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No. 405

P's and Q's

A FARCE COMEDY IN ONE ACT

By

ANNIE NATHAN MEYER

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PRICE, 30 CENTS

NEW YORK
Samuel French
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28-30 West 38th Street

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Samuel French, Ltd.
26 Southampton Street
Strand

BILLETED.

A comedy in 3 acts, by F. Tension Jesse and H. Harwood. 4 males, 5 females. One easy interior scene. A charming comedy, constructed with uncommon skill, and abounds with clever lines. Margaret Anglin's big success. Amateurs will find this comedy easy to produce and popular with all audiences.

Price, 60 Cents.

NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH.

A comedy in 3 acts. By James Montgomery. 5 males, 6 females. Costumes, modern. Two interior scenes. Plays 2½ hours.

Is it possible to tell the absolute truth—for twenty-four hours? It is—at least Bob Bennett, the hero of "Nothing But the Truth," accomplished the feat. The bet he made with his business partners, and the trouble he got into—with his partners, his friends, and his fiancée—this is the subject of William Collier's tremendous comedy hit. "Nothing But the Truth" can be whole-heartedly recommended as one of the most sprightly, amusing and popular comedies that this country can boast.

Price, 60 Cents.

IN WALKED JIMMY.

A comedy in 4 acts, by Minnie Z. Jaffa. 10 males, 2 females (a any number of males and females may be used as clerks, etc) interior scenes. Costumes, modern. Plays 2½ hours. The title which Jimmy walked was a broken-down shoe factory, when the had all been fired, and when the proprietor was in serious contemplation of suicide.

Jimmy, nothing else but plain Jimmy, would have been a mysterious figure had it not been for his matter-of-fact manner, his smile and his everlasting humanness. He put the shoe business on its feet, won the heart of the girl clerk, saved her erring brother from jail, escaped that place as a permanent boarding house himself, and foiled the villain.

Clean, wholesome comedy with just a touch of human nature, just a dash of excitement and more than a little bit of true philosophy make "In Walked Jimmy" one of the most delightful of plays. Jimmy is full of the religion of life, the religion of happiness and the religion of helpfulness, and he so permeates the atmosphere with his "religion" that everyone is happy. The spirit of optimism, good cheer, and hearty laughter dominates the play. There is not a dull moment in any of the four acts. We strongly recommend it.

Price, 60 Cents.

MARTHA BY-THE-DAY.

An optimistic comedy in three acts, by Julie M. Lippmann, author of the "Martha" stories. 5 males, 5 females. Three interior scenes. Costumes modern. Plays 2½ hours.

It is altogether a gentle thing, this play. It is full of quaint humor, old-fashioned, homely sentiment, the kind that people who see the play will recall and chuckle over tomorrow and the next day.

Miss Lippmann has herself adapted her very successful book for stage service, and in doing this has selected from her novel the most telling incidents, infectious comedy and homely sentiment for the play, and the result is thoroughly delightful.

Price, 60 Cents.

(The Above Are Subject to Royalty When Produced)

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THE TOUCH-DOWN.

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

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

"The Touch-Down" has the true varsity atmosphere, college songs are sung, and the piece is lively and entertaining throughout. High schools will make no mistake in producing this play. We strongly recommend it as a high-class and well-written comedy. Price, 30 Cents.

HURRY, HURRY, HURRY.

A comedy in three acts, by LeRoy Arnold. 5 males, 4 females. One interior scene. Costumes modern. Plays 2¼ hours.

The story is based on the will of an eccentric aunt. It stipulates that her pretty niece must be affianced before she is twenty-one, and married to her fiancé within a year, if she is to get her spinster relative's million. Father has nice notions of honor and fails to tell daughter about the will, so that she may make her choice untrammelled by any other consideration than that of true love. The action all takes place in the evening the midnight of which will see her reach twenty-one. Time is therefore short, and it is hurry, hurry, hurry, if she is to become engaged and thus save her father from impending bankruptcy.

The situations are intrinsically funny and the dialogue is sprightly. The characters are natural and unaffected and the action moves with a snap such as should be expected from its title. Price, 30 Cents.

THE VARSITY COACH.

A three-act play of college life, by Marion Short, specially adapted to performance by amateurs or high school students. 5 males, 6 females, but any number of boys and girls may be introduced in the action of the play. Two settings necessary, a college boy's room and the university campus. Time, about 2 hours.

Like many another college boy, "Bob" Selby, an all-round popular college man, becomes possessed of the idea that athletic prowess is more to be desired than scholarship. He is surprised in the midst of a "spread" in his room in Regatta week by a visit from his aunt who is putting him through college. Aunt Serena, "a lady of the old school and the dearest little woman in the whole world," has hastened to make this visit to her adored nephew under the mistaken impression that he is about to receive the Fellowes prize for scholarship. Her grief and chagrin when she learns that instead of the prize Robert has received "a nink card," which is equivalent to suspension for poor scholarship, gives a touch of pathos to an otherwise jolly comedy of college life. How the repentant Robert more than redeems himself, carries off honors at the last, and in the end wins Ruth, the faithful little sweetheart of the "Prom" and the classroom makes a story of dramatic interest and brings out very clearly certain phases of modern college life. There are several opportunities for the introduction of college songs and "stunts." Price, 30 Cents.

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THE RETURN OF HI JINKS.

A comedy in four acts, by Marion Short, author of "The Varsity Coach," "The Touch-Down," etc. 6 males, 8 females. Costumes modern. One interior scene.

This comedy is founded upon and elaborated from a farce comedy in two acts written by J. H. Horta, and originally produced at Tuft's College.

Hiram Poynter Jinks, a Junior in Hoosic College (Willie Collier type), and a young moving picture actress (Mary Pickford type), are the leading characters in this lively, modern farce.

Thomas Hodge, a Senior, envious of the popularity of Jinks, wishes to think up a scheme to throw ridicule upon him during a visit of the Hoosic Glee Club to Jinks's home town. Jinks has obligingly acted as a one-day substitute in a moving picture play, in which there is a fire scene, and this gives Hodge his cue. He sends what seems to be a bona fide account of Jinks's heroism at a Hoosic fire to Jinks's home paper. Instead of repudiating his laurels as expected, Jinks decides to take a flyer in fame, confirms the fake story, confesses to being a hero and is adored by all the girls, to the chagrin and discomfiture of Hodge. Of course, the truth comes out at last, but Jinks is not hurt thereby, and his romance with Mimi Mayflower comes to a successful termination.

This is a great comedy for amateurs. It is full of funny situations and is sure to please. Price, 30 Cents.

JUNE.

A most successful comedy-drama in four acts, by Marie Doran, author of "The New Co-Ed," "Tempest and Sunshine," "Dorothy's Neighbors," etc. 4 males, 8 females. One interior scene. Costumes modern. Plays 2¼ hours.

This play has a very interesting group of young people. June is an appealing little figure, an orphan living with her aunt. There are a number of delightful, life-like characters: the sorely tried, likeable Mrs. Hopkins, the amusing, haughty Miss Banks of the glove department, the lively Tilly and Milly, who work in the store, and ambitious Snoozer; Mrs. Hopkins's only son, who aspires to be President of the United States, but finds his real sphere is running the local trolley car. The play is simplicity itself in the telling of an every-day story, and the scenic requirements call for only one set, a room in the boarding house of Mrs. Hopkins, while an opportunity is afforded to introduce any number of extra characters. Musical numbers may be introduced, if desired. Price, 30 Cents.

TEMPEST AND SUNSHINE.

A comedy drama in four acts, by Marie Doran. 5 males and 3 females. One exterior and three interior scenes. Plays about 2 hours.

Every school girl has revelled in the sweet simplicity and gentleness of the characters interwoven in the charms that Mary J. Holmes commands in her story of "Tempest and Sunshine." We can strongly recommend this play as one of the best plays for high school production published in recent years.

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P's and Q's

PERSONS OF THE PLAY

Originally produced at a special matinee given by the American Pen Women* at the Morosco Theatre, New York, December 10, 1920, with the following cast:

JESSIE DENSLOW	Joan Maclean
HARRY BARMAN.....	Geoffrey Kerr
CHARLEY STARK.....	Leslie Howard
MRS. DENSLOW.....	Mrs. Thomas Whiffen

TIME.—*Afternoon.*

OFF-STAGE PROPS.—

Letter for CHARLEY.

Letter for MRS. DENSLOW.

Salver for MAID.

Several small sheets of penciled notes of the meeting, for MRS. DENSLOW.

* This play was one of the four winners of the competition held by the New York Auxiliary.



P's and Q's

SCENE.—*Library in MRS. DENSLOW'S house. Entrance to hall up L. (portieres). Entrance to inner room up R. (door). Bookshelves between two entrances. Large window R. with window-seat. Fireplace L. with Morris chair facing down stage. Library table L. c. with blotter, ink, one large quill or plume pen (one extra steel pen point), two kinds of note paper and tablet of large paper on right side. Three or four unopened letters at right. Chair R. and one back of table. Settee R. with cushions. A book under cushion.*

(Sounds outside of voices, annoyed.)

JESSIE. *(Entering. Pouting)* I don't care—it's perfectly mean of you!

HARRY *(Following)* But you're unreasonable!

JESSIE. *(Going toward settee R.)* Nothing of the sort!

HARRY. *(Following to R. c.)* Expect a woman to admit it! I tell you I telegraphed.

JESSIE. You don't love me.

HARRY. *(R. c.)* There you go again! I come back expecting to find my best girl all smiles—I rush to the office to report—fly up here—and this is all the welcome I get! Tears! Temper! Tears! *(Goes L.)*

JESSIE. Well, I didn't think you'd neglect me so shamefully.

HARRY. Neglect you? Good Lord! You accuse me of neglecting you when I think I couldn't have been more attentive.

JESSIE. You call it attentive to go away for a whole week and never write me one single letter?

HARRY. But——

JESSIE. And I wrote you three a day!

HARRY. But I tell you I telegraphed you.

JESSIE. Telegraphed!

HARRY. Yes, every time the train stopped—I dashed out—the porters grinning at me—it isn't my fault you didn't get them—I'd like to choke some of those long-eared station-masters—there was one fellow, by Jové! I gave half a dollar to run with it——

JESSIE. Who said I didn't get them?

HARRY. What?!

JESSIE. (*Flopping on settee R.*) I got your old telegrams.

HARRY. (*Back again to R. C.*) You got my telegrams? And you say I neglected you? Well, I like that! Catch me breaking my neck next time for a girl. You must think I enjoyed sprinting platforms and hurdling hand-baggage!

JESSIE. You b-broke your promise.

HARRY. What promise?

JESSIE. To write.

HARRY. But when a fellow telegraphs from every single station you needn't jump on him as if he'd clean forgotten you. Why, I hugged that telegraph blank till they guyed me—thought I was on the wrong side of the market—— (*Chuckling*) One fellow asked if it was twins.

JESSIE. (*Softening*) It was very nice of you to send me all those telegrams.

HARRY. (*To L.*) Yes—I rather think it was.

JESSIE. But what good did *telegrams* do me?

HARRY. What good? What do you mean?

JESSIE. They weren't in your own handwriting.

HARRY. Yes—but you know, you can't telegraph your own handwriting!

JESSIE. That's just it—it was the writing of your own hand I wanted.

HARRY. (*Sitting beside her on settee. JESSIE grudgingly makes room for him. Trying to kiss her*) That's very sweet of you, darling. But really—aren't you a little exacting?

JESSIE. Exacting? To ask for just one little letter?

HARRY. But, my dear, if you were anxious, a telegram's so much quicker.

JESSIE. I expected by this time to have a whole batch of love-letters.

HARRY. (*Laughing*) Tied with a pink ribbon! Honest, old girl, I'm awfully sorry, but I'm no good at writing letters, anyway. You don't understand how it is with a fellow—I mean—you get so used to dictating to a stenographer—you never take up a pen 'cept to sign things.

JESSIE. Pouring out your heart to a girl you love is different.

HARRY. I'm not much good on the pouring out business. (*Trying to smooth things*) But remember my love's all bottled up right here. (*Attempts to put his arm about her. She repulses him and then succumbs. They kiss*)

JESSIE. (*Fingering his coat-buttons*) Won't you write me just one teeny, weeny little love letter?

HARRY. (*Laughing into her eyes*) Want it as evidence?

JESSIE. (*Startled*) What do you mean?

HARRY. In case of a breach of promise?

JESSIE. (*Relieved*) Oh, Harry! What an idea!

HARRY. (*Jokingly*) Well, you seem awfully anxious to get me to commit myself on paper!

JESSIE. (*Teasing*) You will write me one—a nice long one—won't you?

HARRY. Sure, I will.

JESSIE. (*Jumping up. Goes c.*) Goody!

HARRY. (*Following her*) The very next trip I take.

JESSIE. (*Stopping mid-way*) Oh, that won't do at all.

HARRY. Well, it won't do justice to the pink ribbon—but I'll do my best.

JESSIE. (*Sitting R. of table L. C.*) Oh, dear!—I—

HARRY. (*Tenderly*) You see, little woman, when I'm on the road it's such a hustle I don't get a moment to myself, and I'm no ready writer, believe me! I'd chew the pen from New York to Niagara and not get enough down so you'd see it. Now, my telegrams were works of art—they were condensed, yet meaty.

JESSIE. Oh, as telegrams go they were all right—but as I've told you a hundred times, it wasn't telegrams I wanted.

HARRY. They told you I was well.

JESSIE. It wasn't what I wanted.

HARRY. You wanted to hear I wasn't well?

JESSIE. (*Rising and going to him very persuasively*) Oh, Harry! You don't understand! I want you to write me a letter—right away—now.

HARRY. (*Astounded*) Now?

JESSIE. Yes—now!

HARRY. Now? When I'm just back?

JESSIE. Yes.

HARRY. (*Putting his arm around her*) Write you a letter when you're right here by my side? (*JESSIE nods. With concern—*) I say, little girl, did anything happen to you while I was away? You're feeling all right?

JESSIE. Perfectly well!

HARRY. Is it for a bet?

JESSIE. N-no.

HARRY. (*Hugging her*) Isn't a man in the hand worth two in the post?

JESSIE. (*Serious*) I'm in earnest, dear. Won't you please do it for me? You've never written me a letter in your whole life.

HARRY. But why now? I'm just back—after a whole week. I want to talk with you.

JESSIE. Oh, please, Harry, do it for me—as a favor! (*Pulling him L. of table*)

HARRY. Well—since you've set your little heart on it. (*Sits down L. of table, looks up mischievously*) Sure it isn't the breach of promise case? (*JESSIE laughs. HARRY takes up the long quill pen and scratches away for a moment. JESSIE peeps over his shoulder very anxiously; her hair tickles him on one side, quill on the other. Throwing down the pen*) It's too silly—write to a girl who's in the same room.

JESSIE. (*Running to door up R.*) I'll go in the next room.

HARRY. Oh, that isn't what I meant at all. (*JESSIE leaves up R., closing door. HARRY seats himself again, sighs, forces himself to write—then reads aloud as he slowly writes*) I long for a sight of your dear eyes—what slush! Every moment passed from your side seems an eternity—

JESSIE. (*Peeping in from the next room*) How are you getting along?

HARRY. (*Rising, going to JESSIE, back of table*) Rotten! What's the use of floundering about for adjectives when I can tell you everything with a good hug— (*Starts to hug her*)

JESSIE. (*Stopping him with a gesture*) Oh, please go on! (*Exits, closing door again. HARRY sits*)

again. *A moment of silence, HARRY painfully scratching away*)

CHARLEY. (*Speaking outside*) Is Mr. Barman here?

MAID. (*Speaking outside*) Yes, sir, he's in the library.

CHARLEY. (*Entering up L.*) Hello! (*Goes to R. C.*)

HARRY. (*Looking up*) Hello, Charley! Where'd you spring from?

CHARLEY. You weren't at the office—chanced it up here. What're you doing? Writing a letter?

HARRY. No, boy—shaving.

CHARLEY. You *are* writing a letter.

HARRY. Yes. To Jessie.

CHARLEY. Oh—she's out, then?

HARRY. No.

CHARLEY. What?

HARRY. (*Indicating up R.*) No.

CHARLEY. Then what the deuce are you writing a letter to her for? (*HARRY grunts*) She's in there? (*HARRY grunts*) Are you crazy?

HARRY. No, she is! (*Rises, flings down pen, crumples letter and throws it in waste-paper basket.*

CHARLEY *laughs*) Oh, it's awfully funny, isn't it!

CHARLEY. (*Laughing*) You say Jessie's in there— (*Pointing up R.*)—and you sit here writing a letter to her?

HARRY. Sweet reasonableness, isn't it?

JESSIE. (*Entering*) Hello, Charley!

CHARLEY. Hello, Jessie!

HARRY. Charley thinks it's ridiculous, too.

JESSIE. Wait till Charley knows the reason.

HARRY. Reason!

JESSIE. Yes, reason. We'll leave it to Charley—

CHARLEY. No, thank you—

JESSIE. —if he says I'm not perfectly justified, I'll give in.

HARRY. All right! Leave it to Charley.

CHARLEY. Catch me coming between two loving hearts! Good-night! (*Starting to go up c.*)

JESSIE. (*Stopping him up c.*) Please, Charley.

CHARLEY. To have both of you jump on me at the end!

JESSIE. No—honest—if you're not perfectly satisfied that I've got a good reason—I'll give in.

CHARLEY. (*Coming down with JESSIE in front of table*) Sounds all right.

JESSIE. If you're satisfied, he's to go on writing that letter.

HARRY. (*Going to fireplace L.*) Fire ahead—if there is a reason.

JESSIE. (*To HARRY*) Go in there! (*Indicating up R.*)

HARRY. What's that?

JESSIE. Just for a moment.

HARRY. Now look here—if it's a good reason you won't be ashamed of telling him before me.

CHARLEY. Yes—why can't you?

JESSIE. Goosey! If I'd wanted him to know the reason I wouldn't have waited for you to come, would I?

CHARLEY. That's so. (*Crossing c. to R. To HARRY*) Well, old fellow—you go and leave me to umpire.

HARRY. (*Starting reluctantly towards the door*) Well, no funny business, you understand. (*Just as JESSIE goes to whisper confidentially close to CHARLEY, HARRY turns suddenly at door. JESSIE starts and draws back*) How're you going to persuade him?

JESSIE. (*Shooing him off*) I promise not to flirt with him—if that's what you mean.

CHARLEY. (*Pompously*) I swear to judge strictly on the merits of the case! Now—vanish!

HARRY. I vanish! (*Exits up R.*)

CHARLEY. What's up?

JESSIE. (*Drawing CHARLEY to C. Mysteriously*) This isn't the *first* time I've been engaged.

CHARLEY. Oh, Lord! Is that it?

JESSIE. A year ago I was engaged to another fellow and Mother stopped it.

CHARLEY. Your mother?

JESSIE. Yes, the Professor didn't approve!

CHARLEY. The Professor?

JESSIE. I'm not going to let him spoil everything this time.

CHARLEY. That's right—but——

JESSIE. I'm awfully fond of Harry—I just don't know what I'd do if——

CHARLEY. But who *is* this Professor?

JESSIE. Why, Professor Darius Strong—don't you know? (*CHARLEY shakes his head*) The caligraphist?

CHARLEY. The k-k—what?

JESSIE. The caligraphist—the man they're all running after to have him read their character from their handwriting.

CHARLEY. Well, but——

JESSIE. Mother swears by him—wouldn't hire the best cook in New York if he warned her not to.

CHARLEY. I see—and—— (*Moves to L. and turns. Looking over at the table*) —you were trying to——

JESSIE. Yes—to get a sample of his handwriting.

CHARLEY. But Harry's a fine fellow through and through—what're you nervous about?

JESSIE. Nervous about the way he crosses his

"t's." (CHARLEY *laughs*) It's no joke, I tell you—wait till Mother——

CHARLEY. And you mean to tell me your mother would turn down a man like Harry because—because——

JESSIE. Because his writing slants down instead of up——

CHARLEY. Nonsense!

JESSIE. Because he forgets to dot his "i's." Because he puts a dash for a period. Because the tails of his "y's" are too long—or too short!

CHARLEY. Your Mother would deliberately wreck your happiness?

JESSIE. She'd think she was saving me from unhappiness.

CHARLEY. Preposterous! A splendid fellow like Harry.

JESSIE. (*Dryly*) So was Jimmy!

HARRY. (*Poking his head in*) Say, aren't you two through yet?

CHARLEY. Almost. (HARRY *closes door again*)

JESSIE. So now you know—I am unwilling to bank my happiness on a stroke of the pen——

CHARLEY. Pen—penny wise and pound foolish!

JESSIE. Oh, Charley!

CHARLEY. What are you going to do?

JESSIE. I kept putting Mother off, pretending I didn't care for him—expected to get a whole batch of letters from him while he was away and I'd see if it was safe to let her have one.

CHARLEY. How could you tell?

JESSIE. (*Taking a book from behind cushion on settee R.*) I got the Professor's book. I wasn't going to have it happen to me a second time.

CHARLEY. (*Crosses to JESSIE*) Why didn't you tell Harry the whole thing?

JESSIE. About Jimmy, too?

CHARLEY. Oh, I see.

JESSIE. Besides, I didn't exactly like to have Harry think Mother so silly.

CHARLEY. Of course not. (*Goes c. Calling*) Harry! Oh, Harry! (JESSIE *hastily thrusts book under cushion on settee.* HARRY *enters*) Sorry, old man!

HARRY. (*Coming down R. c.—jaunty, sure his pal has decided for him*) To have kept me a prisoner in there?—Never mind, old chap!

CHARLEY. (*Pompously*) No—sorry the verdict of the Court is against you.

HARRY. What? (CHARLEY *nods head*)

CHARLEY. Yes, sir. (JESSIE *nods head.* HARRY *looks from one to the other—business is worked up like two little mandarins nodding alternately*)

HARRY. (*Incredulous*) She had a reason? A reason a man would recognize as one?

CHARLEY. Yep.

HARRY. A reason for asking me to sit down in that chair and write a letter to her when she's right in the next room?

CHARLEY. Yes, a very good reason. (HARRY *goes to CHARLEY L. c. and looks at him closely*)

JESSIE. You won't find any powder on his coat, if that's what you're looking for. (CHARLEY *instinctively brushes his hand over his shoulder.* HARRY *takes a hair off CHARLEY'S coat—turns and looks at JESSIE suspiciously, and with relief says—“Oh, blonde!”*) (*If a blonde acts the part, HARRY may say, “Oh, brunette!”*)

CHARLEY. Oh, come, Harry, be a sport! You agreed to leave it to me. (*Leads him to L. of table*) Now sit right down there and behave.

HARRY. You expect me to write that letter now?

CHARLEY. Now.

HARRY. (*Sitting down*) Catch me leaving any-

thing to a pal again. (*Takes up pen and selects a sheet of paper*)

JESSIE. (*Coming over to back of table. Quickly*) Don't take that paper.

HARRY. Doesn't match your pink ribbon?

JESSIE. (*Taking the paper from him and giving him another sheet*) That's ruled—better let your writing slant naturally—*upward!*

HARRY. Oh, let your writing slant naturally upward! (*A moment's silence while he writes*) Well—mine happens to slant naturally downward.

JESSIE. (*To CHARLEY, who is L. She stands back of HARRY on his L.*) Prepare for the worst!

CHARLEY. (*Aside to JESSIE*) Bad sign, eh?

JESSIE. (*Whispering*) Delicate health—melancholy! (*To HARRY*) Short sentences! (*To CHARLEY*) Plenty of capitals! (*To HARRY*) Use as many "m's" as you can—and "d's." (*To CHARLEY*) Small "d's" are *so* important.

HARRY. Yes, small "d's." I'll use a big "D," too, if you don't mind.

JESSIE. And—and—don't skimp your *curves* whatever you do!

HARRY. My curves? (*Laying down his pen and turning around in disgust*) What is this, anyway? A game?

CHARLEY. Now—now—fire away, old chap—you've lost precious time already. (*Beckoning to JESSIE, who is inclined to look over HARRY's shoulder*) Leave him alone—he'll do it quicker. (*Takes her R.*)

JESSIE. I'm so afraid Mother'll catch on first.

CHARLEY. She won't.

JESSIE. We've simply got to keep her from seeing a scrap of his writing till I know.

CHARLEY. Too bad you didn't confide in me.

JESSIE. But I expected to get a letter every day.

CHARLEY. By Jove! (*Searches rapidly through his pockets*)

JESSIE. What is it?

CHARLEY. Sh! I got a letter from him.

JESSIE. You did? (*CHARLEY nods while still searching his pockets*) While he was away?

CHARLEY. Business—don't be jealous. Here it is! (*JESSIE gets the book from under cushion on settee, sits on settee R. of CHARLEY. Both bend over book excitedly*)

JESSIE. Oh!

HARRY. What're you two doing?

CHARLEY. Just looking at some photographs.

HARRY. Humph! How do you spell "recalcitrant"?

CHARLEY. R-e-k-a-l-s-i—— (*Impatiently, as he is anxious to watch JESSIE*) Oh, say mulish!

HARRY. I've said that already.

JESSIE. Oh!

CHARLEY. What is it?

JESSIE. Oh, it's awful! See this loop of the "d"?

CHARLEY. Well?

JESSIE. Vain—egotistical—this crossing of the "t"—lack of ardor—this closing of the "a"—stingy and—oh, dear—yes—this curve proves a quick temper!

CHARLEY. Impossible! You can tell all that?

JESSIE. Oh!

HARRY. (*Looking up*) What's the matter now?

CHARLEY. Oh, just laughing over the photographs. (*CHARLEY emits a forced laugh. JESSIE imitates him*)

HARRY. (*Rising and coming towards them*) Well, let me laugh, too.

CHARLEY. (*Rising and intercepting him*) You just go on! (*To JESSIE*) What is it?

JESSIE. Oh, this is awful!

MOTHER. (*Speaking outside*) Did you tell her I'd be home?

JESSIE. (*Quickly to CHARLEY as the MAID'S voice is heard in reply*) Look out! Here's Mother now! (*Quickly shoves the letter into CHARLEY'S hand, springs up, putting the book under cushion again. CHARLEY quickly sticks letter in his pocket, rushes over to HARRY and attempts to grab the letter he is writing*)

HARRY. (*Indignantly*) Hey! What're you doing?

(MOTHER enters down c. CHARLEY and JESSIE r., HARRY l. Pause. They all greet her, embarrassed)

JESSIE. (*Rushing across to greet her mother*) Oh, Mother dear! How are you?

MOTHER. I'm quite all right, dear. So you're back, Mr. Barman—

HARRY. (*Shaking hands*) Yes, today.

MOTHER. How d'do, Mr. Stark.

CHARLEY. How d'do, Mrs. Denslow.

MOTHER. Excuse me a moment while I look over my mail. (*Sits herself with her back to JESSIE and CHARLEY, r. of table*)

HARRY. (*Turns and sees CHARLEY stealthily approaching his letter. JESSIE is also approaching it*) What's the matter with you two? (*Both beckon him to be silent. As MOTHER turns curiously, JESSIE rushes to her on her r.*)

JESSIE. How did the meeting go off?

MOTHER. Oh, splendidly—crowded.

HARRY. (*To CHARLEY, who is about to take letter*) Hey, Charley, I'm not through with that letter!

MOTHER (c. *Turning to HARRY l.*) Been writing a letter?

JESSIE. (R. *Quickly attracting her attention*)
Did they elect you again?

MOTHER. Oh, yes. They elected me again. (To HARRY) Writing a letter, you say?

HARRY. Yes, Jessie insisted— (CHARLEY makes frantic signs to him which he ignores)

MOTHER. Insisted upon your writing?

CHARLEY. (Back of table) No, not at all!

JESSIE. Yes—but now Mother's home it isn't necessary.

HARRY. Well, I like that!

MOTHER. (Turning) Oh—a letter for me? Let me have it.

JESSIE. N-no, not exactly—a—a message from—er—Mrs. Brown.

MOTHER. Oh, she telephoned me when I was out?

HARRY. I'll be damned!

MOTHER. Eh?

CHARLEY. (Back of table. *Quickly*) Mr. Barman said he was—er—glad to be of assistance. (Gives HARRY a kick)

JESSIE. Yes—she said she was so sorry you were out—

MOTHER. Nothing else?

JESSIE. No—er—she'll ring up again.

MOTHER. Oh! And so Mr. Barman was writing that message for me?

HARRY. I—

CHARLEY. (Over by HARRY, L. In his ear) Say yes, you fool!

HARRY. (All at sea) I—I—yes, you fool!

JESSIE. (Back of table. Reaching for letter) But—since you're here now—

MOTHER. (Trying to get the letter from JESSIE'S hand) I do think, Jessie, since Mr. Barman was kind enough—

JESSIE. (*Quickly snatching letter from MOTHER'S*

hand) But since you're home, Mother—— (*Tears letter to bits and throws it into waste-paper basket*)

HARRY. But—really—I do think——

CHARLEY. Keep quiet! (*CHARLEY and JESSIE both give sighs of relief. All three grinning at MOTHER. After a slight pause, looking at his watch and bustling*) Isn't it time for us to go?

HARRY. Go? Where?

CHARLEY. Why, our engagement—you know. (*Dragging HARRY up-stage*)

HARRY. Hanged if I know!

JESSIE. (*Going up-stage with them*) Yes, it's too bad you must go! (*HARRY looks from JESSIE to CHARLEY in bewilderment*)

MOTHER. (*Dryly*) Perhaps, instead of keeping that *important* engagement, Mr. Barman, you'll be good enough to do me a favor?

HARRY. (*Coming down L.*) Certainly!

MOTHER. (*Taking some papers from her bag*) The minutes of the meeting—would you mind copying them for me?

HARRY. Of course—with pleasure.

JESSIE. (*Coming down R.*) Oh!

CHARLEY. (*Coming down R. behind JESSIE, mopping his brow*) Oh, my Lord!

MOTHER. (*Turning*) What's the matter?

JESSIE. (*Coming back of table L. of MOTHER*) Well—Mr. Barman came to see me——

CHARLEY. (*Coming R. c. Anxiously*) You see, he's just back, Mrs. Denslow—and they're naturally—ha-ha——

MOTHER. (*Looking up inquiringly*) “Naturally—ha-ha”?

CHARLEY. Won't you let me copy them?

MOTHER. (*Stiffly*) Not at all, Mr. Stark. I prefer to have Mr. Barman do it for me—if you don't mind.

HARRY. I insist upon doing it!

CHARLEY. But—he writes so poorly!

HARRY. Huh! I suppose you think you write better!

JESSIE. (*Leaning over MOTHER*) Let me do it for you, Mother.

MOTHER. (*Ironically*) Why, you're all tumbling over each other to help me! Come, Mr. Barman. (*JESSIE and CHARLEY, back of MOTHER, frantically wave to HARRY to stop*)

HARRY. (*Sitting down, looking puzzled from JESSIE to CHARLEY*) All ready.

JESSIE. (*Rushing back of table before HARRY can begin*) Here's a nice new pen. (*As she hands it to HARRY, she stabs him with it in the right hand*)

HARRY. Ow-w-w!

MOTHER. How awkward!

CHARLEY. (*Rushing L. of HARRY*) You're hurt! It's bleeding! (*While HARRY protests it is nothing, CHARLEY takes out his handkerchief and binds up the wounded hand carefully with JESSIE's solicitous assistance. MOTHER looks on, annoyed*) It would never do in the world to use this hand!

HARRY. Nonsense—a pin-prick!

CHARLEY. Oh—blood-poisoning might set in!

JESSIE. Must be careful!

HARRY. (*Trying to rise—promptly shoved down again by CHARLEY*) You two have gone crazy!

CHARLEY. Won't be able to write for days!

HARRY. (*Starting to rise*) Get out—you—

CHARLEY. (*Firmly holding him down*) No you don't! (*Savagely*) Not—for—days!

JESSIE. (*In a little voice*) Not for days!

MOTHER. Well, if you can't write now— (*Looks up and sees MAID, who has entered with letter on tray*) Oh, Mary, a letter for me? (*Takes it as she says*) Maybe it's the letter I've been ex-

pecting. (*Rises*) I'll be back in a minute. (*Exits up L.*)

(NOTE.—*In case part of MAID is omitted, have MOTHER go up L. and call to MAID: "Mary, didn't any other letters come?" Voice of MAID outside, "Yes, madam, one has just come." MOTHER, turning to others, "I'll be back in a moment—maybe that is the letter I've been expecting."*)

(*JESSIE goes R., looking after her mother.*)

HARRY. (*Rising as CHARLEY releases his hold*) Well, what's the matter with you two, anyway? First you're both determined I should write, then you're both determined I shouldn't.

JESSIE. (*Going quickly towards him*) If you ever hope to gain Mother's consent—

HARRY. Well, wasn't I trying to be nice to her—it's you wouldn't let me.

CHARLEY. Well, the fact of the matter is—

JESSIE. Hush! Mother!—Whisper it!

(*CHARLEY rushes with HARRY across room, grabs book from behind cushion and talks to him with back to audience, gesticulating violently and pointing to book. Obviously CHARLEY cannot repeat the entire secret at risk of boring the audience; therefore, he must say just a few words to give realism to his explanation. Much of it must be done quickly in dumb show, but the audience should get these words spoken by—*

CHARLEY. Character—handwriting—Professor—they believe in it—

HARRY. (*Suddenly comprehending*) Oh—I see—chirography!

CHARLEY. No—no—no!

JESSIE. (*Coming down*) Yes, it's all true—quick— (*Taking the book from CHARLEY and opening it*) There's no time to be lost—take off that bandage and write— (*Drags him to chair L. of table*) Write for your life—

HARRY. (*Bewildered*) But— (*CHARLEY roughly unwinds the bandage. His roughness in doing this must be a complete contrast to the finicky care of it in binding it up*)

JESSIE. If you ever hope to get Mother's consent to marry me, do as I say. (*JESSIE stands over HARRY L., book in hand; CHARLEY on his R.*) Now, then—thick, heavy down-strokes—

HARRY. (*Repeating after her*) Thick, heavy down-strokes—

JESSIE. That's right! (*Consulting book. To CHARLEY*) Great tenacity of purpose! (*To HARRY*) Slant upward—

HARRY. Slant upward—

CHARLEY. Yes, look out for that tendency to melancholy.

JESSIE. Don't skimp your curves—

HARRY. Oh, no, mustn't skimp my curves—

CHARLEY. Go strong on the generosity.

JESSIE. Cross your "t's" firmly, but not too high—

HARRY. That right?

JESSIE. No, a little more than that—that's more like it—no—let me show you. (*Guides his hand as he writes, leaning across him*)

HARRY. (*Jumping up impatiently. JESSIE throws her arms around him as he rises*) We can't put this thing over—it's no use trying.

CHARLEY. (*Shoving him down again*) Cheer up! Sit down!

JESSIE. Yes, you will—with a little patience.

HARRY. (*His arms around her waist, looking up*)

at her) Patience! What are you going to do if my writing doesn't come up to the scratch? You wouldn't turn me down on account of an old hand-writing professor?

JESSIE. (*Quite tragically*) I won't marry you without Mother's consent.

HARRY. If you really loved me——

JESSIE. (*Going to fireplace, nearly in tears*) Oh, Harry, that isn't fair!

CHARLEY. See here! You're wasting precious time—get to work! We'll corner every virtue that ever lurked in a dash or a curve—Darius has the surprise of his life coming to him!

HARRY. Still, I think if Jessie really loved me——
(JESSIE *bursts into tears*. HARRY *turns swiftly, jumping up and taking her in his arms*) Oh, my darling—don't cry!

(CHARLEY *goes R. comically. Sees MOTHER coming, tries to warn them.*)

MOTHER. (*Entering with a letter in her hand. Coming down c., looking towards HARRY and JESSIE*) Well! I'm glad to see you two've settled it. (*The two quickly spring apart*)

JESSIE. (L.) Yes, Mother——

HARRY. (L. *Astounded*) Then you're willing? You don't disapprove of me?

MOTHER. (C.) Disapprove? Disapprove? Why should I?

HARRY. (*Straightening his shoulders*) Yes, indeed, why should you?

MOTHER. I'm charmed.

CHARLEY. (R. *Pumping her hand*) Fine! Fine!

MOTHER. Jessie perhaps told you, Mr. Barman, that I believe one can read character by the hand-writing?

HARRY. (*Embarrassed*) Eh—yes—no—er—that is—

CHARLEY. (*Briskly coming to his rescue*) Ah, Mrs. Denslow, have no fears on that score. Harry—as soon as his finger is all right— (*Turns and notices the bandage is off HARRY'S finger. Quickly tosses HARRY his handkerchief behind MOTHER'S back. HARRY hurriedly wraps it around his finger*)—will hand you a specimen of his handwriting which will convince you—

MOTHER. That, I'm glad to say, is not necessary.

ALL. (*Astounded*) What!

CHARLEY. Not necessary—what do you mean?

MOTHER. (*Smiling*) No, I got ahead of you all. (*To JESSIE*) I know, Jessie, you've been trying to get hold of his writing first—that's why you were so disappointed he only telegraphed. (*To CHARLEY*) And you were doing your best to prevent me—but I've beaten you all!

JESSIE. (*Frightened*) How do you mean?

CHARLEY. You—

MOTHER. (*Triumphantly waving a letter*) Yes—a letter of his! (*All three show consternation. CHARLEY'S hand mechanically opens and shuts as if wanting to grab it*)

CHARLEY. (*The first to recover*) But I thought you said you were delighted to welcome Harry as your son-in-law!

MOTHER. Certainly I am. (*Turning to HARRY*) I'm glad to say you're one to whom I can safely trust my daughter's happiness.

HARRY. (*Bewildered, swallowing hard*) That's fine. (*Goes up to MOTHER and kisses her. Takes JESSIE'S arm in his*)

MOTHER. Do you remember before you went away contributing a dollar to that Scotch widow who

wrote you that her only son had been killed in the trenches?

HARRY. (*Eagerly*) Yes—of course—but I was just leaving—and—— (*CHARLEY signals him to stop*)

MOTHER. (*Triumphantly*) Well—I was that Scotch widow——

HARRY. You?

MOTHER. Yes—and I don't owe you the dollar, either! I gave it to the Professor for reading your handwriting.

HARRY. Oh!

MOTHER. (*Holding up letter*) It was worth it, believe me! Here's his report: "Honesty—will-power—generosity—strong friendship"——

HARRY. (*Meekly*) May I see that letter, Mrs. Denslow?

MOTHER. Certainly. (*Hands letter to him*) And now I'll take off my things and then we'll telephone a few friends. You'll stay to dinner, of course?

HARRY. Thank you. (*Glances at letter, stuffs it in pocket*)

MOTHER. (*Turning to CHARLEY*) And you?

CHARLEY. Delighted. (*Accompanies MOTHER to door up R., bows her out. Just before she leaves, she turns around and gives a little satisfied glance at JESSIE and HARRY*)

JESSIE. (*While CHARLEY escorts MRS. DENSLow to the door; in a low voice to HARRY*) I can't understand it at all.

HARRY. Never mind—she isn't against me—that's the great thing! (*CHARLEY returns and stands gazing benevolently at them*) (*NOTE.—This scene is played a little extravagantly, but not too broad*) Oh, go away—read a book—write some more letters, you're so good at it—get out!

CHARLEY. (*Folding his arms, melodramatically*) I—go away? That's good! Ha!

HARRY. Well, don't stand there grinning like a Cheshire cheese—I mean cat.

CHARLEY. How can I help it when I gaze on you—my handiwork!

HARRY. What's that?

CHARLEY. I hold you two in the hollow of my hand.

HARRY. Oh, get out!

CHARLEY. You're utterly in my power—you can't make a move without my permission.

JESSIE. (*Who has been staring in wonderment*) What on earth does he mean?

CHARLIE. I shall not leave you day or night—I shall stick to you like your shadow—if I leave your side for a single moment—you are LOST!

JESSIE. (*Clinging to HARRY*) Oh, Harry!

HARRY. Nonsense! He's joking.

CHARLEY. Oh, I am, am I? You'll see if it's a joke or not. (*Sits himself on settee R., greatly at ease, crosses his knees and folds his arms*)

HARRY. (*Going to put his arm about JESSIE, turns on CHARLEY*) Say, I won't have you sticking around when we want to be alone.

CHARLEY. (*Grimly*) Oh, won't you!

HARRY. No, I won't!

CHARLEY. (*Easily*) That's so—come to think of it—it would be rather a bore to sit around and see you two spoon. (*With sudden determination*) I'll permit you to do only a certain amount of it.

HARRY. Huh! *You'll permit!*

CHARLEY. I'll allow you just two hugs a day—coming and going.

JESSIE. (*Crossing over to CHARLEY, indignantly*) Say, whom am I marrying, I'd like to know!

HARRY. Yes, so should I.

CHARLEY. (*Suavely*) It is a bit puzzling, isn't it?

JESSIE. Not at all—I'll have you know I'm marrying Harry.

CHARLEY. Ah—you think you are—but your Mother thinks you're marrying all those noble qualities revealed in that letter.

JESSIE. That's right—I am. (*Going to HARRY and putting her arms around him*)

CHARLEY. You are, are you? (*Jumping up*) Well—I wrote that letter!

JESSIE. "That letter?"—Oh, you don't mean—

CHARLEY. Yes, I do.

HARRY. Nonsense! Don't you believe him—he's just jealous.

CHARLEY. Show her that letter in your pocket. (*HARRY hesitates*) Show it to her, I say! (*HARRY reluctantly digs down into his pocket and brings out the letter which Jessie's mother handed him*)

JESSIE. (*Quickly examining the letter*) Why, it isn't anything like Harry's writing!

CHARLEY. (*Preening*) You heard what the learned Professor said, "Honesty—will-power—generosity"—is it likely? (*Ends with an expressive gesture*)

HARRY. Oh, shut up! (*To JESSIE*) You see, dear, it was like this—I was just leaving town—and—

CHARLEY. And the cold-hearted brute threw the poor widdy's appeal into the scrap-basket. It was I—I who rescued it—wrote a nice, gushy letter and enclosed the dollar.

HARRY. Well, what are you making such a fuss about? It was my dollar.

CHARLEY. And it was your name, wasn't it? (*HARRY can think of no adequate reply to this*) And just suppose I hadn't rescued that letter—and hadn't signed your name to it and enclosed your dollar—nice kettle of fish you two'd have been in!

HARRY. Nice kettle of fish we're in now—having you tag after us all the time!

CHARLEY. (*Coolly*) Yes—and you'll be mighty nice to me, too! I'm not going to stand much from you two—you'll have to mind your "P's and Q's," I tell you—or it's all up with you. One mis-step, Mr. Harry, and I'll get your girl!

JESSIE. (*Stamping her foot*) You will not!

CHARLEY. (*Patting his chest*) Do you think your mother will permit such a paragon of penmanship to get away from the family? Do you want me to show her this? (*Bringing out from his pocket HARRY'S letter, and comparing it with the one JESSIE holds in her hand*) Look—just look on this letter and then on that! Look at the noble way in which that slants upwards—the generous curves—the ardor in the dotting of that "i"! And look—just look at the melancholy in this terrible slant—observe the awful temper in this "r"—and this "y"—absolutely no spine! (*Melodramatically*) Woman! would you marry a man without a spine?

JESSIE. (*Desperately*) I don't care! He can dot his "i's" and cross his "t's" any old way he likes. I love Harry— (*Flinging her arms around him, and looking over her shoulder at CHARLEY*) And I don't love you!

CHARLEY. (*Pretending to tear his hair out in despair*) What's the use? A life spent in blameless loops and impeccable curves—and look at me! The man who commits all the caligraphic crimes in the calendar—he—he gets the beautiful girl! (*Throws himself dejectedly on the settee R.*)

HARRY. (*Putting his arms about JESSIE*) There you are! What's left of your mother's pet theories now? (*Crosses over R. and stands by CHARLEY*) Just look at him—the wonderful caligraphic cherub! He has us in his power—so he uses it! "Generos-

ity"—pooh! (CHARLEY starts) He threatens to give me away if I don't do just as he likes—"friendship"—bah! (CHARLEY starts) That—that miserable, grinning trickster—that Jim-the-Penman—is considered a safe bet—while I—I—— (Putting his hand to his forehead in despair) Oh, it's too much! (Strides across room and sinks into Morris chair L. by fireplace)

JESSIE. (Stands looking from one to the other—goes towards HARRY) You're right, Harry. (Quickly runs to HARRY, throws herself on her knees and looks up at him) If the worst comes to the worst—and Mother finds out—I'll run away with you—we'll elope! (Looking off into space melodramatically) I must live my life!

HARRY. (Rising and putting his arm about her, proudly) Ah—there's my brave girl—my darling!

CHARLEY. (Smiles, rises and crosses genially) That's all very well at a pinch—an elopement's all right—but you might as well wait and get the wedding presents!

HARRY. Ha!

CHARLEY. They'll come in handy to make the cook's room attractive, anyway!

JESSIE. (Seriously—looking up at HARRY) The cook! We must please the cook!

HARRY. Please the cook! I know—we'll give her Charley!

Quick Curtain



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