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FRENCH'S ACTING EDITION

THE OAK SETTLE

(HAROLD BRIGHOUSE.)

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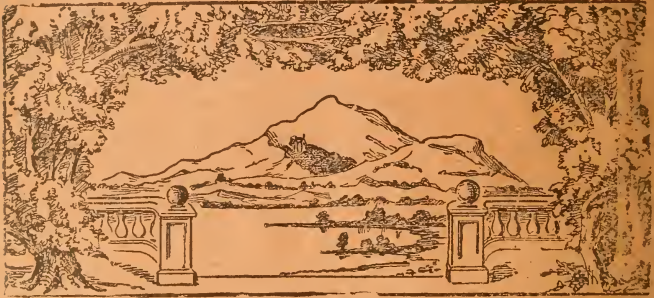
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THE OAK SETTLE

A ONE-ACT COMEDY

By

HAROLD BRIGHOUSE

"

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THE OAK SETTLE

CHARACTERS.

Produced on April 7, 1911, at the Dalston Theatre, London
with the following cast of characters :—

JOSIAH BARTON (an old Farmer)
ANNE BARTON (his Wife)
FRANK CHATTERIS (a City Architect)
ELSIE CHATTERIS (his Wife)
JOE SYKES (A Van-man)

THE SCENE is laid in the kitchen of an old farmhouse.

THE TIME is the present.

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Any costumes or wigs required in the performance of "The Oak Settle" may be hired or purchased reasonably from Messrs. Chas. H. Fox, Ltd., 27, Wellington Street, Strand, London.

THE OAK SETTLE

THE SCENE represents the kitchen of an old farmhouse. At the back is the window; nearly curtained and having in it a cardboard placard, blank to the inside, conveying to the outer world the information that milk is for sale within. There are doors right and left—the right leading inside, the left to a lobby and the garden. There is a table covered with glazed American cloth, a horse-hair sofa and several horse-hair chairs. On the mantelshelf above the large fireplace are several atrocious pot dogs and at one corner an inkstand and a pen. Below the window is a black oak settle, curiously carved. There are present JOSIAH BARTON and his wife ANNE. JOSIAH is a very old man, still hale though bent with years. He is dressed in rough grey clothes with a striped collar and black tie. ANNE, his wife, is many years his junior—a buxom woman of fifty of the invincibly healthy country type. Her bloom of health fails to conceal the avarice which is writ large upon her face. Only the most unsophisticated observer could look at this face and grow enthusiastic over the idyllic effects of a country life. It is a midsummer afternoon, but the window is kept unopened. A bundle of dried bracken fern is in the hearth, but from force of habit, JOSIAH'S chair is drawn up as if to a fire. He sits in it, nodding. ANNE is at the opposite side at work upon some sewing. A picture of domestic felicity—until one examines ANNE'S face. Suddenly, JOSIAH moves, takes a large red handkerchief from the right

side pocket of his coat and waves it as at a fly. ANNE looks up.

ANNE. What's taken you now?

JOSIAH (*grumblingly*). It be a wasp. Worriting varmint, coming and disturbing of my sleep of an afternoon. Wonder is how they gets in. Winder's allays closed tight. (*Flicking the handkerchief about.*)

ANNE. Stop that, now.

JOSIAH (*surprised, still flicking the handkerchief*). What be to do, my dear?

ANNE (*threateningly*). Stop it, I tell you.

JOSIAH (*with the handkerchief suspended in the air*). Why? Bain't I to kill wasp now?

ANNE. That bain't no wasp. That's a bee.

JOSIAH (*pocketing his handkerchief*). A bee, is it? Oh, mustn't kill a bee.

ANNE. It warn't your fault you failed. Destroying of your own money-making property. The idea!

JOSIAH (*apologetically*). I be fair vexed, Anne. That I be.

ANNE (*getting up and putting her sewing down*). I'll open door and let un fly out.

JOSIAH. Don't hold un open long. Mustn't have a draught in room. Be outside door open?

ANNE (*opening the door R.*). Yes. But it's too warm to do ye any hurt.

JOSIAH. Draughts be bad, warm or cold.

ANNE (*watching as she holds the door open*). There he goes. Straight to garden.

JOSIAH. I'm main glad I didn't kill he. Bees spells honey and honey's money. What be that?

ANNE (*shading her eyes with her hand*). Barmby's van be coming down lane with Joe Sykes a-driving her.

JOSIAH. Let 'em knock, then.

ANNE. He's getting down, now, with a box. About time they things came, too. Place looks quite bare with what's been sold lately.

JOSIAH. More things from London?

ANNE. Yes. It 'ull be they as we ordered. (*Speaking to some one without.*) Well, Joe Sykes, what be that? Bring her in. (*Enter JOE SYKES, a carrier's vanman, in corduroys without coat carrying a small packing-case on his shoulder. He sets it down, without speaking, and sits on it mopping his brow with a large red handkerchief taken from his trousers pocket, and taking a large yellow delivery sheet from his waistcoat pocket.*)

JOE (*inquiringly to ANNE*). Mrs. Anne Barton?

ANNE. To be sure. You know me well enough, Joe Sykes.

JOE. Aye, for a neighbour. Put that bain't good enough when it's a matter o' business.

ANNE. What's taken you, you great fuel? Haven't you been here many a time with cases and such-like? (*Trying to snatch the delivery note. JOE calmly shifts it from hand to hand.*)

JOE (*to JOSIAH*). Do you identify this woman?

JOSIAH (*hand to ear*). Eh?

JOE (*louder*). Be her Mrs. Anne Barton? (*Jerking his thumb towards ANNE.*)

JOSIAH. O' course her be.

JOE (*handing the papers*). Then you signs here.

ANNE (*snatching it angrily and taking pen and ink from the mantelshelf and signing at the table*). There!

JOE (*examining signature*). Pretty writer you be, Mrs. Barton.

ANNE. I want none of your impudence now. You'd better be off.

JOE (*rising slowly*). It's a warm day.

ANNE (*shortly*). Yes. Good-afternoon.

JOE. A warm day. A thirsty day.

ANNE. There's a pump in the yard.

JOE. I wouldn't rob you, mam. It's a saying we have down to the village, mean as a Barton. Don't go for to spoil it, mam, by giving summat away. Good-day. (*Exit JOE.*)

ANNE (*closing door.*) Brassen piece of impudence. (*She takes a small crowbar and opens the packing-case, going down on her knees, facing audience.*)

JOSIAH. What be in box?

ANNE. It be they jugs we ordered—Toby jugs and warming-pans. Last lot was sold quick.

JOSIAH (*grumblingly*). Jugs and such bain't worth the trouble. Matter o' a shilling or two. (*ANNE rises with a pair of jugs which she puts on the mantel. Then she feels on it and finds a Post Office Savings Bank book which she opens.*)

ANNE. You're losing heart, Josiah, that's what it is. See, here's your bank-book. Just cast your eye down that. (*JOSIAH takes it, fingers it reverently and chuckles.*) Ah! That does you good, does it? I thought so.

JOSIAH. It's God's truth you're a wonderful woman, Anne, and I don't care if you do come in for it when I'm in my grave. You merit it for sure. (*ANNE returns to the case and extracts a warming-pan.*)

ANNE. Don't you despise the shillings. It's all good money and the trouble's mine. Bain't yours.

JOSIAH. It's time we sold summat big. Bits o' pots bain't to my taste nohow. That settle in the window there's taking a long time to go off.

ANNE (*propping the warming-pan in the corner by the door R.*) No, her bain't neither. Her's not been there above a two threë week and we made five pun' on the last. You can't expect to sell a piece o' furniture every day o' the week. An old Toby jug's different. (*Getting another out from case.*) Ugly t things they be though. I can't see what there is in 'em to make gentlefolks fancy 'em. But there's no telling what they folk will fancy.

JOSIAH. Old! He! he!

ANNE (*indignantly*). Well, they *look* old, don't they? And if you tell the tale proper about they jugs being left you by your grandfer, they believes

them old too and you sells 'em for twice what we pays for 'em. (*Carrying box off.*) I'll put rest in t'other room. It don't do to have too many out at oncē. (*She goes out R. A motor-horn heard at back. JOSIAH hastily conceals the bank book in his pocket. Re-enter ANNE.*)

JOSIAH. What be that? One o' they danged motor-cars?

ANNE (*going to window*). Yes. It be that for sure.

JOSIAH. Cuss 'em. What do they want coming down a lane like ours with their dust and din when there's a plenty o' wide straight roads that are fit for the likes o' they?

ANNE. They're stopping and reading our sign about milk being fur sale. (*She draws back and watches from behind the curtain.*) Yes. They've stopped now.

JOSIAH. Cuss 'em.

ANNE. Who are you cussing? They're getting out of motor now, two of them, man and woman. they be. Now they're coming up path.

JOSIAH (*muttering*). Cuss 'em. Disturbing of my sleep.

ANNE (*roughly*). Hush your row. It's money in your pocket, isn't it, if it's only milk they're after? So much nearer to the pub you're always talking of to end your days in.

JOSIAH (*obstinately*). Price of a glass of milk baint worth breaking your rest for.

ANNE. The bee did that anyhow.

JOSIAH. I'd have dropped off again.

ANNE. Well, who knows? (*Coming from window.*) It might be better than that. (*Her eyes wander round the room, fixing on the settle below the window and an evil look crosses her face.*) They look young and they're happen fools like all young folks, especially them as goes in motors.

JOSIAH (*looking at settle*). You mean—

ANNE. Yes, o' course I do. Mind you remember what I told you if I call you in, and don't get mixed in your tale this time.

JOSIAH (*chuckling senilely*). Oho. That's the game is it?

ANNE. It might be. There's never no telling. (*A knock outside R. She goes to the door and exit. The murmur of a man's cultured voice is heard for a moment and ANNE'S in reply. JOSIAH'S hand goes up to his ear, but he fails to hear and brings it down irritably. ANNE holds back the door for the motorists to enter. They are FRANK CHATTERIS, a pleasant-looking man of about thirty and his pretty wife ELSIE. CHATTERIS is in tweeds with a cap. ELSIE has on a dust cloak which reveals a simple summer frock and a motor veil over her hat. The get-up of both suggests the occasional rather than the professional motorist. JOSIAH rises slowly as they come in and with deferential nod makes his way to the door L. leaning on a stick which was by his hand against the chair.*)

FRANK. Oh, I say, don't let us disturb you, sir. We only want a glass of milk.

JOSIAH. You bain't disturbing I.

ANNE (*closing the door*). It's all right, sir. It's not for the likes of him to sit in the same room with the quality.

FRANK (*humouring her—gravely*). I see. (*Exit JOSIAH L.*)

ANNE. Milk you said, sir, wasn't it?

FRANK. Yes, please.

ANNE (*following JOSIAH*). Yes, sir.

FRANK. Oh, I say, you haven't any soda, have you?

ANNE (*stopping*). Oh yes, sir.

FRANK (*to ELSIE*). Will you?

ELSIE. Yes. I'd rather have soda.

FRANK. Make it soda and milk then, will you?

ANNE. Yes, sir. Just a minute, sir. (*Exit L.*)

FRANK. Did you hear that, Elsie? We're the

quality. Not much Socialism about these parts. The quality! Good Lord!

ELSIE (*looking round*). Oh, Frank, what a perfect room!

FRANK (*following suit*). Yes. Jolly little place, isn't it?

ELSIE Little! It's like a palace after our stuffy flat.

FRANK (*dubiously*). Um. I prefer the flat.

ELSIE (*pouting*). Oh, do enthuse.

FRANK. Can't when I'm thirsty.

ELSIE. So am I. I *am* glad you noticed that sign.

FRANK. Yes. (*The pop of a soda water bottle opening is heard.*) That sounds like business.

ELSIE. Did you notice the woman, Frank?

FRANK. Not particularly. Why?

ELSIE. I'll tell you in a moment. Here she is. (*Enter ANNE L. with two large glasses containing soda and milk on a tray, which she puts on the table.*)

ANNE. Won't you sit down, mam?

ELSIE (*sitting and taking off her glove*). Thanks.

FRANK (*sitting and taking up a glass*). That's what you might call a long drink, isn't it? (*Drinking.*)

ELSIE. I'm going to sip mine quietly and take my time over it, if I may? (*Looking at ANNE.*)

ANNE (*with some show of cordiality*). Ye stay as long as you're a mind, mam. Best not to hurry yourself over milk, though soda do lighten it to be sure. (*ANNE turns to go.*)

ELSIE. Thank you.

FRANK (*putting his hand to his pocket*). Oh— (*Exit ANNE L.*)

ELSIE. She'll be coming back for it. Did you notice her that time?

FRANK. I had a look.

ELSIE. Isn't she sweet with her nice fresh face? I wonder if my complexion will be anything like hers when I'm her age?

FRANK. I thought she looked a bit hard.

ELSIE. Oh, Frank, how can you? I'm sure she's a dear. Do you know what she made me think of?

FRANK (*sipping*). No. What was it?

ELSIE. The country, Frank. That woman's face—so unlike the tired jaded faces of the women one meets in town—this room—our ride through the green lanes—Oh, how different it all is from our artificial closed up life boxed in amongst everlasting rows of houses. Life in the country must be one continual dream of delight.

FRANK. Think so, little woman? Do you know, I expect you'd be bored to death in a month. It's not much sport sitting down watching vegetables grow, and there isn't even that violent form of dissipation in the winter.

ELSIE. Oh, how literal you are. I didn't say I wanted you to be a farmer. No. We could hunt and have house-parties——

FRANK. And generally live up to ten thousand a year when we've got five hundred. And all this because I get a day off from the city and brought you out for a run in a hired motor to blow the cobwebs away.

ELSIE. And I'm grateful for it, Frank. It does us good sometimes to be taken out of ourselves, to come back, if it's only for a day, to the simple life of the country. To see these happy smiling faces with simplicity and content written upon them—oh, it makes me feel a beast when I remember all I have and how little they have.

FRANK. A minute ago you were envying them this room. Anyhow, I shouldn't let it upset me. I dare say they do very well. I've a notion that woman is not the sort to want much.

ELSIE. Yes. It's—oh, it's silly of me to go on like this. To-day, too, our red-letter day. The anniversary of our wedding, Frank. Forgive me. I'll try not to be silly again.

FRANK. Cheer up. Have a drink of milk,

ELSIE. You old goose. (*She drinks. FRANK rises with a little caress and strolls round the room.*)

FRANK. You know, much as I prefer the flat for living in, as an architect I can't help taking a sort of professional interest in this old room. By Jove, we don't build like this nowadays.

ELSIE (*watching him as he examines the window*). What's that under the window?

FRANK (*putting his hand on it*). This thing?

ELSIE. Yes.

FRANK. Oh, it's one of those old settles. (*Sitting on it.*) Beastly hard it is, too. Our ancestors had some funny notions of comfort.

ELSIE (*rising and going to it*). What a quaint old thing.

FRANK (*getting up and inspecting*). Finely carved, isn't it?

ELSIE (*enthusiastically*). It's beautiful. Oh, Frank, wouldn't it look just too lovely for words in our flat?

FRANK (*dubiously*). I'm sure I don't know. Where on earth would you find room for it?

ELSIE. In the hall, of course. We've been wanting a chair there badly and that beautiful old settle would be just the right thing.

FRANK. Umph!

ELSIE. What are you umphing about?

FRANK (*quizzically*). Covetous?

ELSIE (*brazenly*). Yes, I am. I would love to have it.

FRANK. My dear girl, that old thing and our modern flat wouldn't go very well together.

ELSIE. Lots of people have them.

FRANK. Oh, I daresay. I can't afford old furniture. Besides, it would be so out of place in the flat where everything's aggressively new. Here it's—oh, it's in the picture. It fits in. It might have grown where it is.

ELSIE (*sighing*). Yes, I suppose you're right. (*She returns disappointedly to her milk. FRANK goes*

on examining the left wall. ELSIE looks at him : he is too interested to notice. She shrugs her shoulders. He continues interested.)

ELSIE. Frank !

FRANK (*casually, still busy with the wall*). Yes, dear.

ELSIE. Frank, come here ! (*He leaves the wall with regret.*)

FRANK. Yes ?

ELSIE. Sit down and listen to me.

FRANK (*sitting*). Delighted.

ELSIE. No, you're not. You much prefer staring at that silly old wall to gratifying your pretty wife. Now, you know what we had fixed to do to-night ?

FRANK. Dine at home and have a cosy evening together—wasn't that it ?

ELSIE. Yes, and discuss what you are to give me for a wedding present—well a wedding anniversary present.

FRANK. Yes, that's all right.

ELSIE. You've not forgotten and bought me anything ?

FRANK. Oh, no. I remembered the bond.

ELSIE. Well, let's do it now instead.

FRANK. Do what ?

ELSIE. Discuss the present.

FRANK. All right. (*Binding forward and putting his hands together.*) I'll tell you what I thought. I spotted a ripping pendant in Regent Street the other day. I want you to see it and then if we can run to it—

ELSIE. Extravagant boy ! No. Buy me that settle.

FRANK. What !

ELSIE. I'd like a real souvenir of to-day, Frank, something I could look at to remind me always of what we've done and the places we've been in to-day. It's been a great day that you have given me. You don't know how much I've looked forward to this

holiday and how much I've enjoyed it. And that settle—well, it fascinates me.

FRANK. But, my dear girl, it's not on sale. It's simply a piece of furniture in a private house.

ELSIE. Ask the woman when she comes if she's not ready to sell.

FRANK. Well, but—I don't know anything about old furniture. Some of it's awfully valuable.

ELSIE. Probably they haven't the faintest idea of its value.

FRANK. I haven't myself for the matter of that. And the thing may have a sentimental value as a family heirloom. It's a bit different from this stuff. (*Indicating the horse-hair sofa.*) And they'd need to be pretty blind if they can't see the difference.

ELSIE. But just think of what wonderful bargains one hears of people picking up in out of the way cottages.

FRANK. I daresay. They're experts.

ELSIE. Not always. And you're never certain about old furniture bought in town. They can imitate the real thing so well nowadays. There's no question about the genuineness of a settle we drop across by chance in an old house like this.

FRANK. That's true enough.

ELSIE. Yes. And we could take it back with us on the motor and save carriage.

FRANK. No. I'm hanged if we could. In for a penny in for a pound. I'm not a carrier yet. Besides the chances are I shall only offend the old lady if I mention the thing, and I don't know how to set about it anyhow.

ELSIE (*reproachfully*). Frank!

FRANK. What's the matter?

ELSIE (*with exaggerated pathos*). Am I to plead to you, to-day of all days?

FRANK. No. It's your call, partner. (*Going to the settle again.*) You know, I'm not at all sure that we shall be able to open our hall door with this in it.

ELSIE (*turning towards him*). Well, if it is too big we can sell it and make a profit.

FRANK (*smiling indulgently*). What a mercenary person you are!

ELSIE. Well, I don't see why we should throw away a chance of turning an honest penny, if we can't find room for it. We're not that rich. I am only being practical and businesslike. Women go into all sorts of business, don't they?

FRANK (*amused*). Oh, yes.

ELSIE. Yes. Then why should you sit on me because I've an eye to the main chance? I want to prove that I'm not quite useless to you.

FRANK. What do you suppose the thing's worth?

ELSIE. How much were you going to spend on the pendant you saw?

FRANK. Oh, I don't know. Something like twenty pounds, I suppose.

ELSIE. Well, don't go above that for the settle.

FRANK. I'm to do the talking then?

ELSIE. Of course.

FRANK (*going towards door L.*). I wonder where the woman is? (*Looking back.*) You know, I had rather set my heart on getting you that pendant.

ELSIE. Frank!

FRANK (*knocking on door*). All right, dear. (*He retires from door. Enter ANNE.*)

ANNE. Did you knock, sir?

FRANK. I—Yes.

ANNE. Is it the milk? (*Looking.*) Why, you've not finished it.

ELSIE. Oh, but it's very nice. I'm quite enjoying it. (*Sipping.*)

FRANK (*awkwardly*). The fact is, Mrs.—er—I don't know your name.

ANNE. Barton, sir. Yes, sir?

FRANK. Oh, yes. The fact is we—that is—my wife—er—we've been taking the liberty of looking round your room.

ELSIE (*coming to the rescue*). And what a sweet room it is, Mrs. Barton. I should think you must love to live in a place like this.

ANNE. Bain't so bad. (*A pause.*)

FRANK. No—er. (*Desperately.*) That's an oldish piece of furniture you've got there. (*ANNE'S eyes wander vacantly.*)

FRANK (*impatiently*). Under the window.

ANNE. Oh! That.

FRANK. Yes. I wonder now what a thing like that would be worth?

ANNE. I can't say as I can tell, sir.

FRANK. No. (*Offhandedly.*) Probably, not much.

ANNE. Oh, but 'tis. Terrible old that be, sir.

FRANK. Indeed.

ANNE. Yes, sir. You see, sir, my husband, octogeranium he is—older than me this many year—it came to him when his father died—been in the family years upon yeas, sir—regular heirloom as you might say.

FRANK. I see. (*Looks at ELSIE.*)

ELSIE. I suppose you wouldn't care to sell it, Mrs. Barton?

ANNE (*feigning great surprise*). Sell that settle mam?

ELISE. Yes. I've taken quite a fancy to it.

ANNE (*dubiously*). Well, it's not for sale.

ELSIE. Oh, but surely you—

ANNE (*curtly*). It's not for sale.

FRANK (*to ELSIE*). That's off, then.

ELSIE (*motioning him to keep quiet—to ANNE persuasively*). We would pay you a good price, Mrs. Barton.

FRANK (*to ELSIE—impatiently*). Oh, if she doesn't want to sell, what's the good of going on?

ELSIE. Be quiet, Frank. (*To ANNE.*) I suppose, Mrs. Barton, that it's a matter your husband would have to decide?

ANNE (*gloomily*). He wouldn't sell, mam, not if you was to go on your bended knees to him for it.

ELSIE. But don't you think he'd consider it, now, if you had a little talk with him first and told him we were ready to pay him a good price?

ANNE. It bain't no use, mam. He do love that bit of furniture so well as a child or a horse.

FRANK. Yes, I don't think we ought to ask the old gentleman to sell if he's so much attached to it. (*Touching* ELSIE.) Come along, Elsie. You can see that Mrs. Barton doesn't even care to mention it to her husband.

ANNE (*graciously*). I might mention it, sir. No harm in that, only——

ELSIE. Yes, of course you will. I'm sure you don't use it. That sofa is far more comfortable.

ANNE. Use it? Well, no, we don't use it to sit on. But he'd miss it, do you see? It's been in the family so long too, but I'll just mention it to him, to oblige you, mam.

ELSIE. Thanks very much.

ANNE. Yes. I'll see what he says. (*Exit* ANNE L.)

ELSIE (*triumphantly*). You see, I've done it after all.

FRANK. I bet you a pair of gloves he refuses point blank. Either that or asks some fancy price to choke us off. You might as well have dropped it at once.

ELSIE. Now, Frank, just leave this to me. I'll show you what a capable business woman you married.

FRANK. You've hidden your light under a bushel so far.

ELSIE. Just you wait. People in the country don't see much money. I expect they'll be tempted very easily. (*Enter* L. ANNE and JOSIAH. ANNE leads him towards his chair.)

ANNE. It's the old settle, Josiah.

JOSIAH (*vacantly*). Eh?

ANNE (*settling him in his chair*). Do you mind if he sits down, mam? It's his rheumatics. Scrutinizing pains, he has. (JOSIAH *sits*.) The lady wants you to sell her the settle, Josiah.

JOSIAH (*shaking his head*). Sell my settle?

ELSIE. Yes. What do you say, Mr. Barton?

JOSIAH. Sell my settle? No, no, no.

ANNE (*persuasively*). It bain' t no use to us, Josiah.

JOSIAH. Use? No, happen it's not. The room wouldn't look itself without it, though.

FRANK (*as if tired of the discussion, briskly*). Look here, sir, I'll give you a five pound note for it.

JOSIAH (*with determination, nudged by ANNE who stands by his chair*). I won't part, sir.

FRANK. Eight pounds.

JOSIAH. No.

FRANK (*turning away*). Oh, all right.

ELSIE. Eight pounds is a lot of money, Mr. Barton. Think what you could do with eight pounds.

ANNE. Yes. You could buy that milking cow you were after for that.

JOSIAH (*testily*). No, I couldn't neither. He won't sell under ten. (ELSIE *looks appealingly at FRANK*.)

FRANK. I'll give ten.

JOSIAH. 'Tain't no use, sir. I wouldn't part with that settle not for twenty pound, I wouldn't. It's not only because it's been there so long and come down to me from my father.

ELSIE. What other reason is there?

JOSIAH. Well, you see, there was a gentleman come here a while back as admired that settle powerful. Told we as Queen Anne weren't dead when that was made and as how it was worth more than he was, an he'd a gold watch chain same as you, sir. I'm not

short of money, sir. Maybe I'm not much to look at, but that settle's not for sale, thanking ye kindly for your offer, sir.

ELSIE (to FRANK). It is valuable, then. I told you so. Queen Anne period things always are. We could send it to Christie's and get no end of money for it.

FRANK. All right. I'll go the limit. (To JOSIAH.) Look here, Mr. Barton, I'll give you twenty pounds for it and write you a cheque before I leave the room. That's my best offer. Take it or leave it.

JOSIAH (nudged by ANNE). Well, sir——

ANNE. Do 'ee now, Josiah, do 'ee take it. It's a lot of money as the gentleman offers you, and the old thing do need a power of elbow grease to keep her bright.

JOSIAH. It's a bargain, sir.

FRANK. Very well. (Takes a cheque book from his pocket.) Can I trouble you for ink, Mrs. Barton?

ANNE (taking the inkstand from the mantelshelf). Surely, sir.

FRANK (sitting down and writing at the table). Twenty pounds. (Handing the cheque.) There you are. You see my name. I'll send for it to-morrow—er—perhaps you'd better let me have a receipt.

ANNE. Yes, sir. I'll write it. (Takes several sheets of paper from the mantle, sits at table and writes.)

FRANK (taking a pocket-book out). Here's a stamp.

ANNE. Thank you, sir. The fifteenth to-day, isn't it?

FRANK. Yes, fifteenth.

ANNE (handing receipt to him). Will that do?

FRANK (reading it, folding and putting it in his pocket-book). Admirably. Why, you're quite a business woman, Mrs. Barton.

ANNE. I have to be, sir. You see (indicating, JOSIAH), he's getting a bit beyond it now.

FRANK. I see. Well, I think we'd better be moving, hadn't we, Elsie?

ELSIE. All right, dear. Good-bye, Mrs. Barton. Good-bye. (*Moving to JOSIAH.*)

ANNE (*curtseying*). Good-day, mam.

FRANK. Good-day. (*Exit FRANK and ELSIE R.*)

ANNE *holds the door open for them and closes it. Then she goes to the window and looks out. The horn hoots. JOSIAH breaks into a senile chuckle.*

ANNE (*returning from the window*). You may well smile.

JOSIAH. Hee, hee, hee. (*ANNE sits at table.*)
What be doing?

ANNE. Best lose no time about getting another.

JOSIAH. You never know your luck.

ANNE. No. Fifteen pounds nearer that pub of yours. Not bad for one afternoon. Now. (*Squaring up to write.*) Messrs. Smith & Jones, City Road, London, E.C. Kindly send another imitation Queen Anne period oak settle, list number—what's the number, Josiah? Best have same again. Oh, I know—number 343a as last had, price £5 nett, carriage paid to Josiah Barton— (*She breaks off and gets up suddenly, all her smiles gone.*)

JOSIAH (*interrupting his chuckling*). What be to do with ye?

ANNE. The thieves!

JOSIAH. Thieves? Who be ye a-calling ugly names?

ANNE. Them.

JOSIAH. What be stolen?

ANNE. They've gone off without paying for the milk.

JOSIAH. What!

ANNE. It's true!

JOSIAH. Cuss 'em. Cuss 'em. Them motors never brought luck to no one. Noise and dust and home and go off cool and easy without so much as offering to pay for what they've had. Cuss 'em.

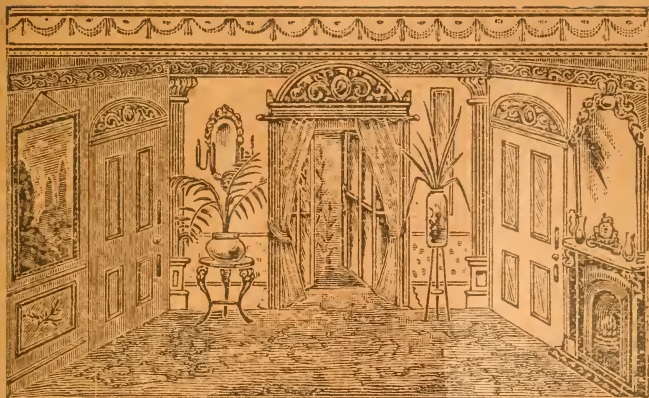
THE OAK SETTLE.

ANNE. The thieves. The dirty thieves. (*She remains standing staring with a malevolent glare straight before her.*)

Curtain.



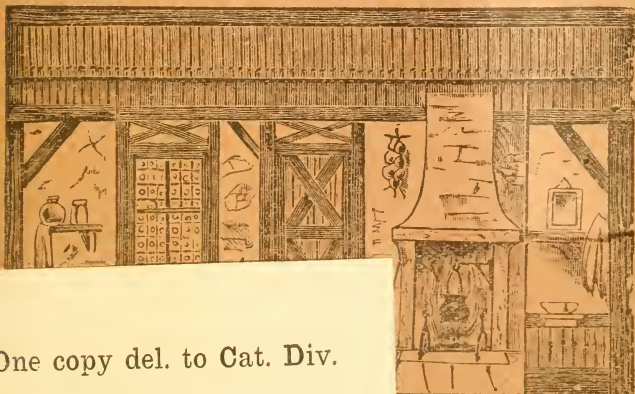
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