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FRENCH'S ACTING EDITION

THE WILES OF THE WIDOW

(KATHLEEN CRIGHTON LION).

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THE WILES OF THE WIDOW

A YORKSHIRE COMEDY
IN ONE ACT

By
KATHLEEN CRIGHTON LION

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Produced by Mr. Charles Hawtrey at Wyndham's Theatre, London, on June 11, 1910, to precede "The Naked Truth," and revived at Prince of Wales' Theatre, October, 1910, in front of "Inconstant George."

CHARACTERS

BETSY PYE (a comely, buxom widow, about 30).

Miss Clare Greet.

MARY BEASLEY (Sister to JAMES, a thin spinster, 37).

Miss Joy Chatwyn.

JAMES BEASLEY (Skipper of the *Mary Jane*, a genial bluff man, 40).

Mr. Holliday Attlay.

DANIEL JOHN SCATT (the Village Policeman. A widower, 38).

Mr. Hubert Druce.

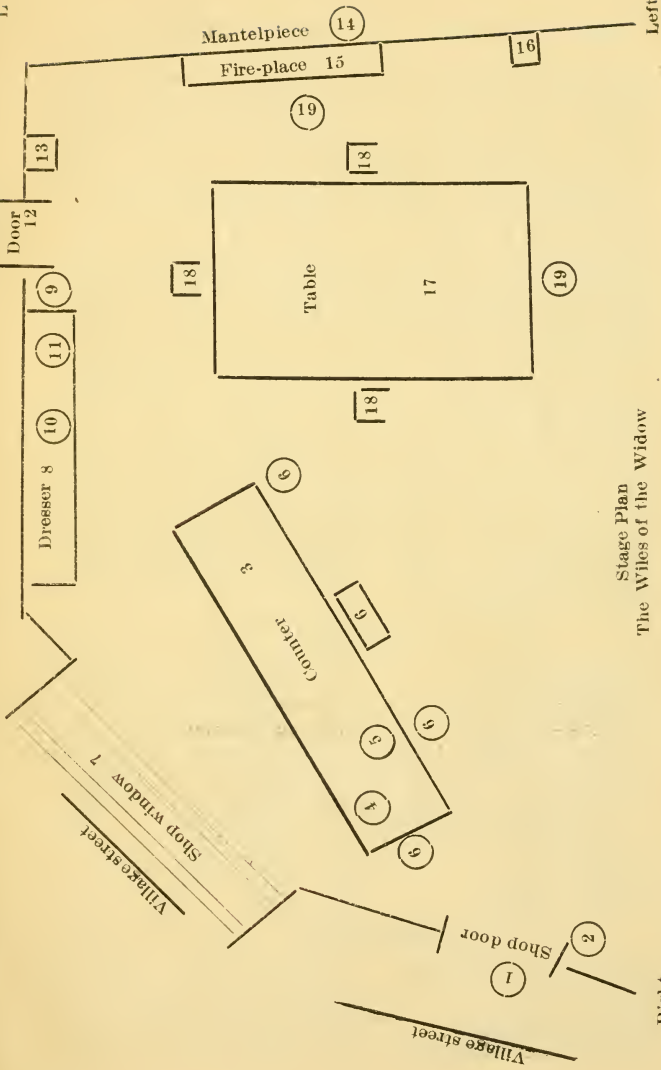
TIME.—*Late afternoon in September.*

PLACE.—*A small fishing village in Yorkshire.*

R

To Garden

L



Left

Stage Plan
The Wives of the Widow

Right

THE WILES OF THE WIDOW

SCENE.—*Front room of a country cottage. (See Plan.) It is fairly large, and half of it is utilized as a shop, or village general stores. Down R. front is a shop door, with half-curtained window, and a bell which rings when door is opened. Above this, crossing diagonally above corner R., is a bow window fitted up with shelves, on which are rows of bottles, tins, etc. Below this, R.C., is a primitive counter loaded up with various requisites of a village store, a cooked ham on a dish, twine, tobacco, bottles of sweets, tins of biscuits, tea, cocoa, etc., and a pair of scales. In back wall R. is a dresser, fitted with tea and dinner service, and standing on it is a silver teapot, a bottle of cowslip wine and three glasses. A brass warming-pan hangs on wall on L. of dresser. Left of this is the door to the garden. Down L. is the brick fire-place, with hob and kettle, and rag hearthrug. On the mantelpiece tea caddy and old-fashioned ornaments. Below fire-place, a Windsor arm-chair. Above fire-place an old grandfather clock. L.C. of stage a large kitchen table, facing longways, with a chair to L. and R. of it, and another at the back. On walls R. are a motley collection of framed advertisements. Soap, whiskey, tea, and biscuits, etc. On walls L. a couple of framed gorgeous funeral cards, a few framed coloured supplements from Christmas numbers, and a gaudy-coloured portrait of the King and Queen. There is a general air of simple cottage comfort and cleanliness.*

KEY TO NUMBERS ON PLAN.

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| 1. Shop door. | 11. Decanter of wine and glasses. |
| 2. Bell on ditto. | 12. Door to garden. |
| 3. Counter. | 13. Grandfather's clock. |
| 4. Scales. | 14. Tea-caddy on mantel-piece. |
| 5. Ham on dish. | 15. Fire-place, fire-irons, kettle, etc. |
| 6. Small kegs or biscuit tins. | 16. Arm-chair. |
| 7. Shop window fitted with shelves. | 17. Kitchen table. |
| 8. Dresser | 18. Chairs. |
| 9. Warming-pan. | 19. Rugs. |
| 10. Silver teapot. | |

PROPERTIES.

- | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Posy of flowers for Daniel. | Sally Lun cake, etc., for Betsy. |
| Tobacco for Betsy. | Flower vase for Betsy. |
| Twine for Betsy. | Tablecloth for Betsy. |
| Lace scarf for Betsy. | |
| Tea things for Betsy. | |

THE WILES OF THE WIDOW.

SCENE.—BETSY is bustling about the room, setting things straight, pausing to pat her hair in front of the glass. She is apparently expecting somebody. The door bell rings, she turns smilingly round, but as she sees her visitor her face changes, she is evidently disappointed.

DANIEL (*to counter*). Good-day to you, Mrs. Pye, marm, a bonny day for——

BETSY. Good-day to you, Dan'l John Scatt, and what are you wanting? (*At counter.*)

DANIEL (*looking round the shop in desperation*). I just called in for—a bit o' twine. . . . Yes, that was it! . . . Ever since my poor wife died——

BETSY (*holding out the ball*). Tak' it then . . . owt else?

DANIEL (*slowly, showing that he had only just thought of it*). Half a pound of ham, an' if its not troubling you, will you give it me cut middling thin. I'm not much of a hand at carving myself.

BETSY (*with a sniff*). Men are poor creatures!

DANIEL (*with an ingratiating manner*). That's true, it is! . . . A man's lost without a woman!

BETSY. Some are lost with one, Daniel John, mind ye that!

DANIEL (*rubbing his chin*). You are a rare clever woman, Mrs. Pye . . . and a bonny 'un as well . . . yes, that you are!

BETSY. Get along with you, man, what next, I wonder?

DANIEL (*producing a large country buttonhole from*

his hat). I've brought you a posy, Mrs. Pye, 'tain't much . . . 'tain't half good enough for you.

BETSY. Thank you, Dan'l John.

(BETSY takes posy, puts it in glass vase on dresser, fills it with water from glass water-jug on dresser, then puts vase with posy on table.)

DANIEL. But if you'll be cutting up that ham for me, I'll tell you——

BETSY (*with asperity*). More than I have time to listen to, I'll be bound.

DANIEL. Tut, tut! Betsy, you look bonnier than ever when you are fired. (*Sees JAMES at the door.*) Oh, well, I have an errand down the street, and I'll come back in half an hour . . . I'll come back.

BETSY. Aye, do!

DANIEL. And you'll listen to me then?

BETSY. Yes, man, yes, anything you like, but go!

DANIEL. I'm a-going . . . I'm a-going, Mrs. Pye. Good-bye to you.

(Exit DANIEL. JAMES had seen DANIEL and had gone to look into shop window again. BETSY runs to glass, smooths her hair, twists her apron right. The door opens, and bell rings. She advances smilingly to JAMES.)

BETSY. Ah! Mr. Beasley, it's a pleasant surprise to see you, I'm thinking.

JAMES. Thanks, ma'am, thanks . . . I've called for——

BETSY. You're looking as fine and young as ever, James.

JAMES (*highly pleased, twirls his thumb in his arm-holes*). 'Tis true, ma'am, quite true!

BETSY. It seems to me but yesterday you kissed me in the hayfield, James.

JAMES. Eh! What! ma'am . . . I never did!

BETSY. Oh yes, you did, James, you did that. I was always fond of you, and——

JAMES. Was that why you married Silas Pye, ma'am?

BETSY. Silas is dead, Mr. Beasley, and I mourned him eighteen months, twelve months in deepest black, and six months in half-tones. Aye! and I paid a pretty penny for it too . . . But 'twas worth it, James . . . I've done my duty to Silas . . . no one can say I made a bad wife to him. (*Begins to sniff a little.*) But I am a lonely woman now, with no one to care for me. (*Uses her handkerchief.*)

JAMES (*looking very embarrassed. Clearing his throat*). Ahem! (BETSY *takes no notice.*) Ahem! (*She slowly looks up.*) I've just called in for an ounce of shag and to tell you that sister Mary is coming to spend the afternoon with you!

BETSY (*in tones of anger*). Shag! (*Getting shag from counter.*) Ah well, I dare say a lonely, uncared-for man needs shag! (*Bangs it down on counter.*)

JAMES. Mary is a good sister to me!

BETSY. Oh! Mary is right enough, peaked and pined, as is natural like in a spinster. It must be a great trial to a man to have a woman like that in his house . . . not to speak of the burden——

JAMES. Say no more, she is a good lass!

BETSY. So she is, James, so she is!

JAMES (*coming in front of counter*). Nay, nay, Betsy, we all know your good heart.

BETSY. You make me feel right shamed, but it is lonesome like here, sometimes.

JAMES. You have a snug enough little place, and you're a rare fine woman, Betsy Pye!

BETSY. So Dan'l Scatt allus says.

JAMES. What Dan'l Scatt, the policeman? (BETSY *nods assent.*) And you let him . . . do you?

BETSY. He is allus a-pestering of me, and I must say he pays me a good deal of attention. Yes, Dan'l John thinks a lot about me! (*Goes c.*)

JAMES. You mean about your snug little bit o' home. (*Cross R.C.*)

BETSY. An' why shouldn't he? . . . It is a snug little home . . . and I've a tidy bit put away besides.

JAMES. Is that true?

BETSY (*nodding her head*). Aye, and more; I bought them two cottages down the Close Alley, and Silas left me that shop of Cook's in the Market Place, an' I saved up and bought twenty-five shares in the Co-operative Stores—

JAMES. My! You're quite a rich woman . . . I never knew it!

BETSY. P'raps not! And when I was a-buying of Silas' grave, I bought it big enough for three!

JAMES. For three, Betsy Pye?

BETSY. Aye, James, for three! I thought t'would be a saving. I knew I was a comely woman, an' I thought when I died, I should lie best a-tween my first and second . . . and then when Doomsday comes, I can pacify them! (*Turns from him L.*)

JAMES (*goes up to her*). Have you thought serious like as to whom your second should be?

BETSY. Aye, I have that!

JAMES. What be he like, Betsy? (*Steps down R.*) Tell us that?

BETSY (*looking at him*). He's a sea-faring man . . . He's fine and tall, with a good colour . . . Aye, an' he's got a tender heart!

JAMES (*looking very pleased*) *steps again to her*). And how do you know that, Betsy? (*This said very tenderly.*)

BETSY. Because of the love he bears his sister.

JAMES. Because of Mary! (*Steps from her down a little R.C.*). (*Aside.*) Aye, I had clean forgot her.

BETSY (*going to him*). Can you guess who I mean, James?

JAMES. No! I daresent!

BETSY. You daresent? (*Puts her hand on his arm.*)

JAMES. I daresent ! (*Puts her hand down, BETSY turns away.*) I promised t' old mother that I would always make a home for Mary, and not bring another woman in it, till she was married . . . or buried !

BETSY. Then 'tis no use talking.

JAMES. No ! . . . no use at all, and I had better be going. (*Goes round counter.*) I'll call for Mary after tea.

BETSY. Aye, do ! (*sits on arm of chair, R. of table*) and I'll try and cheer her up, James.

JAMES. You're a good woman (*leans on counter*), Betsy, a good woman . . . (*Goes to door.*) Good-bye.

(*Exit JAMES.*)

BETSY. Betsy Pye (*getting table-cloth from dresser drawer and putting it on table. Takes cup and saucer and honey and milk from dresser and puts on table*), it looks as if you wasted that money on the grave . . . Still, one must go on, a body cannot pull the blinds down every time sorrow comes to live with her, an' I'll just light up and make things a bit more cheerful. (*She lights the lamp, stirs the fire, then turns and sees DANIEL'S flowers ; these she puts into water on the table.*) Poor Dan'l ! P'raps he's lonely now Sarah Ann's gone . . . He means well, poor man ; he can't help not being much to look at. But I do hold that a woman can't be too particular about getting a fine set man for her second. There must be no rummage sale article for her . . . She can't afford it. No, Dan'l John, she can't afford it. (*A shadow is seen over the door window, and DANIEL enters.*) Lawks sake ! Dan'l John, I clean forgot that ham !

DANIEL. Leave the ham alone, Mrs. Pye, not that there is owt the matter with it—ham's all right in its proper place ; that minds me, I buried my Sarah Ann with ham, and no stint of it. Aye, and I gave the folks pork pies as well, and they all guzzled as if they hadn't been to a funeral for twelve months past. (*Shuts door.*)

BETSY. Aye, you buried her right well, I'll say that for you, Dan'l John.

DANIEL (*leaning over counter*). And I'll bury my second as fine, Betsy, you need have no fear about that.

BETSY. I'll tell her when I set eyes on her. (*To corner of counter.*)

DANIEL. You set eyes on her! (*Guffaws.*) That's a joke, but you were always a rare un at jokes! (*Follows BETSY to corner of counter and chucks her under chin.*)

BETSY. I'd have you keep your place, Mr. Scatt. (*Crosses c.*)

DANIEL. I meant no harm, Betsy. (*Follows to c.*)

BETSY. I'll see you don't do any neither.

DANIEL (*insinuatingly*). You know you're a great fine woman, an' mortal tempting to us poor men.

BETSY. Ah! That was Adam's first wicked excoose, Dan'l (*with a coquettish toss of her head*), and men have used it ever since.

DANIEL. And we poor men be mortal weak, Betsy. (*Puts his arm round her waist.*)

BETSY. I'm not going to have you weak round here. (*Takes his arm away and up to dresser for loaf of bread.*)

DANIEL. Hold hard! I've got something to say to thee, and I'm darned well going to say it, so there!

BETSY. I'm not a-hindering of you, man. (*Down to table L. with tea-cups.*)

DANIEL (*takes off helmet and puts it on the counter. Shakes his head very seriously.*) You can't call me a 'andsome man,' can you, Betsy?

BETSY (*top of table L.*). Don't be too hard on yourself, Dan'l John.

DANIEL. Well, I know I ain't a picture.

BETSY. Well, there are pictures and pictures, my man.

DANIEL. Oh yes, I know. I am one of t'other sort!

BETSY. Don't take on, Dan'l John, you're a good-meaning man.

DANIEL (*jumping at it. Crosses to her top of table L.*). Aye, an' a man's meaning counts more for matrimony than his looks, Mrs. Pye, I'd have you know.

BETSY (*sadly*). I know that, Dan'l. (DANIEL *edges close up to her.*)

DANIEL. As I said, I'm not much to look at, an' I'm not clever. I never had any book learning, and sich like, but I always make a woman a good husband.

BETSY. I never doubted that, Dan'l John. You should get married again. (*Goes to front of table.*)

DANIEL (*he also goes to front of table*). How did you guess I meant that? Oh! we could be so happy and comfortable together, just you and me! I'd bring you home all my money, an' you should give me a bit o' baccy every week, an' a few coppers for my pocket——

BETSY. Nay, nay, man, that can never be.

DANIEL. Do you mean you won't have me? (*Steps back in amazement.*)

BETSY. Aye, I mean that.

DANIEL. Then what have I been a-doing of wasting my time?—You won't change your mind?

BETSY. No! I abide by what I said, Dan'l John! But I'm not the only woman in the village tha' knows?

DANIEL. No, I cast my eye over one or two before I settled on thee, an' I didn't see none as likely as you . . . I bear you no grudge, Mrs. Pye (*crosses to counter and gets helmet, and then goes round other side of counter*), an' I'll take that ham after all. I thought as how if you'd had me, I needn't have bought it. I'd just have stopped wi' you and had some with me tea.

BETSY. Sure, an' you're still welcome, man.

DANIEL. No, I'd best be getting home, tho' its lonesome there without a woman . . . and since

Sarah Ann died, I've had to buy every bit o' bacon and ham, 'stead of having it in t' house . . . Aye, it makes me miss her.

BETSY. Sarah Ann was a rare good managing wife. (*Goes to R. of table and cuts bread and butter.*)

DANIEL. Aye (*goes to counter and puts helmet and stick on it*), she was that. A fine woman with pigs. I don't hold with these new fangled ways mysen; I hold that a woman's place is to mind her home, and look after the pigs, and her man, and see that there is always a bit o' pork in t' house. There's no one as does it now, like my Sarey Ann. (*Comes to end of counter.*)

BETSY (*a light suddenly appears in her face. Aside*). Bless my soul! Mary Beasley! (*To him.*) Yes, there is, Dan'l John, and she's a rare hand at it; her black puddings and chitlings are something wonderful!

DANIEL. He's a lucky man that has her then. I wish I had. (*Goes R.C.*)

BETSY (*going towards him a little*). You might have her yet, for she's not bespoken.

DANIEL. You don't mean it, Betsy?

BETSY. Aye, I do! Wouldn't it be good to have some hot sizzling bacon ready for you when you came home at nights?

DANIEL (*smacking his lips*). Don't talk of it, Betsy, I can't abide it . . . I can't really. 'Taint Widow Grist, is it?

BETSY. No, 'tisin't her.

DANIEL. She talked her man into the grave! . . . (*Goes to her c.*) Nor any young flighty girls; I can't stomach them.

BETSY (*to him c.*). No, Dan'l John, a quiet sonsie woman, not over young.

DANIEL. Eh?

BETSY (*watching his face she adds quickly*). And not over old . . . an' I know some one as is going to give her . . . (*looking round*) grand gifts for her

wedding—a silver teapot! (*Looks round at silver teapot on sideboard.*)

DANIEL. Real silver, Betsy?

BETSY (*still looking round*). Aye . . . and a chiney tea service!

DANIEL. Well, I never!

BETSY. Aye, and a warming-pan! (*Looking round at warming-pan on wall up L.*)

DANIEL. Sarah Ann was powerful set on a warming-pan.

BETSY. Aye, and a pig to start with!

DANIEL. Ow! . . . A pig! a pig!! Well! I'm blowed! (*Steps back to counter, turns, sees ham and strokes it.*)

BETSY (*very solemnly, crossing to him*). Yes, Dan'l John Scatt, she is just the wife you're wanting.

DANIEL (*getting his hat and stick from the counter*). What they call her, Betsy, and where does she live?

BETSY (*reluctant to confess her name*). She's a rare cook.

DANIEL. Yes . . . Yes . . . Tell us her name.

BETSY. And she gets a real silver teapot!

DANIEL. Who be it, Betsy?

BETSY. 'Tis Mary Beasley then?

DANIEL. Mary Beasley! (*Standing thunder-struck.*) Her! . . . you're joking.

BETSY (*with asperity*). Aye, Mary Beasley. . . . Have you owt against her?

DANIEL. Mary . . . Mary Beasley! (*Starting to laugh.*) I never thought of her. (*Scratching his head.*) But . . . she's turned thirty-seven.

BETSY (*L. of table*). Nothing of the kind! Thirty-seven indeed! Why, it wants two months afore she's that.

DANIEL. Will she have me, do you think?

BETSY. Won't she just! She's always a-talking of you; her heart's fair set on you, Dan'l John; you should just hear her!

DANIEL. Is that so . . . poor lass! poor lass!!
(Sits chair R. of tea-table.)

BETSY. Aye, poor lass, she can scarce eat or sleep for thinking of thee; it's just wasting her away.

DANIEL. Ah! Sarah Ann said I was always powerful attractive to females.

BETSY (*front of table*). Not to *every* female, Dan'l John.

DANIEL. Some have more sense than others, Betsy Pye. (*Rise and strut c.*)

BETSY. Me among them, I reckon.

DANIEL (*crosses to her*). There, there, Betsy, I allus says, "What's one man's meat is another's poison." I can never eat crab myself. (*Crosses c.*)

BETSY. Well, are you going to ask her or not?

DANIEL. I'll ask her right enough, if I get the chance.

BETSY. I'm expecting her every minute to tea. Stay and have a sup with us, and ask her then.

DANIEL (*edging away*). Nay, nay, there's no such mortal hurry. (*Backs to corner of counter.*)

BETSY. I knows of others that is after her, and she's waited long enough for a man!

DANIEL (*hesitates, then anxiously*). But I've never courted her yet!

BETSY. Marry her first, and court her afterwards man, that's what pleases a woman.

DANIEL. But I can't start sudden like, directly I see her . . . Shouldn't know what to say.

BETSY. You great gaby (*going to him, and shaking him*), you! You go for a walk, and I'll prepare her. Then come in for a sup of tea with us, and you'll find her ready enough.

DANIEL. Aye, I will! (*Goes round counter and gets helmet and stick. He goes to door, and then suddenly is convulsed with laughter, loud guffaws break from him.*)

(BETSY goes L. to table.)

BETSY. What ails thee, man, now? (*He still is unable to speak.*) Can't you speak?

DANIEL (*between counter and door, still holding his sides with laughter*). Twice asking in one day—a widow and a maid . . . I'm thinking what a terrible gay dog I be! . . . Ha! . . . Ha! . . . Ha! Two askings in one day! (*Still laughing.*) Two askings in one day!!

BETSY. Mind you don't have two refusals, my man. (*DANIEL drops his helmet and picks it up. Woeful look comes into his face.*) There, get you gone! (*He goes to the door.*)

DANIEL. Betsy, would you mind giving me back that posy?

BETSY. Why? You give it to me!

DANIEL. It seems a pity to waste it—and it may come in useful!

BETSY (*throwing posy at him and laughing*). Ah! take it then.

DANIEL (*catching it*). Two askings in one day! and one posy'll do for the two! Ohoo! Mary Beasley!! (*Exit DANIEL.*)

(*BETSY bustles about getting tea ready, takes up glass that had flowers in it, and smiles; the door bell goes again and MARY BEASLEY enters. A quiet, thin, rather despondent-looking woman of about thirty-seven.*)

MARY. Good day to you, Betsy. (*Crosses R.C.*)

BETSY. Well, Mary, my woman, I'm real glad to see you . . . unpin your shawl, and make yourself at home.

MARY. I will, Betsy, thank you. And how's yourself? (*Unpinning her shawl and carefully wrapping it up, and being old-maidish generally.*)

BETSY. I'm finely, Mary, and glad to see you looking so bright.

MARY. So bright, Betsy. (*Puts hand to head.*) I

had neuralgy all the night, and my poor head is always bad. (*Sits chair R. of table.*)

BETSY. No one would think so to look at you. You don't know how finely you look.

MARY. You really think so, Betsy?

BETSY. Of course I think it, woman, and others think it as well as me. I'm not saying as you couldn't be improved! Here, what's this you've got round your neck? (*Takes off woollen shawl from her neck.*) Now you wait a minute, and I'll show you yourself in the glass. (*She goes to drawer and brings out lace collar and a pale pink bow for the neck; these she puts on MARY, surveying her work critically. She puffs her hair out a bit, and lastly unhooks a small mirror from the wall and holds it out to her.*) There, Mary, ain't you bonny? (*L. of fire-place.*)

MARY (*all in a flutter*). I think I am; I look younger. You have made me feel different, Betsy . . . What is it you have done to me?

BETSY. I've only shown you a little appreciation, Mary. There's some as calls it flattery, maybe 'tis . . . maybe 'tain't; . . . anyways, it always works, and not only with females . . . t' only difference is, males wants larger doses, and more frequent . . . as is natural like. Well, Mary, you've had a hard life, a-waiting on your poor mother, and sich-like—but things are going to change, you mark my word!

MARY. What do you mean, Betsy?

BETSY (*sits arm of chair beside MARY*). Other people besides me think a sight about you; I could tell you of one I knows of; that can't get you out of his thoughts day and night!

MARY. Eh! That accounts for stranger I had in my tea-cup on Sunday. Who can it be, Betsy?

BETSY. Where are your eyes, woman, I have no patience with you.

MARY. Nay, Betsy, I can't think.

BETSY. Perhaps you will when it's too late, and he drowns himself for love of you. (*Rises and*

crosses to c.) The poor man's been coming here for months past. It's been Mary this, and Mary that, till I'm fair stalled. An' he's not a man to turn up your nose at neither; he's steady and quiet and easy fed, an' I knows some one who'll give him a grand gift for his wedding!

MARY. Do you now, Betsy?

BETSY. Aye, that I do; he's going to get a silver teapot! (MARY *gasps*), and a chiney tea-service! and a copper warming-pan!

MARY. Sakes, Betsy!

BETSY. And besides all that—a pig to start with!

MARY. Oh, Betsy!!! (*In an awestruck voice.*) Who can it be? An' you say he cares for me?

BETSY. Cares for you? Why, he fair worships the ground you walk on!

MARY (*wringing her hands*). What shall I do, Betsy, tell me what to do! I'm a single woman, and never had a man before—not like you, that's had one and buried him.

BETSY. Aye, and mean to bury another along with me, else I've wasted my money on that there grave.

MARY. What grave?

BETSY. Well, it's what the lawyer chaps call a side issue, so we won't talk about it now.

MARY (*to R. of table*). Who's the man, Betsy, I'se fair trembling to know.

BETSY. Why! 'tis Dan'l John Scatt!

MARY. Well, I never. (*Steps back.*) Dan'l John! . . . Why! I thought he was a-courting thee.

BETSY. Courting me! Hoo! Nothing of the sort. He's fair crazed on *you*, Mary, an' course he thinks you're too good for him, and sich-like trash; they always do till you marry 'em . . . but he'll tell you himself presently—he's coming in to tea.

MARY (*in affright*). Oh, Betsy!

BETSY (*imitating her*). Oh, Mary! Have you never seen a man afore? Pull yourself together, woman. Dan'l John's got a big task in front of him,

an' he'll want all the encouragement you can give him.

MARY. How am I to do it, Betsy?

BETSY (*takes MARY by R. arm and leads her L.*). Speak him softly; get him to talk about himself; look as if you never heard anything so interesting in your life afore; and above all—laugh when he does, as hearty as you can, whether you see the joke or not. Very likely you won't.

MARY. Why not, Betsy?

BETSY. Cause it won't always be there . . . but that's no matter.

MARY (*with tearful gratitude*). I shall never forget what I owe you.

BETSY. You won't get him at all if you pull a long face like that . . . You must set him at his ease.

MARY. All by myself?

BETSY. Now, you don't want another woman to make your own man comfortable, do you?

MARY (*with all the pride of possession*). Of course I don't, thanking you very much, Betsy Pye.

BETSY. That's right, get your spirits up (*turns towards window and sees DANIEL*), you'll need it, for here he is.

MARY (*in alarm*). Oh!

BETSY. Take heart, I guess he's feeling worse than you. Eh! Dan'll John! you've got a big task afore you! (*Aside.*) I've got you, James, I've got you! (*Back of chair R. of table.*)

(*Door opens very softly, the bell rings, DANIEL'S head appears round the door rather sheepishly.*)

BETSY (*calls out*). Come in, Mr. Scatt, tea's just ready. (*DANIEL comes in slowly with the same bouquet of country flowers; he still looks confused; so does MARY*). Shut the door, will you. (*He shuts door.*) The day seems quite chilly . . . You know, Mary.

DANIEL. Indeed I do! . . . How do, Miss Beasley. (*End of counter.*)

MARY. Quite well . . . thank you *very* kindly.
 BETSY (*to him R.*). Go over and talk to her, man!

(DANIEL *still holds flowers. BETSY comes round to him, and gently pushes him up to MARY. He looks round at her; she signs to him to give the flowers to MARY.*)

DANIEL (*clearing his throat. Awkwardly*). Haw! I've taken the liberty of bringing you this nosegay! (*He looks down at them, and then hands the flowers to MARY.*) They're a bit wilted, but they'll freshen up all right in water. (*R. front corner of table.*) Won't they, Betsy?

BETSY. Aye, that they will!

MARY. It's main kind of you, Mr. Scatt. (*This is said very shyly and suddenly acting on impulse.*) I'll wear one of these roses. (*She pulls out one and fastens it in her bodice. L front corner of table.*)

BETSY (*down c.*). That's right, Mary, you should always wear pink, it suits you finely! My word! the men I've heard admire her in pink! (*to DANIEL*).

DANIEL. You don't say so! I should hardly have thought it! (*He clears his throat and gurgles, ditto MARY.*)

BETSY. You shouldn't say that, silly! (*Goes up c.*)

MARY (*shyly*). Have you nowt to say to me, Mr. Scatt? (*At corner of table.*)

DANIEL. Aye, I've summat to say to 'ee. (*Makes as if to take her hand, then retreats c.*) Er—— (*Gurgles.*) Old Sue Tremlett's dead.

MARY. No! What did she die of?

DANIEL. Of a Friday.

MARY. I mean what complaint?

DANIEL. There wasn't no complaint, every one was satisfied. (*Sits chair R. of table.*)

MARY (*looks at him for a moment, and then fires a shrill laugh*). He! he! he! I do love your jokes! (*Sits chair L. of table. He looks very surprised.*)

BETSY (*coming back from fire*). Eh, that's right;

I knew you two would get on together. (*In a loud whisper to DANIEL.*) Talk to her, you silly. Don't sit there pulling your fingers.

DANIEL. I heard down street just now that Jane Lott is in bed again, wi' twins.

MARY. For shame, Mr. Scatt, and before a single lass. (*Rises.*)

DANIEL. A single lass! (*Rises and crosses to her.*) That's not my fault, maa'm. (*Nudges her humorously.*)

BETSY. That's right, Dan, say something sweet to her.

DANIEL. Aye, I'll say summat sweet to her. (*Advancing again.*)

BETSY. And come and sit down to tea.

DANIEL (*turning tail again*). Aye, let's 'ave tea first.

BETSY (*with a pleased laugh*). Well, sit down; that's right, put a chair for Mary, Dan'l John. (*DANIEL was just sitting down himself to the table, jumps up and puts a chair awkwardly for MARY.*)

BETSY. Where do you want to sit, man?

DANIEL (*laughing*). He! he! Ho! ho! I'll sit by Mary!

BETSY. Aye, you sit there, then. Have some scones, Mary. Pass her the honey.

DANIEL. Aye, that I will, 'tis only right. (*Picks up honey jar.*)

BETSY. What do you mean, man?

DANIEL. Well . . . what is honey?

BETSY. Sticky! . . . of course.

DANIEL. Nay, I don't mean that . . . I mean—honey's sweet, an' so is Mary. (*Hands honey to MARY.*)

MARY. Oh, Mr. Scatt! (*DANIEL licks honey off his fingers and runs them through his hair.*)

DANIEL. Don't call me Mister . . . else—

MARY. Else what . . . Dan'l John?

DANIEL. Else I shan't never be able to call thee Mrs. Scatt. (*Laughs loudly.*) That was a good un, eh, Betsy? (*Poking at BETSY.*)

BETSY. Aye, you're getting on finely (BETSY pours out the tea.) How many lumps, Mary?

MARY. One, please.

BETSY. And you, Dan'l John? (Goes to put in two, when DANIEL stops her.)

DANIEL. One's good enough for me then.

BETSY. Lawks sake! Isn't that wonderful! (Hands tea to DANIEL.) You have both the same identical tastes.

DANIEL (to MARY). Shall I stir it for you, Mary?

MARY (simpering). Thank you kindly, Dan'l John! (Business of stirring.)

BETSY (enthusiastically). My word! It does me good to look at you, sure it does. Such pictures of bliss I've never seen afore. Help Mary to the Sally Lunn, Dan'l . . . that's right.

DANIEL. Aye, have a bite o' Sally Lunn, Mary. (Handing it.)

MARY (taking it shyly). Both pieces, Dan'l?

DANIEL. Aye, top and bottom! That means matrimony! Like some one else that's not far from you, eh, Betsy?

BETSY. Well, things do point that way, I must say. (MARY has been drinking her tea, and suddenly chokes. DANIEL jumps up and thumps her violently on the back.) Stay! stay! man, you'll knock all the breath out of her. (Rises and goes c.)

MARY. Thank . . . you . . . kindly . . . Dan'l John. (This between her gasps.) I . . . quite . . . likes . . . it. (Falls into DANIEL'S arms.)

DANIEL. By gum! She quite likes it! (Smiling triumphantly at BETSY.)

BETSY. A woman all over; the more you beat them the better they like it. A little more tea, Mary? (MARY shakes her head.)

DANIEL. Aye, pour it out in saucer! It'll wash down the crumb, lass. (Both pour their tea in saucers and drink, gazing at each other over the edge of the saucers.)

DANIEL JOHN makes frantic signs to BETSY to go

away and leave them alone. At last she understands, nods at him, and goes up back c. to dresser from which she takes silver teapot and starts to polish it during following scene.)

DANIEL. Mary, I've got summat on my mind tha' knowest!

MARY. Well, Dan'l John!

DANIEL. It's three years last Easter since I saw you last to speak to!

MARY. Is it so long?

DANIEL. Aye, that it is. (*Pause and both look awkward and shy.*)

MARY (*hesitatingly*). I'm afraid you have been lonely of late. (*Puts down her saucer.*)

DANIEL. Aye, that I have, but I shan't be lonely much longer, Mary. (*Puts down his saucer.*)

MARY. Won't you?

DANIEL. Not if you'll have me . . . Will you, Mary?

MARY. Yes, Dan'l. (*DANIEL hugs MARY and gives her a smacking kiss.*)

BETSY. (*at dresser, sighing*). There goes my silver teapot! (*DANIEL and MARY turn round to her.*)

DANIEL. Mary and me has agreed to have each other, Mrs. Pye. Thanks to you, Betsy. By gum! she's a champion. I've never rightly noticed her afore. (*They embrace again.*)

BETSY. You have made me right glad, Dan'l John, and now we'll all have some cowslip wine for luck, it will settle your tea.

(*BETSY pours out wine. DANIEL gulps his off. Then hands to MARY.*)

(*The door bell rings, JAMES enters, BETSY jumps away from DANIEL.*)

(*JAMES hesitates awkwardly on seeing DANIEL JOHN so near to BETSY.*)

JAMES. I've come for some . . . shag . . . I

didn't know I should find Dan'l John Scatt here, and looking so smart an' pleased with hisself.

BETSY (*pleadingly*). Stay and have a cup of tea with us . . . do, James.

JAMES. No, I couldn't abear it; I had thought I would ha' stayed and had tea with Mary and you, but I see I oughn't to have come. I won't stand in your light. Dan'l John's a good fellow, an' I wish him luck.

DANIEL (*coming forward with MARY and speaking over BETSY's shoulder, L.C.*). Who are you wishing luck, James; wish it me while you're about it.

JAMES (R.). I am wishing it you, Dan'l John. It's all fixed up a-tween you then? (*Glancing from BETSY to DANIEL. ALL nod assent.*)

DANIEL (*smiling over BETSY's shoulder*). Aye, all fixed, fair and sartin'.

JAMES (*thinking it is BETSY he is engaged to*). Well, it's 'ard on me—but (*to DANIEL*) I do wish you luck, Dan'l John, from the bottom of my 'eart. (*The men shake hands. BETSY down R.*)

MARY. How did you know, James? . . . Will you forgive me?

JAMES. Forgive you, lass . . . What do you mean? (C.)

MARY. About Dan'l John, and me—

JAMES (*amazed*). Dan'l John and thee!! Why . . . What . . . (*The truth dawns on him.*) Why! I thought 'twas Betsy as Dan'l John was courtin'—

DANIEL (*indignantly*). Nothin' of the sort. No idea of such! The lies that folks talk—

BETSY. Nay, 'tis Mary that Dan'l John's going to marry, and I'm left on the shelf, James—

JAMES. Well, I'm danged! Mary Beasley! what's come to thee!

MARY (*fearfully*). You can't stop me, James. (*Simpering.*) I'm of age, thou know'st! . . . besides, we luv each other—don't we, Dan'l? (*Edging up to him.*)

DANIEL. Aye, that we do (*scratching his head*), though how it comes about fair mazes me.

BETSY. I think I know. (*Looking at JAMES.*)

JAMES (*in great astonishment*). Well, I'm damned! (*Bursts into a roar of laughter*). Betsy! You've gotten them two to love each other. It's the best day's work you've ever done. (*Turning to others.*) Mary, you've given me a brother, and the best I can do is to give you a sister in return.

MARY and DANIEL (*together*). A sister!!

JAMES. Aye, a sister. (*Holding out his arms to BETSY.*) Will you marry me and make me happy, Betsy?

BETSY (*with feigned surprise*). Oh, James!! (*In his arms.*) You are so sudden! (*Looking out over his left shoulder.*)

CURTAIN.



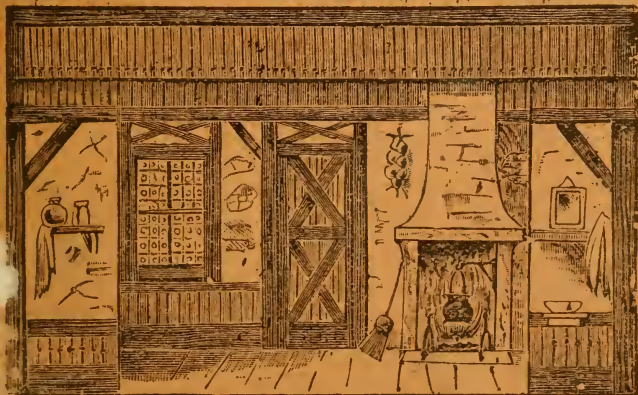
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