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1922

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No. 424

PIRATES

A Comedy in One Act

BY

COLIN CAMPBELL CLEMENTS

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Samuel French
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NEW YORK
SAMUEL FRENCH
(Incorporated 1898)
PUBLISHER

LONDON
SAMUEL FRENCH, LTD.
26 Southampton Street
STRAND

P5 3505
L647 P5
1922

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MAY -4 '22

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no 1

PIRATES

CHARACTERS

MRS. WARREN
BETTY
MRS. LAWTY
MRS. ROMNEY
MRS. PICKERING
MRS. LAWER
CLARA

The play takes place in MRS. WARREN'S little living room during the early Victorian period. At the left is a door leading to another part of the house. A door at the back opens into the entrance hall. As the curtain rises, MRS. WARREN, seated in a large chair, is talking to her maid, CLARA.

MRS. WARREN. Gossip is malicious, my dear girl, positively malicious. Doesn't the Bible say—(*The knocker sounds.*) There, isn't that the door? (*CLARA starts to go.*) Oh, Clara, before you open the door, be sure and dust off the table in the hall and——

(*CLARA goes out. MRS. WARREN arranges her dress and the little lace cap on her head.*)

CLARA. (*From the door*) It's Mrs. Lawty, ma'am.

MRS. WARREN. Oh, the dear soul! Have her come right in—right in, Clara.

(CLARA goes out. MRS. LAWTY enters.)

MRS. LAWTY. Good afternoon—good afternoon, Mrs. Warren.

MRS. WARREN. Good afternoon, my dear. Do sit down, Mrs. Lawty—do sit down.

MRS. LAWTY. Oh, thank you. I have just dropped in for a moment. I am on my way to the meeting of the "Helping Hand Society," and as I had to pass this way I just came in to see how you were. I hope I am not interrupting any work you may be doing, my dear.

MRS. WARREN. Oh, dear, no. I was just giving my maid a little lecture . . . on gossip.

MRS. LAWTY. Gossip?

MRS. WARREN. It is *so* malicious.

MRS. LAWTY. Positively unladylike! One could almost compare a lady who gossips to a . . . to a pirate.

MRS. WARREN. A what, Mrs. Lawty?

MRS. LAWTY. A pirate. They are sort of wild thieves, you know, and steal things from perfectly innocent people, Mrs. Warren. The South Sea Islands are full of them . . . pirates, I mean. Why. I read in our missionary paper, just last week, that one poor man was overtaken by pirates who took away his watch and, I hesitate to say it, his trousers!

MRS. WARREN. His trousers! Dreadful!

MRS. LAWTY. The rest of the story is too indelicate to repeat.

MRS. WARREN. Yes . . . yes, some things are often better left unsaid. (*Pause.*) But one need never be ashamed to speak the truth. What is the rest of the story, Mrs. Lawty?

MRS. LAWTY. The poor man was forced to come into port with a bad cold in his head . . . and in his pajamas!

MRS. WARREN. Oh!

MRS. LAWTY. And that is why I call a woman who gossips a pirate.

MRS. WARREN. Yes . . . yes. Though one can hardly think of *any* woman unlawfully taking a poor gentleman's trousers.

MRS. LAWTY. Hardly. But to steal one's good name is to take one's cloak of righteousness, so to speak. And, oh, my dear, few people can face the world without it. The soul is so much more important than the body.

MRS. WARREN. One should keep *both* properly clothed.

MRS. LAWTY. Yes . . . though on the South Sea Islands the people wear nothing but grass skirts.

MRS. WARREN. One could hardly do that in England.

MRS. LAWTY. Oh, but the people there, in the South Seas, are like little children . . . pure of mind. And so it is one of the very first rules of the "Helping Hand Society" that no gossip shall pass our lips.

MRS. WARREN. Such a worthy organization. I am sure the ladies of Northampton are doing a noble work.

MRS. LAWTY. Oh, yes, indeed, Mrs. Warren. Why, only last week we sent off a large box of soap to the natives of East Africa and now we are getting a box of napkins and tablecloths ready. We are doing such splendid work for our less fortunate brothers and sisters in a far land.

MRS. WARREN. Brothers and sisters! One hardly feels that way toward them, Mrs. Lawty. I am told they are quite black.

MRS. LAWTY. Nevertheless they are Gaud's creatures.

MRS. WARREN. My dear, I shall have Clara make

you a hot cup of tea. It will rest you. (*She calls*)
Clara . . . Clara!

MRS. LAWTY. Oh, no, thank you . . . really. I mustn't stop. I always like to get to the society meetings early . . . otherwise one misses so much that is interesting. (*She rises.*)

(CLARA appears.)

MRS. WARREN. Never mind, Clara. (CLARA starts to go.) Oh, Clara, Clara——

CLARA. Yes, ma'am.

MRS. WARREN. Clara, will you put the water on to boil? And make the tea rather strong . . . but not too strong . . . just so.

CLARA. Yes, ma'am. (*She goes out.*)

MRS. LAWTY. By the way, have you met the new doctor and his wife, Mrs. Warren?

MRS. WARREN. Yes, I have called on Mrs. Hunter.

MRS. LAWTY. (*She sits down again*) Oh, really? How interesting.

MRS. WARREN. But, of course, Betty knows both of them. I must call on Mrs. Hunter again. But I get out so seldom now . . . so seldom. I am so afraid to walk on the new . . . pavement, I believe they call it. Betty is very fond of them both . . . the Hunters, I mean.

MRS. LAWTY. Quite . . . though Mrs. Romney told Mrs. Pickering who told me that the Hunters did not get along well together. It seems she is a Church of England woman while the doctor is the son of a Scotch Presbyterian, so of course——

MRS. WARREN. Though I believe they have been married all of five or six years.

MRS. LAWTY. Oh, really, I did not know that. How interesting! I must tell Mrs. Romney. But

Mrs. Lawer told me that the doctor calls Mrs. Hunter "Dearest" . . . in public!

MRS. WARREN. Such poor taste.

MRS. LAWTY. I always suspect a man who is over-demonstrative . . . in public.

MRS. WARREN. But of course one——

(BETTY comes running in, her arms full of daisies.)

BETTY. Mother dear—— Oh, good afternoon. Mrs. Lawty. See the wonderful flowers Doctor Hunter just gave me.

MRS. WARREN. Doctor Hunter gave you those?

MRS. LAWTY. Doctor Hunter!

BETTY. Yes, his garden is full of them! Aren't they beauties?

MRS. WARREN. But you hardly know him well enough to——

BETTY. You see we are getting acquainted. He was on his way to see Mrs. Hallway and——

MRS. LAWTY. Is she ill again?

BETTY. Rheumatism . . . not really serious.

MRS. LAWTY. Oh, really?

BETTY. And as the doctor was coming this way, he walked to the gate with me . . . we had a lovely chat. Doctor Hunter is such an interesting conversationalist.

MRS. LAWTY. (*Coldly*) Walking! Hasn't he a carriage?

BETTY. Oh, yes, but it is such a wonderful day for walking.

MRS. LAWTY. I daresay that all depends upon with whom one is walking.

MRS. WARREN. Betty, you don't really mean to tell me that you walked . . . walked down a public highway with a strange man!

BETTY. Why, Mother, he isn't a strange man. I know both Doctor and Mrs. Hunter.

MRS. WARREN. But such a short acquaintance . . . and to be walking with him . . . walking with him in broad daylight.

BETTY. What would you have me do? Walk with him after dark?

MRS. WARREN. Oh!

MRS. LAWTY. (*When she recovers her breath*) I—I really must be going, Mrs. Warren. I must not be late to the meeting, you know. (*She pauses.*) And perhaps you would rather be alone with your daughter at this time. (*She rises.*) Good afternoon, Mrs. Warren. Good afternoon.

MRS. WARREN. Good afternoon, Mrs. Lawty.

BETTY. Good-bye.

(*MRS. LAWTY goes out. MRS. WARREN waits until the front door slams before she speaks.*)

MRS. WARREN. (*Much concerned*) Betty, how could you?

BETTY. But, Mother—

MRS. WARREN. Walking with a man, a man who is married and not on the best terms with his wife, accepting flowers from him, a Presbyterian, unchaperoned. Oh! It is so unbecoming . . . so—so unladylike, not to say indiscreet. Oh! Why, when I was a girl—

BETTY. I know. (*She goes close to her mother.*) But things have changed so since then, dear.

MRS. WARREN. Not in Northampton, thank heaven. Here, at least, we still keep some of the old propriety. Oh, Betty, this bold indiscretion of yours would have killed your poor, dear father!

BETTY. (*Turning away*) Perhaps that's what *did* . . . too much propriety.

MRS. WARREN. Did you say something, Betty?

BETTY. I am sorry, dear . . . truly sorry if I have caused you any anxiety.

MRS. WARREN. We must cultivate the doctor's wife at once. There must be no room for gossip among the ladies of Northampton.

BETTY. Cultivate Mrs. Hunter? Oh, I would love to. She is a delightful person. Don't you like her, Mother?

MRS. WARREN. She seems very nice, but, of course, one must be very careful about strangers.

BETTY. She is very fond of outdoor life, and all that sort of thing. Oh, she is a regular sport!

MRS. WARREN. Betty! Let me never hear such a remark from you again. Sport! Am I to understand, then . . . am I to understand that Mrs. Hunter is one of those dreadful mannish sort of persons who— (*The knocker sounds.*) Oh, dear me! I wonder who that can be?

BETTY. If you don't mind, Mother, I shall go up to my room. I want to do a water-color sketch of these flowers while they are still fresh.

MRS. WARREN. Stop here a bit, Betty.

(CLARA enters from the hall.)

CLARA. It is Mrs. Romney, ma'am.

MRS. WARREN. Oh, do have her come right in, Clara . . . and Clara, serve the tea at once. (CLARA goes out.) Mrs. Romney—oh, dear . . . such a bombastic sort of a person, so to speak.

BETTY. She was educated in London, you know.

MRS. WARREN. Yes, poor dear, she has so much to live down. It must be dreadful to have been educated in London . . . such a naughty place. Think of the dreadful environment, my dear, London!

(MRS. ROMNEY enters.)

MRS. ROMNEY. Good afternoon, Mrs. Warren. How do you do, Betty, dear?

MRS. WARREN. Do sit down, Mrs. Romney.

MRS. ROMNEY. Did I hear you speaking of London as I came in, Mrs. Warren?

MRS. WARREN. London? Speaking of London? Were we speaking of London, Betty? Yes, I believe I did say——

MRS. ROMNEY. Dear old London . . . how I long for it!

MRS. WARREN. But my dear Mrs. Romney, London surely hasn't the . . . the refinement of Northampton.

MRS. ROMNEY. Northampton! Ah! Why, this place is as far from the world as . . . as the South Sea Islands!

MRS. WARREN. Mrs. Romney, how—how can you even think such a thing? Why, in the South Sea Islands, I am told, the people wear nothing but straw skirts . . . and pirates, pirates take things—unmentionable things from innocent travelers. One could not accuse the people of Northampton of such things. Even our shop-keepers are gentlemen compared to those dreadful people who live in the South Seas.

MRS. ROMNEY. The people of the South Sea Islands are at least—interesting.

MRS. WARREN. Perfect savages!

MRS. ROMNEY. But, my dear, *all* our forefathers were savages, you know . . . hitting each other over the head with clubs, hanging from palm trees by their tails, and all that sort of thing.

MRS. WARREN. Oh, dear!

MRS. ROMNEY. And the longer I live in Northampton, my dear, the more I'm convinced that it wasn't so very many generations ago, either.

MRS. WARREN. Oh . . . oh . . . oh! Betty, you

may go! You will excuse the dear child, I am sure. She has duties to perform which——

MRS. ROMNEY. Oh, yes, certainly.

BETTY. (*She rises and collects her flowers*) Good afternoon, Mrs. Romney. Shall I see you at Mrs. Hunter's tea Thursday?

MRS. ROMNEY. Yes, dear, charmed.

BETTY. Good-bye.

(MRS. ROMNEY bows. BETTY goes out left. CLARA enters with the tea things.)

MRS. WARREN. You will have a cup of tea, Mrs. Romney?

MRS. ROMNEY. Yes, thank you so much. So refreshing, nothing like tea for nerves, is there, really? Half a cup . . . I have just come from Mrs. Hunter's. Both cream and sugar, yes, thank you so much. Such a charming lady, Mrs. Hunter . . . perfectly charming, my dear, perfectly charming. So witty, so clever, so vivacious . . . but dreadfully jealous.

MRS. WARREN. Jealous? Jealous of whom?

MRS. ROMNEY. She is very fond of her husband.

MRS. WARREN. (*Nervously*) Of whom . . . of whom is she jealous?

MRS. ROMNEY. No one in particular, at present. I think.

MRS. WARREN. (*With a sigh of relief*) Oh——

MRS. ROMNEY. That is . . . oh, is there any cause for her being jealous of any particular person, Mrs. Warren?

MRS. WARREN. (*Choking on her tea*) Eh? No . . . no . . . not that I know of.

MRS. ROMNEY. How uninteresting. The doctor is such a charming gentleman. Dear me, I do hope I will have another attack of indigestion, or some-

thing of that sort soon. I am sure Doctor Hunter would be such a splendid physician . . . he is so good looking. (*She puts down her teacup.*) Dear me, I must be going. I am on my way to the meeting of the "Helping Hand Society" and——

MRS. WARREN. Yes, Mrs. Lawty has just gone. She dropped in to see me for a moment.

MRS. ROMNEY. Mrs. Lawty . . . that one? I'm not speaking to her.

MRS. WARREN. Oh, dear, you . . . you don't really mean you have quarrelled? So unladylike.

MRS. ROMNEY. Ladylike . . . ladylike? Ladylike be damned!

MRS. WARREN. (*Almost jumping out of her chair*) Mrs. Romney!

MRS. ROMNEY. Mrs. Warren, I beg your pardon. I forgot, for a moment, to whom I was speaking.

MRS. WARREN. That was quite evident.

MRS. ROMNEY. Quite. But you see, Mrs. Lawty told Mrs. Pickering, who told Mrs. Lawer, who told Lady Blosshire, whose maid told my maid, that Mrs. Lawty said that I dyed my hair . . . dyed my hair!

MRS. WARREN. Really?

MRS. ROMNEY. I've never dyed my hair. The impertinent gossip. The——

MRS. WARREN. (*Quickly*) Do have another cup of tea, Mrs. Romney. It is so soothing.

MRS. ROMNEY. Oh, thank you. Just a little sugar, please, and no cream.

MRS. WARREN. (*Giving her the tea*) There, my dear.

MRS. ROMNEY. Lovely color, isn't it?

MRS. WARREN. Yes, isn't it? Mr. Warren, dear man, once told me that the natives of India use tea for dyeing.

MRS. ROMNEY. Hair?

MRS. WARREN. No . . . no . . . cloth, I believe. cloth.

MRS. ROMNEY. Oh, how interesting!

MRS. WARREN. I believe they use the henna berry for dyeing hair in the East. I am told it gives a beautiful soft auburn shade.

MRS. ROMNEY. How interesting. Does one procure it from one's pharmacist?

MRS. WARREN. Eh? Oh, yes, I believe so.

MRS. ROMNEY. I must try it on my hair—oh, dear, I mean——

MRS. WARREN. What did you say, Mrs. Romney?

MRS. ROMNEY. I said—I really must be going, my dear. One never seems to realize how fast the time goes when one talks with you. Our little visit has been most interesting . . . and most instructive. I do want to stop in for a moment and see Mrs. Hallway before I go to the meeting of the "Helping Hand." Her rheumatism is worse again, poor dear.

MRS. WARREN. Yes, so I heard. I'm *so* sorry.

MRS. ROMNEY. Oh, it is not at all serious, just a touch, I believe. Of course she did call in Doctor Hunter. But I really believe it was simply to get acquainted with him more than anything else. (*She starts.*) Do drop in and see me when you can. Good afternoon, Mrs. Warren. (*She goes out.*)

(CLARA enters.)

CLARA. Shall I take away the tea things, ma'am?

MRS. WARREN. No . . . no, not just yet, Clara. Someone else may drop in, you know, and perhaps Betty would like a cup of tea.

CLARA. Shall I call her, ma'am?

MRS. WARREN. Yes, I believe you had bet——

(*The knocker sounds.*) There, there, see who that is, Clara.

(*CLARA goes into the hall. She returns immediately.*)

CLARA. It's Mrs. Pickering, ma'am.

MRS. WARREN. Have her come right in, Clara.

CLARA. Shall I call Miss Betty, ma'am?

MRS. WARREN. Yes, do have her come down and have a cup of tea.

(*CLARA goes out. MRS. PICKERING enters.*)

MRS. PICKERING. How do you do, Mrs. Warren?

MRS. WARREN. Oh, good afternoon. Do sit down, Mrs. Pickering.

MRS. PICKERING. Oh . . . my dear Mrs. Warren, I am so glad to see you looking so well. I thought perhaps—of course there is much sickness in Northampton now. (*She sits down.*) Much sickness. (*Pause.*) I just met Mrs. Lawty and she told me that Mrs. Hallway is almost dead with rheumatism . . . almost dead. In fact, I think they hardly expect her to live much longer. Of course, Mrs. Lawty didn't say so, but I implied as much from the tone of her voice.

MRS. WARREN. I heard it was nothing really serious.

MRS. PICKERING. Oh, dear, yes . . . very serious. I just had it from Mrs. Lawty, who had it from . . . from . . . from a most reliable source. Rheumatism is such a painful death, too. Oh, dear, poor soul . . . poor soul! (*MRS. WARREN hands her a cup of tea.*) Thank you so much.

MRS. WARREN. I believe the new Doctor Hunter is attending her.

MRS. PICKERING. Yes, isn't it too bad? Mrs.

Lawty tells me he is a conversationalist, or something dreadful of that sort. But of course he was educated in London . . . and, my dear, London's standard of morals is not the same as Northampton's. I was also told that he treats his wife very badly in public, my dear, in public.

MRS. WARREN. You mean——

MRS. PICKERING. My dear Mrs. Warren, I am very sorry to tell you . . . but I feel that it is my duty, as wife of your pastor . . . to tell you that your daughter Betty has been seen very often,—that is, at least once—walking with this Doctor Hunter. Also, my dear Mrs. Warren, she accepts presents from him . . . flowers and that sort of thing.

MRS. WARREN. Why, Betty hardly knows him!

MRS. PICKERING. That is just it. She hardly knows him . . . nor do any of us. Also remember he is a married man, my dear Mrs. Warren, and very good looking . . . and I really believe all good-looking people are bad, thoroughly bad.

MRS. WARREN. I can't believe that Betty——

MRS. PICKERING. Naturally, my dear, naturally; you are her mother and wish to shield her. But I felt that it was, as I said before, my duty to tell you all I know of the facts of the whole matter.

MRS. WARREN. You quite alarm me, Mrs. Pickering.

MRS. PICKERING. Young girls, nowadays, are sometimes . . . I might say, sometimes indiscreet.

MRS. WARREN. Oh!

MRS. PICKERING. My dear, men are strange beings. Oh, the poor souls that have been lured to their destruction by men. I am always reminded of that beautiful passage in Genesis which says that woman was made after man. And isn't it our dear Mr. Browning who says, "Second thoughts are always best"? (*She puts down her teacup.*) There, now, I

really must be going, Mrs. Warren. I am on my way to the meeting of the "Helping Hand Society" and I really mustn't be too late. I hope I have not overly alarmed you, Mrs. Warren, but as one of your oldest friends and as the wife of your pastor I feel that I must always do my duty, no matter how painful, when the way lies open before me. I sincerely hope you will not feel that I have been . . . been peremptory, so to speak, Mrs. Warren.

MRS. WARREN. No . . . no. It is very kind of you to come to me in this sad moment of trouble.

MRS. PICKERING. (*Rising*) I do hope you will be able to attend the services to-morrow morning. Mr. Pickering has written a beautiful sermon on the evils of gossip . . . a beautiful sermon. I feel that it is the best thing he has written in all the forty years of his righteous work. I am sure it will thunder down the ages as his masterpiece. The sentiment, the beautiful English, and even the punctuation . . . are really marvelous. Of course, Mr. Pickering and I both realize that there is *very* little gossip in Northampton . . . but it is best to know sin when one encounters it. Good afternoon, Mrs. Warren.

MRS. WARREN. (*Weakly*) Good afternoon.

(MRS. PICKERING *goes out*. CLARA *enters*.)

CLARA. I have brought the hot water, ma'am.

MRS. WARREN. Did you call Betty?

CLARA. I knocked at her door, ma'am . . . I knocked very loudly, ma'am, but got no answer.

MRS. WARREN. I am so distressed, Clara. See if she is in the garden. Yes, she must be in the garden. (CLARA *starts*.) And Clara, do tell her to come in and see me at once. I want to talk to her. It is very important . . . oh, most important that I

see her at once, Clara. (*The knocker sounds.*) See who that can be, Clara. Oh, more dreadful news. I fear. (*CLARA goes into the hall. MRS. WARREN keeps mumbling to herself:*) Most disconcerting . . . most dreadfully disconcerting.

(*CLARA enters.*)

CLARA. It is Mrs. Lawer, ma'am.

MRS. WARREN. Eh? What? Who, did you say?

CLARA. Mrs. Lawer, ma'am.

MRS. WARREN. Mrs. Lawer? Oh, do have her come right in, Clara.

(*CLARA goes out. MRS. LAWER enters.*)

MRS. LAWER. Good afternoon, Mrs. Warren, good afternoon. (*Breathlessly*) How ill, how worried you are looking, Mrs. Warren. Oh, I am so sorry for you . . . so very sorry. (*She sits down.*) I have just seen Mrs. Romney, who had just seen Mrs. Lawty, and had the dreadful news from her. I am so sorry, Mrs. Warren.

MRS. WARREN. But what——

MRS. LAWER. But, of course, we who have known you for all these years will be as silent as the tomb . . . you can depend upon us, lean upon us, call upon us. We shall comfort you and be your support in this hour of greatest need.

MRS. WARREN. Why . . . why, what do you mean?

MRS. LAWER. You really mean to say you do not know about Betty and Doctor Hunter? Oh, dear!

MRS. WARREN. But Betty did nothing so very, very improper.

MRS. LAWER. Improper! Well, of course, we shall not blame poor Betty, she is still very young.

but we do blame that wicked Doctor Hunter. Why, he is a married man, my dear . . . and oldish. He should have known better.

MRS. WARREN. But Betty only walked with him.

MRS. LAWER. Only walked with him? I was told that he sends flowers to Betty . . . and flowers have secret meanings. To say the least, they are sentimental. And Mrs. Lawty told Mrs. Romney that she heard Betty say with her own lips that Doctor Hunter was a conversationalist. I believe that means a person with very free ideas about personal matters . . . love, and that sort of thing.

MRS. WARREN. No, indeed . . . it simply means that he is a very interesting talker.

MRS. LAWER. That's just it, Mrs. Warren. What does he find so much to talk about? I have never met him, but from things I have heard I believe he must be a dreadful person. Most unwholesome, so to speak, to the society—the very refined society of Northampton, where for the last forty years we have all lived in such perfect peace and understanding.

MRS. WARREN. Oh, that this should have come upon me!

MRS. LAWER. Your misfortune is our misfortune, Mrs. Warren. We shall do everything we can to keep this dreadful scandal——

MRS. WARREN. Scandal! Has it—has it gone as far as that?

MRS. LAWER. Let us say, indiscretion. As I was saying, we shall keep it locked in our hearts, no word of it will ever reach foreign ears. Of course I really know very little of the whole affair, but I felt that my first duty was to come to you.

(CLARA enters.)

MRS. WARREN. Yes, Clara?

CLARA. I can't find her, ma'am.

MRS. WARREN. Oh, do find her, Clara. I must . . . I must see her at once. (*The knocker sounds.*) Who can that be? Clara . . . Clara, see who is at the door.

(CLARA goes out.)

MRS. LAWER. Oh, Mrs. Warren, trust me in everything . . . are you sure Betty has always been what she seemed . . . I mean——

MRS. WARREN. Mrs. Lawer, do you mean to say that Betty . . . Betty Warren . . . my daughter——

MRS. LAWER. My dear, we must face the truth . . . we must prepare ourselves for the worst . . . we must——

(CLARA enters.)

CLARA. It's them "Helpin' Hand" ladies, if you please, ma'am. The lot of 'em.

MRS. WARREN. Bring them in, Clara . . . have them come right in. Oh! Oh!

MRS. LAWER. You must be calm, my dear . . . perfectly calm.

(MRS. LAWTY, MRS. PICKERING, and MRS. ROMNEY enter from the hall.)

MRS. WARREN. Oh, my dear ladies. Do . . . do be seated.

(*They all sit down quietly. There is a long pause.*
MRS. PICKERING moves restlessly.)

MRS. PICKERING. Mrs. Warren, we have adjourned our meeting of the "Helping Hand" until

next week in order to come to you . . . the poor, dear natives of the South Sea Islands will have to wait another week for their napkins and tablecloths.

MRS. ROMNEY. A very short time . . . considering they have not had such necessary luxuries for several centuries.

MRS. LAWTY. Still, it was with some feeling of . . . of regret that we left our work of altruism unfinished, until next week.

MRS. PICKERING. But we feel that our first duty is at home. Yes, we all felt that our duty was toward you, Mrs. Warren, at present.

MRS. WARREN. Ladies, I am overcome with your kindness.

MRS. PICKERING. We shall now consider . . . consider ways and means of—of helping you, Mrs. Warren, out of this unspeakable—or, let us say, embarrassing situation.

MRS. LAWTY. Let us rather call it . . . unfortunate situation.

MRS. ROMNEY. No matter what we call it . . . let us get on—

MRS. PICKERING. The facts are these: Mrs. Lawty tells us she heard Betty, with her own ears, openly say that the man under consideration, Doctor Hunter, was a revolutionist and—

MRS. LAWTY. I said conversationalist. Though he probably is both.

MRS. ROMNEY. I think she must have meant conventionalist.

MRS. PICKERING. Nevertheless, one is as bad as the other. They all go hand in hand.

MRS. WARREN. But I believe Betty only said he was a good conversationalist and—

MRS. LAWTY. Anyway, she said he talked a lot about it.

MRS. PICKERING. I fear it must be one of those

dreadful, sinful new religions one hears so much of nowadays.

MRS. WARREN. Oh!

MRS. LAWTY. Also, we understand from very reliable sources that Mrs. Hunter is never seen with her husband in public.

MRS. PICKERING. And that he calls her dreadful names.

MRS. LAWTY. Most suspicious!

MRS. ROMNEY. Oh, I don't believe a word of it.

MRS. LAWTY. Believe it or not, Mrs. Romney . . . my information is most reliable.

MRS. WARREN. Is there any way, ladies, of overcoming this situation, I mean——

MRS. ROMNEY. You might call on Mrs. Hunter to-morrow, Mrs. Warren.

MRS. LAWTY. Never!

MRS. LAWER. You might write her a very formal letter, very formal, my dear, asking her to call.

MRS. PICKERING. Ask Mrs. Hunter to come here? I think she would never set her foot in the house.

MRS. LAWER. At any rate, we must do something at once before——

MRS. LAWTY. Before they elope.

LADIES. (*They all begin to talk at once*) Before it is too late. Oh! Ah! But do you really think—I never thought of that. Poor Mrs. Warren! Do you suppose that Mrs. Hunter—— Oh! Etc.

MRS. WARREN. Ladies! Ladies! Do you really think Betty would——

MRS. LAWTY. One never knows what to think!

MRS. WARREN. Clara! Clara!

(CLARA enters from the hall. She holds a letter in her hand.)

CLARA. Yes, ma'am.

MRS. WARREN. Did you find Betty?

CLARA. I went to her room again, ma'am, but she did not seem to be in and she is nowhere in the garden.

MRS. PICKERING. Not in her room! Not in the garden!

MRS. WARREN. You mean, Clara, she is nowhere to be found? Clara, was her room disturbed . . . I mean, did it look as if . . . as if . . . as if she might have left hurriedly?

CLARA. Why, I didn't go in, ma'am. The door was locked.

MRS. WARREN. Locked?

LADIES. (*Looking at each other knowingly*)
Locked!

CLARA. Here is a note, ma'am. It was just left by Doctor Hunter's boy, ma'am.

MRS. PICKERING. A letter!

MRS. ROMNEY. From Doctor Hunter!

MRS. LAWTY. Perhaps they *have* eloped!

(*The ladies jump to their feet.*)

MRS. LAWER. And her room locked . . . she must have gone through the window!

LADIES. Gone!

MRS. WARREN. (*Who has been too busy looking for her spectacles to notice what has been going on about her*) Why, it is a letter for— (*She looks up.*) Ladies, what is the matter? What has happened? Why are you all so excited?

MRS. LAWTY. Don't you understand? It is a letter from Doctor Hunter saying they have eloped!

MRS. WARREN. (*Sinking deep into her chair*)
Oh!

(*BETTY appears in the door at left.*)

BETTY. Ladies.

MRS. WARREN. (*Waving the letter weakly*)
Betty! Betty! Betty!

BETTY. Mother!

MRS. WARREN. (*Looking up*) Betty . . . Betty,
is that you?

LADIES. Oh!

BETTY. Why are you all so—excited? Mother,
what is it?

LADIES. Oh! (*They all sit down again.*)

MRS. WARREN. Then you—then you—— Oh,
where have you been?

BETTY. Why, just taking a little nap. Mother.
Really, I didn't know the ladies were here or I
should have come right down.

MRS. WARREN. Then you haven't . . . you
haven't eloped?

BETTY. Why, Mother dear, what *do* you mean?

MRS. WARREN. These ladies said—said——

(*The ladies all begin to talk at once.*)

MRS. LAWTY. You see, Betty dear, Mrs. Pickering
told Mrs. Romney, who told me that——

MRS. ROMNEY. I didn't! Nothing of the sort,
Betty! It was you yourself, Mrs. Lawty, who told
Mrs. Pickering, who told——

MRS. PICKERING. Me? I had nothing at all to
do with it . . . nothing at all. I only know that
Mrs. Lawer said——

MRS. LAWER. I said? I said nothing. It was
Mrs. Lawty, who told Mrs. Pickering, who told Mrs.
Romney—oh, dear me, I mean——

MRS. ROMNEY. It's a damn lie!

LADIES. (*They all gasp for breath; all begin to
talk at once*) I heard that Doctor Hunter—You told
me that he treated his wife shamefully—No, I said—

Flowers, he sent her flowers every morning—You told Mrs. Pickering that he was a conversationalist—She said a revolutionist—I said—You said—And then she said—Anyway, I do not believe he is a safe person. But very good looking, my dear. Etc.

BETTY. Oh, dear . . . what is it all about?

MRS. ROMNEY. You, my dear, you.

BETTY. Me?

MRS. ROMNEY. These ladies said that you—

MRS. LAWTY. These ladies!

LADIES. (*They all begin to talk at once again*) Why, it was she herself who said—I had nothing to do with it at all—All I know about the whole affair is that—The impertinence of her saying—I didn't say a word about— Etc.

MRS. WARREN. It was all of them . . . every one of them. They said you had—oh, dear, I just can't say it! They came here to tell me you had eloped with . . . with a married man . . . with Doctor Hunter!

BETTY. Ladies! Mother! How dare you! (*She runs to her mother.*) How dare you say such a thing! (*To her mother*) My poor, dear Mother!

MRS. WARREN. And it is so untrue. Oh! Clara . . . Clara! My smelling-salts . . . my smelling-salts! I'm going to faint . . . I'm going to faint . . . I'm going to faint!

MRS. ROMNEY. (*Running to Mrs. WARREN*) Here, use mine, my dear, use mine.

MRS. LAWTY. But the letter, Mrs. Warren.

MRS. WARREN. (*She has been fanning herself furiously with the letter. She suddenly holds it up as if it might be a bomb ready to go off in her hand.*) The letter! Oh! Take it . . . take it . . . take it away!

BETTY. (*Taking the letter*) Why, it is a note from—

LADIES. (*On the very edges of their chairs*) Yes?

BETTY. From Mrs. Hunter.

LADIES. Oh. (*They watch BETTY curiously as she reads the note.*)

BETTY. Mother, Mrs. Hunter asks if I might go for a carriage drive with her this afternoon to gather wild flowers. She is going to stop for me. She says the doctor told her how very fond I am of flowers.

MRS. WARREN. (*With a great sigh of relief*) Oh!

BETTY. May I go?

MRS. WARREN. Why, yes, dear, if you think—

MRS. ROMNEY. I fear these ladies were quite mistaken about—

MRS. LAWTY. These ladies, indeed! Do you not include yourself,—that is to say, are you not one of us?

MRS. ROMNEY. God forbid!

LADIES. Oh!

(*The knocker sounds.*)

MRS. WARREN. Clara . . . Clara!

(*CLARA enters from the Left.*)

CLARA. Did you call me, ma'am?

MRS. WARREN. Clara, there is someone at the door.

CLARA. Very well, ma'am. (*She goes out.*)

MRS. PICKERING. I am sure Mrs. Warren will forgive our very grave mistake. But it was for her sake that—

BETTY. How could you ever dream of worrying my dear mother by such scandalous gossip? It is shameful!

MRS. WARREN. Betty . . . Betty!

MRS. LAWTY. You, my dear, are still too young to understand.

(CLARA enters.)

MRS. LAWER. I fear we were overquick in our judgment.

MRS. WARREN. Yes, Clara?

CLARA. It is Mrs. Hunter, ma'am.

MRS. WARREN. Mrs. Hunter? Do have her come right in, Clara.

CLARA. Yes, ma'am. Shall I bring more tea, ma'am?

MRS. WARREN. Yes, Clara . . . and cake, Clara.

CLARA. Yes, ma'am. (*She goes out.*)

LADIES. Oh, shall we stay? Or shall we go? It might be embarrassing—I am sure Mrs. Hunter—

MRS. ROMNEY. Such an interesting person . . . Mrs. Hunter.

MRS. LAWTY. I am so glad she and her husband have come to live with us here in Northampton.

MRS. PICKERING. We *must* ask her to join the "Helping Hand Society."

MRS. LAWER. I am sure she will have so many good ideas.

MRS. WARREN. Ladies, I am so glad you are all here this afternoon . . . so pleased.

(*The ladies very properly arrange their dresses and bonnets as the curtain falls.*)

The Touch-Down

A comedy in four acts, by Marion Short. 8 males, 6 females, but any number of characters can be introduced in the ensembles. Costumes modern. One interior scene throughout the play. Time, 2½ hours.

This play, written for the use of clever amateurs, is the story of life in Siddell, a Pennsylvania co-educational college. It deals with the vicissitudes and final triumph of the Siddell Football Eleven, and the humorous and dramatic incidents connected therewith.

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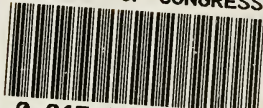
A comedy in four acts, by Marie Doran, author of "Tempest and Sunshine," etc. Characters, 4 males, 7 females, though any number of boys and girls can be introduced in the action of the play. One interior and one exterior scene, but can be easily played in one interior scene. Costumes modern. Time, about 2 hours.

The theme of this play is the coming of a new student to the college, her reception by the scholars, her trials and final triumph.

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DOROTHY

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The story is about vocational training, a subject now widely discussed; also, the distribution of large wealth.

Back of the comedy situation and snappy dialogue there is good logic and a sound moral in this pretty play, which is worthy the attention of the experienced amateur. It is a clean, wholesome play, particularly suited to high school production. Price, 30 Cents.

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