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Browne - Fool For Luck. 1889.



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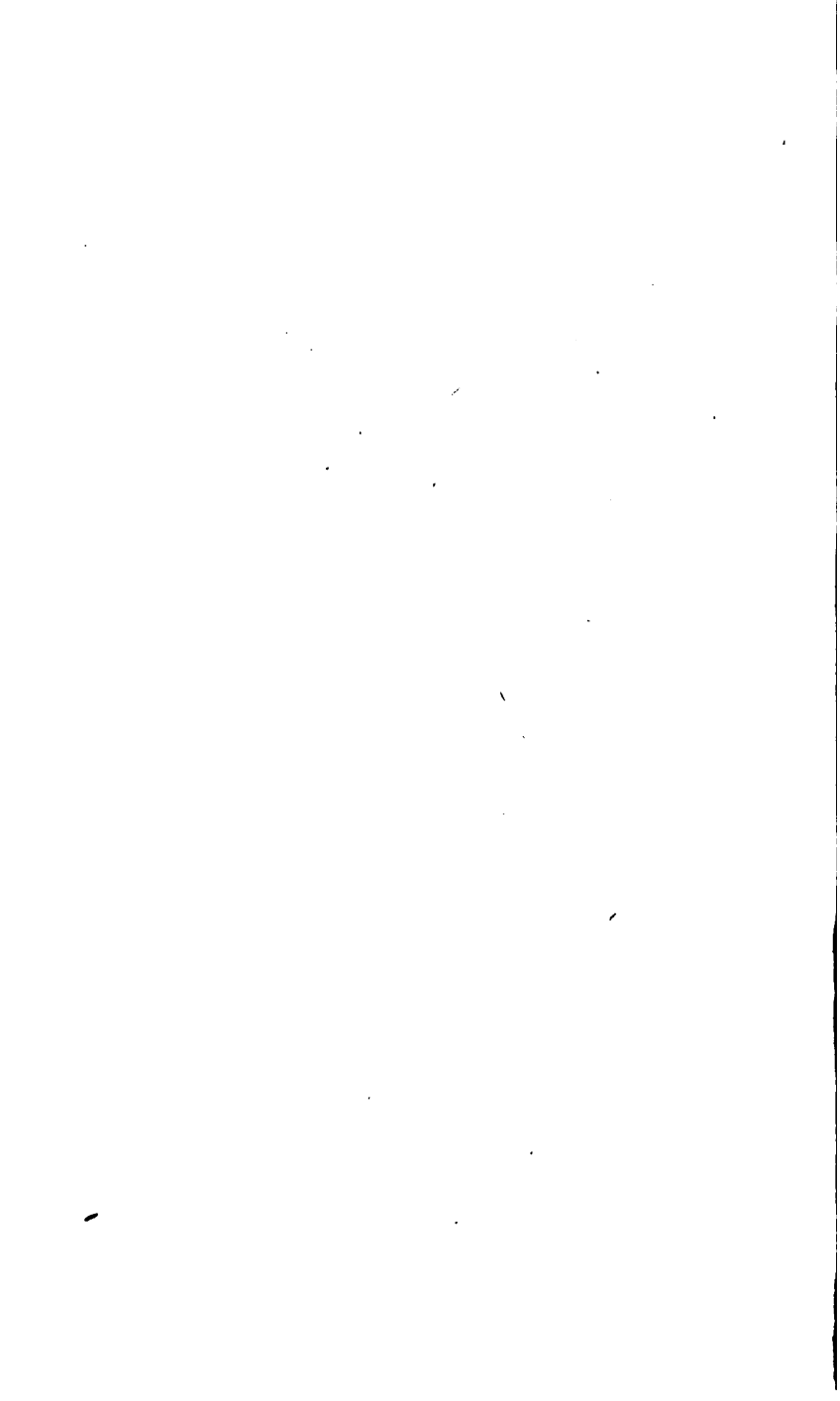


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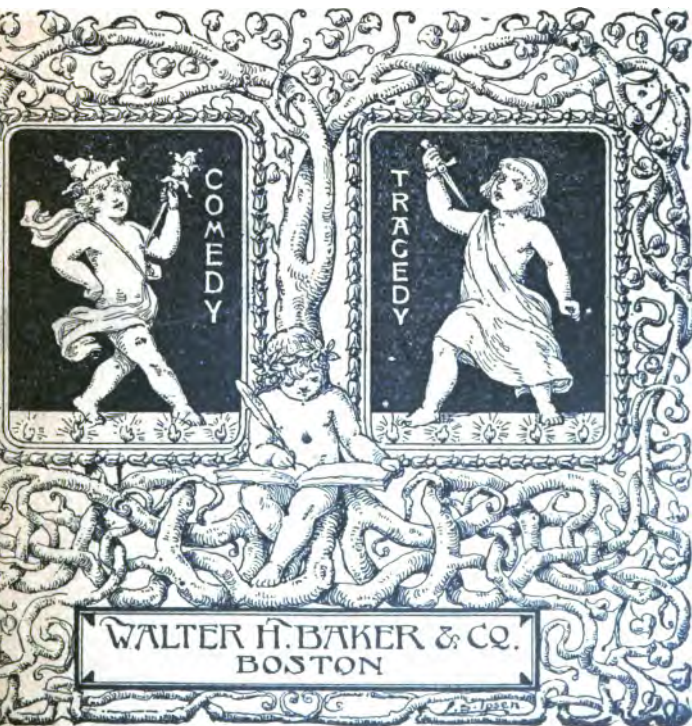


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A

FOOL FOR LUCK

A Comedy in Two Acts

BY

W. M. BROWNE

BOSTON

Walter H. Baker & Co.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

*As originally performed by amateurs at Associates' Hall, Milton, Mass.
April 23, 1889, for the benefit of the Free Reading Room,
at Mattapan, under the title of*

"B. B. & P."

MR. WILLIAM BETTERBY, *a young married man in straitened
circumstances as a result of speculation* . . . MR. RIVERS
MR. ROBERT BIDDER, *his intimate friend, a New-York stock-
broker* . . . MR. HUNT
MR. ARTHUR BABBURTON, *a young Englishman* . MR. BROWNE
WATTS, *valet to Babburton* . . . MR. JAKES
MRS. BETTERBY, *Betterby's wife* . . . MRS. RIVERS
MISS POLLARD, *her younger sister* . . . MISS JAKES
MISS PATTERN, *Betterby's aunt* . . . MISS SHERWOOD

Note.—The personage known as Babburton is distinguished by a slight
impediment in his speech, distinctly not a stammer, but merely a difficulty
in pronouncing the letters "b" and "p."



A FOOL FOR LUCK.

ACT I.

SCENE. — *Breakfast-room in MISS PATTERN'S house, prettily furnished; doors, C., R., and L.; table and chairs, R. C.; various other articles of furniture arranged about the room. MR. and MRS. BETTERBY seated at table, R. C., reading mail.*

BETTERBY (*opening and reading letter*). "Sir: we hope you will excuse our writing to you, but as we have large payments to make," etc., etc. Certainly, you're excused. (*Opens another letter; reads.*) "In accordance with Rule XI., Section 8, of the Liberty Club, your name has been posted for non-payment of your May bill." Hear that, Dolly? Name's up at the club.

MRS. B. I'm sorry, dear. It's very annoying, I know. But is there no letter from Bob Bidder? Oh, dear! If B. B. & P. only does go up, as he says it will, we'll be out of our misery and back in our own house again.

BET. Yes, here is a letter from Bob. (*Opens letter.*) Let's see. (*Reads.*) "Dear Billy, meant to drop you a line yesterday, but was too busy. Wish you could have been here last night. Burroughs and Reed and all the rest of our crowd met at"—h-m-m (*mumbling*)—"my ante"—h-m-m—"full house." This part doesn't interest you, Dolly.

MRS. B. Why, Willie! I didn't know his aunt entertained at all!

BET. Hem! Neither did I. But here's what you want to hear about. (*Reading.*) "B. B. & P.'s June earnings will be published in a few days now, and they say they will make a much better showing than they did last month. I can't find out anything definite, however. The stock gained a point to-day, as you will see by the papers. Can you persuade

your aunt to invite me down over the 4th, and bring a friend — an Englishman named Babburton? His sister married Blake, the president of the B. B. & P., and I thought we might get a few points out of him about the road. Knowing your aunt's aversion to the Stock Exchange, I am a little afraid to have you ask her to invite me, but if your wife will use a little of her irresistible persuasion, I think you can manage it. If I don't hear from you by wire to-morrow morning, I shall take it for granted that it's all right and come down on the 10.30." (*Looks at watch.*) Great Heavens! Dolly! it's past that now! What can we do?

MRS. B. Go on.

BET. Go on what? where?

MRS. B. Go on with the letter.

BET. Oh! (*Reads.*) "Down on the 10.30. By the way, I forgot to say that Babburton will bring his valet along. I suppose he won't make any difference." Ph-e-w! Bob's cheek is perfectly magnificent. Well, Dolly! you'd better speak to the old lady at once. The sooner we get over these unpleasant little duties the better, you know.

MRS. B. Why don't you speak to her, Willie?

BET. I? Well! you see — in fact — the truth is — I'm very busy —

MRS. B. Ha! ha! Never mind; I'll do it. But, to tell you the truth, I don't enjoy the prospect.

BET. There's nothing to be afraid of. All you have to do is just tell her — just tell her.

MRS. B. Just tell her what?

BET. Well — just tell her —

MRS. B. You know how she feels about you and your friends since you lost so much in stocks last winter.

BET. Well, I should say I did. Why, she told me yesterday she was sure I'd lose every cent of her money if she should leave it to me, and said something about five thousand a year in trust for us, and all the rest to a Home for Aged and Indigent Orphans, or Neglected Widows, or —

MRS. B. What nonsense! Who ever heard of an aged and indigent orphan?

BET. I'm an indigent orphan now myself, and I suppose I shall become aged as I grow older.

MRS. B. Perhaps so, dear. But your aunt can't mean it. Five thousand a year! Why, that wouldn't do us any good at all.

BET. Not a bit. But perhaps she may see some good in me some day, and change her mind. Where's Carrie?

MRS. B. She's helping your aunt with her eggs.

BET. Has the incubator declared a dividend — I mean, hatched a chicken yet?

MRS. B. No, I believe not. But why don't you try to interest yourself in it, dear? It might please your aunt to have you.

BET. I did try to. In fact, I suggested lots of things. But she only got mad about it.

MRS. B. What did you suggest?

BET. I asked her if she'd tried boiling the eggs before she put them in, and then I asked her if she hadn't forgotten to put the hens in, and she told me I was something — I've forgotten what — blithering idiot, I think it was. Carrie seems to understand how to get along with her.

MRS. B. Well, perhaps Carrie has more tact than you have, dear. Dear me, I'm afraid the poor child is falling in love with Bob Bidder, and, although he is a very good fellow, and I like him very much, I don't think his income is very reliable.

BET. Oh, Bob's all right.

MRS. B. Yes, I know; but I want Carrie to marry a man with plenty of money. Now, if this Englishman turns out to be a nice man, Carrie can marry *him*.

BET. You seem to feel sure he'll be willing.

MRS. B. Of course he will. (*Enter CARRIE, L.*) But here she comes. Well, dear?

CARRIE. Brother William, your aunt is in a terrible frame of mind.

BET. What's the matter now?

CAR. Not one of the last lot of eggs has hatched, and they are a week late. So she has taken them all out of the incubator, and intends to try again with a new lot. And she says she'll make them hatch, if she has to live in the incubator and have her meals sent in.

BET. I have it! Happy thought! Put the Englishman's valet in there.

CAR. Englishman! What Englishman?

MRS. B. Why, Willie has had a letter from Bob Bidder, and he's coming here with an English friend of his and his valet, and expects me to see that Aunt Pattern is glad to see them, and will want them to stay two or three days.

CAR. If Mr. Bidder is coming, you needn't worry, Dolly. He's sure to smooth Miss Pattern the right way. I really believe she likes him very much.

MRS. B. Yes, of course you do. But hush! here she comes.

(Enter MISS PATTERN, L., carrying a large basket of eggs, which she places on a table, L. C.)

MISS P. There! If that incubator doesn't hatch this time, there'll be trouble.

BET. It must be a very queer sensation to be born by machinery. Don't you think so, auntie?

MISS P. How should I know! I'm no chicken.

CAR. Oh, Miss Pattern!

BET. Right you are, auntie. Ha! ha! ha!

MISS P. William, hold your tongue. You know perfectly well what I mean. Besides, sir, if I'm not a chicken, no more am I a silly lamb at the mercy of bulls and bears. Carrie, tell Thomas to take those eggs far away from the house and bury them.

BET. But, auntie! why do you bury them? They haven't come to life yet.

MISS P. William, when I am so reduced that I need any advice from you, I'll ask for it. Besides, for all you know, they'll come up and grow.

BET. That's so. Egg-plant, by Jove! Never thought of that. (Aside.) She knows a good deal, after all.

MRS. B. (hesitating). Aunt Pattern — I want — to tell you — something.

(BETTERBY starts to leave the room unobserved.)

MISS P. William, where are you going? (BETTERBY stops short and remains.) Well, Dolly, what is it you want to tell me?

MRS. B. (hesitating). You see, Aunt Pattern — we couldn't possibly help it — but —

BET. That's it, auntie — we tried our best, but —

MISS P. William, keep quiet. Go on, Dolly.

MRS. B. This morning a letter came from Mr. Bidder, and —

BET. That's it, auntie. We couldn't help it. It just came.

MISS P. William, will you be quiet? (To DOLLY.) Well?

MRS. B. And he says he would like very much to pass the 4th with us, if —

BET. Yes, auntie. You see he's very ill, and —

MISS P. Mercy! Nothing contagious?

MRS. B. No, no, Aunt Pattern. (*Aside.*) Willie, please don't talk. (*Aloud.*) He's not sick at all. Only tired of town, and wants to see us all, and —

MISS P. Well, I'm sure I shall be glad to see him.

BET. Great Scott! (*Aside to DOLLY.*) Go it, Dolly. You're doing splendidly.

MRS. B. But that isn't all. He — he wants to bring a friend with him — an Englishman —

MISS P. Who is he?

MRS. B. I believe he's a brother-in-law of Mr. Blake, the president of —

BET. (*trying to stop his wife*). Dolly! Dolly!

MISS P. William, what in the world is the matter with you? (*To MRS. B.*) Well, president of what?

MRS. B. Of a railroad. I believe they call it the B. B. & P.

MISS P. I shall be happy to see Mr. Bidder's friend too.

BET. Well, I'll be —

MISS P. (*interrupting him*). Never mind what you will be, William. You seem to think it strange that I should be pleased to welcome here a few men with brains.

BET. Certainly, auntie, certainly.

MRS. B. (*hesitating still more*). But there's one thing more. This — this Englishman has — has —

BET. (*desperately*). O Lord!

MISS P. (*sharply*). Has what? What is the matter? I don't suppose he has the small-pox, has he?

BET. (*eagerly*). That's it, dear auntie; he —

MISS P. Mercy!

MRS. B. No, no, no.

CAR. You're losing your senses, Willie.

MISS P. (*firmly*). Now, Dolly, tell me distinctly, without any more of this nonsense, what is it this Englishman has?

MRS. B. (*very mildly*). A valet.

(*BETTERBY sinks into a chair.*)

MISS P. A valet! Humph! Not so bad as small-pox. It isn't contagious. I can find room for him. When do you expect all these people?

MRS. B. Mr. Bidder said he would take the 10.30, so they ought to be here very soon —

CAR. (*listening*). Hark! There's a carriage now. (*Goes to door at back, and looks out.*) Yes, here they are.

(Enter BIDDER, BABBURTON, and WATTS; WATTS carrying valises, top coats, umbrellas, etc.)

BIDDER (coming forward quickly before BABBURTON; WATTS remains standing stiffly at rear). Aha! I'm so glad to see you all again. It's very good of you, Miss Pattern, to take us in on such short notice. This is my friend Mr. Babburton from England, Miss Pattern, Mr. and Mrs. Betterby, and Miss Pollard. (Turning to MISS PATTERN.) This is lovely weather, Miss Pattern, not a bit too warm. How have you been?

MISS P. Very well, thank you, Mr. Bidder. (To BABBURTON.) I suppose this is not your first visit to America?

BAB. Yes, it is, I'm happy to say — I mean, I'm sorry; that is, certainly.

MISS P. I hope you'll find it very pleasant, and then when you return you'll be able to give a good account of your American cousins.

BAB. But I've only a brother-in-law in America.

MISS P. Yes — but — well, I'll ask you to excuse me while I go and see that you and Mr. Bidder will be made comfortable. I hadn't much warning of your coming. (Going, turns and comes back.) What's your man's name, Mr. Babburton?

BAB. Watts's name?

MISS P. Yes — er — that's what I said.

BAB. Beg pardon.

MISS P. What do you call your valet?

BAB. Watts.

MISS P. You'll excuse me for leaving you. (Exit, followed by WATTS, with valises, etc.)

MRS. B. Carrie, I think you and I had better run away too, and make our toilettes for luncheon. (To her husband.) Willie, you'll see that these gentlemen get whatever they want. (Exit with CARRIE.)

BET. I know what you want, Bob, of course, but you see this isn't my house, and dear aunt doesn't keep Old Tom and Orange Bitters. You know Old Tom, of course, Mr. Babburton? Comes from your country.

BAB. Can't say I do. Who is he?

BID. His last name's Gin. Remember him now?

BAB. Old Tom Gin? Sounds familiar. Oh, you mean — oh, yes. Ha! ha! ha! Now that's clever, Bidder. Must remember that.

BET. Bob, any news about B. B. & P.?

(BABBURTON *shows signs of alarm.*)

BID. Nothing more than I told you in my letter. But Babburton here ought to know something about it, but he says he never heard of it until I mentioned it to him yesterday.

BAB. 'Pon honor, my dear fellow.

BET. But your brother-in-law is president.

BAB. Well, I can't help that.

BID. Never mind, Babburton. Perhaps you may remember something about it later, when you know us better. Can't we smoke a cigar somewhere, Billy?

BET. Yes; out on the piazza. Do you smoke, Mr. Babburton?

BAB. No, but don't mind me. You go ahead, and I'll take care of myself.

BET. All right. You won't mind, will you?

BAB. Not a bit. (*Exit BIDDER and BETTERBY, R.*)

BAB. (*seats himself at table, R. C.*). That's deuced odd. There's another fellow wants to find out about this B. B. & P., this railroad. I don't see why the devil they don't find out for themselves, and not bother me about it. (*Takes up a book from the table, opens it at random and reads aloud:*) "If they are old, put them in boiling water; if they are tender, this is unnecessary. Cut them in small pieces." What the deuce is all this about? (*Looks at the back of the binding, and reads:*) "How to Treat your Guests." Great Heavens! (*Turns back to original place.*) Oh, mushrooms. It's a cookery book. I wonder where Watts is all this time. (*Calls.*) Watts! Watts!

(*Enter WATTS, C.*)

WATTS. Yes, sir.

BAB. Everything all right?

WATTS. Yes, sir; heverythink.

BAB. And my room ready for me?

WATTS. Yes, sir; hall ready.

BAB. Very well. I'll be there directly.

WATTS. Very good, sir. (*Going.*)

BAB. But, Watts, one moment, please. Do you happen to remember these ladies' and gentlemen's names? I don't want to have to ask them.

WATTS. Ho, yes, sir. The hold lady's Miss Pattern, sir.

BAB. Yes, (*with difficulty*) P—P—Pattern.

WATTS. The young lady's Miss Pollard.

BAB. Yes, P—Pollard.

WATTS. Hand the married lady's Mrs. Betterby.

BAB. B—Betterby, yes.

WATTS. Hand 'er 'usband's Mr. Betterby, sir.

BAB. Oh, the deuce! I hoped he'd have a name that was easy to say.

WATTS. And you know Mr. Bidder's name, sir, and that's hall.

BAB. Very well. You may go. (*Exit WATTS, C.*) Now did any one ever hear such a list of names? Why, I'll have to go down on the beach every morning before breakfast like Demos — what's his name — the orator. Hello! here's Mrs. Betterby.

(*Enter MRS. BETTERBY, R.*)

MRS. B. Mr. Babburton, has my husband gone away and left you all by yourself? That wasn't very polite of him.

BAB. Oh, but I told him I didn't mind.

MRS. B. Miss Pattern wished me to tell you that your room was all ready for you whenever you cared to go there.

BAB. Very kind, I'm sure.

MRS. B. (*seating herself*). My husband tells me your sister married Mr. Blake, the president of—

BAB. (*eagerly*). Yes — and you know him? Nice fellow, Blake —

MRS. B. No, I don't know him myself, but I know of him very well. Of course, you know all about the road.

BAB. The road?

MRS. B. Yes, the B. B. & P. Now don't tell me you don't know anything about it, Mr. Babburton, for I'm only a woman, you know, and have a right to be curious, and I'm sure you'll gratify a woman's curiosity. Tell me — what kind of a report do you expect?

BAB. But, my dear madam, as I told Mr. Bidder —

MRS. B. Oh, never mind. I really don't care. (*Aside.*) He's evidently told Mr. Bidder. (*Aloud.*) But your room's all ready, and we lunch at half-past one. (*Exit, C.*)

BAB. Well, by Jove, there's another. Why the deuce don't they find out about this infernal road? Ah! here's Miss Pollard. Nice girl, Miss Pollard.

(*Enter CARRIE, R.*)

CAR. Oh, Mr. Babburton, I've been looking for you. Miss Pattern wanted me to tell you that your room was all ready.

BAB. Thanks very much. But aren't you going to sit down for a while? It's very cool in here.

CAR. Thank you. It *is* lovely and cool for July. You know it's usually very uncomfortable at this season of the year with us. I suppose you've hardly had time to form any opinion of America yet, Mr. Babburton.

BAB. Oh, I haven't been busy at all, but I only landed a week ago. But I'm sure I like you — I mean, I'm sure you're very kind.

CAR. I suppose Mr. Bidder took you to the Stock Exchange?

BAB. Oh, yes; and do you know I thought they were fighting until Bidder told me it was only their way.

CAR. It must have seemed very odd to you. Of course you know a great deal about Mr. Blake's road — the B. B. & P.

BAB. Now, Miss Pollard! 'Pon honor!

CAR. Oh, Mr. Babburton! Fie! When I, a poor innocent girl, ask you purely out of curiosity — for I've a right to be curious, you know — for you to be so anxious, so eager to deny all knowledge of the market! It surely won't do any harm to tell me!

BAB. But as I told Mr. Bidder —

CAR. Oh, never mind. (*Aside.*) He's told Bob. (*Aloud.*) But you will excuse me now, won't you? I have to attend to a few little things for Miss Pattern before luncheon. Oh! we lunch at half-past one. Don't forget. I'll see you then. (*Exit, c.*)

BAB. Now I wonder what the deuce is the matter with these people. They must think I'm an American Bradshaw. Confound their railroad. What do they want to call it by such a beastly name for? B. B. & P.! Now that's a nice name, isn't it? Suppose a fellow really stammered, how the deuce could he say it, you know? I don't believe Demos — what's his name — the Grecian orator could have said it at all. I talk better than he did — or so my friends tell me. But really, though, I wish I *could* tell Miss Pollard something about this road. She's such a nice girl, you know. Nicest girl I ever met. Wonder if she noticed that I stammered. Funny, but I don't when I sing. Happy thought! I'll get her to ask me to sing. No, I can't do that. I have it! Here's everything! (*Goes to table, R., and writes.*) "My dear sister, there's a young lady here, awfully nice

girl,"—let me see,—“awfully interested in railroads, and she wants to know all about the B.”—damn such a name anyway. Can't even write it. (*Reads letter over.*) There! I've got too many B's in that railroad. (*Takes pen and draws line through a "B."*) “Please ask your husband all about it, and write me by return mail. Your loving brother Arthur. P.S. She's the nicest girl I ever met.” (*Sealing letter.*) There! That'll please her, I'm sure.

(*Enter MISS PATTERN, R.*)

MISS P. Writing a letter, Mr. Babburton? Not home-sick already, I hope?

BAB. No, no, I assure you. I was only asking my sister—that is, letting her know—

MISS P. Oh, yes; of your safe arrival. Can you tell me anything about (*BABBURTON starts*) incubators?

BAB. Beg pardon?

MISS P. About incubators—an invention for hatching chickens by artificial heat.

BAB. Fancy!

MISS P. The air in the incubator is kept at a certain temperature, and you put in the eggs, and leave them there until they hatch. I am very much interested in it myself, and have bought one of them, but so far I haven't succeeded in getting a single chicken. I thought, perhaps, you might be able to give me some advice about it.

BAB. I'm very sorry, I'm sure.

MISS P. But of course! I ought to have known you would not care for such things. You are too much interested in railroads, and all that.

BAB. But, my dear Miss Pattern—

MISS P. Yes, I know. You gentlemen are always so unwilling to say anything to us poor women about such matters! But, you see, I'm a little interested in your brother-in-law's road myself—I tell you this in confidence—and thought you wouldn't mind telling me about it; for of course you know.

BAB. But, my dear Miss Pattern! as I told Mr. Bidder this morning—

MISS P. Oh, never mind! I won't persist. (*Aside.*) He's evidently told Mr. Bidder. (*Loud.*) But your room is all in readiness for you. You'll excuse me, won't you? I'm obliged to look after my incubator. I'll see you at luncheon. We lunch at half-past one, remember. (*Exit, C.*)

BAB. Thank Heaven, that's all there are in the family! I suppose they think I don't know *anything*. Don't feel sure I do myself now. Yes, I do know one thing. They lunch at half-past one.

(Enter WATTS, C.)

WATTS. Oh, Mr. Babburton! You'll hexcuse me for hasking, sir, and I thought you wouldn't mind, but do you know anything about the B. B. & P., sir?

BAB. (*shouting*). Watts!

WATTS. Ye—yes, sir.

BAB. Do you want a different master?

WATTS. N—no, sir. By no means, sir.

BAB. Then never mention that damned road to me again. There, never mind, Watts. But I'm very much put out.

WATTS. I'm very sorry, sir, but the 'ousemaid hasked me to hask you, sir, and I didn't know there was any 'arm, sir.

BAB. The housemaid!

WATTS. Yes, sir. She said—

BAB. Never mind what she said. You tell her to tell everybody she sees that I don't know a railroad from—*from* a bull-pup. Don't forget that. Now show me where my room is, and help me change my clothes.

WATTS. Very good, sir. This is the way.

(Exit BABBURTON and WATTS, C. Enter BIDDER and BETTERBY, R.)

BET. Your English friend seems to have taken himself off, Bob. Do you suppose he really knows anything about his brother-in-law's road?

BID. I did think so, but I'm beginning to doubt it. He seems a very good fellow, though. But you needn't worry about your stock. I have perfect confidence in it.

BET. So have I, Bob, so have I. But, you see, if anything should go wrong this time, I don't know what I could do. My aunt would be perfectly disgusted with me again, and throw me over and not leave me a cent.

BID. Oh, never mind your aunt.

BET. I never do, Bob—that is, sometimes.

BID. You see, if the B. B. & P. succeeds in leasing the O. L. & N. road, as they are trying to, it will give them all the freight that goes through the Big River Valley, and they'll have a through line to the coast, and that would boom the stock fifty points sure. Now if we could only find out, a few days before the Street, whether the lease was going

through, we'd get rich in no time. Why, if Babburton knew anything, he'd find out about that from Blake. Blake could make a quarter of a million for him just as easy as not.

BET. By Jove, old man, I've got an idea!

BID. The deuce, you have!

BET. Get Babburton to invite his brother-in-law — I mean, I'll invite his brother-in-law to come and see Babburton; he must want to see Babburton.

BID. Oh, nonsense, Billy! You don't know him, and your aunt doesn't know him.

BET. That's so; never thought of that. But hadn't I better buy another thousand?

BID. Look here, Billy. You've got about all you can stagger under now, and your margin isn't any too big for what you have now.

BET. But you say they're going to lease this road — the O. L. & N.

BID. But I'm not infallible, my dear fellow.

BET. That's so; never thought of that. I've got to leave you for a while, old man. You look out for yourself, will you? I'll be back before long. (*Exit, R.*)

BID. (*reflectively*). One of the best fellows in the world, but as simple as a baby. Dear me, I'm getting all these good people in such a frame of mind about the stock market, that it's all I can do to keep them from ruining themselves. If this stock should go wrong — Phew! Nonsense — it won't — it'll go up. Can't help it; and then — and then — Carrie and I — Bless her heart!

(*Enter CARRIE, C.*)

CAR. Bless whose heart, Bob?

BID. Yours, dear. (*Taking both her hands.*) I was only thinking how happy we'd be when B. B. & P. goes up.

CAR. Oh, do tell me quick, what did Mr. Babburton tell you —

(*Enter MRS. BETTERBY, suddenly, C.*)

MRS. B. Oh! Here you are, Mr. Bidder. Do tell me quick, what did Mr. Babburton —

(*Enter BETTERBY, suddenly, R.*)

BET. I say, Bob, Dolly says Babburton says he told you —

(*Enter MISS PATTERN, suddenly, L.*)

MISS P. Mr. Bidder, Mr. Bidder, tell me what Mr. Babburton told you about B. B. & P.

CAR. Why, Miss Pattern! have you been —

MRS. B. Aunt Pattern! you don't mean to say —

BET. By Jove! she's got some!

(Dead silence. Tableau.)

MISS P. Well, the cat's out of the bag. I suppose I have a right to do what I please with my own money. William Betterby, you needn't stand there looking as if you'd discovered a planet.

BET. *(aside)*. She's got an awful lot more sense than I thought.

MISS P. *(to BIDDER)*. But what did he say?

ALL *(to BIDDER)*. Yes, what did he say?

BID. To me? Nothing! *(Tableau.)*

CURTAIN.

ACT II.

SCENE.— *Grounds near MISS PATTERN'S house. Rustic table and chairs, R. C. Rustic seat, L. C. Various pieces of outdoor furniture to indicate that the place is much used by the household. CARRIE and BIDDER seated at table, R. C.*

BID. (*laying down newspaper, which he has been reading*). This is all very pleasant and jolly, little girl, taking a day off, and having a nice long time with you, but I really ought to have taken the early train to the city this morning.

CAR. One day won't make very much difference, will it, Bob?

BID. It might make all the difference in the world. However, the day after a holiday is not apt to amount to much, and as long as I have made up my mind to stay here, I might as well think of nothing but having a good time. My English friend did not turn out very much for points on the stock market, did he?

CAR. He was the means of our finding out one thing, and that was that Miss Pattern had been speculating. And you've known it all this time, and have never told me a word about it. I don't think that was very kind, Bob.

BID. But, Carrie dear, I had given the old lady my promise not to tell a soul.

CAR. Then you don't think it necessary to make any difference between me and everybody else?

BID. Why, Carrie! Now that isn't fair, you know.

CAR. Oh, very well, sir. I shall know what to expect in the future. You seem to like Mr. Babburton, notwithstanding the fact that he doesn't give you any information.

BID. Why, yes; I like him. He's a very good fellow; don't you think so?

CAR. Yes, he's so frank and open.

BID. Well, I have an idea there isn't very much in his mind to keep back. But he's a sweet-tempered chap.

CAR. Yes, indeed he is. His disposition is perfectly lovely. He's the most amiable man I ever met.

BID. Oh, come, dear! Isn't that putting it a little strong?

CAR. Not a bit. He's perfectly lovely. And he's as considerate as he can be. And his manners are so nice.

BID. (*impatently*). Oh, draw it mild, Carrie. He's no Chesterfield.

CAR. I didn't say he was. And he's such a nice-looking man; don't you think so?

BID. No.

CAR. Why, Bob! how can you say so! He's really a very handsome man; has a very distinguished look. And I really think—but never mind—I don't believe I'd better tell you about that.

BID. Ah, Carrie! please.

CAR. Oh, it's nothing. Only last night, after dinner, he was so very—he seemed so much—I'm afraid if he stays here much longer he'll fall in love with me—and—

BID. But surely, dear, you don't mean—

(*Enter BETTERBY, L. U. E.*)

BID. (*aside*). Confound him! What does he want to turn up now for?

BET. Hello, Bob! Where have you been since breakfast? I've been looking for you everywhere.

CAR. Mr. Bidder and I have been taking a walk, and we've only just come back. But, now that you've come, I think I'll go into the house for a nap, and leave you to your own devices. (*Exit, L. 2 E.*)

BET. It's funny, Bob, but it never seems to occur to girls that a fellow wants to be alone with a fellow sometimes. I hope she didn't walk you very far.

BID. (*absent-mindedly*). Oh, that's all right.

BET. You see, girls are queer. Now, I suppose she thought you'd come down here especially to see her. Where's Mr. Babburton?

BID. I don't know—confound him!

BET. Why, what's the matter with him?

BID. Oh, nothing. I'm tired of him.

BET. Why, that's just what my wife said. You see, she thinks he's rich, and she wants him to fall in love with Carrie. (*BIDDER looks surprised and disgusted.*) But she says he's so thick-headed he'd never think of it. But it seemed to me he was a good deal taken with her last night after dinner. Didn't you notice it?

BID. Notice it! No! Nothing of the sort. (*Aside.*)
Confound him!

BET. What's the matter, Bob?

BID. Nothing.

BET. You're not feeling blue about B. B. & P., are you?

BID. Hang B. B. & P.! The road may go to the devil
for all I care.

BET. By Jove! they'd have a bully passenger business if
they did. But what is the trouble, old man?

BID. Oh, I've got a headache.

(*Enter BABBURTON, L. U. E.*)

BAB. Hello! here you are. I say, won't you fellows go
for a swim?

BID. (*crossly*). No, thank you. I'm going into the house
to read. (*Exit, L. U. E.*)

BAB. What's the matter with him?

BET. I don't know. Says he's got a headache.

BAB. But I say! Won't you go?

BET. Go where? Into the house?

BAB. Go for a swim.

BET. No, thank you. I never care for it. (*Aside.*)
What in thunder does Bob want to have a headache for!
I expected to have a long talk with him. Guess I'll go and
find him. (*Walks off absent-mindedly. Exit, L. U. E.*)

BAB. Don't seem to care for me much. Wonder what
I've done. Mrs. Betterby seemed put out with me this
morning, too. Can't imagine what I've done, I'm sure.
Hope Miss Pollard isn't put out with me, too. Nice girl,
Miss Pollard, awfully nice girl. There's the old lady, too;
seemed rather crabbed this morning. Perhaps that's only
her way. I'd like to please her, too, if I could. Might
please Miss Pollard by pleasing her. Wish I could tell her
how to get a chicken out of that what's-its-name. By Jove!
I have it. That'll please her awfully. (*Calling.*) Watts, I
say, Watts. Where the deuce is Watts?

(*Enter WATTS, L. 2 E.*)

WATTS. Yes, sir. What is it, sir?

BAB. How far is the village, Watts?

WATTS. Near by, sir.

BAB. (*giving him money*). Here, go to the shop and buy
two or three nice chickens; nice ones, mind. Don't say a
word to any one. Bring them back here and put them in
Miss Pattern's what's-its-name — hatching machine.

WATTS. Live ones, sir, hof course?

BAB. Oh, yes, to be sure. Glad you thought of that, Watts. You're a very clever man. Don't know what I'd do without you.

WATTS. Thank you, sir. (*Going.*)

BAB. But wait. Perhaps she keeps it locked.

WATTS. Ho, no, sir.

BAB. Are you sure?

WATTS. Ho, yes, sir. I was looking at it this mornin_g, sir.

BAB. All right, then. Hurry! (*Exit WATTS, R. U. E.*) Now, when she finds them there, Miss Pattern will be so pleased. She'll never know, you know. Or, even if she did know, she'd know I meant to please her. Hello, here's Betterby. Perhaps he's changed his mind about the swim.

(*Enter BETTERBY, L. 2 E.*)

Back again, Betterby. Have you decided to take a swim after all?

BET. No, my dear fellow. I just came back to beg your pardon for leaving you so abruptly just now. But I was worried about Bidder. I'm afraid he isn't well.

BAB. So sorry.

BET. I hope you don't mind.

BAB. Oh, but I do, you know. I feel very badly about it.

BET. But you mustn't feel so. I didn't mean anything by it.

BAB. Oh! you're only chaffing, then. He isn't ill.

BET. Bidder? Says he is.

BAB. Then, my dear fellow, of course I feel badly about it. Only decent, you know.

BET. What is it you feel badly about?

BAB. Why, Bidder's being ill, to be sure.

BET. But I meant, I hope you don't feel badly about my leaving you so abruptly.

BAB. Oh, not a bit. Rather liked it. I mean, I'm glad you did—that is—you know what I mean.

BET. Yes, that's all right. Seen my aunt this morning?

BAB. Yes, she showed me her what's-its-name.

BET. Incubator.

BAB. Yes, that's it. But I say, Betterby, she doesn't have much luck, does she?

BET. No, not much.

BAB. I say, perhaps she doesn't use the right kind of bait?

BET. Bait?

BAB. Yes; that's a joke.

BET. Joke? Oh, I see. Ha! ha! ha! But I've got a conundrum for you.

BAB. Oh, I say—don't.

BET. But this is a new one. Bidder made it up this morning.

BAB. By Jove! Bidder made one up!

BET. Yes; it's this. Why is Miss Pattern's incubator like—no, hold on. It isn't one of those. What's the difference—that's it—what's the difference between George Washington and Miss Pattern's incubator? Give it up?

BAB. Yes, I always give 'em up.

BET. One was—wait a minute. Let me think.

BAB. Does Bidder know the answer?

BET. Of course he does. Now I've got it. One had a hatchet when he was a chicken, and the other had a chicken—no. That isn't it. One was a hatchet when he had—no. I'm getting confused. One hatched it when— I'm afraid I've forgotten it, but it was a very good one.

BAB. Yes, should think it might have been; but I'm not much on riddles; only know one. Why is a sailor on shore like a parson on horseback?

BET. I give it up.

BAB. That's the only one I know.

BET. What's the answer?

BAB. I don't know. All I know's the riddle, you know.

BET. Oh!

BAB. I don't care much for riddles, do you?

BET. No, I can't say I do. Miss Pattern, my aunt, you know, is great on riddles, though. Last Sunday she asked me why I was like the Hoosac Tunnel. You know what the Hoosac Tunnel is, don't you?

BAB. It's a—a—tunnel, isn't it?

BET. Yes, that's it. And the answer was, because I was the biggest bore in this part of the country.

BAB. Bore? Oh, yes; ha! ha! ha! But, I say, Betterby, that's clever, isn't it? Must remember that. Your aunt knows a good deal, doesn't she?

BET. H'm—no. I don't think she knows anything—

(Enter, c., MISS PATTERN, who overhears last remark, and MRS. BETTERBY, the former holding by the legs a live chicken in each hand.)

MISS P. (*coming forward quickly, much excited*). So I don't know anything! William Betterby, aren't you ashamed of yourself?

BAB. (*aside*). She doesn't seem really pleased.

BET. Ashamed of myself? Why, auntie?

MISS P. Why? Why? Don't you trifle with me, William Betterby. Look at these! (*Holding up chickens.*)

BET. I see them. They're chickens.

MISS P. Yes, they're chickens; and I suppose you thought it was funny. I suppose that's your idea of wit.

BET. I haven't the least idea what you're talking about, auntie.

BAB. (*aside*). They seem to be nice chickens, too.

MRS. B. I told you Willie wouldn't do such a thing, Aunt Pattern. (*To her husband.*) Aunt Pattern found these chickens in her incubator not a moment ago, and she thinks you put them there.

BET. No, I didn't, auntie, honestly and truly. Perhaps you overlooked these when you took out your last batch of eggs.

MISS P. Don't try my temper, William. I am doing my best to keep calm.

BET. Anyhow, you needn't be angry; you're two chickens better off than you were before.

MISS P. No such thing. Don't you think I know my own chickens when I see them?

BAB. (*eagerly*). But, Miss Pattern, you're mistaken. They're not your chickens. I told Watts distinctly to buy them in the village, and I never knew Watts to—

MISS P. What! You told him? Then it was you who had these put into my incubator?

BAB. Yes, I did it. But, my dear madam, I thought it would please you, and that you'd never know, you know.

MISS P. (*very dignified*). Mr. Babburton, you are my guest, and I can say no more to you than that I am very much surprised. (*Exit, c., with chickens.*)

MRS. B. Mr. Babburton, how could you! Really, I am almost tempted to tell you that it was unkind. Certainly not in good taste. (*Exit, c.*)

BET. By Jove, Babburton! how did you dare? Ha! ha! ha! You ought to be—ha! ha! ha!—ashamed. I wouldn't be in your boots—ha! ha! ha!—for a farm. (*Exit, c.*)

BAB. Now, isn't that too bad! I didn't mean to be unkind. Damned if I see now why she's so vexed. Oh, by Jove! yes, I do. They're her own chickens! Of course she couldn't hatch her own chickens over again. But I told Watts to buy them. I *must* see Watts. (*Calling.*) Watts! Watts!

(*Enter WATTS, L. 2 E., heated and uncomfortable.*)

BAB. (*severely.*) Watts, my man, come here! Where did you get those chickens?

WATTS. I was just coming to tell you, sir. They only had plucked ones at the shop, sir, and on my way back I saw some nice ones running about, so I caught a couple, sir, and I got very 'ot in consequence, and put them into the incubator, as you directed me to, sir. I thought it would save time, sir, but I 'ad no idea 'ow 'ard they were to catch, sir. Here's the money, sir.

BAB. Keep it, Watts. You've earned it. I suppose it's all my own fault. Watts, go to the house, please, and pack my portmanteau.

WATTS. Are you going, sir?

BAB. Yes, I think I'd better. I'll follow you directly.

WATTS. Very good, sir. (*Going.*)

BAB. (*to himself.*) But the letter to my sister! Miss Pattern wanted to know about this B—B—this road—they all wanted to know. By Jove! they'll all be pleased. Hold on, Watts!

WATTS. Yes, sir.

BAB. Unpack my portmanteau; I've changed my mind.

WATTS. But I 'aven't packed it, sir.

BAB. Well, unpack it directly you've packed it, then.

WATTS. Very good, sir. (*Aside.*) I'm afraid he's not well. He ought to be at 'ome. (*Exit, L. 2 E.*)

BAB. I suppose I'll hear from Laura this afternoon. She'll tell me all about the road, of course, and then I can tell all these people about it—that is, if they'll listen to me. Mrs. Betterby said it was not in good taste. Oh, come! now that's hard. I never did a thing that was not in good taste in my life—never. Oh, dear me! they're the hardest people to please I ever saw. But, by Jove, if I wait to get a letter from Laura, I'll have to meet the old lady again! I know! I'll behave as if she wasn't vexed. But she was vexed—deuced vexed. That won't do. I have it! I'll pretend she's forgotten all about it, and I'll be very pleasant and happy,

and she'll be very pleasant and happy — perhaps. O Lord! I don't feel really confident. But I would like to go for a swim; don't want to go all alone, though. Bidder's got a headache, Betterby never bathes — I mean, swims. I wonder if Miss Pattern — Oh, rot! I'm so put out, I can't think. I'll go down to the beach anyway. (*Exit, R. 2 E.*)

(*Enter CARRIE, C., with work-basket, etc., followed by BIDDER, who looks very uncomfortable. CARRIE seats herself at table, R., and begins crocheting.*)

BID. But, my dear little girl, I'm awfully sorry. I really would have told you about Miss Pattern, but I was afraid you'd tell some one, and —

CAR. Oh, you were?

BID. (*hastily*). No, no, no. I don't mean that, Carrie. I was afraid Miss Pattern would find out I told you, and then she'd think that if I would tell you, I'd tell anybody.

CAR. Oh, she would, would she?

BID. (*anxiously*). No, no. I don't mean that. I mean that if I told you, I thought she'd think that you'd — that is, I'd think she oughtn't to have — Don't you think so?

CAR. Oh, I don't have to think. You're doing all the thinking, you know. (*Drops ball of worsted.*)

BID. But, Carrie, dear, what can I do?

CAR. You might pick up my worsted, Bob, please.

BID. (*picking up and handing her the worsted*). Yes, dear; excuse me. But that wasn't what I meant. What can I say, dear?

CAR. Say anything you please, Bob. Only *please* say something new.

BID. Yes, dear, I know; but I can't think.

CAR. Well, then, let's talk about something else. Speaking of something new, do you know, I was looking at Mr. Babburton this morning, and —

BID. Hang Mr. Babburton!

CAR. Why, Bob, what's poor Mr. Babburton done to you?

BID. Done to me? Nothing. I'm tired of him.

CAR. And I suppose when you're tired of me, you'll want to hang me.

BID. (*taking one of her hands*). But I'll never get tired of you, dear.

CAR. I can't knit with one hand, Bob dear. (*BIDDER still retains her hand.*) But you will get tired of me, unless you tell me everything; or if you don't get tired of me, it won't be my fault.

BID. But I *will* tell you everything.

CAR. Then tell me one thing now.

BID. That depends on what it is, dear, of course.

CAR. Oh, does it? Excuse me, but I want to crochet. (*Drawing away her hand.*) But as I was saying about Mr. Babburton —

BID. No, no, dear; I don't mean that. Of course, anything I can tell you.

CAR. Are you sure? Anything?

BID. Yes, anything.

CAR. How many shares of B. B. & P. has Miss Pattern got?

BID. Come, come, Carrie, I really can't, you know —

CAR. Oh, I don't care — really, not in the least. But, do you know, this morning, as I was looking at Mr. Babburton, he looked —

BID. Three hundred —

CAR. Oh, Bob, dear, he didn't look a day over thirty.

BID. Shares — three hundred shares.

CAR. Thank you very much, dear. It's awfully kind of you to tell me everything. Come and sit beside me, and —

(*Enter BETTERBY and MRS. B., c.*)

BET. I say, Bob, did you hear — ha! ha! ha!

MRS. B. O Carrie, such a joke — ha! ha! ha!

BID. Let's have it.

BET. Babburton, your English friend — ha! ha! ha!

MRS. B. Wait, Willie; let me tell them.

BET. All right; you tell them.

MRS. B. When Aunt Pattern went to her incubator a little while ago she found two good-sized chickens in it, and of course she was perfectly furious, and started off with a chicken in each hand to find Willie; for she was convinced that he did it. Well, she found Willie here with Mr. Babburton, and immediately pitched into him, hammer and tongs, and poor Willie was perfectly innocent all the time. I forget how it happened exactly, but Mr. Babburton finally told her that he had done it because — ha! ha! ha! — he thought it would please her.

(*All laugh together very much.*)

BID. Do you suppose he honestly thought she'd suppose some of the eggs had hatched?

MRS. B. Yes, I suppose so.

CAR. Poor, dear man! It's really too bad. I wonder where he is.

BET. Gone in bathing, I think.

CAR. I do hope he won't drown himself.

(Enter MISS PATTERN, L. 2 E.)

MISS P. Who's that you're talking about?

BET. Mr. Babburton.

MISS P. Humph! He ought to be drowned, the puppy! I hope you're proud of your friend, Mr. Bidder. He's a nice man to get points out of on the stock market! Points! Points! I should as soon think of getting points out of a piece of putty. Why, he's the most simple, stupid—

CAR. But, Miss Pattern, if he's so stupid, he wouldn't think of playing you such a practical joke. He surely honestly thought it would please you.

MISS P. (*trying not to laugh, but gradually laughing more and more*). It's always just such stupid people who play practical jokes, but—ha! ha! ha!—there—ha! ha! ha!—I can't help it. I must laugh—ha! ha! ha! He's such a simpleton.

(Enter BABBURTON, R. 2 E., *looking very uncomfortable and embarrassed, but walking quickly to MISS PATTERN, and assuming a very vivacious manner.*)

BAB. Ah, Miss Pattern! This is such a lovely morning and this is such a pretty place—sweetly pretty place—with all the flowers and the sea and the dear little chickens—I mean, dear little—O Lord! I went down to the shore to take a swim.

MISS P. (*coldly*). Did you take one?

BAB. No, I didn't.

MISS P. (*coldly*). Why not?

BAB. When I got there, I felt so blue, so sorry. Oh, Miss Pattern! I'm awfully distressed about those chickens, I am, indeed. I really thought—

MISS P. (*kindly*). There! there! Never mind, Mr. Babburton. (*Everybody laughs.*) Perhaps, after all, the reason I haven't succeeded in hatching any eggs is because the incubator waits until the chickens are ready for market before hatching them.

(Enter WATTS, C., *bringing a telegram.*)

WATTS. Hexcuse me, marm, but 'ere's a telegraphic despatch for Mr. Bidder, marm.

BID. Telegram for me? Thank you; must be from the

office. (*Reads; others, except BABBURTON, who detains WATTS and talks to him, moving near to him and listening.*) "Rumor that B. B. & P. has not succeeded in leasing the O. L. & N. Stock gone off two points. Wire us what to do." (*All look from one to the other in great dismay, without saying a word, and then assume attitudes of extreme depression. Exit WATTS, C.*)

BAB. (*looking from one to the other; aside*). Dear me; somebody's dead in the family. They don't want me here. (*Aloud.*) Miss Pattern, I see that you and your friends have met with a bereavement, so I'll just—

MISS P. No, no, Mr. Babburton. A little unpleasant news, that's all. You mustn't think of going away. We'll soon be cheerful again.

(*Enter WATTS, C., bringing letters.*)

WATTS. The mail 'as just harrived, marm, and I thought I'd bring it to you.

MISS P. Thank you, Watts. (*Taking letters.*) Here's one for you, Carrie. (*Handing it to her.*) Two for you, Dolly. (*Handing them.*) One, two, three, six for you, William, and they look suspiciously like bills. (*Handing them.*) And here's a very thick one for Mr. Babburton. (*Handing it to him.*)

BAB. Thanks. (*Aside.*) It's from Laura. Now I'll please them.

MISS P. Here's a letter for Thomas Tatterton. I wonder who he is? Oh! it's in your care, Mr. Babburton; forwarded from New York.

BAB. Beg pardon?

MISS P. Tatterton—Thomas Tatterton; don't you know him?

BAB. No, don't remember—

WATTS (*touching his arm*). Beg pardon, sir.

BAB. Oh, yes; I forgot. It's for Watts.

MISS P. For Watts?

BAB. Yes. His real name's Tatterton—that's his real name. But I call him Watts. Here, Watts. (*Giving him the letter; all the others quietly reading letters. BABBURTON opens his and takes out large amount of printed matter.*) Here we are! Now, Miss Pollard! Now, Miss Pattern! This will tell you all about this B. B. & P.) (*Gives some to CARRIE, some to MISS PATTERN, BETTERBY, BIDDER, and MRS. B.*) There!

CAR. Why, these are time-tables.

BID. This is a list of the directors and the last treasurer's report.

MISS P. And these are freight-rates and maps.

BAB. (*happily*). Yes, everything. I asked Laura, my sister, to send everything.

BID. And is that how you happen to have these?

BAB. (*much pleased*). Yes. You all wanted to know about the railroad, so I wrote to my sister Laura, Mrs. Blake, to tell me all about it, and she has sent me these. Laura never does anything by halves, you know. She's a jolly girl.

MISS P. (*testily*). What earthly good do you suppose these are? Everybody can get these.

BAB. (*very much depressed*. BIDDER and the others, *trying not to laugh, turn their backs*). Watts, have you unpacked my portmanteau?

WATTS. Yes, sir.

BAB. Pack it.

WATTS (*picking up a letter which has fallen from BABURTON'S envelope*). Here is your letter, sir.

BAB. (*reading*). "Dear Arthur, I asked my husband about the railroad, and he said it would take too long to tell me, and gave me these papers, which I send to you. He said there would have to be a number of new ones printed soon, because his railroad had just bought or leased another railroad. I think he called it the O. L. & N." (*Turning to the others, in an appealing tone.*) My sister says they will have to print different ones soon.

BID. (*stepping up to BABBURTON eagerly*). Does she say why?

BAB. Yes; here it is. They have leased another road, called the O. L. & N.

(*They all crowd around him much excited.*)

BID. Excuse me, Babburton, but do you mind—may I read it?

BAB. Why, certainly, my dear fellow.

BID. (*reads letter quickly, throws his arms around BABURTON*). My dear fellow, you're a perfect brick— You're an angel in disguise!

BAB. What have I done?

BID. What have you done? You've made us all the happiest people in the world. (*Turns to CARRIE and takes both her hands.*) Now, dear, we need not wait any longer, need we?

CAR. Not if you will tell me everything.

BET. We'll soon be all right now, Dolly.

MRS. B. Yes, dear, and back in our own house.

MISS P. And I shall not have to worry about anything but my incubator.

BAB. I'm glad you're all pleased. But, do you know, I would rather buy shares in this O. L. & N.

ALL. Why?

BAB. Oh! it's a so much nicer name for a railroad. But I am glad you're pleased. (*To audience.*) Are you pleased?

CURTAIN.

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MRS. J. JOHN CARROLL, a widow, and Colonel Rudd's sister-in-law.

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NED GRAYDON, a young gentleman of exceedingly faulty memory.

MR. JAMES BASKOM, Colonel Rudd's lawyer.

CHING-AH-LING, the Chinese cook, a bit impertinent but by far the most important individual in the cast.

SYNOPSIS

ACT I.—Early morning in the kitchen of the Rudd bachelor establishment.

ACT II.—The Rudd library, five days later.

ACT III.—The same. Evening of the same day.

BREAKING THE ENGAGEMENT

A Farce in One Act

By W. C. Parker

Two males, one female. Costumes, modern; scene, an interior. Plays twenty minutes. A quick playing little piece suitable for vaudeville use. Very bright and snappy and strongly recommended.

Price, 15 cents

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By E. W. Burt, M. D.

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Ten females. Scenery, two interiors; costumes modern. Plays a full evening. A bright and interesting play full of action and incident. Can be strongly recommended. All the parts are good. Sarah Jane Lovejoy, Katie O'Connor and Euphemia Addison are admirable character parts, and Miss Alias and Miss Alibi, the "silent sisters," offer a side-splitting novelty.

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By Evelyn Gray Whiting

Four males, seven females. Scene, an interior; costumes modern. A domestic comedy looking steadfastly at the "bright side" of human affairs. Mrs. Briggs is an admirable part, full of original humor and quaint sayings, and all the characters are full of opportunity. Simply but effectively constructed, and written with great humor. Plays two hours.

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A Humorous Entertainment in One Scene

By Laura M. Parsons

Twenty-four males, eighteen females and eight children, but can be played by less if desired. Scenery unimportant; costumes modern. Full of humorous points and chances to introduce local hits. Plays from an hour up, according to specialties introduced.

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THE MAGISTRATE Farce in Three Acts. Twelve males, four females. Costumes, modern; scenery, all interior. Plays two hours and a half.

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THE PROFLIGATE Play in Four Acts. Seven males, five females. Scenery, three interiors, rather elaborate; costumes, modern. Plays a full evening.

THE SCHOOLMISTRESS Farce in Three Acts. Nine males, seven females. Costumes, modern; scenery, three interiors. Plays a full evening.

THE SECOND MRS. TANQUERAY Play in Four Acts. Eight males, five females. Costumes, modern; scenery, three interiors. Plays a full evening.

SWEET LAVENDER Comedy in Three Acts. Seven males, four females. Scene, a single interior; costumes, modern. Plays a full evening.

THE TIMES Comedy in Four Acts. Six males, seven females. Scene, a single interior; costumes, modern. Plays a full evening.

THE WEAKER SEX Comedy in Three Acts. Eight males, eight females. Costumes, modern; scenery, two interiors. Plays a full evening.

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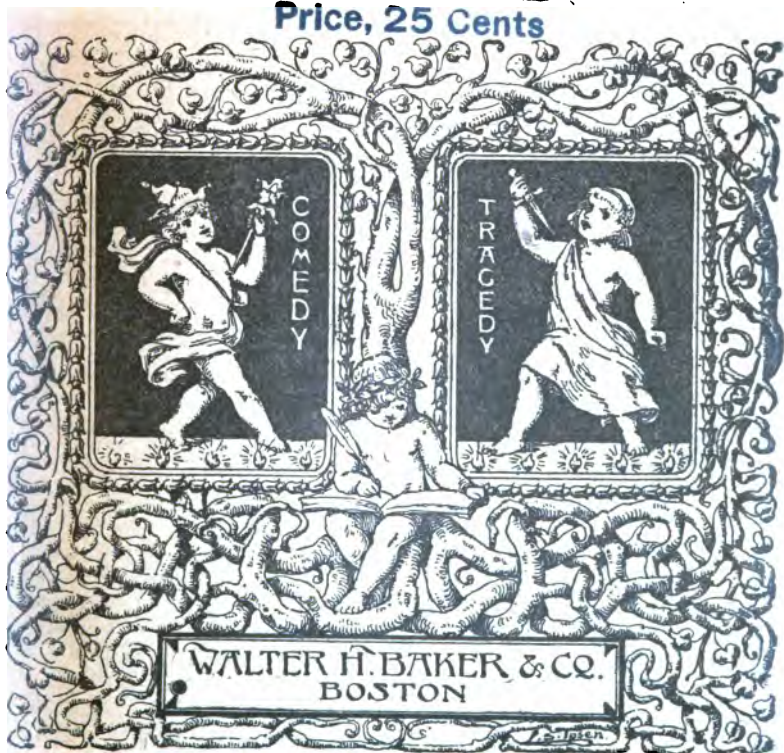
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OF PLAYS

RED OR WHITE

~~Price, 15 Cents~~
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THE AMAZONS Farce in Three Acts. Seven males, five females. Costumes, modern; scenery, not difficult. Plays a full evening.

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DANDY DICK Farce in Three Acts. Seven males, four females. Costumes, modern; scenery, two interiors. Plays two hours and a half.

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No. 5 Hamilton Place, Boston, Massachusetts

RED OR WHITE?

A DECISION IN ONE ACT

BY

WILLIAM MAYNADIER BROWNE

AUTHOR OF "THE TRUSTER," "A FOOL FOR LUCK," ETC.

*As originally performed by "The Footlight Club," at Elliot Hall,
Jamaica Plain, November 28 and 29, 1893.*

BOSTON

Walter H. Baker

RED OR WHITE?

CHARACTERS.

ROBERT GRAY, *a bachelor of forty ; a well-to-do man of the world.*

HERBERT GRAY, *his nephew, say twenty-three.*

JANE BARNARD, *engaged to Robert Gray ; young,—say twenty.*

MISS GRAY, *elder sister of Robert Gray, a maiden lady.*

TIME.—At night ; say 10 o'clock, P. M.

PERIOD.—The present.

COSTUMES.

Evening dress, except for Herbert Gray at second entrance. He is then in travelling costume.



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RED OR WHITE?

Scene.—*Library in ROBERT GRAY'S house; comfortably furnished. Double door at C.; door at R. F.; open fire; library table not far from fireplace, on which is a glass vase containing a single large white rose. As the curtain rises, ROBERT GRAY is discovered, apparently asleep in an arm-chair in front of the fire. A screen stands behind his chair, so arranged that he is visible to the audience, but not to the actors. One hand is hanging listlessly over the arm of the chair (the arm toward the audience), and as he holds the book, one finger marks the place where he has been reading. He has a red rose in his button-hole.*

Enter MISS GRAY, C. *She is carrying a silver tray on which are a decanter, glass, sugar-bowl, hot water, &c.*

Miss Gray (coming down. *Her voice is high and nasal; her manner of speaking is deliberate but complaining.*) Robert, dear, here are your things. I really don't know whether the water is hot enough or not; I can only say that I begged the cook, once more, to try and have it right. (*Setting down the tray and arranging the different articles.*) I do my best—I don't see what *more* I can do than to *beg* the cook to be careful. You haven't the least idea how hard it is nowadays to get anything done. And that reminds me, Robert dear, that I am afraid the laundress is thinking of giving warning, on account of your shirts. You know, Robert dear, you *do* wear—(*Looking about her.*) Why! Where *is* Robert dear! (*Looks behind the screen, sees ROBERT GRAY, and continues without exhibiting any surprise.*) You *do* wear a great many shirts. Couldn't you get along with less? (*Pause.*) Robert! (*Pause.*) Robert, dear! (*Pause.*) He's asleep. Robert dear is getting old. A man always begins to show his age when he falls asleep in the evening. (*Sighs.*) Dear me! He is about to take a *great* risk in marrying Jane Barnard. She's such a *very* young

girl! I do hope he'll be happy with her. But, still, he is taking a *great* risk. And he really ought not to let her go out alone, of an evening, with such a young man as Bertie, even if he *is* our nephew. Robert, dear! (*Pause.*) And even if it *is* to see pictures. It's all very well to think that seeing pictures is a perfectly safe pastime for young people, but *I've* seen pictures that— Robert, dear! (*Pause.*) Yes, he's asleep. (*Sighs.*)

[*Exit, R.*
Robert Gray (*still in chair; after waiting until the door has closed—indulgently*). Good night, Ellen.

[*Pause, during which ROBERT GRAY yawns, stretches, and settles himself comfortably.*

Enter JANE, followed by H. GRAY. *She enters rapidly, evidently much overcome by emotion. He follows her anxiously. As she comes down, she hastily glances about the room, and stops at C.*

H. Gray (*taking her hand*). Jennie! Forgive me. Please forgive me. I could not help it. I love you so!

Jane (*panting*). Oh, Bertie, Bertie! This is horrible! You ought not—

H. Gray (*interrupting*). I know, I know. I feel like a perfect cad, Jennie. I had no right to speak, but I could not help it. And now that I have said it, I must, I will ask you. Do you love him?

Jane (*reproachfully*). Oh Bertie! How can you ask me? Of course I—I—love—Mr. Gray. Everybody loves him.

H. Gray. Yes, I know—but do you love him, really—as I love you?

Jane (*pulling away*). Don't! Don't! Yes, I do—I mean—I think—I—Oh! Please, go away.

H. Gray. But, Jennie; think. Think what it all means. If you are to marry him you must *know* that you love him. You must—

Jane (*pushing him from her*). Please! Don't! I cannot talk to you. Go away.

H. Gray. A moment, dear. Be patient with me one moment. Sit down and let me tell you. I promise to be quiet. I will not even touch your hand again. (*Drawing away from her.*) But I *must* explain—now that I have said what I have. There. (*She sits.*) Jennie, my darling—I have tried so hard not to speak! All these weeks I have been here I have tried to keep my secret because Uncle Bob has been so good to me. I felt like a traitor to think of loving you. Now I have told you I love you. I couldn't help it, Jennie. When I remembered that in an hour I should be going miles and miles away from

you, going back to Uncle Bob's ranche—when, as I helped you take off your wrap downstairs—when I touched your cheek—ah, Jennie, I *couldn't* help it. The words came in spite of me. Try as I might, I couldn't have kept them back. Now they are said. You know that I love you—and I feel like a sneak. But since I *have* said them, tell me, tell me truly, Jennie—do you love Uncle Bob? Look into your heart. Do you love him as a woman should love the man she is to wed? (*Pause.*) Think, dear. Does your whole heart want him? Him alone?

Jane (*sobbing*). I don't know—I don't know.

H. Gray. Then you don't love him—you can't love him.

Jane. But I have promised him.

H. Gray. Yes, I know. But who would be the first man in the world to say that such a promise should be broken? Uncle Bob himself. Who would be the last man to wish to make a girl unhappy? Uncle Bob. I would not say this, dear, except that you say you don't know whether you love him. If you really loved him you would know. When we were boy and girl together you used to love me. Didn't you?

Jane. Oh, I don't know. Please leave me now.

H. Gray. No, Jennie. I can't leave you so. I love you. I love you. Think how hard it is for me.

Jane. Think how hard it will be for him.

H. Gray. But he's such an easy-going, unselfish old chap. He's so good-natured. But I won't ask you to decide now. Tell me before I start—tell me in half an hour, when I come downstairs again.

Jane. But I—

H. Gray. No, no. Think of it. Don't decide yet. Wait until I come back. Then, if I may hope—no matter how little—give me some sign before I start. Give me one of those roses (*pointing to those in her corsage*), when you say "Good-bye."

Jane. No, no. He gave me these.

H. Gray (*glancing about the room*). Then give me that white one, in the vase.

Jane. No. He gave me that, too. I can't, Bertie, I can't. Let me go.

H. Gray. Well, do this, then: When I come back here I will look at that vase. If the white rose is still there, I shall know you refuse to think of me again. But if I find a red one there in its place, I shall hope. (*She starts to interrupt.*) No. Don't say a word. It rests with you to decide.

[*Exit hurriedly, C.*

[JANE *throws herself down beside a chair and buries her head in the cushions. Pause. R. GRAY lets fall the book he has been holding; JANE springs to her feet.*

Jane. What was that !

[*Walks to the screen ; looks around it and sees R. G. ; exclaims ; he rubs his eyes and looks about him ; seeing her.*

R. Gray. Hello, little girl ! That you ? Have a good time looking at the pictures ? Eh ?

Jane. Have you been asleep, Mr. Gray ?

R. Gray. Come, come, come ! (*Rises.*) What did I tell you I'd do to you if you persisted in calling me Mr. Gray ? (*Taking her face in his hands.*) H'm ? Didn't I say that for every time you called me Mr. Gray I'd cut you off one new bonnet just as soon as we were married ? Eh ?

Jane. Yes.

R. Gray. Well, do you think I want to go trapesing round with a wife with a shawl over her head ?

Jane. Were you asleep ?

R. Gray (*still holding her face*). Well, go on.

Jane. What do you mean ?

R. Gray. Say Robert.

Jane. Were you asleep, R—Robert ?

R. Gray. Ah ! Well, my dear little woman, that's a question. Sit down, and I'll tell you something. (*Moves his own chair towards front, and places an ottoman beside it, for her. They sit. He has taken up the book he let fall.*) But first you must tell me something. If a fellow has a dream, is he asleep ?

Jane. What do you mean ?

R. Gray. Well, I'll tell you. While I was sitting, looking at the fire, perhaps a half-hour ago, the last two lines of an old poem kept running in my head. I couldn't remember the other lines. I am afraid your gray-headed old lover has spent more time at the club and at dinner parties, than he has spent reading poetry. However, I made up my mind that, since I was about to be married to a beautiful young woman who, I suppose, keeps posted on poetry, I'd better look that poem up and nail it on the spot—just for a starter in my poetical education, you know. So I got this book from the shelf, and sat down again to read.

Jane. Could you find the poem ?

R. Gray. *Could* I find the poem ! Why, my dear child, you seem to think I can't find anything in a book. I can find the wedding service in the Prayer Book. Still, although I could, doubtless, have found the poem, I didn't—and I'll tell you why. I was trying to recall the name. I looked into the fire, and there I saw the faces of two or three old gray-haired bachelors, like myself, all staring at me—faces of fellows I know at the club. I looked at them for a minute, and said, "How are you"—I

hate a man who's bashful about saying "How are you" to another man—and then they began to talk. One said, "Better not read the rest, old man." Another fellow said, "Let well enough alone, Bob," and the third fellow—Oh I know who he was, I recognized him—he nudged the other fellows and whispered, "Let him read it, let him read it." That put me on my mettle, and I said to myself I'd read it if I felt like it, and be hanged to 'em. Just then the book fell from my hands, and there you stood, peeping round the corner of the screen, looking as if you'd heard every word of it, and wondered if I had.

Jane. What were the last two lines, Mr.—er—Robert?

R. Gray. Oh, I don't believe you want to hear them.

Jane. Yes, I do.

R. Gray. How much?

Jane. Ever so much.

R. Gray. That's a good deal. H'm. Well, I'll make a bargain with you. I'll tell you the last two lines, if you will promise to read me the rest of the poem. What do you say? Is it a go?

Jane. Yes.

R. Gray. All right. Done with you—that is, on that point. The last two lines were: (*His manner changes to grave, and he strokes her hair gently, as he recites the lines.*)

But I will do my best a gude wife to be,
For Auld Robin Gray, he is kind to me."

(*He watches her narrowly, as he hands her the book.*) Now, little woman, hunt up the poem, and let's have it. (*He settles back in his chair; JENNIE has taken the book mechanically; she is evidently agitated. Pause.*) Well, Jennie, dear, I'm ready.

Jane. I don't need the book. I know the verses.

R. Gray. By Jove! You don't say so! So much the better. Recite them, dear.

Jane (*much distressed*). Dear Mr. Gray—well, then, Robert dear—I—I—you—you wouldn't like it.

R. Gray (*stroking her head*). Why not, little woman?

Jane. It is very sad.

R. Gray (*gravely*). Then the sooner we have it over with the better. Eh?

Jane. Must I?

R. Gray. Yes, dear, you promised.

Jane (*reciting, softly. As she proceeds she becomes more and more affected*).

"When the sheep are in the fold, and the kye a' at hame,
 When a' the weary world to sleep are gane,
 The wæs o' my heart fa' in showers frae my e'e,
 While my gudeman lies sound by me.

Young Jamie lo'ed me weel and sought me for his bride,
 But saving a crown he had naething else beside ;
 To mak the crown a pound my Jamie gaed to sea,
 And the crown and the pound they were baith for me.

He hadna been awa' a week but only twa,
 When my mither she fell sick, and the cow was stown awa' ;
 My father brak his arm—my Jamie at the sea—
 And Auld Robin Gray came a-courting me.

My father couldna work, my mither couldna spin,
 I toiled day and night, but their bread I couldna win ;
 Auld Rob maintained them baith, and wi' tears in his e'e,
 Said 'Jennie, for their sakes, will you marry me?'

My heart it said na, and I looked for Jamie back,
 But hard blew the winds, and his ship was a wrack ;
 His ship it was a wrack—why didna Jamie dee? "

(At this point she breaks down completely and sobs aloud, her face against his knee. He waits until she is quiet, then says, very gently.)

B. Gray. "And wherefore was I spared to cry 'wae is me!'"
 Never mind, Jennie dear—never mind. I know the rest of the story. It all comes back to me now—how the poor girl, after she was married to the old chap, met Jamie alive and well—and they still loved each other—and they had to live it down. I remember it all. You were right, it was sad—beastly sad. But, my darling little woman, just think for a moment what a pity it would be, what a great pity it would be for a sweet, bright, pretty, trim little girl who knows poetry so well and who recites it so—er—pretty well, to be spared to cry "Wae is me!" Of course there's no "Jamie" in our case, now, but these "Jamies" are thick as thieves and there's no telling when one of 'em may have served his time and turn up again. However, we won't talk about that. But since we are on the subject of "Auld Robin Gray" *(he raises her gently and puts his arm about her)*, we might as well exhaust it. We'll just walk up and down a bit, and discuss the old chap and his young wife as if that Jonah of a Jamie had never been born. Now *(they walk slowly across the stage, his arm about her)*, you are twenty and I am—well, call it forty for convenience in figuring. So I am twice as old as you are. Therefore, you see, when you get to be forty

—not old for a *woman*, you know—I shall be, let me see, eighty—and that's—

Jane (*smiling through her tears*). Oh Robert! How ridiculous! You'll only be—

R. Gray (*interrupting*). Never mind. Eighty is near enough. It's best, too, to figure on the safe side. Now at eighty I probably won't have a tooth to my name—I mean except when I am in full dress.

Jane. Oh, Robert! Please don't talk that way about yourself. You'd never be as—

R. Gray (*stopping short and holding her at arm's length*). Look here, young woman, you don't seem to understand the age of man. Do you know that even now I have to sit down when I pull on my trousers?

Jane. Oh, Robert!

R. Gray. And by the time you are a fine, healthy, middle-aged woman, I shan't have a leg left to—er—to pull onto?

Jane. Oh, Robert!

R. Gray. Oh, you don't half know, yet, I'm a terrible fellow apart from my age. Let me tell you just one instance—shirts! I'm a devil of a fellow on shirts. I'm a lightning-change-artist. Now I think of it, while I was asleep—I mean in my vision—one of those chaps—or somebody—said no laundress would live with me unless I wore fewer shirts—and I *won't*. Not for the youngest woman that walks. Then what would happen? Our laundress would leave. Then what? Our cook would have to wash *and* cook. So she'd leave. Then what? Our chambermaid would have to cook, wash, and chambermake—if that's the right root—and then *she'd* leave; and then, then, my wife would have to know it all—and from bitter experience. Ah, Jennie! Jennie! think of these withering details! and all because I would not wear fewer shirts. And I wouldn't—I swear I wouldn't—not if they gave me the Garden of Eden to do it in.

Jane (*laughing*). Oh, Bob! You dear old—

R. Gray. (*sudden change of manner; takes her hands*). But there is one little thing, Jennie, sweet girl, that my wife must do, or she shall be no wife for me. She must love me with the heart of her very soul—in spite of my gray hairs, in spite of my age, in spite of all the "Jamies" in the world. Perhaps that is more than my little woman bargained for. (*She starts to speak*.) No, no! Don't say a word. Wait for a time—a week, a month, a year, if your heart is puzzled—it's a very young heart yet, and the problem is a deep one. But remember this, my dear one—decide as you may, Robert Gray will be just as kind to you—(*aside*) and, God help him, just as fond of you. (*Aloud, with sudden change to gay manner*.) But now for a

bit of news. You know what a faithful, dear good chap Bertie has been to me. His hard work has made my ranche property valuable. And now I am going to make him a present before he goes. I'll tell you why. Bertie is poor. He will want to be getting married. He can't help it, you know, because matrimony is a very contagious affair. It goes through a household like the grip—and leaves you with, the Lord knows what, too, sometimes. So I have decided to make Bertie a present, outright, of the ranche and all belonging to it. (*She starts toward him in admiration.*) No, no! I can afford it. And now I must run upstairs for a moment, to sign the deed. I'll give it to him before he goes. (*Starts to go.*) Cheer up, little girl. Think hard and true. (*She is seated on sofa, L.; buries her face in her hands. He is going; stops suddenly.*) By Jove, that white rose is a beauty. I think I'll steal it—no, I'll swap—fair exchange, you know. (*Removes the red rose from his button-hole, exchanges with the white one, leaving the red rose in the vase. She scarcely notices him.*)

[*Exit, R.*
 [After a moment] JANE rises and walks toward the table. She is much agitated. She sees the red rose in the vase. Realizes what has happened. At this moment H. GRAY'S voice is heard, off stage, calling "All right, Aunt Ellen. Don't think of coming down. Good-bye." JANE steps quickly to the vase, takes the red rose and places it with those in her corsage. Looks wildly about her.

Jane. Oh, if I only had a white one!

[Enter H. GRAY, C., dressed for travelling. He comes down. JANE is standing at L., her back to him. He looks at the vase.

H. Gray (*pointing to vase*). Jennie, the vase is empty. That is no answer.

[Enter R. GRAY, at R. He has a paper in his hand. Pause. Then JANE goes quickly to him, snatches the white rose from his coat and puts it in the vase. Tableau.

B. Gray (*crossing to H. GRAY, and holding out his hand*). Good-bye, Bertie, my boy. I meant to drive down with you, but—I—I can't now. (*Hands him the paper.*) Here. Read that when you get on the train. Good-bye, my boy. God bless you. (*Exit H. GRAY, C.; to JANE, holding out his arms.*) My darling! (*She rushes to him.*)

Jane (*after a pause; still in his arms*). Robert dear, were you really asleep?

B. Gray. Never mind, little woman. I am awake now—awake to a great joy.

CURTAIN.

A Novelty

THE VILLAGE POST-OFFICE

AN ENTERTAINMENT IN ONE SCENE

By *Jessie A. Kelley*

Twenty-two males and twenty females are called for if the full text is used, but the piece is so arranged that one person may take several parts and some characters may be omitted, if desired. Scenery easy; the stage is merely arranged so as to roughly indicate a country store and post-office in one. Costumes are rural and funny. Plays a full evening. A side-splitting novelty, full of "good lines" and comical incident and character. One continuous laugh from beginning to end. Strongly recommended for all cases where fun is desired and not culture. Suited for church entertainments or general use; very wholesome and clean.

Price, 25 cents

CHARACTERS

WILLIAM JONES, *postmaster.*
JERUSHY JONES, *his wife.*
ELYZABYTHE JONES, *their daughter,*
just home from boarding school, very
affected.
JAMES HENRY JONES, *their son, about*
sixteen years of age; a green country
boy.
COLONEL GIBSON, *big story-teller.*
JOSEPH ROBINSON, *bigger story-teller.*
SILAS HARDHACK, *still bigger story-*
teller.
DEACON SLOCUM, *horse trader.*
LIZY ANN SLOCUM, *his wife.*
BETSEY WINSLOW, *dressmaker.*
REV. TOBIAS DUSENBERRY,
REUBEN RICKS, *who stutters.*
SUSAN SMITH, *who helps Mrs. Jones.*
WIDOW GRAY,
LEE SING, *a Chinaman.*
MRS. JOSEPH ROBINSON,
MARY ANN STEDMAN, *deaf.*
CYRUS DEPEW, *town philanthropist.*
SAMANTHY DEPEW, *his wife.*
MANDY BAKER, *believer in Woman's*
Rights.
JOB BAKER, *her weak husband.*

PATRICK O'MULLIGAN,
DOCTOR DOLLIVER,
DELILAH MARTIN,
MRS. BRIGGS, *who has recently come*
from the city.
CLAUDIUS BRIGGS, *her son.*
NORAH CASSIDY, *Mrs. Briggs' hired*
girl.
ITALIAN,
JONATHAN ABNER, } *who have visited*
CYNTHIA ABNER, } *the city.*
MARTHY REYNOLDS, *a comforting*
friend.
HANS SCHNEIDER, *a German.*
FRANCIS ST. CLAIR BIGELOW, *agent;*
very dudsish.
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BELLE RANDALL, *the miner's daughter.*

JULIA RANDALL, *his wife.*

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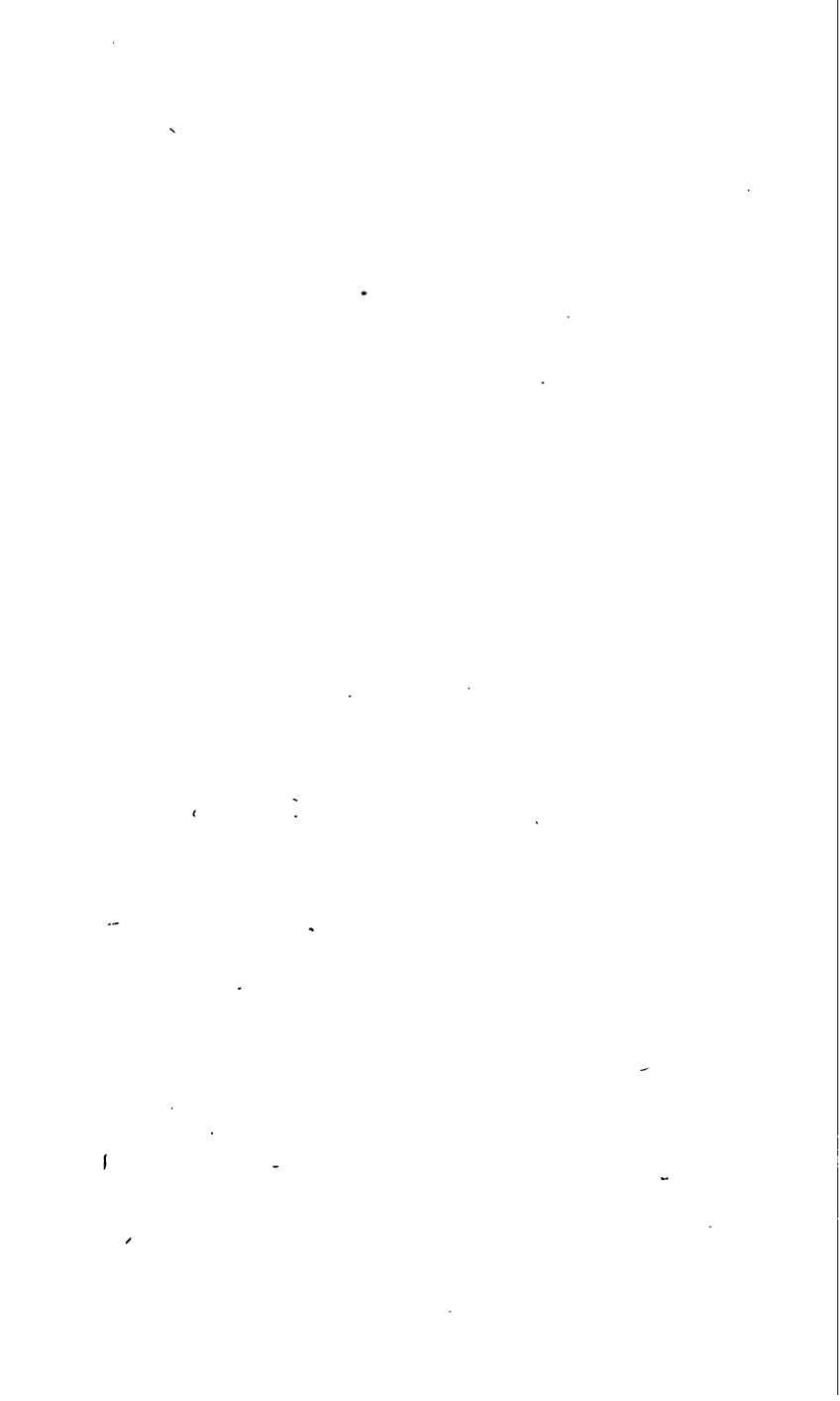
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