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# CRICKET ON THE HEARTH

By ALBERT SMITH



SERGEL'S  
ACTING  
DRAMA

No. 248

ART. WORKERS LEAGUE

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## CONTENTS

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**A DRAMA, IN THREE ACTS.**

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**ALBERT SMITH,**

**BY THE EXPRESS PERMISSION OF THE AUTHOR,**

**CHARLES DICKENS.**

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**WITH CAST OF CHARACTERS, STAGE BUSINESS, COSTUMES, RELATIVE POSITIONS, &c.**

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**CAST OF CHARACTERS.—CRICKET ON THE HEARTH.**

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|--|----------------------------|--|
|  | <i>Lyceum,<br/>London.</i> | <i>Winter Garden, N. Y.,<br/>Sept. 14, 1859.</i> |
|  |                            | Under management of<br>Mr. W. Stuart.            |
| <i>John Perrybingle (a Carrier).....</i> | Mr. Emery.                 | Mr. H. Pearson.                                  |
| <i>Mr. Tackleton (a Toy Maker).....</i>  | Mr. Meadows.               | Mr. T. B. Johnston.                              |
| <i>Caleb Plummer (His Man).....</i>      | Mr. Keeley.                | Mr. J. Jefferson.                                |
| <i>Old Gentleman.....</i>                | Mr. Vining.                |  |
| <i>Porter.....</i>                       | Mr. Yarnold.               |  |
| <i>Dot's Father.....</i>                 | Mr. Bender.                |  |
| <i>Neighbors.....</i>                    |                            |  |
| <i>A Little John Perrybingle.....</i>    | Master Forest.             |  |
| <i>Dot.....</i>                          | Mrs. Keeley.               | Miss Agnes Robertson.                            |
| <i>Bertha (a Blind Girl).....</i>        | Miss Keeley.               | Miss Sara Stevens.                               |
| <i>Mrs. Fielding.....</i>                | Mrs. Woollidge.            | Mrs. W. R. Blake.                                |
| <i>May Fielding.....</i>                 | Miss Howard.               | Mrs. J. H. Allen.                                |
| <i>Tilly Slowboy.....</i>                | Miss Turner.               | Mrs. John Wood.                                  |
| <i>Mrs. Dot.....</i>                     | Miss Foster.               |  |
| <i>Spirit of the Cricket.....</i>        | Miss Dawson.               | Miss Ione Burke.                                 |
| <i>Twelve very little Fairies.....</i>   | Twelve Children.           |  |
| <i>A very little Dot.....</i>            | Miss Frampton.             |  |
| <i>A very little Tilly Slowboy.....</i>  |                            |  |

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TIME OF PLAYING—TWO HOURS.

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**COSTUMES.**

- JOHN PERRYBINGLE.**—Dark corduroy suit. The coat a sort of gamekeeper's, with many and large pockets, wide-awake hat, and heavy boots.
- MR. TACKLETON.**—Ordinary dress of an English shopkeeper fifty years ago.
- CALEB PLUMMER.**—Similar dress, but more seedy looking.
- OLD GENTLEMAN.**—Quiet dress of a young English gentleman of the time; but entirely hidden by a long-skirted overcoat.
- DOT'S FATHER.**—Plain dress of well-to-do farmer of period.
- DOT.**—Neat print dress of a young matron of the time.
- BERTHA.**—A plain, but neatly fitting dark stuff dress.

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**RELATIVE POSITIONS, EXITS, ETC.**

R. means Right; L. Left; R. H. Right Hand; L. H. Left Hand; C. Centre; S. E. (or 2d E.) Second Entrance; U. E. Upper Entrance; M. D. Middle Door; F. the Flat; D. F. Door in Flat; R. C. Right of Centre; L. C. Left of Centre.

R.            R. C.            C.            L. C.            L.

*The Reader is supposed to be on the Stage, facing the Audience.*

28F12 M.H.P.

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# THE CRICKET ON THE HEARTH.

## CHIRP THE FIRST.

*The Scene represents the interior of JOHN PERRYBINGLE'S Cottage. A fire alight in the grate, on which is the kettle, practicable spout, to steam. Table and tea-things. Chairs by the fire. Cradle. Door, L. Window with curtain furniture.*

*At the rising of the curtain, music, TILLY SLOWBOY is sitting down on a low stool, nursing the baby. DOT is busy about.*

DOT. There! there's the ham—and there's the tea—and there's the bread! Now all is comfortable against John comes home. Dear me! if it had been for anybody else, how tired I should have been! and cross, too! oh, very cross! I'm sure there was enough to make me so. First, when I went to fill the kettle, I lost my pattens, and splashed my legs—that's hard to bear when one rather plumes oneself upon one's legs, and keeps oneself particularly neat in point of stockings. Then the lid of the kettle first turned itself topsy-turvy, and then dived sideways in, right down to the very bottom, and was as difficult to get up as if it had been the wreck of the Royal George! But now everything's right, and I can sit down for a minute in comfort and cheerfulness.

[*Music. She sits down at the fireside. The chirp of the CRICKET is heard. The kettle steams.*]

Ah! there's the Cricket on the hearth again. I thought it wouldn't be quiet long when the kettle began to sing.

How its voice sounds through the house, and seems to twinkle in the outer darkness like a star. Why, I declare it's racing with the kettle—trying to get before it! It can't, though; no, no—the kettle's not to be finished like that! How I love its fireside song of comfort; and John loves it, too. He says it always seems to say, "Welcome home, old fellow; welcome home, old boy!" He's very late to-night. Hush! I hear him. Yes, I'm sure it is. [*Rises.*] Give me baby, Tilly; I know it is John coming home!

[*Music. She takes the baby from TILLY, and going to the door, opens it. Part of the cart is seen, with a lantern—JOHN comes in, stamping with cold—snow on him—he shakes his hat.*]

Oh! goodness, John, what a state you're in, with the weather. [*Assists him to undress.*]

JOHN. Why you see, Dot, it—it ain't exactly summer weather, so no wonder. [*Puts down parcels.*]

DOT. I wish you wouldn't call me Dot, John—I don't like it.

JOHN. [*Drawing her to him.*] Why, little woman, what else are you? A dot, and—[*Looks at baby.*]—a dot, and carry—no, I won't make a joke, I should only spoil it; I don't know that I was ever nearer one though!

DOT. You don't notice baby, John—ain't he beautiful? Now don't he look precious in his sleep?

JOHN. Very! He generally is asleep—ain't he?

DOT. Lor! John!—good gracious—no!

JOHN. Oh! I thought his eyes were generally shut. Holloa! [*Shouts in baby's ear.*]

DOT. Goodness, John! how you startle one!

JOHN. It ain't right for him to turn 'em up, in that way, is it? See how he's winking with 'em both at once! And look at his mouth! Why, he's gasping like a gold and silver fish!

DOT. [*With dignity.*] You don't deserve to be a father—you don't; but how should you know what little complaints babies are troubled with, John?

JOHN. No—it's very true, Dot. I don't know much

about it—I only know the wind's been blowing northeast, straight into the cart, the whole way home.

[*Beginning to take off his coat.*]

DOT. Poor old man! so it has. Here, take the precious darling, Tilly, while I make myself of some use. Bless it, I could smother it with kissing it, I could! Now see me bustle about, John, like a busy bee—"How doth the little"—and all the rest of it, you know, John. Did you ever learn "How doth the little," when you went to school, John?

JOHN. Not quite to know it. I was very near it once; but I should only have spoilt it, I dare say.

DOT. [*Laughs.*] Ha! ha! what a dear old dunce you are, John, to be sure! Here, Tilly, take baby—and don't let him fall under the grate, whatever you do! [*At table.*] There! there is the tea-pot ready on the hob—and the cold knuckle of ham—and the crusty loaf—and there's the cricket!

JOHN. [*Having hung up his coat.*] Heyday! it's merrier than ever to-night, I think. [*Goes to table.*]

DOT. And it's sure to bring us good fortune, John!

JOHN. It always has done so. To have a cricket on the hearth is the luckiest thing in all the world!

DOT. [*Sits by his side and takes his hand.*] The first time I heard its cheerful little note, John, was on that night when you brought me to my new home here, as its little mistress, nearly a year ago. You recollect, John?

JOHN. I should think so, Dot.

DOT. It's chirp was such a welcome to me! It seemed so full of promise and encouragement. It seemed to say, you would be kind and gentle with me, and would not expect—I had a fear of that, John, then—to find an old head on the shoulders of your foolish little wife.

JOHN. [*Patting her.*] No, no—I was quite content to take them as they were.

DOT. It spoke the truth, John, when it seemed to say so—for you have been, I'm sure, the best, the most considerate, the most affectionate of husbands to me. This has been a happy home, John, and I love the Cricket for its sake!

JOHN. Why, so do I then—so do I, Dot!

DOT. I love it for the many times I have heard it, and the many thoughts its harmless music has given me. Sometimes, in the twilight, when I have felt a little solitary and down-hearted, John, before baby was here to keep me company, and make the house gay, when I have thought how lonely you would be if I should die, how lonely I should be if I could know that you had lost me, dear, its chirp, chirp, chirp, upon the hearth has seemed to tell me of another little voice, so sweet, so very dear to me, before whose coming sound, my troubles vanished like a dream. And when I used to fear—I did fear once, John, I was very young you know—that ours might be an ill-sorted marriage; I being such a child, and you more like my guardian than my husband; and that you might not, however hard you tried, be able to learn to love me as you hoped, and prayed you might—its chirp, chirp, chirp, has cheered me up again, and filled me with new trust and confidence. I was thinking of these things to-night, dear, when I sat expecting you; and I love the cricket, for their sake.

JOHN. And so do I! But, Dot! *I* hope and pray that I might learn to love you? How you talk! I had learnt that long before I brought you to be the Cricket's little mistress, Dot. [*Kisses her, then she rises.*]

DOT. There are not many parcels to-night, John. [*Goes to those he has put down.*] Why, what's this round box? Heart alive, John, it's a wedding cake!

JOHN. Leave a woman alone to find out that! Now, a man would never have thought of it; whereas, it's my belief, that if you was to pack a wedding cake up in a tea chest, or a turn-up bedstead, or a pickled salmon keg, or any unlikely thing, a woman would be sure to find it out directly. Yes, I called for it at the pastry cook's.

DOT. [*Reading.*] Why, John—good gracious, John! you never mean to say its Gruff and Tackleton, the toy maker's!

TIL. [*Is dancing the baby.*] Was it Gruff's and Tackleton's the toy maker's then? and would it call at pastry cooks, for wedding cakes—and did its mothers know the boxes, when its fathers brought them homes. Ketcher! ketcher! ketcher!



DOT. [*Still looking at the parcel.*] And so, its really come about! Why she and I were girls at school together, John—and he's as old—as unlike her. How many years older is Gruff and Tackleton, John?

JOHN. [*At the table.*] How many more cups of tea shall I drink to-night in one sitting, than Gruff and Tackleton ever took in four, I wonder? Ah! as to eating, I eat but little; but that little I enjoy, Dot. Why, Dot—[*Raps with the knife on table.*] Dot!

DOT *has remained plunged in thought since she last spoke. She starts at the noise.*

DOT. Lor bless me, John! I beg your pardon, I was thinking. Ah! so, these are all the parcels, are they, John?

JOHN. That's all—why—no—I—[*Lays down knife and fork*—I declare—I've clean forgotten the old gentleman!

DOT. The old gentleman?

JOHN. In the cart. He was asleep amongst the straw the last time I saw him. I've very nearly remembered him twice since I came in, but he went out of my head again—Halloo! yahip there!—[*Goes out of the door.*] rouse up there!—that's my hearty!

*Music*—TILLY looks alarmed, as she hears the words "the old gentleman," and crossing to DOT runs against the STRANGER, with baby's head, as he enters, introduced by JOHN. The STRANGER removes his hat, and remains bare-headed, in the center of the room.

JOHN. You are such an undeniable good sleeper, sir, that I had a mind to ask you where the other six are, only that would be a joke and I know I should spoil it. Ha! ha! very near, though very near!

*Music*—The STRANGER looks round him, and bows to JOHN and DOT, gravely—then striking a club he carries on the stage, it falls asunder, and forms a species of camp-stool—he sits down on it.

JOHN. There! that's the way I found him, sitting by

the roadside. Upright as a mill-stone, and almost as deaf.

DOT. Sitting in the open air, John?

JOHN. In the open air, just at dusk. "Carriage paid," he said; and gave me eighteen pence. Then he got in; and there he is!

STRA. If you please, I was to be left till called for. Don't mind me.

*He puts on a pair of large spectacles, takes a book from his pocket, and begins to read. JOHN and DOT look at him with astonishment.*

[*To JOHN, nodding his head towards DOT.*] Your daughter, my good friend?

JOHN. Wife!

STRA. Niece?

JOHN. [*Loud.*] Wife!

STRA. Indeed: surely—very young! [*Reads for an instant, then resumes.*] Baby yours? [*JOHN and DOT nod eagerly.*] Girl?

JOHN. [*Bawling.*] B—o—y?

STRA. Also very young—eh?

DOT. [*Bawls in STRANGER'S ear.*] Two months and three days!—vaccinated just six weeks ago! Took very finely—considered, by the doctor, a remarkably fine child—equal to the general run of children at five months' old—takes notice in a way quite wonderful—may seem impossible to you, but feel his legs already!

[*A knocking at the door.*]

JOHN. Hark! he's called for, sure enough! There's somebody at the door—open it, Tilly.

*Music*—TILLY goes to the door, opens it, and lets in CALEB, in his sackcloth coat.

CAL. Good-evening, John? good-evening, mum! good-evening, Tilly—good-evening, unbeknown! How's baby, mum? Boxer's pretty well, I hope?

DOT. All thriving, Caleb! I'm sure you need only to look at the dear child, for one to know that.

CAL. And I'm sure I need only look at you, for an-

other—or at John, for another—or at Tilly, as far as that goes.

JOHN. Busy just now, Caleb?

CAL. Why, pretty well, John—this is a good time of year for the toy business. There's rather a run upon Noah's arks, just at present. I wish I could improve Noah's family—but I don't see how it's to be done at the price. It would be satisfaction to one's mind to make it clearer, which was Shems and Hams, and which was wives. Flies ain't on that scale neither, as compared with the elephant, you know. Ah, well! have you got anything in the parcel line for me, John?

JOHN goes to L. and searches his coat pocket, and brings out a little plant in a flower-pot, packed up.

JOHN. There it is! not so much as a leaf damaged—full of buds. It was very dear, though, Caleb, at this season.

CAL. Never mind that; it would be cheap to me whatever it cost. Anything else, John?

JOHN. A small box—here you are. [*Gives box.*]

CAL. [*Spelling.*] “For Caleb Plummer, with cash.” With cash, John? I don't think it's for me.

JOHN. With care. Where do you make out “cash?”

CAL. Oh! to be sure. It's all right—“With care?” Yes, yes, that's mine. Ah! if my dear boy in the golden South Americas had lived, John, it might have been cash indeed! You loved him like a son, didn't you? You needn't say you did—I know, of course. [*Reads.*] “Caleb Plummer, with care.” Yes, yes; for my poor blind daughter's work—it's a box of dolls' eyes; I wish it was her own sight in a box, John.

JOHN. I wish it was, or could be.

CAL. Thank'ee, you speak very hearty. To think she should never see the dolls, and them a staring at her bold all day long. That's where it cuts. What's the damage, John?

JOHN. I'll damage you if you inquire. Dot, nearly a joke; very near, wasn't it? Stop, Caleb—here's something for your governor, old Gruff and Tackleton.

CAL. He hasn't been here, has he?

JOHN. Not ~~he~~, he's too busy courting.

CAL. He's coming round though—he told me so. He isn't a pleasant man, is he, John? though he does sell toys. 'Pon my honor I think he only likes to sell those that make children uncomfortable. He makes all the grim faces to the brown paper farmers who drive the pigs. And if you knew how he reveled in those hideous, hairy, red-eyed jacks in boxes. Oh! he loves them. I think I'd better go. By the bye, you couldn't have the goodness to let me pinch Boxer's tail, mum, for half a moment, could you?

DOT. Why, Caleb, what a question.

CAL. Oh! never mind, mum; he mightn't like it, perhaps. There's a small order just come in for barking dogs, and I should wish to go as close to nature as I could for sixpence. That's all, never mind, mum; good-bye!

*He puts the box on his shoulder, and is going out, when he is met by TACKLETON on the threshold.*

TAC. [*Entering.*] Oh! here you are, are you? Wait a bit; I'll take you home. John Perrybingle, my service to you; more of my service to your pretty wife. Handsomer every day! Better, too, if possible. [*Aside*] And younger, there's the devil of it.

DOT. I should be astonished at your paying compliments, Mr. Tackleton, but for your condition.

TAC. Oh! you know all about it then?

DOT. I have got myself to believe it somehow.

TAC. After a very hard struggle, I suppose.

DOT. Very.

TAC. In three days' time; next Thursday, that's to be my wedding day.

JOHN. Why, it's our wedding-day, too.

TAC. Ha! ha! Odd! You're just such another couple, just!

DOT. [*Half aside.*] What next? He'll say just another such baby, perhaps. The man's mad.

TAC. [*To JOHN.*] I say, a word with you. You'll come to the wedding—we're in the same boat, you know.

JOHN. How, in the same boat?

LAC. [*Nudging him.*] A little disparity, you know. Come and spend an evening with us beforehand.

JOHN. Why?

TAC. Why? That's a new way of receiving an invitation! Why, for pleasure, sociability, you know, and all that.

JOHN. I thought you were never sociable.

TAC. Tchah! It's of no use to be anything but free with you, I see. Why, then, the truth is, you have a—what the tea-drinking people call a—a sort of comfortable appearance together, you and your wife. We know better, you know better, but.

JOHN. No, we *don't* know better. What are you talking about?

TAC. Well, we *don't* know better, then; as you like; what does it matter? I was going to say, as you have a sort of an appearance, your company will produce a favorable effect upon Mrs. Tackleton, that will be.

JOHN. We've made a promise to ourselves, these six months, to keep our wedding-day at home. We think you see that home.

TAC. Bah! what's home? [*Cricket is heard.*] Four walls, and a ceiling! Why don't you kill that cricket? I would; I always do! I hate their noise.

JOHN. You kill your crickets, eh?

TAC. Scrunch 'em, sir. You'll say you'll come; because, you know, whatever one woman says, another woman is determined to clinch always. There's that spirit of emulation among 'em, sir, that if your wife says to my wife, "I'm the happiest woman in the world, and mine's the best husband in the world, and I dote on him!"—my wife will say the same to yours, or more; and *half believe it.*

JOHN. Do you mean to say she don't, then?

TAC. Don't! Ha! ha!—don't what?

JOHN. Pshaw! that she don't believe it!

TAC. You're joking. I have the humor, sir, to marry a young wife, and a pretty wife—I am able to gratify that humor, and I do—it's my whim. But now, look there! [*Points to DOT, who is sitting at the fire.*] She honors and obeys, no doubt, you know; and that as I am

not a man of sentiment; is quite enough for *me*. But, do you think there's anything more in it?

JOHN. I think I should chuck any man out of the window, who said there wasn't.

TAC. Exactly so. We're exactly alike in reality, I see. Good-night! You won't give us to-morrow evening. Well, next day you go visiting, I know. I'll meet you there, and bring my wife that is to be. It'll do you good. Good-night.

*As he is going, DOT gives a loud shriek, starts up from her seat, and remains transfixed with terror and surprise. Picture. Music.*

JOHN. Dot! Mary, darling! what's the matter? Are you ill? [*He supports her.*] What is it? Tell me dear.

[STRANGER rises and stands.

*DOT falls into a fit of hysterical laughter, claps her hands together and sinks upon the ground.*

What is this, Mary? My own little wife—speak to me!

DOT. [*Recovering.*] I'm better, John—I'm quite well—now—I—a kind of shock—something came suddenly before my eyes—I don't know what it was—it's quite gone—quite gone!

TAC. I'm glad it's gone!—I wonder where it's gone, and what it was? Humph! Caleb, come here—who's that with the gray hair? [*Points to STRANGER.*

CAL. I don't know, sir. Never seen him before in my life. A beautiful figure for a nutcracker—quite a new model—with a screw jaw opening down into his waistcoat, he'd be lovely!

TAC. Not ugly enough!

CAL. Or for a firebox, either—what a model! Unscrew his head, to put the matches in—turn him heels upwards, for a light—and what a firebox for a gentleman's mantel-piece, just as he stands!

TAC. Not half ugly enough! Come, bring that box—all right now, I hope!

DOT. [*Hurriedly.*] Oh! quite gone—quite gone!—Good-night!

TAC. Good-night!—Good-night, John Perrybingle!

JOHN. Stop!—this good gentleman may be glad of company—I must give him a hint to go.

STRA. [*Rises and advances towards JOHN.*] I beg your pardon, friend—the more so, as I fear your wife has not been well—but the attendant whom my infirmity [*Points to his ears.*] renders almost indispensable, not having arrived, I fear there must be some mistake. The bad night is still as bad as ever. Would you, in your kindness, suffer me to rent a bed here?

DOT. [*Eagerly.*] Yes, yes, certainly.

JOHN. Oh! well, I don't object; but still, I'm not quite sure that——

DOT. Hush, dear John.

TAC. Hush! why, he's stone deaf!—Odd! [*To JOHN.*] isn't it?

DOT. I know he is, but—yes, sir—certainly—there's the spare room, and the bed ready made up!

TAC. Well, now I'm off! Good-night, John—good-night, Mrs. Perrybingle! Take care, Caleb; let that box fall, and I'll murder you!

DOT. [*To STRANGER.*] This way, sir—this is your room!

*She takes a candle, and beckons the STRANGER to an apartment at the side. TACKLETON, who is going, preceded by CALEB, turns back, and laying his hand on JOHN's shoulder, points towards his wife and the STRANGER. The curtain falls to the music of the commencement.*

## CHIRP THE SECOND.

*The abode of CALEB PLUMMER—a poor, half-tumbling down interior. A dresser, on which some common broken crockery is placed. The room is filled with toys of all descriptions, especially dolls' houses and dolls. There are movable sand toys, and musical carts, fiddles, drums, weapons, Noah's arks, horses, &c., &c. CALEB's coat hung up.*

*As the curtain rises CALEB is discovered making house. He sings*

"The glasses sparkle on the board,  
The wine is ruby bright," &c., &c.

Ah! me; my voice seems to get fainter and fainter every day. I'm often afraid that my poor blind child will perceive it, and then I shall not be able to make her believe that I am still young and lively by my songs. Poor Bertha! yet I often think her blindness may be a blessing. She never knew that the walls are flaked, and bare of plaster; or that the iron is rusting, the wood rotting, and the paper peeling off. If my poor boy had lived to come back from the golden South Americas, how different it would have been. She knows not now that Tackleton is a cold and exacting master. Poor girl, I have made her believe by a little affectionate artifice that all his harsh and unfeeling reproofs are meant in joke to enliven us—and she thinks he is our guardian angel, and she imagines her poor old father to be a man still young and handsome. Hush! Caleb, she is here!

*Music. The door opens—CALEB rises and goes towards it. BERTHA enters and feels her way to the spot where he was sitting. He takes her hand.*

CAL. Bertha!

BER. Father. So you were out in the rain last night, in your beautiful new great coat.

CAL. [*Looking at his coat and shrugging his shoulders.*] In my beautiful new great coat.

BER. How glad I am you bought it father.

CAL. And of such a fashionable tailor too, it's too good for me.

BER. Too good for you, father; what can be too good for you?

CAL. I'm half ashamed to wear it though, upon my word. When I hear the boys and people behind me say, "Holloa! here's a swell!" I don't know which way to look. And when the beggar wouldn't go away last night, and when I said I was a very common man, said, "No, your honor; bless your honor, don't say that;" I was



quite ashamed. I really felt as if I hadn't a right to wear it.

BER. [*Clapping her hands with delight.*] I see you, father, as plainly as if I had the eyes I never want when you are with me. A blue coat.

CAL. Bright blue.

BER. Yes, yes; bright blue! the color I can just remember in the blessed sky. A bright blue coat.

CAL. Made loose to the figure.

BER. Yes, loose to the figure—[*Laughing*—and in it you, dear father, with your merry eye, your smiling face, your free step, and your dark hair, looking so young and handsome—

CAL. Halloo! halloo! I shall be vain, presently.

BER. Not at all, dear father, not at all. But I am idling; I can talk just as well whilst I am at work.

[*Feels about for her basket, finds it, and begins to dress some dolls.*]

CAL. [*Taking up the dolls' house.*] There we are, as near the real thing as sixpenn'orth of half-pence is to sixpence. What a pity that the whole front of the house opens at once. If there was only a stair-case in it now, and regular doors to the rooms to go in at, but that's the worst of my calling. I'm always deluding myself and swindling myself.

[*In a low tone.*]

BER. You are speaking quite softly; you are not tired, father?

CAL. Tired! What could tire me, Bertha? I was never tired. What does it mean?

[*Sings with forced energy.*]

"We'll drown it in a bowl!

We'll drown it in a bowl," &c., &c.

*As he is singing TACKLETON enters.*

TAC. What, you're singing, are you? Go it—I can't sing—I can't afford it—I'm glad you can. I hope you can afford to work too. Hardly time for both, I should think.

CAL. [*To BERTHA.*] If you could only see him, Bertha, how he's winking at me, Such a man to joke. You'd think, if you didn't know him, he was in earnest; wouldn't you now?

[*BERTHA nods assent.*]

TAC. The bird that can sing, and won't sing, must be made to sing, they say. What about the owl that can't sing, and oughtn't to sing, and will sing—is there anything that *he* should be made to do?

CAL. [*Aside to BERTHA.*] The extent to which he is winking at this moment! Oh, my gracious!

BER. Always merry and light-hearted with us, Mr. Tackleton.

TAC. Oh—there you are—are you? Poor idiot!—Umph!—well—and being there, how are you?

BER. Oh, well—quite well; as happy as ever you can wish me to be; as happy as you would make the whole world if you could. [*Rising.*]

TAC. Poor idiot! no gleam of reason; not a gleam.

BERTHA, *who does not hear him, takes TACKLETON'S hand, and presses it to her lips.*

What's the matter now?

BER. I stood the little plant you sent me, close beside my pillow when I went to sleep last night, and remembered it in my dreams; and when the day broke, and the glorious red sun—father—the *red* sun—

CAL. Red in the mornings and evenings, Bertha. [*Aside.*] Poor thing! I must deceive her still, to make her believe he is less harsh and cold.

BER. When the sun rose, and the bright light—I almost fear to strike myself against it in walking—came into the room, I turned the little plant towards it, and blessed Heaven for making things so precious, and blessed you for sending them to cheer me.

TAC. [*Aside*] Bedlam broke loose! We shall arrive at the straight waistcoat and mufflers soon; we're getting on Ugh! Bertha, come here. Shall I tell you a secret?

BER. If you will.

TAC. This is the day on which little What's-her-name—the spoiled child—Perrybingle's wife, pays her regular visit to you—makes her fantastic pic-nic here—isn't it?

BER. Yes, this is the day.

TAC. I thought so. I should like to join the party.

BER. [*Gladly.*] Do you hear that, father?

CAL. Yes, yes, I hear it, but I don't believe it. It's one of my lies, no doubt.

TAC. You see, I want to bring the Perrybingles a little more into company with May Fielding. I'm going to be married to May.

BER. Married!

TAC. [*Muttering.*] She's such a confounded idiot, that I was afraid she'd never comprehend me. [*Aloud.*] Yes, married!—church, parson, clerk, beadle, glass coach, bells, breakfast, bride-cake, favors, marrowbones, cleavers, and all the rest of the tom-foolery. A wedding, you know; a wedding! Don't you know what a wedding is?

BER. I know; I understand.

TAC. Do you? It's more than I expected. Well, I want to join the party, and to bring May and her mother. I'll send in a little something or other before the afternoon; a cold leg of mutton, or some comfortable trifle of that sort. You'll expect me.

BER. Yes. [*Turns away, and her head drops.*]

TAC. I don't think you will, for you seem to have forgotten all about it already. Caleb!

CAL. [*To himself.*] I may venture to say I'm here, I suppose. [*Aloud.*] Sir.

TAC. Take care she don't forget what I've been saying to her.

CAL. *She* never forgets. It's one of the few things *she* ain't clever in.

TAC. Every man thinks his own geese swans. Well, good-bye!—umph! poor devil! [*Exit.*]

CAL. [*To himself, taking up a toy wagon and horses, which he proceeds to put harness on.*] Phew! I'm glad he's gone. [*Sings.*] "The glasses sparkle," &c.

BER. [*Puts her hand on his shoulder.*] Father, I am lonely, in the dark; I want my eyes—my patient, willing eyes.

CAL. Here they are; always ready. They are more yours than mine, Bertha. What shall your eyes do for you, dear?

BER. Look round the room, father.

CAL. All right; no sooner said than done, Bertha.

BER. Tell me about it.

CAL. It's much the same as usual; homely, but very snug. The gay colors on the walls—the bright flowers on the plates and dishes—the shining wood, where there are beams and panels—the general cheerfulness and neatness of the building make it very pretty.

BER. You have your working-dress on—and are not so gallant as when you wear the handsome coat?

[Touches him.]

CAL. Not quite so gallant. Pretty brisk, though!

BER. [Putting her hand around his neck.] Father, tell me something about May—she is very beautiful?

CAL. She is, indeed.

BER. Her hair is dark—darker than mine. Her voice is sweet and musical, I know. I have often loved to hear it. Her shape—

CAL. There's not a doll's, in all the room, to equal it; and her eyes—

BER. [Sadly.] Her eyes, father—

[Hides her face, and her head sinks on his arm.]

CAL. [Aside.] Fool that I was! [Sings.] "We'll drown it in a bowl."

BER. But Mr. Tackleton—our kind, noble friend, father—he is older than May?

CAL. [Hesitating.] Y-e-e-s—he's a little older, but that don't signify—

BER. Oh! father, yes! To be his patient companion in infirmity and age—to be his gentle nurse in sickness, and his constant friend, in suffering and sorrow—to sit beside his bed, and talk to him, awake, and pray for him, asleep! Would she do all this, dear father?

CAL. No doubt of it!

BER. I love her, father; I can love her from my soul.

[Clings to him, and is affected.]

CAL. Come, Bertha—cheerily! cheerily! I declare, all the dolls are staring at us, as if they were mad with hunger, to remind us that our company will be here soon. Come, Bertha—let us go and see about the potatoes in that handsome wooden bowl, that is so beautiful to look at—come, come!

*Music.* They exeunt at R. The tune changes to "Gee ho dobbin!" and the door opens. Enter MRS. PERRYBINGLE, carrying all sorts of parcels, followed by JOHN, doing the same—and lastly, TILLY, carrying the baby.

DOT. Nobody here, to receive us—and nobody come yet! Never mind; we're not proud, John, are we?

[Undoing bonnet, &c.]

JOHN. Well, I don't know, Dot; I'm proud of you when you're admired, knowing that you don't mind it.

[Pulling off great coat.]

DOT. Now, John—

JOHN. In fact, that you rather like it, perhaps.

DOT. Now, hush, John! I'm sure I'm only proud of your cart; and who wouldn't be? and Boxer.

JOHN. And just getting into the cart—the legs, Dot, eh?

DOT. Now, John, how can you! Think of Tilly. And are you sure you've got the basket with the veal and ham pie, and things—and the bottles of beer? Because if you haven't, we must go back.

JOHN. You're a nice little article, to talk about going back, when you kept me a quarter of an hour after time! They're all right!

DOT. I declare I wouldn't come without the veal and ham pie, and things, and the bottles of beer, for any money! Regularly once a fortnight, since we have been married, John, we have made our little pic-nic here. If anything were to go wrong with it, I should almost think we were never going to be lucky again!

JOHN. It was a kind thought, in the first instance, and I honor you for it, little woman.

DOT. My dear John! don't talk of honoring me—my gracious!

JOHN. By the bye—that old gentleman—he's an odd fish—I can't make him out—I don't believe there's any harm in him.

DOT. Not at all—I'm sure there's none at all!

JOHN. [With meaning.] I'm glad you feel so certain—because it's a confirmation to me. It's curious he

should have taken it into his head to ask to go on lodging with us, ain't it? Things come about so strangely.

DOT. [*Almost aside.*] So very strangely.

JOHN. However, he's a good-natured old gentleman, and pays as a gentleman, doesn't he? Why, Dot! what are you thinking about?

DOT. [*Starting.*] Thinking of, John? I—I was listening to you.

JOHN. Oh, that's all right! I was afraid from the look of your face, I had set you thinking about something else.

DOT. Oh, no, John, no! But here comes Caleb and Bertha! now they shall help us put the veal and ham pie and things, and bottles of beer all in order!

*Enter CALEB and BERTHA, R.*

CAL. Halloa, John! here you are, then! and missus, too. How d'ye do, mum?

BER. [*Going to DOT.*] Dear Mary!

CAL. The rest of the company will be here directly. The potatoes is all right—you never see such picturs—I don't think I could make any half so natural, not if dolls wouldn't have nothing else in their kitchens. Ah! [*A knock.*] There's May and her mother, and Gruff and Tackleton! Come in—come in!

*Enter TACKLETON with MAY FIELDING on one arm, and MRS. FIELDING on the other, wearing a calash over her cap, which is very fine. TACKLETON is carrying a parcel. CALEB receives them awkwardly.*

TAC. Well, we're come. I don't suppose you wanted me much though.

DOT. [*Going to MAY.*] May! my dear old friend! what a happiness to see you! [*They embrace.*]

TAC. Ah! that's it—women always are so deuced affectionate before people—it's all trick—only to make us envious, don't you think so, Perrybingle?

JOHN. No, I don't! I call that as pleasant a sight as a man might see in a long day. Their faces quite set one another's off. They ought to have been born sisters.

MAY. [*To BERTHA.*] And are you quite well and happy, Bertha?

BER. Quite, dear May! How can I be otherwise when you are here?

CAL. Bless me! I'm quite nervous; I feel as if somebody was pulling a string, and making me jump all ways at once. I'll go and get the potatoes. [*Exit R.*]

TAC. There, there's a leg of mutton. [*Puts it on table.*] And there's a tart. Ah! you may stare, but we don't mind a little dissipation when our brides are in the case. I haven't been married a year, you know, John.

DOT. [*Aside.*] Spiteful creature.

JOHN. Come, let us begin dinner. [*Placing the chairs.*] You have not driven along the road three or four miles; I'm hungry.

CAL. [*Enters with a bowl of smoking potatoes, R.*] You shan't be long, John, you shan't be long. There they are—look at 'em—it's almost a shame to eat 'em. Now, sit down, sit down. You there, mum, if you please—[*To MRS. FIELDING.*—and you there. [*To TACKLETON.*] Perhaps, too, sir, you'd like May next you—it's natural you should. And, Mrs. Perrybingle, you'll go to the side of your old friend, John, here; and Bertha next to me. There we are, beautiful!

DOT. Oh! how comfortable this is! It seems but yesterday, May, that we were at school; and now to think you are quite a woman grown!

MAY And you, Dot—married!

JOHN. Yes; and got a baby!

DOT. Now, John.

JOHN. Well! is it anything to be ashamed of? I always thought—

DOT. [*Interrupting him.*] You dear, good, awkward John; there, take some pie, and there's a nice bit of egg! And now don't talk with your mouth full!

CAL. But you, May; you don't eat anything.

DOT. Oh, May's in love, you know, Caleb; and people in love are never hungry. Bless you, it wouldn't be proper; I never was.

TAC. Perhaps you were never in love. Ha! ha!

DOT. [*Imitating his hollow laugh.*] Ha! ha! what a

funny man you are. [*Aside.*] He looks about as much in his own element as a fresh young salmon on the top of the pyramid!

MRS. F. [*Gravely.*] Ah! girls are girls, and byegones byegones; and as long as young people are young and thoughtless, they'll behave as young and thoughtless people do.

DOT. Dear May, to talk of those merry school-days, makes one young again.

TAC. Why you ain't particularly old at any time, are you?

DOT. Look at my sober, plodding husband, there. He adds twenty years to my age, at least; don't you, John?

JOHN. Forty.

DOT. How many you'll add to May's, I'm sure I don't know; but she can't be less than a hundred years of age on her next birth-day.

TAC. Ha! ha! [*Aside.*] I could twist her neck like a sparrow's!

DOT. Dear, dear; only to remember how we used to talk at school, about the husbands we should choose. I don't know how handsome and young, and how gay and how lively mine was to be. And as to May's; oh dear! I don't know whether to laugh or cry, when I think what silly girls we were.

TAC. Ah! you couldn't help yourselves; for all that you couldn't resist us, you see. Here we are! here we are! Where are your gay young bridegrooms now?

DOT. Some of them are dead, and some of them forgotten. Some of them, if they could stand among us at this moment, would not believe we were the same creatures, or that we could forget them so. No, no, they would not believe one word of it.

JOHN. Why, Dot, little woman; what are you thinking of? Come, come, I think we're slighting the bottled beer. I'll give a toast. "Here's to to-morrow, [*They pass the beer round*] the wedding day;" and we'll drink a bumper to it.

CAL. Yes, the wedding day.

ALL. The wedding day; the wedding day.

[BERTHA gets up and leaves the table.



JOHN. Well, this is all very well; but I must be stirring. I have got several parcels to deliver now.

CAL. But you won't be long, John?

JOHN. Oh, no; the old horse has had a bait as well as myself, and we shall soon get over the ground.

CAL. Well, good bye, John.

JOHN. Good bye—good bye, all! [*To baby.*] Good bye, young shaver. Time will come, I suppose, when you'll turn out into the cold, my little friend, and leave your father to enjoy his pipe and his rheumatics in the chimney-corner—eh! where's Dot?

DOT. [*Starting.*] I'm here, John.

JOHN. [*Claps his hands.*] Come, come, where's the pipe?

DOT. I forgot the pipe, John. I'll fill it directly.

[*Takes the pipe from his coat.*]

JOHN. Forgot the pipe! Was such a wonder ever heard of? Why, what a clumsy Dot you are this afternoon. I could have done it better myself, I verily believe.

TAC. I'll go with you, John Perrybingle, a little way, if you'll take me. I've got to go down the town.

JOHN. Oh, willingly, willingly! Good bye, Caleb; good bye, all! I shall be back very soon.

ALL. Good bye, John!

[*Exeunt JOHN and TACKLETON.*]

DOT. And now, Tilly, bring me the precious baby—and whilst you help May put the things to rights, and do everything she tells you, I shall sit with Mrs. Fielding at the fire.

MRS. F. I should have sat by fire-places of a very different kind, if people had done by other people as the first people ought to do, especially in the Indigo trade.

DOT. [*Shaking her head.*] Ah, I'm sure you would.

MRS. F. But when a friend asks any one to befriend that friend's friend, and the friend's friend does not act as such, we must put up with what other friends have to offer us.

DOT. Yes, it's very true, ma'am. But now, [*Putting a chair.*] sit down here, and while baby is in my lap, perhaps you will tell me how to manage it, and put me right

upon twenty points, where I am as wrong as can be. Won't you, Mrs. Fielding?

MRS. F. I see no objection; although before that occurrence with the Indigo, which I always thought would happen, and told Mr. F. so often, but he wouldn't believe me, I never managed my babies at all, but had proper persons, whom we paid. My husband was quite enough for me to manage.

DOT. Ah, I should think so.

[DOT seats herself upon a stool, with baby near the fire, and close to MRS. FIELDING. MAY and TILLY are putting the room to rights. CALEB and BERTHA come forward.]

CAL. Bertha, what has happened? How changed you are, my darling, and in so short a time. What is it? Tell me.

BER. [*Bursts into tears.*] Oh, father—father—my hard, hard fate!

CAL. But think how cheerful, and how happy you have been, Bertha! How good, and how much loved by many people, although I know to be—to be blind, is a great affliction—but—

BER. I have never felt it in its fullness. Oh! my good, gentle father, bear with me, if I am wicked. This is not the sorrow that so weighs me down.

CAL. [*Aside.*] I cannot understand her. What does this mean?

BER. Bring her to me. May—bring May. [MAY, hearing it, comes towards her, and touches her arm. BERTHA seizes her by the hands.] Look into my face, dear heart, sweet heart! Read it with your beautiful eyes, and tell me if truth is written on it?

MAY. Dear Bertha, yes.

BER. There is not in my soul a wish, or thought, that is not for your good, bright May. Every blessing on your head light upon your happy course! not the less, my dear May—not the less, my bird—because, to-day, the knowledge that you are to be *his* wife, has wrung my heart almost to breaking.

CAL. Is it possible—she loves him then—Tackleton!

**BER.** Father—May—Mary! Oh! forgive me, that it is so, for the sake of all he has done to relieve the weariness of my dark life; and for the sake of the belief you have in me, when I call Heaven to witness that I could not wish him married to a wife more worthy of his goodness.

**CAL.** Gracious Heaven! is it possible! Have I deceived her from her cradle, to break her heart at last!

**DOT.** [*Who has been listening, advances.*] Come, come, dear Bertha! come away with me. Give her your arm, May—so!—how composed she is, you see, already, and how good it is of her to mind us. [*Kisses her.*] There, dear—come and sit by us. Stop; I hear some footsteps I know.

**BER.** [*Starts.*] Whose—step is that?

**CAL.** Whose—why, it's John's.

*Enter JOHN.*

**DOT.** Why, John—how soon you have returned.

**JOHN.** Well—ain't you glad of it, Dot? I met young Hobbins in the street, and he is going to take the cart on, and call for us on his way back.

**BER.** But whose is the other's step—that of a man's—behind you?

**CAL.** She's not to be deceived.

**JOHN.** Why, who should I overtake, but our old deaf gentleman, who'd been up town to buy some things; so I brought him along with me. Come along, sir, you'll be welcome, never fear!—[*The STRANGER enters.*]—He's not so much a stranger, that you haven't seen him once, Caleb. You'll give him house-room till we go?

**CAL.** Oh! surely, John; and take it as an honor.

**JOHN.** He's the best company on earth, to talk secrets in. I have reasonable good lungs, but he tries 'em, I can tell you. Sit down, sir. All friends here, and glad to see you.

**CAL.** What can we do to entertain him, John?

**JOHN.** Oh, nothing! A chair in the corner, and leave to sit quite silent and look pleasantly about him, is all he cares for. He's easily pleased. [*Leads the STRANGER to a chair, BERTHA and MAY are talking; so, also, DOT and MRS. FIELDING—to DOT.*] A clumsy Dot she was, this

afternoon; and yet I like her, somehow. See yonder, Dot!

[Points to STRANGER.

DOT. Well John, [*confused*] what is there, there? [*Aside.*] Can he suspect anything!

JOHN. He's—ha! ha! ha! he's full of admiration for you! talks of nobody else.

DOT. I wish he had a better subject, John.

JOHN. A better subject: there's no such thing; come, off with the heavy wrappers, and a cosy half hour by the fire. [*To MRS. FIELDING.*] My humble service, mistress. A game at cribbage, you and I? That's hearty; the cards and the board, Dot. And a glass of beer here, if there's any left, small wife.

DOT. Yes, John, plenty!

[MAY arranges the table and cards, whilst DOT gets the beer.

TACKLETON enters the door.

MRS. F. That's quite right, my dear! Thank heaven, I have always found May a dutiful child, though I say it, that ought not, and an excellent wife she will make.

TAC. Well, I don't doubt that.

MRS. F. And with regard to our family, though we are reduced in purse—I don't say this, sir, out of regard to what we are to play for—but though we are reduced in purse, we have always had some pretensions to gentility.

JOHN. Which nobody doubts, who knows you, mum, or May, either. There's a good Dot. [*Dot brings beer.*] And now we will cut for deal. [*Cuts.*] Seven!

MRS. F. Nine!

JOHN. Ah! you are fortunate, mistress.

[The STRANGER, who has been exchanging looks with DOT, gets up, unperceived, and goes towards door, L. DOT appears anxious to follow him, as he beckons to her. This is through the dialogue.

MRS. F. Well, I will go to say that if the Indigo trade had turned out different, which, however, is not a pleasant subject to allude to, we *might* have been lucky.

JOHN. Well, here goes. [*Deals.*] Now, I wonder

what my fortune will be to-night. Hum! [*Takes his cards.*] What ought I to throw out? Here, Dot, Dot.

[*DOT is about to follow the STRANGER, who is gone out, she starts at JOHN'S voice, and turns back.*

What would you do, Dot?

DOT. [*Alarmed.*] I, John; nothing.

JOHN. Pshaw! you? No, the cards—which shall I throw out? [*DOT takes out the cards and throws them down.*] There, little woman, that will do. I won't call you away from May again.

[*DOT retires. The others, except TACKLETON, who watches her, gather round.*

MRS. F. I play, I think.

[*MUSIC. During the game DOT has taken a candle from the table, timidly, and followed the STRANGER. The light is seen directly afterwards behind the blind of the large window. When it becomes stationary TACKLETON advances and lays his hand upon JOHN'S shoulder.*

TAC. I'm sorry to disturb you, but a word immediately.

JOHN. I'm going to deal—it's a crisis.

TAC. It is, come here man, come.

JOHN. [*Rising and alarmed.*] What do you mean?

TAC. [*Leading him from the cards.*] Hush, John Perrybingle; I'm sorry for this; I am, indeed! I have been afraid of it; I have suspected it from the first.

JOHN. What is it?

TAC. Hush! I'll show you. Can you bear to look through that window, do you think?

JOHN. Why not?

[*Advancing.*

TAC. A moment more. Don't commit any violence; it's of no use. It's dangerous, too. You're a strong made man; and you might do murder before you know it.

JOHN. What do you mean, I say? Stand on one side.

[*JOHN puts TACKLETON back, and advancing to the window, draws back the blind. The window looks into a warehouse, now lighted, in which are seen DOT and the*

STRANGER, *as a young man, with his arm around her waist—she takes his white wig, and laughs, as she puts it on his head.*

JOHN. What do I see! Dot! Mary! faithless! Yes, she adjusts the lie upon his head, and laughs at me, as she does it! [*Wildly.*] May this hand have power enough to dash them to the earth—but, no—I cannot—she was my wife—gone! lost forever!

[*He falls upon the ground. As the others gather round, TACKLETON draws the curtain. TABLEAU.*

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### CHIRP THE THIRD.

*The Scene is the same as for Chirp the First. The interior of JOHN PERRYBINGLE'S cottage. As the curtain rises slowly to plaintive Music, JOHN is discovered, sitting by the fire-place, with his head upon his hands, R.*

JOHN. I have sat here through the long, long night, until the stars grew pale, and the cold day broke—and the more I have thought about her, the more I feel how desolate I am become—how totally the great bond of my life is rent asunder. [*Music. DOT enters mournfully, and sits down on the little stool at his feet. He is about to kiss her, but recollecting what has occurred, he reclines his head upon the table, hiding his face with his hands. DOT goes out, expressing great anxiety.*] And he is still beneath my roof!—the lover of her early choice; of whom she has thought and dreamed; for whom she has pined and pined, when I fancied her so happy by my side. Oh! agony, to think of it! [*Sees the gun hanging on the wall.*] What monstrous demon has taken possession of my thoughts, and now whispers to me, that it is just to shoot this man, as I would a wild beast. A step will bring me to his side. I can kill him—kill him in his bed! [*Takes down the gun.*] It is loaded—I know that; and again the demon has changed my thoughts to scourges, to urge me on. I will kill him—here in his bed.

[*As he speaks, the fire, which was before nearly extinguished, burns up and the CRICKET is heard. Music. He stops and listens for an instant—then speaks through the Music.*

The cricket on the hearth! [*Puts down gun.*] that she so loved—and told me so, with her pleasant voice. Oh! what a voice it was, for making household music at the fireside of an honest man—and she is nothing now to me—her love is another's—another's!

[*He bursts into tears, and sits down again by the fire-side, R. Music continued. The hearth opens—and the FAIRY CRICKET is seen, covered with filmy gray veil—the CRICKET keeps chirping, but faintly, so as not to interfere with the dialogue.*

CRI. I love it, John, for the many times I have heard it, and the many thoughts its harmless music has given me.

JOHN. Her very words!—she said so! True.

CRI. This has been a happy home, John, and I love the cricket for its sake.

JOHN. It has been, Heaven knows. She made it happy always until now.

CRI. So gracefully sweet tempered—so domestic, joyful, busy, and light hearted.

JOHN. Otherwise, I never could have loved her as I did.

CRI. As you do.

JOHN. [*Faltering.*] As I did.

CRI. Upon your own hearth—

JOHN. The hearth she has blighted!

CRI. The hearth she has, how often, blessed and brightened—the hearth, which, but for her, were only a few stones, and bricks, and rusty bars, but which has been, through her, the altar of your home, on which you have nightly sacrificed some petty passion, selfishness or care, and offered up the homage of a tranquil mind, a trusting nature, and an overflowing heart! so that the smoke from this poor chimney has gone upward with a better fragrance than the incense that is burnt before the

richest shrines in all the gaudy temples of this world. Upon your own hearth, in its quiet sanctuary, surrounded by its gentle influence and associations. Hear her! hear me! hear everything that speaks the language of your hearth and home.

JOHN. And pleads for her?

CRI. All things that speak of the language of your hearth and home must plead for her, for they speak the truth.

[*As the FAIRY CRICKET finishes speaking, the chimney, above the mantel-piece, opens slowly, and discovers a tableau-vivant—a fac-simile view of the interior of the cottage, with a miniature figure of DOT, sitting by the fireside, as in Act 1st. TILLY SLOWBOY, BABY, &c. At the same time troops of small Fairies appear from every available position; some forming a sort of border to the tableaux, others run to JOHN, and pull him by the skirts, to call attention to the picture.*

CRI. Is this the light, wife, you are mourning for?

[*The figure of DOT rises, and an equally miniature resemblance of JOHN PERRYBINGLE comes in at the door. She rises to meet him, helps him off with his things, &c., repeating the business of the first scene.*

CRI. Is this the wife who has forsaken you?

[*The Music becomes louder and hurried—a film descends in front of the tableau—the scene becomes darker, and a shadow appears to obscure it. The FAIRIES express consternation, and strive to rub it out, or put it on one side; when it goes away, it discovers DOT, sitting by the side of the cradle, with her hands clasped on her forehead, and her hair hanging down. The FAIRIES get round her, kiss her, and try to fondle her.*

CRI. Is this the wife who has betrayed your confidence? Do you think that these household spirits, to whom falsehood is annihilated, would thus comfort her, if they did not believe her to be true? Reflect on this; for in all truth and kindness has it been presented to you.



[*The FAIRY CRICKET disappears, and the tableau closes. The music also ceases. JOHN starts as if from sleep.*

JOHN. I hear the question still: "Is that the wife that has betrayed my confidence?" But, no—no; again the terrible shadow rises on my hearth! [*A knocking—JOHN starts.*] Who is that? [*Knocking repeated.*] Come in.

*Enter TACKLETON.*

TAC. John Perrybingle, my good fellow, how do you find yourself this morning?

JOHN. I have had a poor night, master Tackleton, for I have been a good deal disturbed in my mind; but it's over now. I wish to speak a word or two with you.

*Enter TILLY at D. R. and knock at D. L.*

You are not married before noon.

TAC. No, plenty of time—plenty of time.

TIL. Ow! If you please I can't make nobody hear. I hope nobody ain't gone and been and died, if you please. [*She knocks at the STRANGER'S door and then exits D. R.*

TAC. John Perrybingle, I hope there has been nothing—nothing rash in the night.

JOHN. What do you mean?

TAC. Because as I came here I looked into the window of that room. It was empty and he was gone. There has been no scuffle, eh?

JOHN. Make yourself easy. He went into that room last night without word or harm from me and nobody has entered it since.

TAC. Oh! well; I think he has got off pretty easily.

JOHN. Look ye, master Tackleton, you showed me last night my wife—my wife, that I love, secretly.

TAC. And tenderly.

JOHN. Conniving at that man's disguise and giving him opportunities of meeting her alone. I think there's no sight I would'nt rather have seen than that. I think there's no man in the world I wouldn't have rather had to show it me.

TAC. I confess to having had my suspicions always; and that has made me objectionable here, I know.

JOHN. But as you did show it me, and as you saw her—my wife—*my wife—that I love*, at this disadvantage, it is right and just that you should also see with my eyes, and look into my breast, and know what my mind is upon the subject, for it's settled, and nothing can shake it now.

TAC. Go on, John Perrybingle, I'll listen to you.

JOHN. I am a plain rough man, with very little to recommend me. I am not a clever man, as you very well know. I am not a young man. I loved my little Dot, because I had seen her grow up from a child in her father's house; because I knew how precious she was; because she had been my life for years and years. There's many men I can't compare with, who never could have loved my little Dot like me, I think; but I did not—I feel it now, sufficiently consider her.

TAC. To be sure—giddiness, frivolity, fickleness, love of admiration—not considered; all left out of sight, ha!

JOHN. You had best not interrupt me till you understand me; and you're wide of doing so. If yesterday I'd have struck down that man with a blow, who dared to breathe a word against her, to-day I'd set my foot upon his face, if he was my brother.

TAC. I did not mean anything, John Perrybingle; go on.

JOHN. Did I consider that I took her, at her age, and with her beauty, from her young companion, and the many scenes of which she was the ornament; in which she was the brightest little star that ever shone; to shut her up from day to day in my dull house, and keep my tedious company? Did I consider how little suited I was to her sprightly humor, and how wearisome a plodding man like me must be to one of her quick spirit? Did I consider that it was no merit in me, or claim in me, that I loved her, when everybody must who knew her! Never! I took advantage of her hopeful nature, and her cheerful disposition, and I married her. I wish I never had—for her sake, not for mine.

TAC. For your own as well, John.

JOHN. I say *no*. Heaven bless her for the constancy with which she has tried to keep the knowledge of this

from me. Poor girl! that I could ever hope she would be fond of me—that I could ever believe she was.

TAC. She made a show of it—she made such a show of it, that, to tell you the truth, it was the origin of my misgivings. Look at May Fielding, *she* never pretends to be so fond of me.

JOHN. I only now begin to know how hard she has tried to be my dutiful and zealous wife. That will be some comfort to me when I am here alone.

TAC. Here alone? Oh, then! you do mean to take some notice of this?

JOHN. I mean to do her the greatest kindness, and make her the best reparation in my power.

TAC. Make *her* reparation? There must be something wrong here. You didn't mean that, of course?

JOHN. [*Seizing him by the collar.*] Listen to me, and take care you hear me right. Listen to me—do I speak plainly?

TAC. Very plainly, indeed.

JOHN. As if I meant it?

TAC. Very much as if you meant it.

JOHN. I sat upon that hearth, last night—all night—on the spot where she has often sat beside me, with her sweet face looking into mine. I called up her whole life—its every passage—in review before me, and, *upon my soul, she is innocent*, if there is one to judge the innocent and the guilty.

TAC. Very likely, John Perrybingle; very likely.

JOHN. Passion and distrust have left me; nothing but my grief remains. In an unhappy moment some old lover, forsaken, perhaps for me, against her will, returned. In an unhappy moment, wanting time to think of what she did, she made herself a party to his treachery, by concealing it. Last night she saw him, in the interview we witnessed; it was wrong; but otherwise than this, she is innocent, if there is truth on earth.

TAC. If that is your opinion?

JOHN. So let her go. Go with my blessing for the many happy hours she has given me, and my forgiveness for any pang she has caused me. She'll never hate me.

She'll learn to like me better, when I'm not a drag upon her.

[DOT *appears at the back, pale and anxious*, D. R. C.

This is the day on which I took her, with so little thought for her enjoyment, from her home. To-day she shall return to it, and I will trouble her no more. Her father and mother will be here to-day—we had made a little plan for keeping it together—and they shall take her home. I can trust her there, or anywhere. She leaves me without blame—and she will live so, I am sure. If I should die—I may, perhaps, while she is still young—I have lost some courage, in a few hours she'll find that I remembered her and loved her to the last! This is the end of what you showed me. Now it's over.

[*Both rising.*

DOT. [*Coming forward.*] Oh! no, John, not over—do not say it's over, yet; I have heard your noble words—I could not steal away, pretending to be ignorant of what has affected me with such deep gratitude. Do not say it's over till the clock has struck again.

JOHN. No hand can make the clock, which will strike again for me the hours that are gone. But let it be so, if you will, my dear. It will strike soon. It's of little matter what we say. I'd try to please you in a harder case than that.

TAC. Well, I must be off; for, when the clock strikes again, it'll be necessary for me to be on my way to church. Good-morning, John Perrybingle, I'm sorry to be deprived of the pleasure of your company—sorry for the loss and the occasion of it, too.

JOHN. I have spoken plainly?

TAC. Oh, quite!

JOHN. And you'll remember what I've said?

TAC. Why, if you compel me to make the observation, I'm not likely to forget it.

JOHN. I'll see you into your chaise—I shall not come back here, untill the clock strikes.

[TAKCLETON *makes a rude obeisance to DOT. As he is going out with JOHN, TILLY enters with the baby. JOHN pauses—kisses it—and rushes out. DOT bursts into tears.*

TIL. [*Howling.*] Ow! if you please, don't—it's enough to dead and bury the baby—so it is, if you please.

DOT. Will you bring him sometimes to see his father, Tilly, when I can't live here, and have gone to my old home?

TIL. Ow—w! if you please, don't! oh! where has everybody gone and been and done with everybody, making everybody else so wretched—ow—w—w!

[*As she is going off, she meets CALEB and BERTHA entering.*]

CAL. Heyday! What's the matter here?

BER. What! Mary not at the wedding!

CAL. [*Aside to DOT.*] I told her you would not be there, mum. I heard as much last night—but, bless you, I don't care for what they say—I don't believe 'em. There ain't much of me, but that little should be torn to pieces sooner than I'd trust a word against you.

[*Takes her hand.*]

DOT. You are very kind, Caleb, very.

BER. Mary, where is your hand? Ah, here it is! here it is! [*Kisses it.*] I heard them speaking softly among themselves, last night, of some blame against you. They were wrong.

CAL. They were wrong.

BER. I know it—I told them so—I scorned to hear a word. There is nothing half so real, or so true about me, as she is—my sister!

CAL. Bertha, my dear, I have something on my mind I want to tell you, while we three are alone; hear me, kindly, I have a confession to make to you, my darling.

BER. A confession, father?

CAL. I have wandered from the truth, and lost myself, intending to be kind to you. My dear blind daughter, hear me, and forgive me.

BER. Forgive *you*, father—so good, so kind!

CAL. Your road in life was rough, my poor one, and I meant to smooth it for you. I have altered objects, changed the characters of people, invented many things that never have been, to make you happier—Heaven forgive me—and surrounded you with fancies.

BER. But living people are not fancies, father, you can't change them.

CAL. I have done so, Bertha. There is one person that you know, my dove!

BER. Oh, father! why do you say I know? What, and whom do *I* know—I, who have no leader—I, so miserably blind!

CAL. The marriage that takes place to-day; May's marriage, is with a sordid, stern, grinding man; a hard master to you and me, my dear, for many years; ugly in his looks, and in his nature; cold and callous always—unlike what I have painted him to you, in everything, my child, in everything.

BER. Oh! why did you ever fill my heart so full, and then come in, like death, and tear away the objects of my love? Oh! heaven, how blind I am, how helpless, and alone! Mary, tell me what my home is—what it truly is.

DOT. It is a poor place, Bertha, very poor and bare, indeed the house will scarcely keep out wind and rain another winter. It is as roughly shielded from the weather, Bertha, as your poor father, in his sackcloth coat!

BER. [*Leading DOT aside.*] And the presents, Mary, that came at my wish; who sent them, did you?

DOT. No!

BER. [*Shaking her head, presses her hands to her eyes*] Dear Mary, a moment more, look across the room where my father is, and tell me what you see.

DOT. I see an old man worn with care and work; but striving hard, in many ways, for one great sacred object; and I honor his gray head, and bless it.

BER. [*Leaves DOT, goes toward CALEB, and falls at his knees.*] I feel as if my sight was restored. There is not a gallant figure on the earth that I would cherish so devotedly as this—the grayer and more worn, the dearer—father.

CAL. My Bertha!

BER. And, in my blindness, I believed him to be so different!

CAL. The fresh, smart father, in the blue coat, Bertha—he's gone.

BER. Nothing is gone, dearest father. No; everything is here in you—father—Mary—

CAL. Yes, my dear; here she is.

BER. There is no change in *her*. You never told me anything of *her*, that was not true?

CAL. I should have done it, my dear, I fear, if I could have made her better than she was. But I must have changed her for the worse, if I had changed her at all—nothing could improve her, Bertha.

DOT. More changes than you may think for may happen, though. You mustn't let them startle you too much, if they do. Bertha! hark! are those wheels upon the road?

BER. [*Listens.*] Yes; coming very fast.

DOT. [*Flurried.*] I—I—I know you have a quick ear; though, as I said, just now—[*Listens.*]—there are great changes in the world—great changes; and we can't do better, we can't do better, I say, than to prepare ourselves to be surprised at hardly anything. They are wheels, indeed—coming nearer—nearer!—very close—and now you hear them stopping at the garden gate—and now you hear a step, outside the door—and now—ah! he is here!

[*Music. She utters a cry of delight. The STRANGER now, a young man, comes in, throwing his hat upon the ground. DOT puts both her hands before CALEB'S eyes.*

DOT. It's over?

EDW. Yes.

DOT. Happily over?

EDW. Yes.

DOT. Do you recollect the voice, dear Caleb? Did you ever hear the like of it before?

CAL. If my boy in the golden South Americas was alive—

DOT. He is alive! [*Takes her hands away from CALEB'S eyes.*] Look at him! see where he stands before you—healthy and strong!—your own dear son—your own dear, living, loving brother, Bertha. [*They embrace.*

JOHN enters, and starts back

JOHN. Why, how's this? What does this mean?

CAL. It means, John, that my own boy is come back from the golden South Americas—him that you fitted out, and sent away, yourself—him that you were always such a friend to.

JOHN. [*Advances to shake hands, then recoils.*] Edward! was it you?

DOT. Now tell him all, Edward, all him all, and don't spare me, for nothing shall make me spare myself in his eyes ever again.

EDW. I was the man.

JOHN. And could you steal disguised into the house of your old friend? There was a frank boy once—how many years is it, Caleb, since we heard he was dead, and had it proved, as we thought?—who never would have done that.

EDW. There was a generous friend of mine once—more a father to me than a friend—who never would have judged me, or any other man, unheard. You were he—so I am certain you will hear me now.

JOHN. Well, that's but fair. I will.

EDW. You must know that when I left here, a boy, I was in love; and my love was returned. She was a very young girl, who, perhaps, (you may tell me) didn't know her own mind. But I knew mine, and I had a passion for her.

JOHN. You had—*you!*

EDW. Indeed I had, and she returned it; I have ever since believed she did, and now I am sure she did.

JOHN. Heaven help me! this is worse than all.

EDW. Constant to her, and returning full of hope, after many hardships and perils, to redeem my part of the old contract, I heard, twenty miles away, that she was false to me, that she had forgotten me, and bestowed herself upon another and a richer man. I had no mind to reproach her, but I wished to see her, and to prove beyond dispute, that this was true. That I might have the truth—the real truth—observing freely for myself, and judging for myself, without obstruction on the one hand, or presenting my own influence, if I had any, before her, on the other, I dressed myself unlike myself—you know how—and waited on the road, you know where. You



had no suspicion of me, neither had—had she, [*Points to DOT*] until I whispered into her ear at the fireside, and she so nearly betrayed me.

**DOT.** [*Eagerly.*] But when she knew that Edward was alive and had come back, and when she knew his purpose—she advised him, by all means, to keep his secret close, for his old friend, John Perrybingle, was too much open in his nature, and too clumsy in all artifice, being a clumsy man in general, to keep it from him. And when she, that's me, John, told him all, and how his old sweetheart had believed him to be dead, and how she had, at last, been over-persuaded by her mother into a marriage, which the silly, dear old thing called advantageous; and when she, that's me again, John, told him they were not yet married, though close upon it, and that it would be nothing but a sacrifice, if it went on, for that there was no love on her side, and when he went nearly mad with joy to hear it, then she, that's me again, said she would go between them, as she had often done before in old times, John, and would sound his sweetheart, and be sure that what she, me again, John, said and thought was right, and it *was* right, John! and they were brought together, John! and they were married, John, an hour ago, and here, here! [*Runs to door, and brings in MAY.*] and here's the bride, and Gruff and Tackleton may die a bachelor, and I'm a happy little woman! may God bless you!

**JOHN.** [*Advancing.*] My own darling Dot!

**DOT.** [*Retreats.*] No, John, no! hear all—don't love me any more, John, till you have heard every word I have to say. It was wrong to have a secret from you, John, I'm very sorry, I didn't think it any harm, till I came and sat down by you on the little stool last night, but when I knew by what was written on your face that you had seen me walking in the gallery with Edward, and knew what you thought, I felt how giddy and how wrong it was. But oh! dear John, how could you, could you think so?

**JOHN.** Little woman! Dot! How could I, indeed?

**DOT.** Don't love me yet, please, John, not for a long time yet. When I was sad about this intended marriage,

dear, it was because I remembered May and Edward such young lovers, and I knew that her heart was far away from Gruff and Tackleton. You believe that now, don't you, John?

JOHN. I do, I do.

[*Advances.*

DOT. No, keep your place, John. When I laugh at you, as I sometimes do, John, and call you clumsy, and a dear old goose, and names of that sort, it's because I love you, John, so well, and take such pleasure in your ways, and wouldn't see you altered in the least respect to have you made a king to-morrow.

CAL. Hooraw! hooraw! my opinion!

DOT. When I first came home here, I was half afraid I mightn't learn to love you every bit as well as I hoped, and prayed I might, but, dear John, every day, and every hour, I loved you more and more; and if I could have loved you better than I do, the noble words I heard you say this morning, would have made me, but I can't; all the affection I had—it was a great deal, John—I gave you, as you well deserved, long, long ago, and I have no more left to give. Now, my dear husband, take me to your heart again. That's my home, John; and never, never think of sending me to any other.

*She rushes into his arms; at this moment TACKLETON enters.*

TAC. Why, what the devil's this, John Perrybingle? There's some mistake! I beg your pardon, sir, [*To Edward.*] I haven't the pleasure of knowing you; but if you can do me the favor to spare me that young lady; she has rather a particular engagement with me, this morning.

EDW. But I can't spare her—I couldn't think of it.

TAC. What do you mean, you vagabond!

EDW. I mean that, as I can make allowance for your being vexed, I am as deaf to *harsh* discourse, this morning, as I was to *all* discourse last night.

TAC. I don't understand you.

EDW. I am sorry, sir, [ *Holding out MAY's ring finger.*] that the young lady can't accompany you to church; but

as she has been there once this morning, perhaps you will excuse her.

TACKLETON *looks at ring, scratches his ear, and takes a little parcel containing a ring from his pocket.*

TAC. Miss Slowboy, will you have the kindness to throw that in the fire? [*She does so.*] Thank'ee!

EDW. It was a previous engagement, quite an old engagement, that prevented my wife from keeping her appointment with you, I assure you.

MAY. Mr. Tackleton will do me justice to acknowledge that I revealed it to him faithfully; and that I told him many times I never could forget it.

TAC. Oh! certainly, oh! to be sure! oh! it's all right, it's quite correct! Mrs. Edward Plummer, I infer—

EDW. That's the name.

TAC. Ah! I shouldn't have known you, sir—I give you joy, sir!

EDW. Thank'ee.

TAC. Mrs. Perrybingle, I'm sorry you haven't done me a very great kindness, but, upon my life! I'm sorry—you are better than I thought you; John Perrybingle, I am sorry—you understand me, that's enough. It's quite correct, ladies and gentlemen, all, and perfectly satisfactory. Good morning! [*Exit, c.*]

JOHN. Now we'll make a day of it, if ever there was one!

DOT. And we'll have such a feast and such a merry-making! Dear John, I hardly know whether to laugh or cry. My goodness, John, there's old Mrs. Fielding at the door all this time, and nobody has asked her out of the chaise. Go and fetch her in. [*Exit JOHN, c.*] And Caleb, run to father's and bring him in, and mother too, and anything they have got to eat and drink, that's ready. [*Exit CALEB.*] And May, spare her a few minutes, Edward, there's the tub of ale in the cellar, and there's the key; and Bertha shall look after these vegetables; and we've a nice ham! What a happy, happy little woman I mean to be!

[*Bustles about with the others, moving tables, plates, &c.*]

*Enter JOHN and MRS. FIELDING.*

JOHN. There, mum, there's your son-in-law, and a fine fellow he is!

MRS. F. That ever I should have lived to see this day! Carry me to my grave!

JOHN. Not at all, mum; you're not dead, nor anything like it, nor won't be, we hope, for many a year to come. There; let them tell their own story, and get out of their scrape as they can, and as I am sure they will.

*He brings EDWARD, MAY and MRS. FIELDING together, and pushes them towards the fire-place.*

*Enter CALEB, with DOT's father and mother, and one or two neighbors. They embrace DOT.*

CAL. How d'ye do, everybody? Here they are, and here are we—won't we be jolly? Haloo! who are you?

*Enter a MAN, with two parcels.*

MAN. Mr. Tackleton's compliments, and as he hasn't got no use for the cake himself, perhaps you'll eat it.

CAL. Law!

MAN. And Mr. Tackleton's compliments, and he's sent a few toys for the baby—they ain't ugly.

DOT. Why, what can this mean?

*Enter TACKLETON.*

TAC. Mrs. Perrybingle, it means this—I'm sorry, more sorry than I was this morning. John Perrybingle, I'm sour by disposition, but I can't help being sweetened, more or less, by coming face to face with such a man as you, Caleb. That unconscious little nurse gave me a broken hint last night, of which I have found the thread. I blush to think how easily I might have bound you and your daughter to me, and what a miserable idiot I was when I took her for one. Friends, one and all, my house is very lonely to-day; I have not so much as a cricket on my hearth; I have scared them all away; be gracious to me—let me join this happy party. Do!

JOHN. Of course, and heartily glad we are to see you!

we'll make you so jolly, that you shan't believe you're yourself!

DOT. John, you won't send me home this evening, will you? [JOHN embraces her.

EDW. A dance! a dance! Bertha, here's your harp, now play us your liveliest tune. Won't you dance, Mary? [DOT shakes her head.] Nor you, John? No. Then here goes!

[BERTHA plays the harp. Music. MAY and EDWARD get up and dance for a little time alone. Then JOHN throws his pipe away, takes DOT round the waist, and joins them. Presently TACKLETON goes off with MRS. FIELDING; then DOT's father and mother join in—lastly, CALEB and MISS SLOWBOY, and Neighbors. General dance.

THE END.

# Joe Ruggles

OR

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### SYNOPSIS OF EVENTS

#### ACT I—Entrance to Railroad Station

Looking for a victim—Joe Ruggles—"Them galoots is worse than grizzlies"—"Morning papers"—Madge and Bess plying their trades—"Can't you sing Joe a song?"—Hamilton and his pal confer—Tom Howarth gains important information—"Don't you dare to lay hands on us!"—Hamilton tries to maintain his authority—"Who? Old Joe!"

#### ACT II—Doomsday's Hotel, Dare-devil's Gulch, California

The landlord secures a guest—Hans disappointed—"Dot is a mistake"—A ghost story—The "Kid and his sister"—"Did I hurt your nighness?"—Hans and Doomsday have another talk—Kate Laurel meets the young miner—"Yah, dot vas vot I t'inks"—Madge's disguise penetrated—She recognizes an old enemy—"Now, George Smith, take your choice"—Joe Ruggles as a tramp—"Ef yer think yer can pick on me because I'm han'some ye'll find me ter hum"—Hamilton appears—"These two youngsters are mine"—The tramp takes a hand.

#### ACT III—Wood Scene

A lively ghost—Hamilton and Smith plan more villainy—Old Joe thinks of turning Detective—Kate Laurel again—"There is a secret connected with my life"—Kate's confession—"What do you mean, sir?"—Tom Howarth once more—"Vos you looking for a hotel?"—Planning an abduction—Old Joe as an Irishman—"Phat does yez want wid me?"—Undertakes to be a detective—Takes a hand in the abduction—"Do it at your peril."

#### ACT IV

Hans hears, and tells, the latest news—"I nefer believed dot spook peesness"—Kate Laurel astonished—Hamilton attempts flight—"De poys haf got Mr. Hamilton, und dey vill gif him a necktie barty"—Arrest of Smith—"Get out mit my vay, I vas de United States Mail"—Tom meets his old friend under new circumstances—"Do you want me, Tom?"—Old Joe gives consent—A happy ending.

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Plays about two hours.

## SYNOPSIS

**Act 1.** Sewing carpet rags. "John and I are engaged." "Well, you can disengage yourself, for you'll never be married." "Mrs. Clark, she's took worse." Who makes the cake? Julia declines to sew carpet rags. "It would ruin my hands for the piano or my painting." Dixey to the rescue. "You take the rags a minute, child, and I'll just give that fire a boost." Dixey's story. "It breaks his heart, but he gives her away, an' he promises never to let her know as how he's her father." Enter Jerry. "Howdy." John gets a situation in the city. Farewell. "It's a dandy scheme, all the same. We'll have our party in spite of Aunt Sarah." "Oh, I'm so happy." The quartette. Curtain.

**Act 2.** Chopping mince meat. The letter. Louise faints. "How dare you read a paper that does not concern you?" "You have robbed me of my father's love." The mother's story. Dinner. "I swan, I guess I set this table with a pitchfork." "Now, Lambkin, tell Dixey all 'bout it, can't yer?" "It looks zif they'd got teh be a change here purty darned quick, an' zif I'm the feller 'lected teh bring it 'bout." "None o' my bizness, I know, but—I am her father!" "It's love the leetle one wants, not money." "If I'd beer a man, I'd never given my leetle gal away." "I'm dead sot on them two prop'itions." Curtain.

**Act 3.** Dixey builds the fire. "Things hain't so dangerous wher everybodys' got his stummick full." The telegram. "It means that Louise is my promised wife." "By what right do you insinuate that there has been treachery under this roof?" "A miserable, dirty, little waif, picked up on the streets, and palmed off upon my father as his child!" "Oh, my wife, your attitude tells a story that breaks my heart." "Yeh drove her to do what she did, an' yeh haint got no right teh blame her now." "Friend Tompkins, a third man has taken our leetle gal an' we've both got teh larn teh git along without her. We kin all be happy in spite o' them two sentimental kids." Curtain.

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# Hick'ry Farm

## A Comedy Drama of New England Life in Two Acts

By EDWIN M. STERN

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Price, 25 cents

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Six male, two female characters. The play deals with the same phases of life as "The Old Homestead" and "The County Fair," and is written in the same comedy vein which has rendered these two pieces so popular. The courtship of the Irish alderman is one of the most ludicrous scenes ever written, while the scenes between the old farmer and his daughter are most touching and pathetic. Scenery, a set cottage and a plain room. Costumes of the day. Time of playing, an hour and a half.

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### SYNOPSIS OF INCIDENTS

#### ACT I—Hick'ry Farm House

Darkwood's Plot—Skinner tempted—Money! Gold!—Zekiel appears—"Be you Ann Maria's boy?"—Fortune's reminiscences—The deed must be stolen!—Hard cider—Aunt Priscilla's love—The alderman's brogue—"Dear departed Hezekiah"—Jessie's secret—"Then you still love me?"—"Larry McKeegan's courtin'"—The "widdy" succumbs—"Zekiel's fav'rit' song"—McKeegan's ghost—Jack Nelson makes a discovery—Jessie has gone—"Heaven help me!"—Zekiel's prayer.

#### ACT II—In Fortune's Shanty

Zekiel's misfortunes—The rent collector—Darkwood's insult—"Villain, you lie!"—Skinner's remorse—The New York detective—The bank robbery—Darkwood threatens—Jessie returns—The alderman married—"Sure it's a darlint little woife she is"—Zekiel's happiness—"Gosh! I ain't felt so gol-darned happy since I wuz a boy"—A trap for Darkwood—Jack and Jessie reunited—Priscilla pacified—Darkwood at bay—"Stand aside, as you value your lives!"—The detective fires—"You've done for me this time!"—Zekiel's forgiveness—Old Hick'ry farm restored.

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# Capt. Racket

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By CHARLES TOWNSEND

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### CHARACTERS

**CAPT. ROBERT RACKET**, one of the National Guard. A lawyer when he has nothing else to do, and a liar all the time.....Comedy lead

**OBADIAH DAWSON**, his uncle, from Japan, "where they make tea".....Comedy old man

**TIMOTHY TOLMAN**, his friend, who married for money, and is sorry for it.....Juvenile man

**MR. DALROY**, his father-in-law, jolly old cove.....Eccentric

**HOBSON**, waiter from the "Cafe Gloriana," who adds to the confusion ..... Utility

**CLARICE**, the Captain's pretty wife, out for a lark, and up to "anything awful".....Comedy lead

**MRS. TOLMAN**, a lady with a temper, who finds her Timothy a vexation of spirit.....Old woman

**KATY**, a mischievous maid.....Soubrette

**TOOTSY**, the "Kid," Tim's olive branch.....Props.

### SYNOPSIS

**Act I.** Place: Tim's country home on the Hudson near New York. Time: A breezy morning in September. The Captain's fancy takes a flight and trouble begins.

**Act II.** Place: the same. Time: the next morning. How one yarn requires another. "The greatest liar unhung." Now the trouble increases and the Captain prepares for war.

**Act III.** Place: the same. Time: Evening of the same day. More misery. A general muddle. "Dance or you'll die." Cornered at last. The Captain owns up. All serene.

Time of playing: Two hours.

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## (The Original Old Maids' Convention)

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Ridiculous old maid costumes, with all their frills and furbelows, their cork-screw curls, mittens, work bags, bird cages, etc., are the proper costumes. Later on in the program some pretty young women in modern evening dress are required. The latter should each be able to give a number of a miscellaneous program, that is, be able to sing, play some instrument, dance, whistle or recite well.

This entertainment utilizes all sorts of talent, and gives each participant a good part. Large societies can give every member something to do.

### SYNOPSIS

Gathering of the Members of the Society—The Roll-Call—The Greeting Song—Minutes of the last meeting—Report of The Treasurer—Music: "Sack Waltz"—A paper on Woman's Rights—Song: "No One to Love, None to Caress."—Reading of "Marriage Statistics"—The Advent of the Mouse—Initiation of two Candidates into the Society—The Psalm of Marriage—Secretary's Report on Eligible Men—A Petition to Congress—Original Poem by Betsy Bobbett—Song: "Why Don't the Men Propose?"—Report of The Vigilance Committee—An Appeal to the Bachelors—Prof. Make-over—The Remodelscope.—Testimonials—The Transformation and a miscellaneous program.

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By W. D. EMERSON

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