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NO PLAYS EXCHANGED

AMATEUR SERIES

PRICE 15 CENTS



Before the Play Begins



T. S. DENISON & COMPANY
PUBLISHERS CHICAGO

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DENISON'S ACTING PLAYS

Partial List of Successful and Popular Plays. Large Catalogue Free.

DRAMAS, COMEDIES, ENTERTAINMENTS, Etc.

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	M.	F.
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Real Thing After All, 3 acts, 2¼ hrs. (35c)	7	9
Rustic Romeo, 2 acts, 2¼ hrs. (25c)	10	12
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Southern Cinderella, 3 acts, 2 hrs. (25c)	7	
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Thread of Destiny, 3 acts, 2½ hrs. (25c)	9	16
Tony, the Convict, 5 acts, 2½ hrs. (25c)	7	4

T. S. DENISON & COMPANY, Publishers, 154 W. Randolph St., Chicago

BEFORE THE PLAY BEGINS

A COMEDY IN ONE ACT

BY

GEORGIA EARLE

AUTHOR OF

*"Gettin' Acquainted," "The Lie that Jack Built," "The Villain,"
"Hitchin' Up Amos," "The Porchclimber," "The Love-
joy Twins," "The Rented Lady," etc.*

CO-AUTHOR

*"The Mark of the Beast" (Produced at the Princess Theatre,
New York City)*



CHICAGO
T. S. DENISON & COMPANY
PUBLISHERS

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BEFORE THE PLAY BEGINS

CHARACTERS.

KATE LAMBERT.....*The "Leading Lady"*
JACK SYLVESTER.....*The "Leading Man"*
FRED LAMBERT.....*Kate's Brother; the "Stage Manager"*

TIME—*Tonight, 8 p. m.*

PLACE—*The Reading Room off the Main Library at
Bramhill College.*

TIME OF PLAYING—*About Fifteen Minutes.*

COSTUMES.

KATE and JACK wear the wigs and costumes of the 17th Century. He wears a sword. FRED is in modern clothes, without a coat.

STAGE DIRECTIONS.

R. means right of stage; C., center; R. C., right center; L., left; 1 E., first entrance; U. E., upper entrance; R. 3 E., right entrance, up stage, etc.; D. F., door in flat, or scene running across the back of the stage; up stage, away from footlights; down stage, near footlights. The actor is supposed to be facing the audience.

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BEFORE THE PLAY BEGINS

The scene is a reading room off the main library at Bramhill College. There are some book cases against a wall, a reading table or two, littered with books and magazines, and several easy chairs. There is a door in the back wall, left of center. There is another door left 1 E. The electric light switch is in the wall at about L. 2 E.

As the curtain rises, the stage is dark and empty of people.

KATE LAMBERT enters, hastily, holds the door open and looks out into the hall. She is about twenty years old and is dressed in the wig and costume of the 17th century.

KATE (*speaking in a guarded tone to someone outside*). Hurry! Come in quick before anyone sees you! And be careful with that sword! You're making an awful noise.

Enter JACK SYLVESTER, a young man of about twenty-three. He is dressed in a costume of the same period and wears a sword. He closes the door. They both listen intently.

KATE. I don't hear anyone coming! Do you?

JACK. No.

KATE. You're sure nobody saw us?

JACK. Don't believe so.

KATE (*grabbing his arm in a sudden panic*). 'Sh!

JACK. What's the matter?

KATE. I thought I heard someone!

JACK. You didn't. (*Moves down stage.*)

KATE (*with a sigh of relief*). Thank goodness!

JACK. My, but it's dark here! Where's that switch?

KATE (*pointing to wall L.*). Over there on the wall. I'm dreadfully nervous, aren't you?

JACK (*going over and turning on the switch; the lights go up*). Rather.

KATE. That's better! (*Briskly.*) Now let's move the furniture out of the way so we can rehearse that Corridor scene first of all. (*They take hold of the table and move it up stage.*) That's the one that worries me so. We've never once been through it properly, you know, they do guy so! (*They shove the chairs up stage.*)

JACK. I know.

KATE. Well, I'd like to do it right just once before the audience sees us! The audience! Oooo-oh! it gives me a cold chill to think of it!

JACK. It isn't the audience I mind! It's our own bunch!

KATE. I know! They're perfectly awful! (*Coming down to him.*) Why do you suppose people have to act as if it was all so—personal?

JACK (*trying to take her hand—sentimentally*). But isn't it—just a little—personal with us?

KATE (*nervously drawing away her hands*). Now, Jack! Really, you know, we haven't very much time before the play begins, and Fred or someone may interrupt any minute.

JACK (*promptly*). All right! Go to it! (*He goes down stage, extreme L.*) Now I come on from way over here.

KATE (*standing R. of C.*). And the staircase is here!

JACK. Ready?

KATE. Uh-huh.

JACK (*coming C. with a long stride and speaking in a rather forced voice, with an elocutionary manner*). "'Tis here I'm to meet her! In the corridor, near the long staircase, at eight by the clock, her letter reads. 'Tis after eight, and yet—she cometh not!"

KATE (*in a loud stage whisper*). "Eustace!"

JACK (*looking up, supposedly up the staircase, dramatically*). "Myrtilla!" (*KATE makes three or four steps in one place to indicate running down stairs. She stops as though hesitating.*)

JACK. "Myrtilla, I am here! Fear not, 'tis I, thy Eustace!"

KATE (*taking a few more up and down steps as she supposedly finishes the flight*). "Eustace, my own!"

JACK. "My beloved!" (*They start to rush into each other's arms and then stop dead, embarrassed. Brief pause. JACK making a heroic dive at her.*) "My beloved!"

KATE (*backing away and laughing consciously*). Oh, I thought I heard Bertie in the hall! You don't suppose he's listening at the keyhole, do you? (*She starts up toward the door up stage.*)

JACK. No, I don't. Come back here! (*She turns and comes back.*) Now let's try it over again!

KATE. All right, let's!

JACK. And we're supposed to be really in love, you know, and not afraid of each other!

KATE (*meckly*). Yes, I know, but I did think I heard Bertie, honestly! We'll just do the embrace again. Ready! "Eustace, my own!"

JACK. "My beloved!" (*They fly into each other's arms so enthusiastically that they stop and laugh.*)

KATE (*taking her arms from around his neck*). Oh, my goodness, that must have looked awfully funny!

JACK (*putting her arms back around his neck again*). Never mind, go on with the scene or we'll never get through!

KATE (*dramatically*). "Why so late, dearest? I've waited for thee till each mouse in the wainscot seemed an army come to destroy me!" (*Taking her arm down and speaking in her natural voice.*) See here, Jack, I can't stand with my arms around your neck all that time. It would look foolish!

JACK. I don't think that's long.

KATE. Don't you? Well, I do!

JACK. I certainly want my arms around you during the next speech. "Sweetheart, I had to contest my way"—

KATE. Jack, you ought to say "Me way."

JACK (*argumentatively*). Why?

KATE. They all do it. It's poetic!

JACK. Well, I won't! It's silly! It's bad enough to have to spout all the rest of this piffle Isabel McGlynn wrote. I suppose she thinks she's the coming American dramatist!

KATE. Maybe she is! You boys are sore because a girl's play was chosen!

JACK. We aren't, either!

KATE. Never mind. Anyhow, you can't embrace me through that whole speech. We'll just embrace at the beginning and then I'll come over here and say my speech. (*She crosses down R.*) "Why so late, dearest"—

JACK (*interrupting, sarcastically*). That's very sensible, I must say! But of course, if you know more than the stage manager—

KATE. Stage manager! Pooh—my brother Fred! I guess I know as much as he does any day in the week if he is a real actor.

JACK (*starting over L.*). Let's go back and start over!

KATE. No! (*He stops, turns and comes back.*) Start with your speech. I'm over here. Go on.

JACK. "Sweetheart!"—(*protestingly*). This isn't right, I can feel it—"Sweetheart, I had to contest my way"—

KATE. *Me way!*

JACK. "*My way*"—I wish you wouldn't interrupt—"My way with a certain villain—none other than thy cousin Lionel"—(*crossly*). Say, Kate, are you going to stand with your back to me?

KATE. I think—

JACK. Well, I think you ought to look at me, or come toward me or do something to indicate that I am on the map. I might as well be talking to myself! (*Turns suddenly and nearly falls over his sword.*)

KATE. Oh, do be careful or you'll fall over that sword. That would look fine!

JACK (*disgusted*). Now you've got me all mixed up. I don't know where I was! I never can remember the speech anyhow. (*Tries to remember.*) "None other than thy cousin Lionel, who swore that I should reach thy side only over his dead body—dead body—dead body"—oh, what the—excuse me!

KATE (*haughtily*). You'd better!

JACK. "Dead body"—

KATE. Go on!

JACK. I can't. I'm stuck.

KATE. Gracious! Suppose you do that at the performance! Start at the beginning and see if you can't remember!

JACK (*looking straight ahead of him and repeating like a parrot*). "Sweetheart, I had to contest my way—contest my way—with a certain ruffian, none other than thy cousin Lionel—cousin Lionel who swore that I should reach thy side only over his dead body—dead body"—there, I'm stuck again!

KATE. Oh! Oh!! (*He looks at her.*) I guess I'm the one. It's my turn!

JACK (*brightening up*). So it is. I thought it was funny I couldn't remember.

KATE (*dramatically*). "Me cousin Lionel? Eustace, what have you done? He is not *dead*?"

JACK. "No, sweet one, not dead, but the leech must visit him, ere he again try conclusions with thy Eustace!" (*He walks proudly down L.*)

KATE. "Eustace, thou hast fought with Lionel"—Now, Jack, you mustn't walk away from me there! I have to throw myself into your arms again!

JACK (*disdainfully*). Again! Humph! Well, you'll just have to run after me, then.

KATE. Run after you? I should say not!

JACK. It says "goes down left" in my part, and I have some respect for the stage manager if you haven't.

KATE (*plaintively*). But how can I throw myself in your arms if your back is turned toward me?

JACK (*dignifiedly—folding his arms*). You turned your back on me!

KATE (*tearfully*). Well, I turned round when you asked me!

JACK. Very well, then, I'll turn around at the end of the speech.

KATE. "Eustace, thou hast fought—and with me cousin Lionel—now indeed will me stern sire never forgive thee!" (*She throws herself in his arms.*)

JACK (*holding her very tight*). "Sweetheart!" (*Kisses her.*)

KATE (*trying to break away*). Jack Sylvester, that kiss isn't in the part!

JACK. Well, it ought to be! That's the way I feel it! I know I'd kiss you if it were I!

KATE (*still struggling*). But it isn't you—it's Eustace!

JACK (*placatingly*). Now, Kate, I admit Eustace is a chump, but I won't admit he's that much of a chump. Even Eustace would know a good chance if he saw it!

KATE (*trying not to laugh*). Now, Jack, you know—

JACK (*hastily*). Let's get on with the scene! "Sweetheart!" (*Kisses her, goes on very hastily.*) "'Tis not thy sire's forgiveness I crave, but thine!"

KATE. "Mine thou hast!" (*Pertly.*) Eustace has, you haven't!

JACK. "Then fly with me—tonight—my steed waits without—there is clear road to the border and then—

KATE. "Nay, nay, my Eustace, I dare not!" (*Tries to break from his arms.*)

JACK. Hold on, you don't break away yet! (*Very sentimentally.*) "Myrtila, dost thou love me?"

KATE. "Love thee? Mayhap. (*Turning coquettishly away from him.*) But I would be sure of thy love!"

JACK (*intensely*). "Then I will swear"—

KATE (*lightly*). "Swear? Faith, all men do that? 'Tis a surer love test I demand!"

JACK (*suddenly and practically*). On the level, Kate, what kind of a love test would you want?

KATE. Don't be silly. How do I know? Go on with the piece.

JACK. Where the deuce were we?—oh, yes! "'Tis no time for tests! Time flies, Myrtila, even now our way may be blocked!" Gee, Eustace's trolley system must have been just like ours. I waited fifteen minutes for a car tonight!

KATE. Go on, idiot!

JACK. "Blocked—blocked"—oh, yes—umm—"I have

risked death to reach thy side this night! Is not that test enough?"

KATE. "Nay, 'twas not love of me, but of the Goddess Adventure who brought thee into peril this night. What wilt thou do for me alone?"

JACK (*folding his arms, grimly*). "Die, an' thou continue so perverse, fair lady!"

KATE (*shrieking with laughter*). For goodness sake, Jack, if you look as funny as that when you say that speech, the audience will simply howl!

JACK (*miffed*). Thanks!

KATE. Don't get mad about it! I thought you'd like to know! (*Patronisingly*.) I just told you for your own good!

JACK. Thanks again! Where were we?

KATE. I don't know.

JACK. It's not my turn.

KATE. I guess it's mine. What did you say last?

JACK (*still annoyed—stiffly*). I'm not going to repeat it.

KATE (*beginning to laugh again*). Oh, I remember. "Perverse, an' this to thy lady love *before* marriage, what wilt thou not say afterwards! Oh, thou brute!" (*Goes down stage R.*)

JACK (*following her*). "Myrtilla!"

KATE. "Nay, nay, be still! I will not listen!"

JACK. "Myrtilla!"

Enter FRED LAMBERT from door L. C. His hair is tousled, his coat off, his shirt sleeves rolled up, he is the frenzied, perspiring stage manager.

FRED. For the love of heaven, you two, come on! We've been looking everywhere for you! Everyone's waiting! (*He exits.*)

KATE (*starting to run to the door*). Mercy me!

JACK. Kate! (*She turns.*) We haven't finished the scene!

KATE. There isn't time! Come on! (*Runs to the door.*)

JACK. Wait a minute. I want to ask you something first.

KATE. Ask me afterwards. (*She exits.*)

JACK (*loudly*). No!

KATE *reappearing in the door.*

KATE. Aren't you coming?

JACK. Not till you answer my question.

KATE (*going down to him*). Well, what is it?

JACK. You know this chump Eustace finally gets his Myrtila?

KATE. Well?

JACK. Before we go any further I want to know if I get mine?

KATE (*airily*). That depends upon who your Myrtila is! (*Turns to go.*)

JACK (*taking her hand firmly and speaking meaningly*). You know!

KATE. Oh, Jack, this is so sudden! (*She laughs and tries to run away.*)

JACK (*pulling her back*). No you don't. Come back here! Do I?

KATE (*trying to pull away*). Jack, they're waiting!

JACK. Let 'em wait! Do I?

KATE (*not looking at him, still trying to pull away*). Do you what?

JACK. Do I get you?

KATE. Yes! (*Tries to run away.*)

JACK. Kate! (*Grabs her and kisses her.*)

FRED (*bawling off stage*). First Act!!!

JACK (*striking a heroic attitude*). Myrtila, my love!

KATE (*in his arms*). Eustace, my own!

FRED (*bawls—outside*). Places! Everybody!

KATE (*grabbing JACK's hand*). Oh, do hurry! Hurry!

(*They run off stage as the curtain falls.*)

CURTAIN.

Safety First

By SHELDON FARMER

Price, 25 Cents

Farce-comedy, in 3 acts; 5 males, 5 females. Time, 2¼ hours. Scenes: A parlor and a garden, easily arranged. A sprightly farce full of action and with a unique plot teeming with unexpected turns and twists that will make the audience wonder "what on earth is coming next." Behind the fun and movement lurks a great moral: Always tell the truth to your wife. The cast includes three young men, a funny policeman, a terrible Turk, two young ladies, a society matron, a Turkish maiden and Mary O'Finnigan, the Irish cook. The antics of the terror-stricken husband, the policeman, the dude and the Irish cook start the audience smiling at 8:15 and send them home with aching sides from the tornado of fun at 10:40. Suitable for performance anywhere, but recommended for lodges, clubs and schools. Not a coarse or suggestive line in the play.

SYNOPSIS

Act I.—Jack's lil suburban home. A misplaced husband. "He kissed me good-bye at eighteen minutes after seven last night, and I haven't laid eyes on him since." The Irish maid is full of sympathy but she imagines a crime has been committed. Elmer, the college boy, drops in. And the terrible Turk drops out. "Sure, the boss has eloped wid a Turkey!" Jerry and Jack come home after a horrible night. Explanations. "We joined the Shriners, I'm the Exalted Imported Woggle and Jack is the Bazook!" A detective on the trail. Warrants for John Doe, Richard Roe and Mary Moe. "We're on our way to Florida!"

Act II.—A month later, Jack and Jerry reported drowned at sea. The Terrible Turk looking for Zuleika. The return of the prodigals. Ghosts! Some tall explanations are in order. "I never was drowned in all my life, was I, Jerry?" "We were lashed to a mast and we floated and floated and floated!" A couple of heroes. The Terrible Turk hunting for Jack and Jerry. "A Turk never injures an insane man." Jack feigns insanity. "We are leaving this roof forever!" The end of a perfect day.

Act III.—Mrs. Bridger's garden. Elmer and Zuleika start on their honeymoon. Mabel forgives Jack, but her mamma does not. They decide to elope. Jerry's scheme works. The two McNutts. "Me middle name is George Washington, and I cannot tell a lie." The detective falls in the well. "It's his ghost!" Jack and Jerry preparing for the elopement. Mary Ann appears at the top of the ladder. A slight mistake. "It's a burglar, mum, I've got him!" The Terrible Turk finds his Zuleika. Happiness at last.

Foiled, By Heck!

By FREDERICK G. JOHNSON

Price, 25 Cents

A truly rural drama, in 1 scene and several dastardly acts; 3 males, 3 females. Time, 35 minutes. Scene: The mortgaged home of the homespun drama, between sunup and sundown. Characters: Reuben, a nearly self-made man. His wife, who did the rest. Their perfectly lovely daughter. Clarence, a rustic hero, by ginger! Olivia, the plaything of fate, poor girl. Sylvester, with a viper's heart. Curses! Curses! Already he has the papers. A screaming travesty on the old-time "b'gosh" drama.

T. S. DENISON & COMPANY, Publishers
154 W. Randolph Street, CHICAGO

An Old Fashioned Mother

By WALTER BEN HARE.

Price, 25 Cents

The dramatic parable of a mother's love, in 3 acts; 6 males, 6 females, also the village choir or quartet and a group of silent villagers. Time, 2¼ hours. One scene: A sitting room. A play of righteousness as pure as a mother's kiss, but with a moral that will be felt by all. Contains plenty of good, wholesome comedy and dramatic scenes that will interest any audience. **Male Characters:** The county sheriff; an old hypocrite; the selfish elder son; the prodigal younger son; a tramp and a comical country boy. **Female Characters:** The mother (one of the greatest sympathetic roles ever written for amateurs); the village belle; the sentimental old maid; the good-hearted hired girl; a village gossip and a little girl of nine. Especially suited for church, Sunday school, lodge or school performance.

SYNOPSIS.

Act. I.—**The Good Samaritan.** Aunt Debby's farmhouse in late March. The Widder rehearses the village choir. Sukey in trouble with the old gray tabby cat. "She scratched me. I was puttin' flour on her face for powder, jest like you do!" Lowisy Custard reads her original poetry and Jerry Gosling drops in to see if there are to be any refreshments. "That's jest what maw says!" Lowisy and Jonah pass the fainting tramp by the wayside and Deborah rebukes them with the parable of the Good Samaritan. The tramp's story of downfall due to drink. "A poor piece of driftwood blown hither and thither by the rough winds of adversity." John, Deborah's youngest son, profits by the tramp's experience. "From this moment no drop of liquor shall ever pass my lips." John arrested. "I am innocent, and when a man can face his God, he needn't be afraid to face the law!"

Act II.—**A Mother's Love.** Same scene but three years later, a winter afternoon. "Colder'n blue and purple blazes and snowin' like sixty." Jerry's engagement ring. "Is it a di'mond? Ef it ain't I'm skun out of two shillin'." "I been sparkin' her fer nigh onto four years, Huldy Sourapple, big fat gal, lives over at Hookworm Crick." Deborah longs for news from John, the boy who was taken away. The Widder gossips. "I never seer slich a womern!" "You'd think she was a queen livin' in New York at the Walled-off Castoria." Lowisy is disappointed in Brother Guggs and decides to set her cap for Jonah. Deborah mortgages the old home for Charley and Isabel. The sleighing party. "Where is my wandering boy tonight?" The face at the window. Enoch and John. "I've been weak and foolish, a thing of scorn, laughed at, mocked at, an ex-convict with the shadow of the prison ever before me, but all that is passed. From now on, with the help of God, I am going to be a man!"

Act III.—**The Prodigal Son.** Two years later. Deborah bids farewell to the old home before she goes over the hills to the poorhouse. "The little home where I've lived since John brought me home as a bride." The bitterest cup—a pauper. "It ain't right, it ain't fair." Gloriana and the baby. "There ain't nothin' left fer me, nothin' but the poorhouse." The sheriff comes to take Aunt Deb over the hills. "Your boy ain't dead. He's come back to you, rich and respected. He's here!" The return of the prodigal son. Jerry gets excited and yells, "Glory Hallelujah!" The joy and happiness of Deborah. "Honor thy father and thy mother that thy days may be long in the land."

T. S. DENISON & COMPANY, Publishers
154 W. Randolph Street, CHICAGO

DENISON'S ACTING PLAYS

Partial List of Successful and Popular Plays. Large Catalogue Free

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Billy's Chorus Girl, 25 min.	2 3
Billy's Mishap, 20 min.	2 3
Borrowed Luncheon, 20 min.	5
Borrowing Trouble, 20 min.	3 5
Case Against Casey, 40 min.	23
Country Justice, 15 min.	8
Cow that Kicked Chicago, 20 m.	3 2
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Family Strike, 20 min.	3 3
First-Class Hotel, 20 min.	4
For Love and Honor, 20 min.	2 1
Fudge and a Burglar, 15 min.	5
Fun in Photo Gallery, 30 min.	6 10
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Great Medical Dispensary, 30 m.	6
Great Pumpkin Case, 30 min.	12
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Initiating a Granger, 25 min.	8
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Pair of Lunatics, 20 min.	1 1
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Pat, the Apothecary, 35 min.	6 2
Persecuted Dutchman, 30 min.	6 3
Please Pass the Cream, 20 min.	1 1
Second Childhood, 15 min.	2 2
Shadows, 35 min.	2 2
Sing a Song of Seniors, 30 min.	7
Smith's Unlucky Day, 20 min.	1 1
Taking Father's Place, 30 min.	5 3
That Rascal Pat, 30 min.	3 2
Too Much of a Good Thing, 45 min.	3 6
Turn Him Out, 35 min.	3 2
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Two Gentlemen in a Fix, 15 m.	2
Two Ghosts in White, 20 min.	8

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