew's name, come down here lookin' for board as an English nobleman. John can do it. He'll look and act the part. I'll coach him to cure Patty of her false ideas about lords and counts.

WILLIAM—(*shakes his head*) Don't believe it will work.

SETH—Why not?

WILLIAM—She's too smart. You can't fool her.

SETH—Foolin' girls is about the easiest thing any young chap does, William.

PATTY—(*outside*) Come right in. I'll change my dress and be ready in a jiffy.

(*Enter Patty, Mary Jane Stokes and Dan Dickson, C. D.*)

PATTY—Dan and Mary Jane want me to go to Willow Grove with them tonight, Daddy. So I came back to change my dress.

WILLIAM—How's business at the store, Dan?

DAN—Ripping. Since we put in the new soda fountain, it's a regular riot.

SETH—Sell lots of milk shakes, eh?

DAN—Milk-shakes, nothing! It's all high-priced stuff now. Nut sundaes and fruit crushes and gold and silver fizzes. Nothing so plain as a milkshake goes now.

SETH—Mighty healthy and satisfyin' drink, though. But I reckon you got to jazz up the youngsters' innards this day with somethin' new.

MARY JANE—I'll tell the world you have.

PATTY—What's the use of selling a five-cent milkshake when you can get twenty-five cents for a dab of ice cream with a few peanuts on it?

DAN—You said it, Patty. We don't run the soda fountain for our health.

WILLIAM—Nor for the health of your patrons.

MARY J.—(*drops into chair*) Did you see Madelaine Murray in her new picture last night, Patty?

PATTY—(*taking off her hat*) No. What was it?

MARY J.—“The Vicious Vampire.”

DAN—A peach. I sat it through twice.

(*Seth winks significantly at William.*)

SETH—Say, Patty, I mean Patricia. I want your advice.

PATTY—(*crosses and stands behind Seth's chair*) You might go farther and do worse. What about?

SETH—I got a letter from my sister in New York. It seems there's a young English nobleman in trouble down there. Got to going too fast a pace and ruined his health. Sister met him in a private hospital. She always was buttin' around takin' flowers to sick folks. She took a likin' to the English swell and wants me to let him come out here and rest up for a spell.

PATTY—How interesting!

MARY J.—Just like a movie scenario.

DAN—Bet he could put me next to a few new dopes.

SETH—I'd like to help sister and the young Englishman out, but we haven't much to offer over at my place.

PATTY—Why not let him come here? What did you say his name is?

SETH—I didn't say, but it seems to me 'twas Lord John Matthews, or somethin' like that.

MARY J.—What! A real English nobleman? Oh, Mr. Wilson, how extraordinary!

WILLIAM—(*winks at Seth*) Don't know as I'd want him around here.

PATTY—(*goes to back of William's chair*) Oh, Daddy! Just think how nice it would be to read in *The Clarion*, "Lord John Matthews, of England, is the house guest of Mr. William Webster."

WILLIAM—Shucks! That wouldn't get us nothin'.

PATTY—Please, Daddy, don't say "nuthin'." You mean "would not get us anything."

WILLIAM—I meant what I said. Nuthin's less than anything.

MARY J.—(*rises and joins Patty behind William's chair*) Please, Mr. Webster. Let him stay awhile at Meadowbrook Farm.

DAN—I can't see any harm in it.

WILLIAM—Oh, you can't? Well, I can.

SETH—What's wrong about it, William?

WILLIAM—Everything. He may be a low-down tramp, posin' as a lord. Even if he is a lord, I'll bet he's no good.

PATTY—Father, I'm ashamed of you—to speak so of an English nobleman.

WILLIAM—English fiddlesticks!

SETH—We can make sure of his standing. I'll have my sister look up his pedigree.

DAN—You talk like he was a horse.

WILLIAM—I'd rather have another horse on Meadowbrook Farm than an English lord.

PATTY—But I would rather have the English lord. So you may invite him—Uncle Seth. It will afford fa-

ther the opportunity to study the manner and bearing of a cultured gentleman.

WILLIAM—(*leaps up, knocking over his chair*) Well, of all the—the— Patty, go to your room.

PATTY—Now, father, don't make a scene. You know I hate scenes.

WILLIAM—What is this house comin' to? To think that a child of mine should talk that way to her father.

DAN—Oh, they all do that now, Mr. Webster. You ought to hear some of 'em at the soda fountain.

PATTY—(*goes to William and puts her arm about him*) Really, Daddy, I'm sorry I was rude. But you older people don't understand. Youth, you know, must be served, and this is the period of youth. It's the young folks who keep the world moving.

SETH—Just jazzin' along as it were, William. Patricia's right. We're only has-beens.

WILLIAM—All I've got to say—if that whipper-snapper of an English lord moves in here, I move out.

PATTY—Sorry to see you go, Daddy. (*To Seth.*) You may write your sister that Miss Patricia Webster will be glad to have Lord Matthews as her house guest. (*Picks up her hat and goes to door.*) Come on, Mary Jane. I'll not bother to change my dress. (*Exit Patty, followed by Dan and Mary Jane.*)

WILLIAM—Now, what are you going to do?

SETH—(*tilting back his chair*) Just keep right on putting it up to Patty.

CURTAIN

ACT II.

(*Scene, the same. Two weeks later. Hulda seated in Aunt Mary's chair, peeling potatoes. Hiram is lying on the couch reading.*)

HIRAM—Gee! This is a great story. "Buffalo Ben, the hell-hound of the plains." Listen to this, Hulda. (*Reads aloud.*) "His piercing eyes scanned the west.

The setting sun cast its dying rays upon his face, lighting it with a sickly yellow hue. A ghastly scar upon his cheek was lurid in the glow of the falling twilight. With a—with a—g-e-s-t-u-r-e (*spells it.*)—what's a gesture, Hulda?

HULDA—Some kind of a joke, Hiram. Jest means to joke.

HIRAM—"With a joke of disdain he turned and mounted his faithful steed and rode swiftly toward the west. (*Pause.*) Chapter two hundred and eleven. (*Looks up.*) Gee, but its great! (*Reads.*) "Two hours later we find our hero standing in front of the Last Chance Dance Hall. Darkness has fallen, and the twinkling lamps of the mining camp cast their fitful glitter across the gulch, welcoming the weary traveler to their arms of rest. 'Tis he,' he mutters, as a shadow creeps toward him, and quickly drawing forth his deadly six-shooter, he commands in a voice of thunder—"

WILLIAM—(*outside*) Hiram!

HIRAM—(*hiding novel in his pocket, he jumps up quickly*) Dern it! That's allus the way. 'Jes' as I get to the interestin' part, he has to call me.

WILLIAM—(*outside*) Hi-ram!

HIRAM—I hear ye. I'm comin'.

WILLIAM—Take a pitcher of water up to the spare room right away.

HULDA—Land's sake! I had no idea they'd be back so soon. (*Leaps up.*) I'd better get back to the kitchen. Miss Patricia would skin me alive if she saw me peeling potatoes in the drawin' room. (*Rushes off D. R.*)

HIRAM—Right away, Mr. Webster. (*Aside.*) I'm goin' to blow this chambermaid job and be a cowboy. Them's the fellers that sees life. Nuthin' to do but ride around on horseback all day, and shoot Injuns at night. If I was only Buffalo Ben.

(*Enter William, C. D.*)

WILLIAM—Why don't you get a move on you?

You're too triflin' to catch cold. If it wasn't for Hulda, I'd fire you this minute.

HIRAM—Which rug did you say you wanted me to beat, sir?

WILLIAM—Good heavens! That's all the attention you pay to me. I told you to take a pitcher of water up to the spare room.

HIRAM—Cistern or well water?

WILLIAM—Cistern water—for his lordship's bath.

(Hiram stands gazing at William.)

WILLIAM—Well, what are you waiting for?

HIRAM—The pitcher.

WILLIAM—The pitcher is up in the spare room. Get out! *(Starts for Hiram, who goes out hurriedly.)* He'll drive me crazy.

(Enter Aunt Mary, with hat and shawl on.)

AUNT M.—*(taking off hat.)* Patty hasn't got back yet?

WILLIAM—Haven't seen anything of her, but she ought to be here soon.

AUNT M.—*(looking about)* Well, the stage is all set for the big experiment, William.

WILLIAM—I hope it turns out all right. *(Sits in chair at C. T.)*

AUNT M.—Seth seems quite confident. *(Comes up behind him.)* And Seth is a pretty level-headed man.

WILLIAM—*(pats her hand which she has laid on his shoulder)* You was mighty fond of Seth when you was a girl, Mary. Sometimes I used to dream of you as Seth's wife.

AUNT M.—Nonsense! We were just good friends then as we are now. *(Draws away her hand.)* That's all—just good friends.

(Patty appears at door. Stops to listen. Aunt M. and William sit with their backs to the door and do not see her.)

WILLIAM—Seth is a good man. He would have been happy with you.

AUNT M.—Never mind me. Let us help Seth in his big experiment. I wonder what Patty will do when she learns the truth?

(Patty leans forward, listening intently.)

WILLIAM—You mean when she finds out that Lord Matthews is really just plain John Matthews of the U. S. A.?

AUNT M.—That's what I mean.

WILLIAM—Well, I reckon Patty will be sore and pout for a spell. Then she'll see the joke and make up to Jim Miller real quick. When a girl finds out she's been fooled in one man she most generally marries another chap in a hurry to cover it up.

AUNT M.—We're doing it for her good.

(Aunt M. steps aside as Pattily hastily exits D. L.)

WILLIAM—Time will tell. Seth ought to be bringing his lordship around now any minute.

AUNT M.—Yes. I must see that Hulda has a clean apron on. *(Exit D. R.)*

WILLIAM—I hope it turns out all right. Girls are such contrary creatures, you never can tell.

(Enter Patty D. L.)

PATTY—Waiting for our distinguished guest, Daddy?

WILLIAM—Yep. All dressed up and nowhere to go. I know I'm not going to like Lord John, Patty. I feel it comin' on me that we ain't goin' to agrée.

PATTY—You mustn't be prejudiced, Daddy. Of course, he will have manners not in accord with your own, but I want you to remember always that you, too, are a gentleman.

WILLIAM—Umph! You really think your old dad is a gentleman, do you?

PATTY—Sometimes. *(Straightens magazines on the table.)* Not always.

WILLIAM—I am an old fool, Patty, most of the time. An old fool about you. Ever since your mother died I've done everything I could to make you happy. I've gone against my better judgment sometimes. (*Patty goes up behind him and smooths his hair.*) But you're all I had, child. It was mighty lonesome here—when you were away.

PATTY—Pshaw, Daddy, don't talk that way. Little girls must grow up and seek their own careers in life.

WILLIAM—I know some little girls that still loved their old daddies clear to the end of the trail—and then I've known some that were selfish and proud and looked upon their fathers as troublesome old men who were always in the way.

PATTY—Perhaps that was because their old daddies were always criticizing and complaining. Always looking upon their daughters as little girls who had never grown up. I think it would be a fine thing for a grown daughter to look upon her Daddy as a pal. If she isn't to grow up, you know, he mustn't grow old either. He must not put the spectacles of old age on the bright eyes of Youth. They've got to look on life through the same glasses.

WILLIAM—By Jove, that's horse sense, Patty. What a fine thing it would be if—

SETH—(*outside*) Hullo! Anybody home?

PATTY—(*kisses William on the hair.*) Maybe we can make it a dream come true, Daddy.

(*Enter Aunt M. and Hulda, D. R.*)

AUNT M.—They've come, William. Now, Hulda, you take the lord's hat and luggage.

WILLIAM—(*rising*) All right, Patty, I'll try to be a gentleman, but I know I'm not going to like him.

PATTY—(*stands beside Aunt M. and Hulda*) A real, live nobleman. I never expected to meet one face to face.

SETH—(*entering C., followed by John*) Well, here

we are, folks. (*Puts down heavy suit case and golf bag*)
Let me introduce Sir John Matthews of Lynnmouth Hall.
(*John bows haughtily.*)

WILLIAM—(*goes up to shake hands*) Pleased to meet you, sir. (*John holds his hand shoulder-high and after some confusion, William reaches up and takes it.*)

JOHN—Aw—thanks awfully. (*Looks about.*) Jolly place this. (*Eyeing Aunt M.*) And this is your wife?

WILLIAM—My sister, Miss Mary Webster.

JOHN—(*elevates monocle to eye and stares at Aunt Mary*) Charmed, I am sure. (*Pause.*) These your daughters? (*Staring at Hulda and Patty.*)

WILLIAM—One of them is, my lord; the other is a servant.

JOHN—To be sure. (*Crosses to Hulda and taps her under the chin.*) She's got your eyes, your nose, too, I think.

WILLIAM—That's my servant.

JOHN—Oh, indeed?

(*John turns toward Patty and she tries to meet him half-way by elevating her chin. His audacity fails him and he turns aside. Hulda attempts to suppress her giggles and rushes off D. R. Seth winks at William and pulls him aside.*)

WILLIAM—Hold on. He's got to get this straight. (*Goes up to John and leads him toward Patty.*) This is my daughter, Miss Patricia Webster, Lord John Matthews. And she's a queen in her own right.

JOHN—(*bows*) My mistake. A bounder's blunder, I'm sure. You'll pardon me, Miss Webster?

PATTY—So you really didn't know any better? I'm quite disappointed, Sir John. I thought for a moment you were only "spoofing."

SETH—(*punches William in the ribs. Aside.*)
Score one for Patty.

JOHN—Spoofing, my word! Where did you get that, my girl?

PATTY—Read it in a cablegram, I think, my lord.

JOHN—(*crosses to Seth. Aside*) You've framed me. She's on.

SETH—(*aside*) She's not. Keep your wits. I told you the girl was clever.

WILLIAM—You will want to brush up a bit, my lord. I'll call Hiram and have him show you to your room. (*Goes to D. R. and calls.*) Hi-ram!

PATTY—I trust that we shall make your lordship comfortable.

JOHN—I hope so, my good girl. But I shall require little. Mr. Wilson told you I was here for my health?

PATTY—No one would ever guess it, Sir John. You seem quite fit.

JOHN—Nothing really serious.

PATTY—I should hope not.

JOHN—Just frayed a little about the edges. Sort of nervous breakdown.

PATTY—We'll fix you up, all right. Nobody is ever allowed to be ill long at Meadowbrook Farm.

HIRAM—(*sticking head in D. R.*) Somebody callin' me?

WILLIAM—Yes, Hiram. Take his lordship's luggage up to his room and show him the way.

(*Hiram crosses and picks up hand bag, then stands looking at golf clubs.*)

HIRAM—Oh, gee! You play golf? That's great. We'll have a twosome over at the Country Club.

JOHN—(*haughtily*) I beg your pardon.

PATTY—Why, Hiram, I am surprised at you. Please forgive him, Sir John. He does not understand.

HIRAM—(*picks up golf bag and starts off*) I suppose that's what you call being snubbed. (*Aside.*) The big snob. (*Exit D. R.*)

JOHN—(*whispers to Seth*) I'm goin' to buck.

SETH—(*aside*) You stay put or I'll disown you.

(*John crosses to D. R., turns and bows.*)

PATTY—We'll have tea as soon as you are ready, Sir John.

JOHN—(*aside*) I hate tea. (*Bolts D. R.*)

PATTY—Daddy, I've been thinking. We can't possibly let Sir John stay in the guest room.

WILLIAM—And why not?

PATTY—Because you know it faces the West. It is stifling hot there in the afternoon, and the room never cools off until after midnight. Besides, it is on the side of the house next to the poultry yard and the chickens raise such a racket so early in the morning.

WILLIAM—What are you going to do about it?

PATTY—Don't you think we ought to let his lordship have your nice, cool, quiet, east room?

WILLIAM—Not by a darn sight.

PATTY—Oh, Daddy. That's mean and selfish. (*She goes up to him.*) You don't want to be mean and selfish.

WILLIAM—Look here, Patty. It's bad enough to have that thingumbob loafing around here. I'm not going to give up my room to him.

SETH—William's right, Patty. It isn't necessary.

PATTY—You keep out of this, Mr. Seth Wilson. I'm the hostess in this home. Didn't you hear Sir John say "I hope so, my good girl," when I told him we would try to make him comfortable. Now, he's got to be made comfortable.

WILLIAM—Well, not in my bed. (*Pleading.*) Listen, Patty, I've slept in that bed for forty years. It just suits me.

PATTY—I am quite sure it will just suit Sir John, too. Daddy, you've got to move out.

WILLIAM—I won't!

PATTY—Remember, you promised to be a gentleman.

WILLIAM—But all my things are in that room. All my clothes and shoes, my old rockin' chair, why every-thing —

PATTY—Never mind, Daddy, I'll go right up and have Hiram change your things to the guest room closet. (*Exit, D. R.*)

WILLIAM—(*turning savagely on Seth*) Now, look what you've gone and done, you meddlesome old fool. I've got to move into the guest chamber and roast on that felt mattress.

SETH—It's for Patty's sake, William.

WILLIAM—I've done enough for her sake. By gum, there's a limit to this thing.

SETH—Calm yourself, William. Want to play a game of checkers?

WILLIAM—No, I don't want to play a game of checkers. I want you to take your fool nephew and get out of here.

SETH—He's a nice boy.

WILLIAM—Not in my bed, he ain't. He can't put me out of my regular bed and be a nice boy.

SETH—Oh, shucks!

WILLIAM—I'm going to tell her the truth. I'm going to tell her he's a fake and see how quick she orders him out. (*Starts toward D. R.*)

SETH—(*catching hold of him*) Whoa, there, William. Don't spill the beans, just when the pot begins to boil. We started out to cure Patty of a lot of foolish notions. Let's play the game through.

WILLIAM—I didn't agree to sleep in the spare room bed. (*Looks at Seth earnestly.*) Did you ever sleep in a spare room bed?

(*Enter Aunt M., D. R.*)

AUNT M.—Quarreling again; boys? I could hear William clear out in the kitchen. What's the matter?

WILLIAM—Do you know what Patty's doin' now? She's movin' me out of my room, bag and baggage. (*A crash is heard outside.*)

SETH—Reckon Hiram's dropped your trunk.

AUNT M.—What do you mean, William?

WILLIAM—She's givin' my nice, cool, quiet east room to that thingumbob of a lord and I've got to sleep in that hot guest chamber.

AUNT—M.—(*stifling a laugh with her handkerchief*) Oh, William, the joke is on you.

SETH—Better not rub it in, Mary.

WILLIAM—I'll stand it for a week and then his lordship gets his orders to vamoose.

AUNT M.—Hulda will be here with the tea in a few seconds. I think you boys had better get out.

WILLIAM—Great Scott! Can't I even stay in the old sittin' room?

AUNT M.—This is Patricia's drawing room, you must remember, and she is going to have tea with Sir John. Run along.

SETH—Yes, come on, William. We'll go down to the barn and look at the black colt. (*Exit C. D.*)

WILLIAM—You tell Patty to get rid of that thingumbob in a week. (*Takes up hat and storms out C. D.*)

AUNT M.—(*Sits and takes up knitting.*) Poor William! He does hate anything that disturbs his regular habits of life.

(*Patty enters D. R.*)

PATTY—Oh, Aunt Mary, don't you think he's wonderful?

AUNT M.—Hardly that, my dear. From what little I have seen of him, I think he is rather spoiled and selfish.

PATTY—Of course, he is used to having his own way. Men in his position always are. You should hear the way he orders Hiram about. "Is this the best room you have?" he asked when Hiram took him into the guest chamber.

AUNT M.—Your father tells me you have given Sir John his room.

PATTY—Surely. When I showed him Daddy's nice room, he said at once, (*mimicking John*) "Ah, yes, this is much bettah. I'll have this one." Then, turning to Hiram, he said, "Bring me up some hot watah and clear these boots and old clothes out."

AUNT M.—Your father is not pleased with the change.

PATTY—Poor Daddy! I'm afraid he will have to get used to many changes while his lordship is here.

AUNT M.—Don't crowd him too far, my child.

PATTY—Where is Hulda with the tea?

AUNT M.—She is coming. Everything was ready when I left the kitchen.

(*Hulda enters, her cap over one eye, carrying a tea wagon in her arms, on which are tea pot, cups, plate of cakes, etc.*)

HULDA—Lend me a hand, some one. I'm sure I'll drop this tray.

PATTY—For goodness sake, Hulda, put it down and push it.

HULDA—(*looking at Patty over top of the tea cart*) Push it? Lands sake, I thought ye carried it.

PATTY—(*helping her down with it*) How can you be so dull? I would have been humiliated to death if Sir John had been here.

HULDA—(*gives the tea cart a little push across the floor*) Well, of all the fool contrivances. It's neither a tray nor a cart. They ought to send directions with it.

PATTY—I supposed of course you knew what a tea cart was. You find them in the homes of all our society leaders.

HULDA—I'm only a poor working woman.

PATTY—You look it. Straighten your cap and get out of here before his lordship comes in.

HULDA—Yes, ma'am. (*Backing out.*) So that's a tea cart. Pretty soon they'll be servin' tea from a pretty little red hose wagon.

(*John enters just as Hulda reaches the door R., and she backs into him.*)

JOHN—My word, my good woman. Can't you look where you're going?

HULDA—(*courtesys*) Your pardon, sir. I was just looking at the new tea truck. (*Exit D. R.*)

AUNT M.—You found everything all right, I hope, Sir John.

JOHN—Quite all right, Miss—ah—Miss Webster. (*Drops on couch.*) That is, for such a dull place.

AUNT M.—Yes, my lord.

JOHN—Fearfully dull. (*Stifles a yawn.*) What I'm to do to amuse myself for a fortnight, I'm sure I don't know.

PATTY—(*busy about the tea cart, raises her eyes and looks at him steadily*) I'm afraid there is not much to do about here, my lord. We are very plain folks in these parts.

JOHN—(*languidly*) Yes, I suppose so.

PATTY—Perhaps you play croquet?

JOHN—Croquet? Never heard of it. What is it? A new game with cards?

PATTY—Oh, dear no. It's a child's game you play with mallets and balls and wickets.

JOHN—With wickets and balls, you say? My word, it might be something like cricket.

PATTY—It might, but it isn't. Won't you have some tea?

JOHN—Thanks awfully. (*Rises and takes chair near tea cart.*)

AUNT M.—(*rising*) If you will excuse me, I'll go and see about setting the sponge for breakfast.

PATTY—Certainly, Aunt Mary.

(*John rises, cup in hand and bows as Aunt M. goes out D. R.*)

PATTY—(*seating herself as John resumes seat*) I

hope that however dull you may find us, Sir John, we are at least making you comfortable.

JOHN—(*stretching his legs*) I have never been more comfortable in my life.

PATTY—Oh, my lord, think of Lynnmouth Hall. I have never seen an old country seat. I should be so grateful if your lordship would describe yours to me.

JOHN—It's rather run down now. I haven't given it much attention lately, you know. The dear old place really seems deserted. Not a human creature is anywhere visible, and the only sound that breaks the stillness, is the cawing of a few rooks in the lofty tops of the neighboring elms. (*Aside.*) That's pretty good.

PATTY—But surely your retainers, the caretakers, are there.

JOHN—Oh, yes, of course, but one does not count the servants as being anyone.

PATTY—You seemed to consider Hulda someone when you first came here.

JOHN—My mistake. A bounder's blunder. You have forgiven me?

PATTY—Perhaps. We shall see. But go on about Lynnmouth Hall.

JOHN—Really I can't tell you a whole lot about the rummy old place, except that it is rather a fine specimen of Norman architecture, strongly built, dark and grim, gives an indication of great age. Amid its surroundings it looms with a peculiar frowning majesty, a certain bleak loneliness, both unique and impressive. (*Aside.*) Boy! Talk about castles in the air!

PATTY—How happy you must be.

JOHN—(*shakes his head gravely*) My possessions have never given me any happiness. I would much rather be in a humble rank of life. Live where I like, and—and marry whom I like.

PATTY—(*archly*) Oh, my lord, surely—

JOHN—(*earnestly*) Fact! Do you know what I'm

planning? A pretty bungalow on 300 acres of good American farm land. Living room with a fireplace. Exhilarating spot, air like good wine, waving fields of grain ripening in the sun. Sunset on the porch before twilight. Acres I can call my own. Every man ought to have a place like that. And—and a girl, with hair like yours, waiting by the well-curb, as the evening shadows fall.

PATTY—Why, Sir John, you're a painter of word pictures—a poet.

(*Enter William, C. D.*)

WILLIAM—Humph! Eating again?

PATTY—An English custom, Daddy. Sir John always has tea before retiring.

JOHN—(*affecting English drawl*) My word, yes. Cawn't sleep a wink without my tea, don't ye know?

WILLIAM—(*comes down and glares at John*) No, I didn't know. Tea and coffee are supposed to keep Americans awake, if they drink it at night.

JOHN—You don't say? Are you such a sleepy lot as all that? My word! Have to drink tea to keep awake. Ha, ha!

WILLIAM—Funny, isn't it?

JOHN—Well, rawther. But I suppose sleeping is the best thing you do in such a dull place as this.

WILLIAM—You think it dull here?

JOHN—Well, rawther.

WILLIAM—Why don't you leave? We got along very well before you came.

PATTY—Father! You forget yourself. Sir John is our guest.

WILLIAM—You're right, Patty. I beg your pardon, sir.

JOHN—Not at all, my good man. Of no consequence whatever. (*To Patty.*) Did he call you Patty?

(*William gives John a look of contempt and drops into chair.*)

PATTY—A childish nickname. I was christened Patricia.

JOHN—Ah, that's bettah, Patricia! Fits you like a glove. You are a girl of such regal splendah.

WILLIAM—(*Aside*) Ye gods and little fishes! What do you think of that? (*Aloud.*) Say, how do you get that way?

JOHN—(*eyeing him through monocle*) I beg your pardon.

WILLIAM—(*glaring at John*) Ah, come off. You make—

PATTY—Father! (*To John.*) You mustn't mind father, Sir John. He is a product of the honest soil. His language is not the language of your set.

WILLIAM—I'll say it ain't.

PATTY—Sir John is quite charmed with your pretty east room, Daddy.

JOHN—All but the luggage and the boots. My word, but you keep your room in a frightful mess.

WILLIAM—Suited me.

JOHN—At least it is more inviting than the other room your man showed me.

WILLIAM—If you don't like it you can sleep in the milk house.

(*Patty smothers an outburst of laughter by a counterfeit sneeze. Stuffing her handkerchief into her mouth she leaps up and goes off into a fit of choking.*)

JOHN—(*excitedly*) My word, your daughter's choking.

WILLIAM—Well, what of it? She often chokes. When she was a baby I used to hold her by the heels.

PATTY—(*between gasps*) Don't—you—try—it—now. (*Rushes off D. R.*)

(*William gets up and follows her to the door. Then comes back and stands beside John.*)

WILLIAM—Young fellow, you're overdoing your part.

JOHN—(*looking up*) In what way?

WILLIAM—You're making me ridiculous in the eyes of my daughter. It's all right to fool her. But darned if I'll stand for any impudence in my own house.

JOHN—Uncle Seth said you wanted her cured of her foolish notions.

WILLIAM—That don't mean making me a fool in her sight.

JOHN—I'm sorry, sir, if I have offended you. I didn't want to play this part in the beginning, but Uncle Seth insisted.

(*Patty sticks her head in the door and listens.*)

WILLIAM—Seth's an old grandmother.

JOHN—He is deeply interested in your daughter and her happiness.

WILLIAM—She'll raise particular Cain when she finds out you're a fraud.

JOHN—I hope not, sir. I shall try to win her respect for John Matthews, while I make her detest the Sir John of Lynnmouth Hall.

(*Patty disappears.*)

WILLIAM—I gave in to the scheme under protest. But you must understand I won't stand for any foolishness by John or Sir John.

JOHN—I think you can trust me, sir, to be a gentleman.

WILLIAM—It wasn't necessary to have me fired from my own room.

JOHN—I'm really sorry about that, but it was to show her how selfish Sir John is.

WILLIAM—Well, move fast, young man. I don't want you hanging around here too long.

JOHN—Uncle Seth said he thought I ought to stay about a month.

WILLIAM—You don't know Patty. If she don't wake up in two days I'll eat my old straw hat.

JOHN—It is very pleasant here. I like it.

WILLIAM—I'd like it better if you worked and slept in the spare bedroom.

JOHN—Perhaps I will, before I leave.

(*Enter Aunt M., carrying lamp, which she places on the table.*)

AUNT M.—Here is your lamp, Sir John, whenever you may wish to retire.

JOHN—(*aside to William*) Now, I've got to be that fool lord again.

WILLIAM—Not before Mary. She's one of the conspirators.

JOHN—Thank you, Miss Webster. I was just telling Mr. Webster that I did not approve of Uncle Seth's idea of putting it up to Patty.

AUNT M.—I am glad you really do not enjoy fooling Patty. She is a dear sweet girl.

JOHN—I quite agree with you.

WILLIAM—Oh, ho! When did you find that out?

JOHN—(*embarrassed*) The moment I laid eyes on her.

(*Voices of Mary Jane, Dan and Patty heard outside.*)

AUNT M.—On guard, Sir John, we are having company.

PATTY—(*outside*) Oh, really, you must come in a moment and meet Sir John.

JOHN—Hang it all! I'd like to bolt.

(*Enter Patty, Mary Jane and Dan, C. D.*)

DAN—Hello, folks. Mary Jane and I were just taking a little joy-ride in the little old flivver and seeing you all lit up, we dropped in.

AUNT M.—Always glad to see you, Daniel. Guess you know that.

PATTY—This is Sir John Matthews, of Lynnmouth Hall, England; Mr. Daniel Dickson, our leading apothecary, Sir John.

DAN—(*leaps forward and offers his hand*) Glad to know you, Mr. Matthews.

JOHN—(*draws back; elevates monocle*) My word. How dye do?

DAN—(*wilting*) Howdy, Mr. Webster. Kind of chilly this evening.

PATTY—And this is my dearest friend, Miss Mary Jane Stokes; Mary Jane, may I present Sir John Matthews.

JOHN—(*effusively offering hand*) Chawmed, delighted, I am sure, Miss—er—Miss—I didn't catch the name.

PATTY—Stokes.

JOHN—Oh, yes, Stokes. Mary Jane, wasn't it? Interesting name, Mary Jane. So simple, so—ah—pastoral one might say. So—ah—feminine.

DAN—Yes. We never call our boys Mary Jane in America.

JOHN—(*looks at him through monocle*) I beg your pardon. Did you—ah—did you say something?

DAN—(*shakes his head*) Wrong number. Ring off, please.

MARY J.—(*withdrawing her hand, which John has been holding*) So pleased to meet you, Sir John. I have heard so much about you.

JOHN—(*surprised*) Heard so much about me? Why, my good girl, I cawn't understand. I have only been in America for a short time, and most of that I spent in the hospital.

MARY J.—That's it. The hospital. I heard you were in the hospital.

DAN—Yes, we heard you were in the hospital. Jolly old place—the hospital. I was sent up once for six weeks.

JOHN—(*staring vacantly at him*) Sent up? The hospital? My word!

DAN—Yes, got hit in the back with a tennis ball.

Frightful injury. Took an X-ray to locate the beastly thing, and then—then four doctors operated.

JOHN—(*looks at him sharply*) Too bad it didn't hit you in the head. It might have strengthened your mentality.

WILLIAM—(*roars*) Oh, I say. Pretty clever, Sir John.

DAN—(*to Patty*) Not such a dub as he looks.

PATTY—(*aloud, looking at John*) Indeed, he is much smarter than you would imagine.

DAN—How can you tell?

JOHN—(*aside, to Aunt M.*) I'll kill that pill peddler.

AUNT M.—Won't you sit down?

MARY J.—Oh, I'd love to stay and hear Sir John tell us about England.

JOHN—I should be delighted. Shall we take a turn in the garden? (*Advances to Mary Jane.*)

DAN—We can't linger, Jane. I've got to get back to town in time to close the store.

JOHN—My word! You keep a store?

DAN—No. I *own* a store.

JOHN—How very interesting!

DAN—Sometimes it is; sometimes it isn't. But it's mine.

MARY J.—Don't you think he's young to have a drug store all his own?

JOHN—Depends upon how he got it. I suppose you sell a lot of baby foods.

DAN—Lots. I'll bring you some the next time I come.

WILLIAM—(*yells*) Holy Smoke! That's a high one. (*Hiram rushes on D. R., hiding novel under coat.*)

HIRAM—Did you call, sir?

WILLIAM—No. (*laughing.*) No, Hiram.

HIRAM—If you don't mind, sir, I think I'll go to bed.
(Starts to take lamp from table.)

AUNT M.—Why, Hiram, what are you doing with that lamp? Put it down.

HIRAM—I was going to read a little in bed.

WILLIAM—You read too much, now. That's his lordship's lamp.

HIRAM—(looks about) Well, if I can't have the lamp, and can't read in bed, maybe his lordship would like to borrow my book.

JOHN—(eagerly) What is it? Let me see it. (He takes novel from Hiram. Reads:) "Buffalo Ben, the hell-hound of the plains." No, my good man, no, no! Bless me, no. I thank you very much but I cawn't read that, don't ye know?

DAN—Get him a copy of "Little Lord Fauntleroy."

HIRAM—It's a good story.

JOHN—No doubt, no doubt. I thank you very much.

(Hiram takes book, looks longingly at lamp and shuffles off.)

JOHN—(crosses to Dan) As for you, little boy, better run along and close your drug store. Somebody might get stuck on your fly paper.

MARY J.—(to John) I think you're horrid.

JOHN—And I think you are very chawming. With one exception (looks meaningly at Patty) the most chawming girl I have met since I left England.

DAN—(draws Mary J. away) Come on Jane. We'll take Sir John out snipe hunting the first moonlight night.

JOHN—Thanks awfully, old chap. But somebody else will hold the bag. Ta, ta!

(Exit Dan and Mary Jane C. D.)

PATTY—(calling after them) Come back soon, Dan, you're such good company.

AUNT M.—If you'll excuse me, my lord. I think I will retire.

JOHN—(*bows*) Goodnight, Miss Webster, and pleasant dreams.

AUNT M.—Goodnight. (*Exit D. R.*)

WILLIAM—Got to get up early in the morning. Hayin' time, you know. (*Starts to door L.*) Better go to bed soon, Patty.

PATTY—In just a minute, Daddy.

WILLIAM—You can find your way, Sir John?

JOHN—Well, rawther. This is really a small house, you know, Mr. Webster.

WILLIAM—Small? May be so. But it's a home, Sir John, and that's more than you can say of some castles.

JOHN—Well said, Mr. Webster. There's a rummy lot of ancestral halls in merry England. Goodnight.

WILLIAM—(*at door*) Goodnight. (*Exit D. L.*)

(*Patty and John go to table to get lamp. Both reach for it and their hands touch. John closes his hands over Patty's and gazes into her eyes.*)

JOHN—I beg your pardon.

PATTY—Oh, no, Sir John, I beg yours. This is your lamp. I had forgotten that mine is in my room.

JOHN—How your eyes dance. Are you laughing at me?

PATTY—Indeed not. But, please,—you are holding my hand.

JOHN—(*releases her hand and pulls himself together*) My word! I'm rawther a bounder, don't you know? Always was silly when a pretty girl was around. Weakness of the family. Just cawn't help it. (*Patty gives him a look of disdain and goes to D. R.*) You're not angry, my good girl. I may be a bounder at times, but I'm a gentleman toward the ladies.

PATTY—You're the biggest kind of a fool, Sir John Matthews. (*Exit hurriedly D. R.*)

JOHN—(*takes up the lamp*) With the accent on the

Sir. Just what did she mean by that? (*Starts to cross toward D. R. and pauses down center.*) How her eyes flashed and laughed. I'll bet a golf ball she's next to the blessed little scheme and is making a monkey out of me. (*Goes to D. R.*) But she has got wonderful eyes. (*Exit*)

(*As John goes out carrying lamp, stage is darkened. Door left opens and Williams comes on with flashlight. He has taken off his coat and vest. He gropes about, looking for something in table drawer and behind the chairs. After a few seconds he knocks over a chair.*)

PATTY—(*Outside*) What was that?

JOHN—My word! There's someone in the house.

HIRAM—(*outside*) Stand aside! Let me get him.

(*Much confusion heard off stage. Hiram enters, carrying candle and golf stick and chases William about in the semidarkness. Sounds of struggle.*)

WILLIAM—Quit thumping me with that club.

(*Enter John in shirt sleeves, holding lamp on high. All lights up at his entrance. Aunt M. in wrapper, hair in knöt, carrying candle. Patty in kimona. Hulda in night gown, carrying an ax. They group themselves about William and Hiram who are struggling on the floor. They get up. Hiram is in pajamas.*)

PATTY—Daddy! What does this mean?

WILLIAM—It means I can't find a thing in that darn spare room. Where did you put my liver-pad.

CURTAIN

ACT III.

(*Scene—the same. At rise of curtain William and Seth are discovered playing checkers in same position as in Act I. Aunt Mary is knitting in rocking chair, at right of table. For a few seconds there is complete silence, the men studying the checker board intently.*)

WILLIAM—(*jumps two men, then leans back in his chair*) I guess that puts a crimp in you, Seth.

SETH—(*scratches his head*) It sure does, William. Don't see how I come to overlook that. (*Studies board intently.*)

WILLIAM—(*tilts back his chair and whistles a few bars*) Well, it's your move.

SETH—I know it's my move. (*Testily.*) I'll move when I get ready.

WILLIAM—Your time's up.

SETH—I'll move when I get good and ready, I said.

AUNT M.—Now, Seth, William must be getting the best of you.

WILLIAM—He's beat, but he don't know it.

SETH—Is that so? (*Moves.*)

WILLIAM—Yes, that's so. (*Jumps three men.*) All over, Seth.

SETH—(*pushes back his chair*) Consarn it, William. You talked me into that.

WILLIAM—(*straightening out checkers*) Play you another game.

SETH—Not now. Enough's enough. Where's John? I came over to see him.

AUNT M.—Where he always is now. Somewhere with Patty.

SETH—Seem to be pretty good friends, eh?

AUNT M.—They are more than that.

WILLIAM—Not a bad sort of a lad when he ain't acting the part of that thingumbob.

SETH—John is a good boy. Been taught scientific farming at the university and so far as I can see, it hasn't hurt him a bit.

WILLIAM—Knows quite a bit about farmin'. When Patty was away yesterday, we took a walk out to the north field. He wants me to fertilize it this fall and sow it in wheat. Talked about crop rotation and sour soil like a real he-farmer. Been goin' over the wheat, sortin' for seed.

SETH—Been here a month, hasn't he?

AUNT M.—Just a month next Tuesday.

WILLIAM—(*rises*) He's got a big idea about a dairy farm around here. Figures there's more money in butter and milk, along with a big poultry yard than there is in straight farmin'. Got me guessin', that boy has.

AUNT M.—Sometimes I don't quite understand Patty's position.

SETH—How so, Mary?

AUNT M.—Whether we've fooled her or not. Whether she still thinks he's an Englishman or whether the boy has told her the truth.

SETH—Shucks! What's the difference? He's made her more satisfied with life here at Meadowbrook, hasn't he?

WILLIAM—That's the point. Has he? Or is she figuring on being Lady Matthews some day.

SETH—How's the lad behavin'?

AUNT M.—He is very rude sometimes, when Patty is around. When he is alone with me, he is always a gentleman.

SETH—Pretty good actor as well as farmer, eh, William?

WILLIAM—He's all right when he is plain John Matthews, but an impudent pig when he's Sir John. I think we ought to put an end to it.

SETH—Then tell Patty the truth.

WILLIAM—Who? Me?

AUNT M.—But suppose she is really in love with him as Sir John?

SETH—Gosh! I can't believe it. But that would make a mess of things.

WILLIAM—Well, it can't go on much longer. I'm awful tired of that spare bedroom.

PATTY—(*outside*) No, no. Go away, please. You cheated.

(Patty rushes on, C. D., her hat hanging at her back held by streamers.)

PATTY—*(Out of breath)* Oh! *(looks about.)* I thought there was nobody here.

(John runs on C. D., after her. He is dressed in white flannels, without a hat, and waves a fine big red ear of corn.)

JOHN—Hold on. I didn't cheat. *(Sees the others.)* My word, Miss Patricia, I found it honestly. Bless me, don't you know I did?

PATTY—Yes, in the corn crib.

WILLIAM—What does this mean?

JOHN—Why—er—you see, Miss Patricia was teaching me a little American game. Something about finding a red ear of corn and claiming a forfeit, don't you know?

AUNT M.—Why, Patty!

SETH—Well, I'll be day goned!

WILLIAM—Humph!

(Patty hangs head and John looks at her fondly.)

JOHN—Anything wrong, Mr. Webster? It was quite an interesting game. And I've been hunting the scarlet ear of maize for a long time. I just found it and was going—was going—to ask—Pat—Miss—er—Patricia to show me the rest of the game. My word! I am quite innocent.

WILLIAM—*(looks at him, sternly)* Yes, you are.

JOHN—'Pon my honah, sir.

PATTY—I told him about our husking bees and how the man who found a red ear could claim a forfeit from the girl. I had no idea he'd hunt an old red ear out of the corn crib.

JOHN—I see. What a bounder! Then red ears out of the corn crib don't count?

PATTY—You know they don't.

JOHN—I beg your pardon. I am not up on Ameri-

can games. Rawther foolish idea, anyway. (*Throws ear of corn on table.*)

PATTY—Oh, you think so?

JOHN—I certainly do. I suppose the forfeit would have been a box on the ear, by Jove.

WILLIAM—Give her the corn, Sir John, and insist on her playing the game.

PATTY—Don't you dare!

(*John picks up the ear of corn and hesitates.*)

AUNT M.—I think Sir John knows more than he pretends, about the red ear of corn. Better play quits.

WILLIAM—Come on, Seth, I want you to see my new tractor.

SETH—Did they give you a plow with it, William?

WILLIAM—A plow and a disc harrow. I think I bought the implements and they threw in the tractor. (*Goes to C. D.*) Brother to the horse, the dealer said. First time in all my life that town feller ever gave me anything except a calendar. (*Exit C. D.*)

SETH—(*at C. D.*) Want to go along, Sir John?

JOHN—Aw—thanks—awfully. But you know I cawn't make head or tail of the blasted thing. Never did like machinery—or arithmetic.

SETH—More interested in red ears of corn and pretty girls. Well, I was, too—once. (*Exit.*)

(*Patty smooths out her dress, adjusts her hat, takes magazine from table and drops into chair.*)

AUNT M.—(*looks over her glasses at Patty*) It's a long run from the corn crib.

PATTY—(*turning leaves of magazine*) Is it?

(*John keeps his eyes on Patty and smothers a laugh.*)

AUNT M.—Was Hiram around the barn?

JOHN—We didn't see the man.

PATTY—Hiram is painting the kitchen.

AUNT M.—So he is. I'm sure he is making a terrible mess. (*Lays down knitting.*) I'll go and see. (*She rises and looks at John, then at Patty as though to speak, then shakes her head and goes out D. R.*)

JOHN—(*tiptoes to door after her, then turns and goes up behind Patty.*) They almost caught on.

PATTY—Almost! They did catch on. You shouldn't have chased me in here.

JOHN—It would have been much better if you hadn't run away. (*Leans over and kisses her on the hair.*) There was nobody looking at the barn.

PATTY—Only the mice.

JOHN—And that poor old horse that is blind in one eye.

PATTY—How long is this farce to continue?

JOHN—It will end whenever you say the word, Patty.

PATTY—But I've only known you a month. I really don't know who you are.

JOHN—Cruel. At least you know I am not a ruined Englishman seeking an American heiress.

PATTY—I knew that from the start.

JOHN—Before you gave me your father's room?

PATTY—Even before you came.

JOHN—Then somebody gave me away. How did you know?

PATTY—I heard Uncle Seth revealing his plan. He called it "Putting It Up to Patty."

JOHN—Well, now that they have put it up to you, what are you going to do about it?

PATTY—I don't know. How should I?

JOHN—Then I'll tell you, dear. You are going to marry me, a plain American farmer, and we are going to build up the biggest dairy farm in this county. We are going to have a home of our own with broad meadows and a herd of sleek cattle. We are going to be in-

dependent, work hard and look everybody straight in the eye. We are going to be pals in sickness or health, for better or worse, for richer or for poorer. We are going to raise morning glories and calves, string beans and sunflowers and let the rest of the world go by.

PATTY—(*looks up at him*) Oh, Sir John.

JOHN—Sir John, nothing! John Matthews, president of the Matthews Creamery Company, highly respected and well-to-do citizen of the U. S. A. That's good enough for me.

PATTY—And it's good enough for me, too, John.

(*John leans over and lays his head against hers. Hulda enters D. L. and stands watching them a moment.*)

HULDA—Hey! What you whisperin' about?

JOHN—(*jerking his head away quickly*) My word, my good woman, how you startled me!

HULDA—Yes, I reckon I did. What was you whisperin' about?

PATTY—He wasn't whispering anything, Hulda. He was—he was—

JOHN—I was making a diagnosis, my good woman. Miss Webster has a slight ailment of the —er—the thyroid gland and I was—er—I was counting her respirations.

HULDA—You was—what? It didn't look like—what you said—to me.

JOHN—My word! You're not supposed to know, my good woman.

HULDA—Ain't I, though? You can call it perspiration or anything you want to. But it looked like plain spoonin' to me. Where's your aunt, Miss Patty?

PATTY—Gone to the kitchen to see if Hiram is painting.

HULDA—He's painting. Or at least he's daubin' up everything with the stickiest paint I ever saw. (*Starts*

to door.) I beg your pardon, Doctor Sir John. I hope your patient gets better soon. (*Exit D. R.*)

JOHN—Everybody seems to be catching on. Let's run away and be married.

PATTY—Father would never forgive me.

JOHN—I've got it. Those two rare old gentlemen, your father and Uncle Seth, for he is my uncle, you know, aided and abetted by your Aunt Mary, framed this thing up on you. Why not turn the tables and make them think we've eloped? Good joke on them, making them explain to you that you've married a plain American farmer instead of the English nobleman they passed off on you.

PATTY—It would be fun. Only—

JOHN—Only what?

PATTY—Only it's got to be a pretend elopement. I really must be married at home, John.

JOHN—Surest thing in the world. Pink candles, wedding march, bride's cake and everything. I'll have the flivver ready at the gate in five minutes. (*Leans over to kiss her and she pushes him away.*)

PATTY—Stop whispering and run along.

JOHN—I guess they'll worry a little about how they are going to explain, eh, Patty? (*Runs off C. D.*)

PATTY—(*folding her hands in her lap and dreaming*) I must have been pretty badly spoiled when dear Uncle Seth and Daddy thought it necessary to import a bogus lord to cure me. Dear old Daddy. I must have hurt him terribly. But I can't resist this wonderful opportunity to turn the tables on him. John was so smart to think of it.

(*Enter William, C. D.*)

WILLIAM—Where's that thingumbob going now? He ran out of here like the house was afire.

PATTY—He's gone to get the car, Daddy. We're going to town to dine with Dan and Mary Jane.

WILLIAM—Where you goin' to eat? At the Mansion House?

PATTY—No, I think we'll go to the Quick Service.

WILLIAM—Do you call that dining?

PATTY—I don't want Sir John to take me to an expensive place.

WILLIAM—(*sits in chair opposite Patty*) Look here, daughter. I've been wanting to say something about this here Sir John for some time. He is not—

PATTY—Let's not talk about Sir John, Daddy. He'll be going away in a few days.

WILLIAM—The sooner he goes, the sooner I'll get my old bed back. But I want to tell you—

PATTY—And I want to tell you something, Daddy.

WILLIAM—Will you listen to me, child?

PATTY—(*gets up and goes and sits on arm of his chair*) No, I won't listen to you, just now, Daddy. Sir John is waiting for me. But before I go I want to tell you that you are the dearest Daddy in all the world, and that I am sorry I ever caused you a worry or an unhappy moment. Always remember me as your little Patty and try to forget the spoiled girl I was when I came home from boarding school. (*Rises and goes behind chair.*) Promise me, Daddy, you will always love me.

WILLIAM—Why, my child, what do you mean? (*catching at her hands which are on his shoulders.*)

PATTY—Nothing. (*Kisses his hair, withdraws her hands and runs to door.*) Only, Daddy, if anything should happen, always remember—

WILLIAM—(*Leaps up*) What do you mean—if anything should happen?

PATTY—You never can tell. Remember, we are to dine at the Quick Meal Restaurant. (*Exit C. D.*)

WILLIAM—(*rises*) I suppose that is what she calls "spoofing." But a change has certainly come over the girl in the last month. Seth's little scheme hasn't worked

out at all as he thought it would. Instead of being disgusted at Sir John, she seems to grow fond of him. I hope she won't break her heart when she finds out he isn't a lord at all. (*Pause.*) I wish she hadn't said: "If anything happens." Great Scott! It can't be she means to run away and marry that thingumbob in the belief that he is a nobleman and has a vast estate in England.

(*Enter Seth and Aunt M., C. D.*)

AUNT M.—All alone, William? I'm glad. Seth has something to say to you.

WILLIAM—Yes, Mary, I'm all alone and a little uncomfortable about Patty.

SETH—Still worryin' about her and Sir John?

WILLIAM—You don't suppose she would run away with him, do you?

SETH—That's an insult to John. He wouldn't let her.

AUNT M.—What put that into your head, William?

WILLIAM—Well, she's gone to town with him and before she left she said: "If anything should happen, Daddy, I want you to always love me."

AUNT M.—(*shaking her head*) That sounds suspicious. Oh, I hope the child won't do anything foolish.

WILLIAM—If your nephew makes a fool of my daughter, Seth Wilson, I'll make him pay.

SETH—Have no fear, William. John is my sister's boy and Patty's as safe with him as she would be with you. But I've something else to say to you.

WILLIAM—(*dropping into chair*) I reckon I know what it is.

AUNT M.—(*sits*) Oh, William!

WILLIAM—They say it never rains but it pours. Just as I'm scared about Patty goin' away with young John, I reckon you've finally made up your mind to take Mary away.

AUNT M.—Oh, William!

SETH—(*standing back of table*) You're a pretty good guesser, William. That's just what I'm plannin' to do.

WILLIAM—(*sarcastically*) Took you a long, long time to make up your mind. Are you sure you want her now?

SETH—I'll forgive you that, because you do not understand.

WILLIAM—No, Seth, I can't understand why a man would keep a good woman waiting thirty years.

SETH—Mary understands and now I'll tell you. But we will never speak of it again. For thirty long years I have lived under a cloud. Yesterday the sun came forth and I can claim your sister without a stain upon my name.

WILLIAM—What do you mean?

SETH—When I came here I was a fugitive—an escaped prisoner, with a price upon my head.

WILLIAM—A convict?

SETH—Yes, but falsely accused. I was innocent, William. When but a mere boy I worked in a railroad station in a little town in Vermont. The station agent stole a sum of money from the company and fastened the crime on me. No matter how, the chain of circumstantial evidence was complete, and I was sent to prison for five years. They made me a trusty and I escaped. Soon after, I came out here and what my life has been since I came, you know.

WILLIAM—I know how you worked and saved until you were able to make a payment on your little farm, and I know how you have paid off the mortgage.

SETH—Yes, but you do not know what I've been through. For years I feared to meet a stranger. I dreaded to take the mail from the box. My sister, John's mother, and Mary were the only ones in whom I confided.

WILLIAM—But you say the cloud has passed?

SETH—Two months ago the station agent died and left a confession. My sister took the confession to the governor and yesterday I received a pardon. I couldn't ask Mary to be my wife while that thing hung over me.

WILLIAM—(*rises and takes his hand*) Forgive me, Seth. I did not know.

AUNT M.—But I knew, William, and I've been waiting for him.

WILLIAM—God bless you both, and make you happy.

SETH—We'd like to be married soon. I've been lonely such a long, long while.

WILLIAM—It's goin' to be hard on me, Seth. I've depended so on Mary ever since Patty's mother died.

AUNT M.—I am not going very far away, William.

WILLIAM—It's all right. But you've got to be good to her, Seth.

SETH—You know I'll be that, don't you William?
(*Terrific crash heard outside.*)

AUNT M.—Good Heavens! What was that?

WILLIAM—Hiram.

SETH—Sounded like the house fell in.

HULDA—(*outside*) Are you hurt? Speak to me.

AUNT M.—(*leaping up*) Oh, I know he's killed himself.

WILLIAM—Keep cool, Mary. Hiram never gets hurt.

(*Enter Hulda, leading Hiram, D. R. Hiram is smeared with green paint from head to foot.*)

HULDA—Oh, look at him; look at him!

WILLIAM—What happened now?

HIRAM—(*wiping his face on his sleeve*) The ladder slipped and—

HULDA—He dove right into the paint bucket.

HIRAM—I didn't either. The bucket flew up and hit me.

AUNT M.—(*drops into chair*) He's ruined the kitchen.

HULDA—He's ruined his shirt.

HIRAM—Reckon the pants is spoiled, too.

WILLIAM—This is the end. Get out of here.

HULDA—Oh, sir, you don't mean—

WILLIAM—Hiram's fired! I've put up with him as long as I can. We've had nothing but trouble since he came. You can stay, but Hiram's got to go.

HULDA—I can't do that, sir. Nobody can take care of Hiram but me.

WILLIAM—Nobody else would be fool enough to try.

AUNT M.—Don't be hard on them, William. He didn't do it on purpose.

WILLIAM—Huh! I'm not so sure of that. He didn't want to paint the kitchen.

AUNT M.—And I didn't want him to paint the kitchen.

SETH—Looks like it might be your fault after all, William.

WILLIAM—Well, take him out of here. He's dripping paint all over the floor.

(Dan and Mary Jane rush in C. D.)

MARY J.—Congratulations.

DAN—Yes, congratulations, everybody.

HULDA—It's nothing to congratulate him on.

DAN—*(sees Hiram; laughs heartily)* What have you been painting, Hiram?

HIRAM—I started to paint the kitchen.

DAN—And ran out of paint, of course. Looks like you put most of it on yourself.

WILLIAM—Take him out, I tell you, Hulda.

DAN—Yes, send him to the dry cleaner's.

HULDA—Nobody ever feels sorry for Hiram but me. *(Exit, leading Hiram out.)*

MARY J.—Congratulations.

DAN—Yes, congratulations.

AUNT M.—Why, bless my heart, children. We haven't told a soul.

MARY J.—Oh, you know, then?

SETH—Well, I reckon we know. But we didn't want anybody else to know until after the wedding.

MARY J.—After the wedding? Why, the wedding's over.

SETH—'Tain't no such thing. We haven't even seen the minister yet.

DAN—What are you talking about?

SETH—Our wedding—Mary's and mine.

MARY J.—Oh!

DAN—Oh!

WILLIAM—(*goes up to Dan*) What were you talking about?

MARY J.—Another wedding.

AUNT M. AND SETH—(*together*) Whose?

DAN AND MARY J.—(*together*) Patty's and Sir John's.

WILLIAM—(*drops into chair*) Oh!

AUNT M.—(*drops into chair*) Oh!

SETH—Well, I'll be day gone!

WILLIAM—(*pathetically*) You—you don't mean my little girl is married?

MARY J.—We met them just as we were coming out of town and they told us they were going to be married.

DAN—I suppose she'll be leaving America and living at Sir John's ancestral home in England.

WILLIAM—Ancestral woodshed! He hasn't got any home in England. (*Leaps up.*) This has got to be stopped. (*Calls.*) Hiram!

HULDA—(*entering D. R.*) Hiram can't come, sir. He—he—ain't got anything on but paint.

WILLIAM—I want a horse hitched up at once. (*To Dan.*) Here, you take me to town in your car. (*Drags Dan toward door.*)

DAN—Hold on. I can't take you. Got a puncture as we came up the lane. Tire's flat.

SETH—Wait a minute, William. Let's think this thing out.

HULDA—What's the matter?

WILLIAM—Patty has run away with that thingumbob.

HULDA—Not Sir John? Well, I'm not surprised.

AUNT M.—What do you know about it?

HULDA—I saw 'em spoonin, right in this room. He said something about perspiration, but he couldn't fool me. I know spoonin' when I see it.

WILLIAM—The impudent upstart! I'll horsewhip him.

MARY J.—Why, Mr. Webster. We thought you'd be glad.

WILLIAM—Glad my little girl has been bunkoed—made a fool of. (*Goes up to Seth.*) It's all your fault, you meddlesome old —

AUNT M.—Don't you lay your hands on Seth.

HIRAM—(*outside*) Hulda! Hulda!

HULDA—What do you want?

HIRAM—I want to get out of here.

HULDA—You can't. We've got company. Guess I'd better get him something to put on. (*Exit D. R.*)

DAN—I don't get this. I thought marrying Sir John would be a great match for Patty.

WILLIAM—I'm the best judge of that.

SETH—I've got an opinion of my own.

AUNT M.—Everything will come out all right, William.

WILLIAM—I can't see it. Patty run away with that chap; you going to leave me and marry Seth; and I've fired Hiram and Hulda goes, too. (*Paces floor.*) I'm in a dickens of a mess.

SETH—Put a want ad in the paper.

WILLIAM—A fine job you did, “Putting it up to Patty.”

DAN—She’s Lady Patricia by this time.

WILLIAM—Lady Fiddle-dee-dee! He’s a bogus lord. He’s no more Sir John Matthews than you are.

DAN—(To Mary Jane) There, what did I tell you?

MARY J.—Well, you’ll remember I had my doubts, too.

DAN—Who played this low-down trick on Patty?

WILLIAM—Seth did.

AUNT M.—You agreed to it.

MARY J.—She’ll never forgive you. Never.

SETH—Maybe so. But I kind of think she will. As she jumped in the car she handed me this note. (*Holds up note.*) “When you’ve all worried enough, give this to Daddy,” she said. (*Hands note to William.*)

WILLIAM—(*reads*) “Whatever happens, Daddy, don’t you believe it. Back soon.” God bless her. (*Wipes his eyes.*)

(*Enter Hulda and Hiram. Hiram has on a white, stiff-bosom shirt and dress trousers. Wears black bow tie and high silk hat.*)

HULDA—Do you think it will be all right for Hiram to wear these clothes?

AUNT M.—Where did you get them?

HULDA—Borrowed them from Sir John.

SETH—Yes, Hulda, it will be all right. John isn’t going to need them any more.

HIRAM—I’ll bet he’s goin’ to take my place. He kin hev it.

(*Enter Patty and John, C. D.*)

PATTY—(*running up to William and throwing her arms around his neck.*) Daddy, poor old Daddy.

WILLIAM—(*patting her head*) My little girl!

JOHN—(*to Seth*) Everything quiet on the Potomac?

SETH—’Tis now. But it’s been pretty rough.

HULDA—(*pulling at John's coat*) Can he have 'em?

JOHN—(*turns around and sees Hiram*) I'll say he can. I'm crazy to get back into my overalls.

AUNT M.—You—you're not married, Patty?

PATTY—(*drawing away from William*) Who says I am?

MARY J.—You told us—

PATTY—That we were going to be married. But I didn't say when.

DAN—Well, of all the false reports!

JOHN—We would like to start a dairy farm here, sir. And—and—we'd like to have you live with us.

WILLIAM—We'll consider the proposition.

HULDA—And you'll keep me and Hiram?

HIRAM—I'll do anything but paint.

PATTY—And, Daddy, we want to have a real wedding. Pink candles, wedding march, bride's cake and everything.

(*Patty puts one arm around William's neck and reaches out the other hand to John. Seth and Mary clasp hands. Hulda draws Hiram to her. Dan, at extreme left, throws kiss to Mary Jane, who has taken position at extreme right.*)

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
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