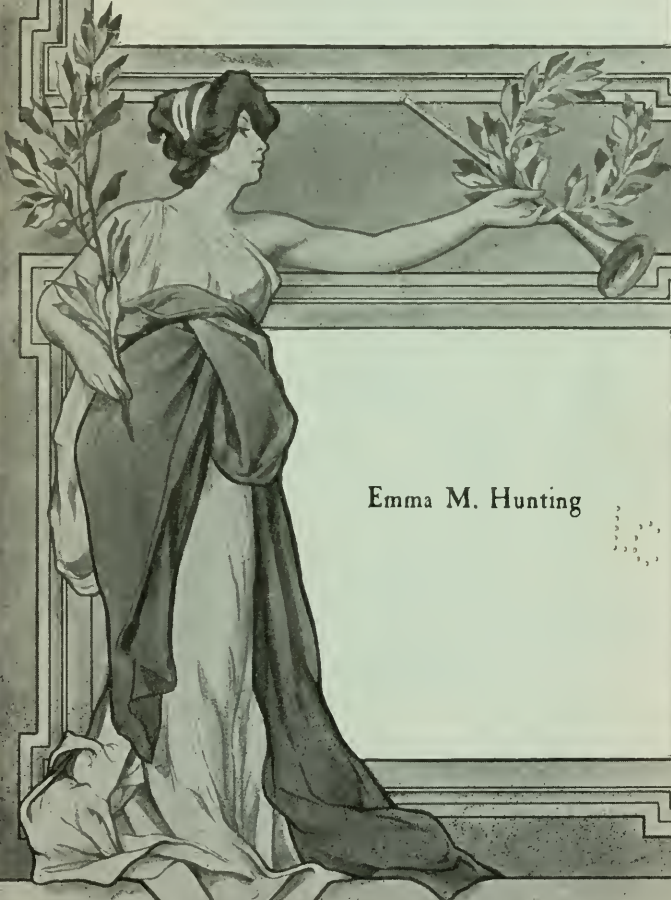


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Betty's Ancestors

Emma M. Hunting

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Betty's Ancestors

A Play in One Act

BY

Ema M. Hunting



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Betty's Ancestors

CHARACTERS

BETTY WINSLOW	<i>the last of the high house of Winslow</i>	
DEBORAH WESTON	<i>whom, with everything else she possesses, Betty has inherited</i>	
JAMES O'MARA	<i>of Texas</i>	
THE SPAYDE SISTERS, ELLA AND BELLA, GERTIE, EVA AND IMOGEN	<i>sightseers</i>	
MRS. AUSTIN C. WELLINGTON	<i>who doesn't care for relics</i>	
MISS ELVIRA J. MOORE	<i>who knows what she wants</i>	
MRS. FREDDIE HITCHENS	<i>a very modern product</i>	
MRS. HITCHENS' MOTHER	<i>who would rather sleep</i>	
GREAT-GREAT-AUNT LETITIA	} SHADES {	<i>a beauty of colonial days first ambassador to the court of France Continental soldier of fortune and early western pioneer</i>
EPHRAIM HUNTINGTON		
JAMES O'MARA		

NOTE.—The cast may be all female, if preferred. MRS. WELLINGTON may double AUNT LETITIA, MISS MOORE may double MRS. HITCHENS' MOTHER. The parts of any of the three SHADES may be taken by any of the SPAYDE SISTERS, or by MRS. WELLINGTON, or by MISS MOORE. One of the SPAYDES may play young JAMES O'MARA.

TIME OF PLAYING.—One hour.

STORY OF THE PLAY

This play is recommended for use in high schools in connection with Washington's Birthday exercises, or for societies and clubs interested in colonial history or ancestry.

Miss Betty Winslow is the caretaker of the family mansion, which has had a notable colonial history, and is now a museum, open to the public. Betty and her old companion, Deborah Weston, though tired of being at the beck and call of sightseers, have no other means of support. Young James O'Mara of Texas has begged Betty to marry him, but in her family pride she has refused him. Betty repents, too late, when she has a letter saying he has gone back to Texas. In spite of her feelings she has to entertain sightseers, Miss Moore, a businesslike school-teacher, Mrs. Wellington, who is looking for a new colonial society to join, Mrs. Hitchens, who is irreverent and flippant, her tired mother, and the Spayde sisters, who are a jolly lot and cheer Betty up. Among the relics is Great-great-Aunt Letitia's historic glove. Mrs. Hitchens wants to know where the other glove went. Betty doesn't know.

But after the sightseers are gone Betty falls asleep, and in a dream sees something of the love story of Aunt Letitia, who married the man chosen for her by her family, but who loved James O'Mara, a soldier and adventurer. Betty sees Aunt Letitia at the bidding of her fiancé bid good-bye to her lover and her happiness, and sees O'Mara take her glove. This solves the mystery of the missing glove, and also solves Betty's own problem. She wakes resolved to follow the dictates of her heart, and when young James O'Mara unexpectedly returns he kisses her, unresisting.

COSTUMES

BETTY WINSLOW. At first a pretty, up-to-date, blue silk dress. Later, after her second entrance, a quaint costume in the style of the early eighteenth century. This might be of pink brocade, made with a flat, pointed waist, the neck and sleeves filled in with old lace, the skirt long and voluminous, with a slight train; the whole veiled with an overdress or shawl of lace. The hair may be done high, with curls behind the ears, surmounted with a tiny lace cap. Probably some real gown, a family heirloom, may be borrowed for the occasion.

DEBORAH WESTON. She is a neat, handsome, thrifty woman from "down east" in Maine. She wears a light print house dress with starchy white apron.

JAMES O'MARA. When he represents the shade, the character should wear the dress of the early pioneer. A long military cape conceals his person; a colonial cocked hat, or a beaver turned up on one side may be used; heavy gauntlets, boots and spurs. He wears a sword, and "his own hair" is tied at the neck with a ribbon. He speaks with just a trace of the Irish accent. Later, as the young man from Texas, he wears a long ulster and traveling cap or broad brimmed hat, and carries a bag. The two O'Maras may be represented by different people, but this is not necessary.

GREAT-GREAT-AUNT LETITIA. The familiar colonial costume—powdered hair, panniers, long, pointed bodice, satin petticoat and high-heeled shoes.

EPHRAIM HUNTINGTON. The dress of the fop of the colonial period. Embroidered waistcoat, satin breeches, long coat with bright-colored flaps, lace ruffles at throat and wrist, silk stockings and buckled shoes. He wears a light dress sword, and carries a snuff-box and lace handkerchief.

THE SPAYDE SISTERS. Pretty, rather elaborate clothes, in the extreme of style. The twins are dressed exactly alike, and look boyish. Eva is decidedly of the "Fluffy Ruffles" type. Imogen tries to look intellectual, and Gertie is wholesome and handsome.

MRS. AUSTIN C. WELLINGTON. A large, mild lady, pretty

in spite of her ten children. She wears a black bonnet and shawl, voluminous black skirts, and carries an ample hand satchel from which she takes her crochet work.

MISS ELVIRA J. MOORE. She is forty-five, a school-teacher from Indiana. The tilt of her hat and its sharp quill follow exactly the lines of her nose and chin. She wears a skirt made over from one of her mother's, a tight black jacket cut off short at the hips with a sharp flare behind, and a black fur collarette with a high collar turned up around her ears. She carries a guide-book to Boston and environs, a note-book and pencil. She stands on the balls of her feet (rubber heels) and she does not wear a—that is, her figure is her own.

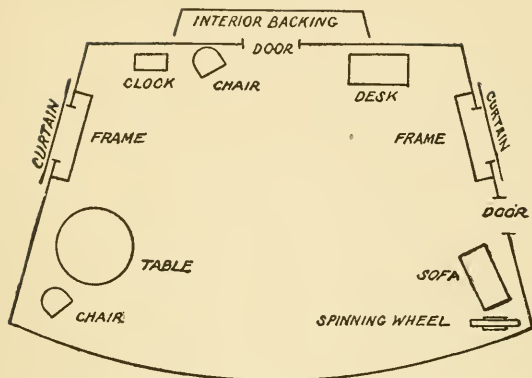
MRS. FREDDIE HITCHENS. A diminutive person, overdressed, the rings rattling on her skinny little hands, but possessed of an energy that drives everything and everybody before it. Her mother is a dumpling of a woman whose sole endeavor is to move fast enough to keep within sight of her daughter.

PROPERTIES

The relics of colonial days mentioned in the dialogue can usually be obtained in any community where an interest in such things exists; or if these particular articles cannot be found, others equally appropriate may be substituted by slightly changing the lines. Any other objects of interest may be displayed on the stage; and no small part of the interest of producing this little play will result from collecting the heirlooms of the neighborhood and stimulating interest and pride in them.

Properties required for DEBORAH, flowers, letter, dust cloth, broom, handkerchief, lighted candle in brass candlestick; for MISS MOORE, book; for THE SPAYDES, books, hand-bags, muffs, gloves; for BETTY, long white glove; for HUNTINGTON, snuff-box; for LETITIA, long white gloves.

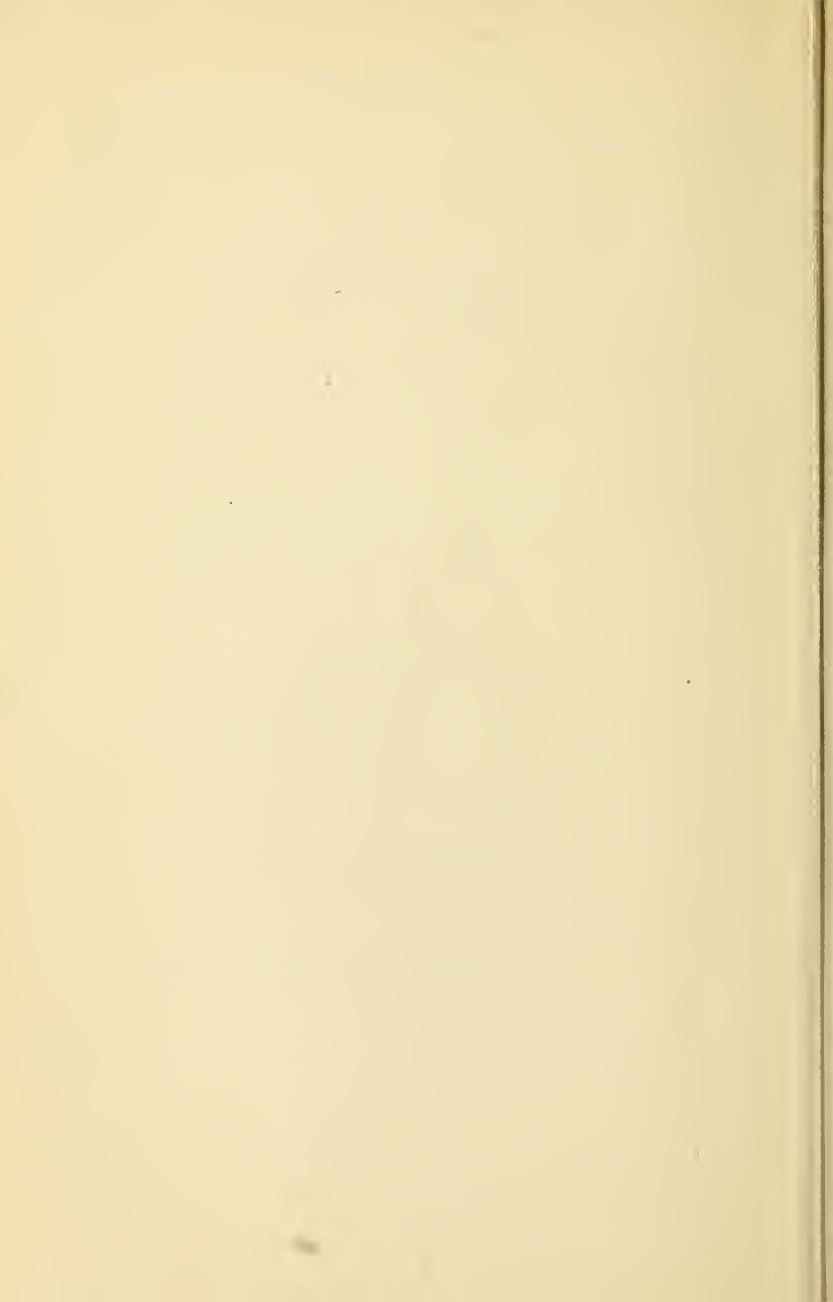
SCENE PLOT



SCENE.—Parlor of an old colonial mansion. Doors up c. and L. Window or fireplace R., if desired, but neither is necessary. Table and chair of colonial design down R. A spinning-wheel and an antique sofa or couch down L. "Grandfather's clock" up R. Other furniture and decorations as desired, but all should be colonial.

On walls up R. and L. are frames large enough for portraits, full length or at least three-quarter length. They are covered with dark hangings, and behind them are other curtains to serve as background for the persons who pose as portraits.

If desired the frames may stand across the corners of the room, up R. and L., with entrances behind them, or space for actors to remain until they enter.



Betty's Ancestors

SCENE.—*A quaint old room, supposed to be the parlor in an old colonial mansion. There should be a door at back center, communicating with the entrance hall of the house; another, leading to the interior apartments, midway of the left wall. Just beyond this door, on the left, hangs the portrait of GREAT-GREAT-AUNT LETITIA, represented by the frame; opposite, a similar frame to indicate the companion portrait of her husband. Both are life-size and concealed by draperies. Behind the frames, a second set of draperies should be so arranged as to represent the background of the paintings, and also to conceal the openings by which the characters enter. If the play is to be given in a parlor which does not have doors conveniently placed for this purpose, the frames may be set across the back corners of the room, leaving space where the characters may remain throughout the action of the play. In the right wall there should be, if possible, a window. At the right also, well down stage, is placed the table and armchair referred to in the text of the play. There should be a couch, several chairs, etc.—all of quaint, old-time design.*

(As the curtain rises, DEBORAH WESTON is placing some flowers in a vase on the table, down R. She looks critically around the room, running her finger along polished surfaces in search of dust, etc. The tall grandfather's clock chimes two.)

DEBORAH. Two o'clock! *(She hurries to the door L. and calls.)* Bettina, do you know it's two o'clock, and this house may be full of people in three minutes?

BETTY WINSLOW *(outside)*. I'm hurrying, Deb!

DEBORAH *(sniffing)*. Hurrying? You're primping, that's what you are doing. This house is open for visitors every Wednesday afternoon from two till four without fail, and has been, rain, snow or brimstone, for the last thirty years, ever

since I moved in and took charge; and not a soul, not one soul has been turned away from them steps nor will be while I'm here to let 'em in, even if the poet's only granddaughter —

BETTY (*still outside*). Now, Debbie—don't get nervous. Buck up —

DEBORAH. What? Buck up? (*A burst of laughter answers her. She shuts the door and comes down stage, sputtering.*) Buck up! That's language, I must say, to come from the granddaughter in direct descent, unbroken, of the Father of New England Verse! She gets it from that cowboy, that's what she does; and if he comes around here this Wednesday and wants to see a forebear and General Washington's queue —

BETTY (*calling through a crack of the door*). Debbie—shut your eyes!

DEBORAH. Shut my eyes? What on earth —

BETTY (*as before*). Hurry! And turn your back. (*As DEBORAH, still grumbling, does as she is bid, BETTY flings open the door and comes in on tiptoe. She is flushed, radiant, excited. She slips up behind the housekeeper, strikes a pose with a flourish.*) Behold, woman! (*DEBORAH, obeying, turns and looks, and throws up her hands in astonishment.*) Well—what's the matter, Deb? Don't you like my dress?

DEBORAH (*slowly*). What in the name of common sense has gotten into you?

BETTY (*breathlessly gay*). Nothing has gotten into me—it's on the outside! (*She pirouettes on her toes, her arms above her head, then takes a long step to show her modish skirt.*) Look at that, Deb! (*Giggles.*) Isn't that a scream?

DEBORAH. A scream? Bettina Winslow!

BETTY. That slipped, Debbie —

DEBORAH. Yes, you're right it slipped, and it slipped right straight from Mr. James O'Mara, that's where it slipped from. That gentleman cowboy that we've seen so much of lately. Oh, don't talk to me about slipping! I know all about —

BETTY (*coaxing her*). Now, Debbie—dear old Debbie —

DEBORAH (*inflexible*). And I know all about this new-fangled dress idea. Nobody ever heard a word about new

dresses until four weeks ago to-day—and four weeks ago to-day was the first day that Mr. James O'Mara favored us with a call—and every Wednesday since.

BETTY. But, Debbie —

DEBORAH. Every Wednesday, Bettina Winslow! Comes smilin' up to the door and says he's crazy about ancestors and is thinkin' of gettin' him some, and haven't we half a dozen or so to spare—though I dare say he has plenty of 'em that he wouldn't be proud to own over in Ireland.

BETTY (*warmly*). His people have been in this country since the Revolution.

DEBORAH (*scornfully*). That's what he says. And declaring he'll never believe about Paul Revere and the lanterns until we show him the skull of the horse the poor man rode, and how he just loves to sit among these sweet relics of the past and let their soothing influence steal over him—*influence!* You couldn't move that young man, not if you was to fasten a block and tackle to him.—And had the impudence to ask me if I'd get him a pass into the D. R.—said he'd always wanted to be a Daughter! What does he want here, anyhow?

BETTY. Want? Why, I—you see he's in the cattle business, and sells land —

DEBORAH. Oh! The cattle business? I see! That's the reason he puts in every Wednesday afternoon looking at Revolutionary relics. Wants to describe them to the cows when he gets back home, I s'pose!

BETTY (*at the window*). I suppose he has a right to go sightseeing if he wants to? (*Turns.*) Anyhow, I don't see what he has to do with my new dress.

DEBORAH. You don't? Humph! Well, I do. Where'd you get it?

BETTY. Made it. You'd never guess what from.

DEBORAH. It looks to me like —

BETTY. It is—Aunt Emilie's blue brocade.

DEBORAH. You don't mean to tell me that you cut up your Aunt Emilie's blue brocade that she wore to President Buchanan's inaugural ball and made it into—that?

BETTY. Yes—and got the whole thing out of the skirt. Isn't it lucky that we used to go this way, and now we go this way? (*She makes gestures to indicate first the hoop-skirt and then the close-fitting modern garment.*) And why shouldn't I cut it up? What good was it doing me that she

wore it to a dance and had a good time in it? You know very well I had to use some old thing—I couldn't have anything new. I've never had anything new in my life. I've never had anything but ancestors—and I'm sick and tired of them!

DEBORAH. Betty Winslow!

BETTY. I am! I'm sick of being supported by an historical society just because my name is Winslow, and being kept here on exhibition like the other relics, and I won't wear that old rag of Great-great-Aunt Letitia's and make a spectacle of myself any more!

DEBORAH. Bettina Winslow! You, with your name, and your illustrious family and your Great-great-Aunt Letitia herself hanging right there and hearing you call her dress that she wore before the crowned heads of Europe a rag! (*She points to the portrait.*)

BETTY. I don't care—it wasn't a hundred years old when she wore it, and it was in style! You didn't catch her wearing her great-great-aunt's dress! (*Puts her arms around DEBORAH's neck.*) Don't scold, Debbie! I wanted to feel—to-day—that I, just my very own self, am alive—now. (*Moves away.*) Oh, it's so good to be alive—just alive, Deb, and young—

DEBORAH. What's that cowboy been saying to you?

BETTY. Why, n-nothing. He's been telling me about Texas, you know—it's a great place—and—an-d—besides, he isn't a cowboy, Debbie Weston! He's a cattleman. And he sells land, whole counties at once—just sells 'em off as if it wasn't anything. That's what he came East for.

DEBORAH. And is he trying to sell you a county?

BETTY. Oh, no—h-he—no, he doesn't want to sell me any—

DEBORAH. Bettina Winslow—has that man proposed to you?

BETTY. Oh, yes—every Wednesday—(*DEBORAH collapses into a chair, up L., throwing her apron over her head*) except the first one! (*She runs to DEBORAH and puts her arms around her.*) And I didn't accept him, not once, Debbie—honest I haven't—

DEBORAH (*waiting behind her apron*). A Winslow—a Winslow!

BETTY (*springing up*). Yes—a Winslow! Why not? If some Winslow 'way, 'way back hadn't made up his mind

to go West in that leaky old tub of a "Mayflower," we wouldn't have been heard of from that day to this! What are we, anyhow? Just the descendants of a good, solid, middle-class, hard-working Englishman who had sense enough and courage enough to get out of his rut. (*Moves about the room.*) It's the spirit of my ancestors, Debbie—that's what is pulling me. "Go West, young man, go West!" "Life, liberty, and the pursuit of—happiness!" (*She kneels again beside the housekeeper, coaxing the apron down.*) Oh, Debbie, don't you see? I'm young—just as Mary Winslow was when she dared to leave her home and come to the new land—and just see what a fuss people make over her. Debbie—smile—there's a dear. Why, you'll love Texas—— Debbie, you were young, too—don't you remember ——

DEBORAH (*quite melted, but trying to maintain her stand*). I didn't have men proposing to me every Wednesday, if that's what you mean!

BETTY. But didn't you wish they would? (*Unable to resist the girl, DEBORAH looks at her; they both laugh, and fall into each other's arms, laughing, talking, half crying all at once. In the midst of their excitement, the door-bell rings. The girl draws back at arm's length, and the two look again into each other's eyes, this time with complete understanding. BETTY, in a whisper.*) Y—you go to the door, Deb——

DEBORAH (*in a burst of motherly feeling, drawing the girl back into her arms*). Dearie——

BETTY. I won't go to Texas without you, Deb—I won't—— (*They rise. BETTY dries DEBORAH'S tears with her own handkerchief, laughing, excited, feverishly happy.*) Now you're all right, Deb—now run—no, don't run! That wouldn't do at all. Walk, Deb—and don't look as if you knew anything—just go—go——

(DEBORAH goes out into the hall. BETTY tries in vain to quiet her own excitement, stands very straight, attempts a haughty look, takes up a pose on the sofa expressing supreme indifference, jumps up at a sound and practices walking about in her new narrow skirt. As she hears DEBORAH returning, she starts toward the door at center back, and stands so, her back to the audience, as DEBORAH returns alone, a letter in her hand.)

DEBORAH. It was the postman.

BETTY. The—postman, Deb?

DEBORAH. Yes. He left a letter for you.

(*BETTY takes the letter. DEBORAH comes down stage R. Still without turning, BETTY opens the letter and reads. The envelope falls from her hand. There is a long pause.*)

BETTY (*without turning, in a changed voice*). Deborah—he has gone.

DEBORAH. Gone —

BETTY. Back to Texas. He—wrote to tell me so. He says, "I am going back to-day. If I wait to see you again, I'll never go. And I've been thinking about you, growing there among those sweet old things, like a rose in an old-fashioned garden. You were quite right to refuse me; I reckon it wouldn't do to break you off and carry you out on the plains. You'd never take root, d-dear—you'd droop and—die."

(*She turns slowly. Her hand falls, crushing the letter. Suddenly it falls from her fingers, and with a little cry, like that of a child who has been hurt, she covers her eyes and stands swaying.*)

DEBORAH. Darling—Deborah's own little —

BETTY (*sharply*). Don't! (*After a pause, tensely.*) It was the relics and the name and this great useless house that drove him away from me, and I hate them!

DEBORAH. Betty —

(*The door-bell rings. With an effort, BETTY controls herself. Her hands fall at her sides, her face grows quite expressionless, the life and color gone. She speaks quietly.*)

BETTY. Will you take care of the people who come? (*She moves toward the door, L.*) I am going up—to change my dress.

DEBORAH (*exploding*). Bettina Winslow! I've been in this house thirty years and I've never refused a thing you've told me nor your mother before you nor I never will, nor nobody shall say I ever did, but when you tell me to "look after the people" while my own blessed lamb that I'd give

my eyes for is up-stairs breaking her heart over a no-account cowboy that goes off half-cocked to Texas —

BETTY (*hotly*). Stop! (*Her self-control dominates DEBORAH. She speaks slowly.*) This house is open to visitors every Wednesday afternoon no—matter—what—happens.

(*Very proudly, with her head high, she opens the door, and goes out L. The door-bell rings again. With a deep sigh, shaking her head in sad perplexity, DEBORAH goes to admit the visitor. After a moment, the murmur of a voice approaches, and MRS. AUSTIN C. WELLINGTON appears in the doorway—talking. She has a sweet, monotonous voice that flows on evenly and ceaselessly like Tennyson's brook.*)

MRS. W. (*continuing as she enters*). —yes, Mrs. Austin C. Wellington. Austin C. There's some other plain Austins up Maine way, but I've looked them all up and they aren't no relation. My husband's folks came from Vermont state and settled in Maryland first before they moved to Illinois, so there's Wellingtons all the way from the Atlantic to the Mississippi. I was a Pickens—ever see any Pickenses? Josiah Pickens came from Dorchester, England, in 1659, and he married Mary Norton. Her father was a minister; and their son married Sallie Coolidge, and she died and then he married Emily Burrige and she was the third daughter of Amos Burrige and his wife was a Russell. And their son was Emery Pickens and he's the one that married a Adams and went down to Maryland—and that's the way I'm related to the Quincys and the Hancocks and all them. You've heard tell of them. What's your name? Are you a Winslow?

DEBORAH (*snappishly*). My name is Weston, ma'am.

MRS. W. Weston? Where from—Maine? I thought so. There was Westons that married into the Wellington family up there. Obadiah Weston. But that line never amounted to very much. It died out pretty soon, all but a few branches around Bangor. I s'pose you come from one of them.

DEBORAH. You appear to me to know a mighty lot about people's families!

MRS. W. (*settling down on the sofa. She takes some crochet work from her bag, and goes placidly to work.*)

Oh, land, yes! I just got a pattern here I want to finish, but I can talk just the same. Yes, I took up genealogy after my eighth come, and I been studying it off and on ever since. After I'd had five I knew I had to do something to take my mind off 'n 'em. First it was verbenas. I had fifty-nine varieties of verbenas growin' in my garden at the same time, and I could tell you the names of every one of 'em, popular and botanical. Then it began to get crowded keepin' them in the house over winter, so I took up genealogy. That's lasted me all through the whole ten, and now that the girls are all away and doin' their own sewin', I been joinin' the societies. I belonged to eleven one time, but I dropped the sewing circle and the Willing Workers. I'd had them two societies of my own right at home ever since I was married, and I didn't feel like payin' dues to 'em. That's what I come to see about to-day. Do you know any more 'round here I could join?

DEBORAH. Societies?

MRS. W. Yes, Daughters or Dames or somethin' like that. I belong to all there is out in Illinois. I'm four Daughters, a Mayflower Descendant, and a Colonial Dame now, not countin' Royal Neighbors and such. But I heard there was lots of historical societies around here, and I thought I'd come out to-day and ask about 'em—I'm visitin' my fourth over in Boston. There's the Society of Collegiate Alumnae, but I don't know as I care much about that. I joined the New England Historic Genealogical Society yesterday, and I sent my application in to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences—thought maybe I could tell them something about verbenas. I'd like to join the Daughters of Maine—I was down in Maine once; I liked it real well—and the Daughters of Sons of Veterans. Where do they meet?

DEBORAH (C.). But you weren't borne in Maine!

MRS. W. Oh, no, but I thought I'd like to be another Daughter. I'm a Daughter of the American Revolution, Daughter of Vermont, Daughter of Early Immigrants to Southern Illinois—Egypt, some folks call it—and a King's Daughter, but I thought I'd like to join some more.

DEBORAH (*helplessly*). Don't you want to see the relics?

MRS. W. No, I don't care much about relics. Unless you got some good crochet patterns, crochet or tattin'. I'm sort of workin' into crochet now I've joined most of the

societies. I never finish anything, you know, just get patterns. (*The bell rings.*) There, you're goin' to have company. (*Puts up her work.*) Well, if you see any of them Austin Wellingtons when you go back to Maine you might say you met me, but they aren't any kin to my husband's family because I looked up the whole outfit in the——

(*Her words trail off into incoherence as she and DEBORAH go down the hall. After a moment, DEBORAH appears, standing stiffly in the doorway and pointing into the room.*)

DEBORAH. Yes, ma'am. This is the house of the poet Winslow, and unfortunately it is open to the general public. And this is the poet's study where he wrote "Lines to a Purple Flower" and it is supported by the State Historical Society, and if you care to see the relics—come in!

(*She steps aside, and MISS ELVIRA J. MOORE, of Indiana, appears in her place.*)

MISS MOORE. Humph! This is it, is it? (*She looks sharply around the room as if each object were a pupil whom she had under her eye; then produces the guide-book and reads.*) "Here may be seen the study of the poet where for many years he lived and wrote; and where are preserved interesting relics of the Winslow family dating as far back as the times of Col. George Winslow, of the Continental army, who gave the mansion to his daughter Letitia, on the occasion of her marriage to Ephraim Huntington. The relics are in charge of the poet's granddaughter, and may be seen every Wednesday afternoon——" Are you the poet's granddaughter?

DEBORAH (*glaring*). I am not!

MISS MOORE (*also glaring*). Well, I'm sure I'm not!

DEBORAH. I'm sure it's a matter of entire indifference to me who you are!

MISS MOORE. And I'm sure it would not inconvenience me in the least if you did not so much as exist! What I am interested in is these relics. I came all the way from Indiana to visit spots of historical interest, and I'm going to see every spot within thirty miles or know the reason why. That's what the school board sent me for. They said, "Miss Moore"—my name is Elvira J. Moore—"we've decided to separate the eighth grade from the seventh, and we

haven't a teacher in the building that we'd trust with it but you. Now," they says, "if there's anything you want to get started with—in reason—in reason—just you feel free to name it." I says, "Mr. Winter"—he's been boss of that board for the last twenty years—but I gave him the shock of his life that day—I says, "Mr. Winter, there's just one thing, and that's history. Not dates; I've got dates all right, and names and battles and generals; but what I want is background. I want to get up before my class and say, 'Here. You take from page eighteen to the end of the chapter to-morrow and you learn it. And everything you find in there is so—because I've seen the place where it happened!' Now," I says, "that's what I want to tell those youngsters; and I want you to pay half my expenses while I go on a two weeks' trip visiting historical spots in the East." Well—I thought it would kill him. He says, "I meant blackboards and erasers and—and maybe a map or two." But he came 'round. Oh, you bet he did! I've known Frank Winter for the last twenty-five years, and if his wife knew him half as well as I do she wouldn't be wearing her Grandmother Perkins' black silk, turned, on Sundays. What's that?

DEBORAH (*snapping*). A lantern.

MISS MOORE. A lantern? What lantern?

DEBORAH. The lantern that Col. George Winslow carried when he went to the Boston Tea Party—several years before you were born.

MISS MOORE. Humph!

DEBORAH. Anything else you would like to know?

MISS MOORE. Nothing that you could tell me!

DEBORAH. I'm obliged to you, ma'am!

MISS MOORE. I shall go immediately to the Fopp's Hill Burying Ground!

DEBORAH. You couldn't do anything that would please me better!

MISS MOORE. Humph! (*She marches to the door, stops, and turns back for a parting shot.*) There isn't a relic in the place that I'd be seen carrying to a Salvation Army Rummage Sale!

(*Exit, colors flying.*)

DEBORAH (*glaring after her*). Of all the natural, dyed-in-the-wool, pressed-down-and-running-over impudence!

(*She goes to door L., opens it and calls.*) Bettina, if you don't get down here and attend to these inflated question marks from the Mississippi Valley there'll be another Battle of Bunker Hill right here! (*Slams the door.*) "What lantern?" "Are you the poet's granddaughter?" She wouldn't dare go to a Salvation Army sale—though they'd have to put her in a surprise package, sight unseen, to get rid of her. (*The bell rings.*) Another of 'em! (*She goes back to door L., and calls.*) Bettina, there'll be murder committed if I have to see another of these—

BETTY (*outside*). Be there in a minute, Debbie.

DEBORAH. Humph!

(*She throws up her hands and marches to the hall door. A moment later a flutter of chatter, laughter, ladylike squeals, cries of delight, etc., are heard approaching down the hall, and the five Spayde sisters burst simultaneously into the room and stand with clasped hands.*)

THE SPAYDES (*ecstatically*). Oh—girls!

GERTIE. How sweet!

EVA. Too cute!

IMOGEN. Such a literary atmosphere!

THE TWINS. Say, ain't it grand?

ALL. Oh—girls!

DEBORAH. Oh—cat's foot!

GERTIE (*turning to her*). Did you say the poet's study? Girls, the poet's study!

EVA (*gushingly*). What did he study?

IMOGEN. Eva Spayde—study! He created.

GERTIE. Cre-ated? Oh, yes, dear. (*To DEBORAH.*) Imogen is so literary!

THE TWINS (*to DEBORAH*). Are you her?

IMOGEN. Gertie—really! Did you hear that? "Are you her?"

THE TWINS. Well, ain't that all right?

IMOGEN. "Ain't!"

ELLA. Well, what's hurting you?

IMOGEN. You talk so—common!

BELLA. Piffle!

GERTIE (*shocked*). Girls! (*To DEBORAH, apologetically.*) Imogen is so sensitive to language, and the twins are so impulsive!

THE TWINS. We ain't, either! We want to see Betty!

DEBORAH. You want to see Betty?

THE TWINS (*speaking alternately, and very fast*). Yes.
Miss ——

Bettina Winslow, grand ——

Daughter of the ——

Poet Winslow who in ——

Herits much of his ——

Charm of manner ——

And the beauty of ——

Her great-great-aunt ——

Letitia, who ——

Married Ephraim Huntington ——

First minister to the court of France ——

(*Together.*) For further details see chapter entitled
"Living Descendants of Our Illustrious Men."

ELLA. You left out "and is affectionately known as
Betty to the large circle of friends"—and all that.

BELLA. I didn't no such thing! That comes from
"Living Descendants."

ELLA. Why, Bella Spayde!

BELLA. It does, too!

ELLA. I'm going to ask her!

BELLA. Why, Ella Spayde!

IMOGEN. Gertie, can't you stop this wrangling? It is so
common!

GERTIE. Girls!

EVA. Oh, might we see the poet's granddaughter?

DEBORAH. Well, I hope so—and pretty quick! (*She
goes to the door L., and calls.*) Bettina! There's a picnic
party here that wants to see a Living Descendant!

BETTY (*outside*). Yes, Debbie. (*DEBORAH stalks grimly
to the hall door. THE SPAYDES draw close together in a
breathless row opposite the door L. The door opens slowly,
and BETTY enters, dressed in the "rag" of GREAT-GREAT-
AUNT LETITIA'S. She is very quiet, the vivacity and life of her
earlier entrance gone.*) Did you wish to see me?

THE SPAYDES (*in a long-drawn breath of ecstasy*). Oh
—girls!

GERTIE. How sweet!

EVA. Too cute!

IMOGEN. Just like a heroine!

THE TWINS. Ain't she grand!

ALL. Oh—girls!

DEBORAH. Oh—Lord!

BETTY. If you are busy in the kitchen, Deborah, we won't detain you.

(*Exit DEBORAH, sniffing.*)

THE TWINS. Is she the hired girl?

IMOGEN. Gertie, make them stop! Nobody says "hired girl" any more!

GERTIE. Girls! You mustn't mind them, Miss Winslow. The twins are so impulsive, bless their dear little hearts!

(*THE TWINS resent this fiercely.*)

BETTY. Are you twins?

THE TWINS. Uh-huh.

BETTY. And are you all sisters?

ALL. Uh-huh.

EVA. Let's call the roll.

(*They draw closer together in a row R., linking arms.*)

GERTIE. Gertie Margerite —

EVA. Eva Arabella —

IMOGEN. Imogen Linconetta Mae —

THE TWINS. Ella and Bella —

ALL. Spayde. (*They bow.*)

BETTY (*sitting on couch*). Spayde?

GERTIE. Yes, that's our name—Spayde. Isn't it funny? Some people call us the five spot of spades, and make jokes about following suit and all that sort of thing —

IMOGEN. And some people call us Spuds, but that sounds so common!

EVA. We believe in calling a Spayde a Spayde!

THE TWINS. And everybody says we're simply the Deuce!

GERTIE. We are all so different and such a happy family, it's interesting to strangers. The twins, dear children, are such vivacious, unexpected little dears —

THE TWINS (*walking about, looking at relics*). Aw, cut it out!

IMOGEN (*sitting L.*). Gertie, do you allow them to talk slang?

GERTIE (*coming down and sitting by BETTY, L.*). Imo-

gen is the brilliant one of the family—yes, you are, dear ! She has such a command of language, and is always chosen to read Lincoln's speech at Gettysburg on Decoration Day in the opera house. Dear, recite for Miss Winslow that little thing you gave at Mayor Mulligan's—do !

EVA (*crossing L. and sitting by BETTY*). Oh, do, 'Genie !

IMOGEN. Oh, I don't think Miss Winslow would care to—and that is such a simple little thing —

BETTY. I would be very glad if you would.

IMOGEN. I don't know whether I can get my atmosphere. Girls, sit down.

(THE TWINS, *not paying attention, are eagerly inspecting some swords, old muskets, etc., in a corner, front.* IMOGEN *rises, makes elaborate preparations to create her "atmosphere," sweeping the hair from her brow, clearing her throat, spreading out her arms, etc., finally fixing her eyes on a corner of the ceiling, and proclaiming a few words in a voice totally unlike her ordinary tones. Any short, ultra-sentimental selection may be chosen which permits of exaggerated gestures. After a word or two, she interrupts herself, to say in her natural voice, "I forgot to tell you it's entitled '———.'*" EVA and GERTIE *listen with rapt attention ; BETTY with some astonishment.* IMOGEN *once more works up her atmosphere and makes a fresh start, but after a word or two, THE TWINS, suddenly becoming conscious of what is taking place, interrupt with intense disgust.*)

THE TWINS. Oh, gee !

IMOGEN (*arrested with her mouth wide open*). Gertie !

GERTIE. Girls !

ELLA. Well, do we have to listen to that again ?

BELLA. I thought we came to look at relics, not to listen to 'em.

BETTY. But I have never heard it—and I'm sure it will be—unusual. Miss Imogen, won't you recite it for me ?

IMOGEN. There, smarties !

(THE TWINS *subside ; and after another struggle to create "atmosphere," IMOGEN triumphantly completes her "piece," and stands modestly awaiting her plaudits.* EVA and GERTIE *applaud heartily.*)

BETTY. Thank you so much.

GERTIE. Wasn't that splendid?

IMOGEN. Gertie!

BETTY. It—it was astonishing!

GERTIE. There, Imogen, what did I tell you? Now sit down and rest a while, dear. Now what was I telling you, Miss Winslow? Oh, yes—about us. Well, and Eva is engaged!

EVA. Oh, Gertie!

GERTIE. Well, Eva, you know you are. He's a fine young man, no bad habits, good profile, and dreadfully in love—now, Eva, don't deny it. Don't you want him to be? That's partly what we came to the city for—to get Eva's—(*in a modest whisper*) things. While the white sales are on, you know.

BETTY. And what about you?

GERTIE. Oh—I look after them, you know. The twins are really quite a responsibility. But now won't you tell us about yourself?

(THE TWINS *come closer to listen.*)

BETTY. I? There's nothing to tell. I—I just live here, with Debbie, and take care of the relics and show them and—that's all.

THE TWINS. Don't you have no fun?

BETTY. Well—I go out to tea sometimes.

IMOGEN. But it's a great privilege to breathe such an intellectual atmosphere!

EVA. And you are so pretty, dear—I'm sure you have a lover.

BETTY. No. Oh, no—I haven't any——

GERTIE. And haven't you any sisters?

BETTY. I haven't anything—but ancestors. And relics. I never had anything in my life that belonged to me. Not even my name. I get the Bettina from Cousin Bettina Danvers and the Fairfax from mother's family. Why, even my hair—my hair isn't mine! It comes from Great-grandmother Winslow—that is, the color does. The curl belongs to Nancy Fairfax.

THE SPAYDES. Oh—girls!

BETTY. Oh, I'd trade every ancestor I ever had for just one—just one—sister!

(*She stretches out her hands in unconscious appeal.*)

THE SPAYDES. Oh—girls! (*They group themselves around her, patting and petting her, as she cries with her face hidden on GERTIE'S shoulder, with little coos and cries of sympathy.*) Oh, the poor little thing! You sweet child! Come right home with us! etc.

BETTY (*springing up at last and laughing*). How horrid this is of me, when you came all the way to see me! Won't you let me show you the relics?

GERTIE. No, indeed! Will we, girls? You are tired out and all done up—I knew it the minute I saw you. You go right up and lie down and have that—Imogen, what are they called?—the help—you have the help bring you a cup of steeped flaxseed and lemon—hot. If it weren't for the twins I'd stay and take care of you myself. Now, girls—get your things together!

(*THE SPAYDES scurry around gathering up hand-bags, guide-books, gloves, muffs, etc. GERTIE and BETTY go toward the door talking together.*)

ELLA. Aha, Imogen Spayde, you took my blue stockings! I looked high and low for them this morning and you knew it. Just because you have the brains of the family it doesn't follow that you can have the hosiery, too! You'll just please give them right straight back!

IMOGEN (*haughtily*). You vulgar little thing!

ELLA. Well, it looks to me pretty vulgar to go around flaunting other people's stockings in their faces——

IMOGEN. Ella Spayde!

GERTIE. Girls! Come, now. (*BETTY stands at the right of the door, and THE SPAYDES form a line opposite, bidding her good-bye, each with a kiss, one at a time.*) Good-bye, Miss Winslow! Now, don't forget—flaxseed and lemon, hot. And we'll come again next week, sure. Good-bye! (*She kisses her and passes her on to EVA.*)

EVA. Farewell, dearie! I'll send you one of my announcements.

IMOGEN. Au revoir, Miss Winslow! So happy to have made your acquaintance. I'll use you as the heroine of my first novel.

THE TWINS (*getting one on either side*). So-long, Betty! Had a grand time.

BELLA. I'm going to kiss her first, Ella Spayde !

ELLA. You're no such thing, Bella Spayde !

BELLA. I'm two hours older than you are, Ella Spayde !

ELLA. I don't care if you are, Bella Spayde —

GERTIE. Girls !

THE 'TWINs. Now, both together !

(They kiss her simultaneously on either cheek.)

BETTY. Good-bye—good-bye ! Please come again !

THE SPAYDES. Yes, we will—you come and see us.
Good-bye—good-bye !

(They disappear, still calling to her, the sound receding down the hall. BETTY, left alone, comes slowly forward and seats herself in Madame Huntington's chair. She takes the letter from her dress and holds it in her hands. The bell rings. BETTY hastily conceals the letter and rises, as DEBORAH appears in the hall door.)

DEBORAH. Mrs. Freddie Hitchens and her Ma !

(MRS. FREDDIE HITCHENS bustles in c.)

MRS. H. Oh, how de do? *(Turns and calls back.)* Come on, Ma ! *(To BETTY.)* We're building a new house, you know—Freddie said it was all nonsense, but I wouldn't hear o' nothin' else since Mis' Burrows put up hers—and I came on East to pick out furnishings—which is something she didn't do—and I thought while I was here I might as well look around at relics and things. *(Calls.)* Coming, Ma? Oh, here you be. *(MA appears, panting and waddling.)* Well, you can sit right down—I guess the lady won't care. That's the first thing Ma wants to do when she gets anywheres — Oh, I wouldn't sit on that chair, Ma ! *(MA has been about to sink her weight onto an old mahogany chair with a worn seat and very slender curved legs.)* I don't know as that would hold you. It looks sort of shaky anyhow—but I s'pose it's a relic. You sit over there on the sofa, Ma, and cool off. *(MA obeys gratefully, and throughout the following continues business of untying bonnet strings, mopping face, loosening collar, finally pulling off one shoe and going noddlingly to sleep.)* I s'pose this is Miss Winslow? Winslow? Where have I heard that name before? Winslow, Winslow, Win — Ma, where'd we know

any Winslows? Oh—I know; of course. Soothing syrup. We give it to Rudolph Rassendyll when he was a baby—Mrs. Winslow's Soothing Syrup. We named him for the Prisoner of Zenda—or was it the other fellow? Well, dear me—are you any relation to that Mrs. Winslow? Oh, you're not? O-oh. A-h—excuse me, but is that the style of dress they're wearing now in the East?

BETTY. This? Oh, no! This is a dress that belonged to my Great-great-Aunt Letitia. She wore it after her marriage while she was at the court of France.

MRS. H. Oh! Is that so? Well, I wondered! I always make over old things when they get out of style. There's a lot of goods in that skirt. Wake up, Ma! Well, I guess perhaps you better show us the relics now. We ain't got any too much time. Will that chair hold me?

(Points to chair down R.)

BETTY. Oh, yes. This chair was brought over from England more than two hundred years ago by my great-great-grandfather.

MRS. H. Is that so? Don't you think you could varnish it? Or maybe a good stain. I've done wonders on old truck with a walnut stain.

BETTY. I don't know—it is a shabby old thing.

MRS. H. *(settling herself upon it)*. Wake up, Ma, and see the relics.

BETTY *(pointing at the polished table, and speaking in the manner of one reciting from a guide-book)*. This was the table in constant use in this house as a dining table throughout the lifetime of Col. George Winslow and of his daughter Letitia. Distinguished guests have partaken of refreshments from its surface. Around it were gathered at one time General Washington, General Lee —

MRS. H. Is that so? Our dining table will seat fifteen when it's spread out, and the leaves kind of fold back into its insides when we ain't using 'em. I always keep a center-piece on it—Cluny lace. Some folks likes a bare table; but I always tell 'em if you've got doilies, it's better to use 'em.

BETTY. I wish I had a table with—insides!

MRS. H. Well—I was married ten years before I had one! Ma-a!

BETTY *(indicating Madame Huntington's chair up R.)*. This is the chair in which Madame Huntington always sat

while receiving visitors as mistress of this mansion. It is considered a very fine specimen of the furniture of the period.

MRS. H. Is that so? You know, I believe if you'd take some cretonne and some tape and some gold-headed tacks you could make a real good bedroom chair out of that.

BETTY. Do you?

MRS. H. They were telling me at the furniture store today that cretonne is all the go for bedrooms. (*Points to the old cups and saucers on the table.*) Are them Haviland?

BETTY. Those are Staffordshire, purple luster ware, and came from France. And the silver tankard is one made by Paul Revere.

MRS. H. Is that so? Well—I'm not one that thinks Haviland is the only thing there is; but of course, if you don't have it, you aren't in it. But that silver must be awful hard to keep clean. I bought some of that Everwear Aluminum stuff and I guess it will. It's fine. I bought it of a young college fellow that was selling it vacations to make his way. Has he been here?

BETTY. No. I wish he would come!

MRS. H. For land's sake! Is that a spinning-wheel? In the parlor? Ain't you got no attic?

BETTY. We're all attic!

MRS. H. Ma! In another minute you'll be asleep. Well, now, can't we see some relics?

BETTY. Why, I don't—understand?

MRS. H. Some curiosities. These things are just old odds and ends of furniture.

BETTY. So they are!

MRS. H. But I mean something unusual—something interesting. They call this the Winslow Museum of Colonial Antiquities and Relics. I want to see the museum.

BETTY. Oh! Well—there's my grandfather's desk where he wrote his poems.

MRS. H. Freddie has a roller top desk with a typewriter that rolls up too.

BETTY. And then there is Great-great-Aunt Letitia's glove.

MRS. H. Who is this Great-great-Aunt Letitia we hear so much about?

BETTY. She was the only child of Colonel Winslow and a great beauty. She was full of spirits and had many lovers,

and she married Ephraim Huntington, who became minister to France, you know, and after that she grew dignified and haughty and never played pranks nor laughed much. Would you like to see her portrait? (*She goes up L. and lifts the heavy drapery in such a way that the supposed portrait is concealed from the audience.*) We have to keep them covered because some people like pieces of the frame for souvenirs.

MRS. H. (*who has followed*). Well, if she was dressed up she would be rather pretty looking. (*Follows BETTY to the portrait opposite.*) And that's the minister, is it? Pretty gay for a preacher, I should say, and I don't wonder she quit laughing much. I don't like those little, stuck on-theirselves men. Freddie's too fat, and gettin' fatter every day, but I tell 'em there's worse things than double chins and he's good-natured anyhow. So are the children, but they get that from me. What did you say you had of hers?

BETTY. I'll show you. (*She goes to the table and takes from a drawer a carved wooden box. Within are many folds of soft paper, and parting these with great care, she takes out a long kid glove, once white, but now yellowed with age.*) This is the glove which Great-great-Aunt Letitia wore at the great ball which her father, Colonel Winslow, gave in this house in honor of General La Fayette, the distinguished Frenchman; and when he led her through the minuet, this glove was upon the hand he touched. It has been carefully preserved from that time to this as a memento of the famous visitor.

MRS. H. Is that so? Well, that's a queer notion—keeping one glove—I don't see what good it would do anybody unless there was a pair. What became of the other one?

BETTY (*as if struck with a new idea*). Why, I don't know. I never heard of the other glove.

MRS. H. (*preparing to leave*). Well, if I'd been that Letitia and had had my pick, I'd have taken a man with some ginger to him. A girl like that ought to have a lively, wide-awake, up-and-coming sort of man—you know the kind I mean.

BETTY. Yes.

MRS. H. Looks to me 's if she made a mistake. Well, come on, Ma—we want to get back before the stores close. Ma! Well, will you look at that! If she hasn't took her

shoe off again! Every time we stop anywheres long enough to sit down, off comes that shoe. Ma! (*On her knees.*) Stick out your foot!

MA (*gradually coming to*). Shucks! I must o' dropped off!

(*And promptly does so again while her daughter struggles with the shoe.*)

MRS. H. Do you—stiffen up, Ma!—do you run this museum for your living?

BETTY. Why—yes. That is, the Historical Society keeps up the house on condition that I keep it open once a week. I—am very poor.

MRS. H. Is that so? I thought things was sort of run down. Well, if I was you I'd sell off all this truck and take the money and go somewheres and start a chicken farm.

BETTY. Oh, I wish I could!

MRS. H. Well, I don't see as there's anything to prevent you. (*Rises and shakes her mother.*) Come on, Ma! Spruce up now! Well, I'm sure I'm much obliged to you, and if you're ever in Medina, New York, come and see me. Ma—for goodness' sake, don't wobble so! And you know, Miss Winslow, if I was you I'd look around careful and maybe you'll find that other glove. Now, Ma, stand still while I set your bonnet straight. I declare you're worse 'n Rudolph Rassendyll to take around. You go ahead now or we'll never get there. Well, good-bye, Miss Winslow—stop and see us if you're ever out our way. Go on now, Ma, straight ahead—

(*Exit, c., pushing MA. Her voice dies away down the hall.*)

(*BETTY goes to the portrait of LETITIA, up L., lifts the drapery as before, and stands looking intently at the picture. DEBORAH enters with dust cloth, dust pan and broom.*)

DEBORAH. All I've got to say is, if any more of those impudent, sassy, nosey, un-speak-able wimmen are allowed in this house, you've got to attend to 'em, for I won't. I simply can't do it. It's an awful thing—a-n-aw-ful thing—that a nice respectable lot of Revolutionary relics can't be put on display without drawing down on their heads an

avalanche of old maids and widows from dear knows where! That's all I've got to say! (*She wields broom or cloth vigorously as she discovers traces of the aforesaid maids and widows.*) They're not ladies, that's all I've got to say for 'em. There's not a mite of a lady about 'em. Oh, I heard that last one—talking about varnish and tables with insides and chicken farms and giving you notions—a nice combination, that's all I've got to say!

BETTY (*dropping the curtain and coming forward*). Debbie, what do you suppose became of Aunt Letitia's other glove?

DEBORAH. For the love of goodness, what you thinking about that for?

BETTY. I have to have something to think about. I can't go on just thinking "Texas, Texas, Texas" all the time!

DEBORAH (*putting down the broom and coming behind the girl to draw her back into her arms*). Come here, dearie, and tell Deb about it.

BETTY. Oh, Debbie, I'm so sick of being a relic. I'd so much rather be just a girl. Oh, I wish I could live in a kitchenette apartment and run a vacuum cleaner and go to moving-picture shows! Everybody else has something—sisters and twins and Freddies—and I haven't anything, n-not a-a-nything but you!

DEBORAH (*rocking her in her arms*). There, there, there, there now! Now, pretty, tell me—tell Deb—do you love this Jamie—this cowboy?

BETTY. He was so—funny, Deb; and alive. And so big and sunburned. I never saw a man in my life except college professors until—he—came—that day. And he made me feel as if I were living now instead of a hundred years ago. And now he's gone—he's gone back to that horrid Texas—and how do I know, in a little bit of a place like that, but one of those Mexicans will shoot him? (*Hysterical, wails on DEBORAH'S shoulder.*) Oh, Deb, he's gone—he's gone! (*Straightens up suddenly and stamps her foot.*) How did he dare go like that? And what do I care for ancestors? I'd like to go right straight down to Texas and—and—t-tell him so!

(*The last words another wail on DEBORAH'S shoulder.*)

DEBORAH. Now, see here, dearie—now, now, now!

Listen to Deb—there, that's her little lamb! Now, you sit right down here in your great-great-aunt's chair—and here's your hankie,—now, you sit right there and forget all about him, and Deb will go out and cook you the finest piece of chicken you ever ate, and stewed peaches with whipped cream! And chocolate out of the Louis Napoleon cup! And then you'll have a big long sleep, and to-morrow you'll be just all right!

BETTY (*winking and choking back her sobs*). Y-yes—to-morrow, Deb. I'll be—be all right t-to-morrow.

DEBORAH (*looking back from the door*). Sure, dearie?

BETTY. Sure, Deb. Oh—Debbie, did you say chicken?

DEBORAH. Yes, pretty.

BETTY. Save me the wish bone. (DEBORAH *goes out* L. BETTY *comes down* R. and sits at the table, her sobs gradually subsiding. Presently she leans her elbows on the table and rests her head on her hands. It grows dusk in the room. The historic glove lies just in front of her. She rouses herself presently, and takes up the glove in one hand.) Poor old thing! I'll grow wrinkled and yellow and limp just like that. (*She leans her cheek on the hand holding the glove and speaks dreamily, with her eyes closed.*) You've lost your mate, too. Mine has gone to Texas. (*She stretches her arm along the table, looking at the glove.*) I wonder—where—yours is?

(*Her head sinks down to rest on the extended arm. She covers her eyes with the other hand and sits very still. The room grows dimmer and dimmer. Presently a strain of music is heard, very faint, as though far away—the music of an old-time dance in stately rhythm, played on the spinet or violin. Any old English ballad will serve, or the minuet music from "Don Juan."* Then the curtains before the portrait of Great-great-Aunt Letitia are seen to sway, to part, and the old time beauty steps forth, very cautiously, lifting the skirt of her satin gown and peering over her shoulder as if she fears pursuit. She has taken but a few steps into the room when from door C. JAMES O'MARA, handsome, dashing, ardent, enters, strides forward and falls on one knee before her.)

O'MARA. Ah, mistress! Sure 'tis the breath of life to see you here!

LETITIA. No, no! In truth, you should grieve, sir, that I have done as you begged me and left my father's guests to meet you here.

O'MARA. 'Tis the guests are grieving, sweet, not I! Ah, Lettie—was it much to ask—just a look at that sweet face and a word to carry with me—when to-morrow I lose both forever? (*Rises and takes her hand.*)

LETITIA. To-morrow?

O'MARA. Ay, to-morrow, sweetheart. Think you I would stay and dance with the guests when Mistress Letitia Winslow weds with Ephraim Huntington? By that time, and God wills, I'll be well on my way across the mountains to the new lands of the West, where every man is as good as he can make himself, and 'tis himself and not his grandfather that folk ask about! Ah, forgive me, love; but sure it fair maddens me to think that for the accident of your father owning the land and mine working it, and your folk belonging to England and mine to Ireland, I'd take you with me, Lettie—take you, my own, my bride, my wife—across the mountains, into a land of our own——

(*Unnoticed by the lovers, the curtains before the portrait of Ephraim Huntington, up R., have parted, and he has entered the room and stands listening.*)

LETITIA (*sadly*). You forget, Jamie. Even were there no other barrier between us, I am the promised bride of Ephraim Huntington.

EPHRAIM HUNTINGTON (*coming forward and making her an ironical bow*). A fact which you, also, mistress, forget, methinks. (LETITIA, *up L., shrinks back with a faint cry*. O'MARA, *up C., stands his ground, a hand on his hilt*. HUNTINGTON, *up R., looking them over with a cool sneer, draws a snuff-box from his pocket and proceeds to an elaborate pinch*.) A thousand pardons for interrupting so amiable a meeting! I wish merely to remind Mistress Winslow—and by the by, Lettie, drat me, but you are charming to-night!—to remind the lady, and you, too, sir, that it is unusual for the betrothed of one man to meet another—er—clandestinely—ah, you object to the word, sir? Let us say—privately—privately——

O'MARA (*hotly*). I do object to the word! You are offensive, sir!

HUNTINGTON. And you, my excellent fellow, if you will pardon my saying so, are—amusing.

O'MARA. Amusing? Have a care——

HUNTINGTON. Oh—softly! Surely, if either of us is to have a care, it is not I!

O'MARA. Nor is it I! I've done nothing for which I'll not answer with my life. My heart's my own, sir, and if it's jumped out of my breast and to the feet of the sweetest lady on God's footstool, no man shall question its right to lie there! A poor devil of a soldier, sir, wounded almost to the death, I was carried to her door, and she nursed me like an angel of mercy back to strength and life; and if I love her, sure 'tis no more than any man with blood in his veins must do!

HUNTINGTON. Then you do in truth, sir—ah—love my promised bride?

O'MARA. I love Mistress Letitia Winslow!

HUNTINGTON. Exactly. And you, mistress, do you in turn, if I may ask—ah—love this man?

LETITIA (*lifting her face from her hands*). Oh, I pray you——

O'MARA (*coming to her and taking her hands*). Lettie! Fear nothing, sweetheart. The blame alone is mine. But I charge you, if you know your heart, answer truly. Do you love me?

LETITIA (*meeting his eyes*). Yes.

(O'MARA *bends his head and lays his face against her hand.*)

HUNTINGTON. So this is the man—this soldier of fortune, this Irish adventurer, this nobody from across the seas, the son of a peasant, this would-be Western pioneer with scarce a coat to his back or a shelter to his head—this is the man whom Mistress Letitia Winslow loves?

(*During this speech O'MARA has drawn back, looking humbly, beseechingly at LETITIA, whose cheeks have flushed with anger, and whose indignation, conquering for the moment her timidity, sparkles in her eyes. She faces HUNTINGTON boldly, a hand on O'MARA'S sleeve.*)

LETITIA. Yes. This is the man I love!

HUNTINGTON. Ah! And this—(*tapping his breast*) is the man you will wed.

O'MARA. What! Surely you'd not hold her to a promise made years ago before she knew her heart, now that she confesses love for another! Why, man, think——

HUNTINGTON (*dropping his sneer and affectation of indifference*). Think? I do think—of the sneers of the town, the laughter of the court. What? “Ephraim Huntington jilted? And for an Irish adventurer without name or fortune? The foremost man of the colony thrown aside by a chit of a girl?” Zounds! 'Tis insufferable! The papers are drawn—'tis known far and wide—this house settled upon her as a wedding gift—and now for a whim, a mood, for love throw it away? No! I hold her to her promise.

O'MARA. You—you refuse——

HUNTINGTON. I do refuse! (*With an abrupt return to his former manner.*) And that being the case, there remains but one more contingency. You say, mistress, that you love this man? You have promised to wed with me. Will you break your promise?

(*There is a pause. LETITIA, white and shaken, looks from O'MARA, standing with bowed head, to HUNTINGTON, who fingers his lace ruffles and looks at her steadily with his slight, sneering smile.*)

LETITIA. No!

(*O'MARA turns sharply away. HUNTINGTON laughs and bows to her. The girl stands perfectly motionless.*)

HUNTINGTON. Ah! My dear Lettie, you gratify me. I feel that you are indeed worthy to be—my wife. And—may I be permitted to suggest, sir, that under the circumstances—the—er—distressing circumstances, there is really nothing for you to do but to—go? (*O'MARA rouses himself. He wraps his cloak more closely around his shoulders and without turning toward the two strides to the door. But there he hesitates, turns back, and comes slowly to LETITIA, whose eyes are fixed upon him. Without speaking a word, he kneels before her, takes the hand she extends to him, and lifts it to his lips. At last he rises, and without word or glance for either, hastily leaves the room. LETITIA stands perfectly still looking down at the hand he has kissed. After a moment HUNTINGTON rouses himself, and with an ugly laugh points at the glove upon that hand.*) Take it off!

LETITIA. You mean ——

HUNTINGTON. The glove! Give it me! (LETITIA, *shrinking from him, takes the glove from her hand and gives it to him.*) Ah! A little token I shall keep, mistress, in memory of this interesting conversation and its—ah—occasion! (*He folds the glove, puts it in an inner pocket of his coat, and bows profoundly.*) I trust, my love, that you will never have occasion to use—the other glove. (*Smiling, watching her keenly as she quivers under the insult, he steps back to the curtains through which he had made his entrance.*) I wish you good-night, mistress—and pleasant dreams!

(*He parts the curtains, steps between, makes another profound bow, and disappears. LETITIA stands quite still until he has gone, then moves fearfully, glances over her shoulder and about the room, and wrings her hands with a faint moan.*)

LETITIA. My glove—my glove—my one white glove! Oh, he will never let me forget it—never, never —— (*She comes forward stealthily and bends above the motionless form of BETTY.*) Hush! Don't let them hear me—don't let them know! But some day, from the West, will come again Jamie O'Mara! And you—you will be happy. But I—oh, my glove—he has my glove—my glove—(*she wanders away*) oh, cruel, cruel —— (*She pauses in front of the portrait of Letitia.*) Hark! He is coming—he is coming—from the West! But not for me—oh, not for me—never, never ——

(*She disappears. The curtains swing for a moment, the music dies away. Then all is quiet. The door of the inner room opens. DEBORAH enters carrying a lighted candle. She puts it on the table and bends over BETTY.*)

DEBORAH. Asleep! Poor little child! (*The door-bell rings suddenly, violently. With a gesture of irritation, DEBORAH goes to answer it. BETTY springs to her feet with a cry. She sees the glove in her hand and stares at it in a daze. The bell continues a steady peal. BETTY snatches up the candle and runs back to the portrait of Great-great-Aunt Letitia. As she lays her hand on the curtain, DEBORAH bursts open the hall door. DEBORAH almost incoherent with excitement.*) Betty—Betty—Betty—he's come back!

BETTY. Come back?

DEBORAH. That cowboy. He says "Darn the ancestors! I want my girl!"

(*Overcome with emotion, DEBORAH flings her apron over her head, sits on the couch and rocks back and forth in mingled joy and despair.*)

BETTY. Oh—Aunt Letitia!

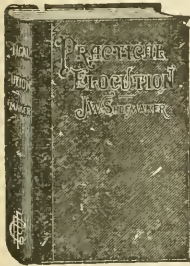
(*She swings the curtains entirely aside, and Letitia, in a stiff, old-fashioned pose, is fully revealed. BETTY backs slowly toward R., holding candle high above her head, and gazes at the picture. O'MARA, in cap and ulster, appears at door C.*)

O'MARA. Betty!

(*Without a word BETTY, up R., turns to him and extends her hand. He comes forward, drops on his knee, and lifts the hand to his lips. BETTY looks smiling straight into the eyes of Great-great-Aunt Letitia. The curtain slowly falls.*)

CURTAIN

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