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BAKER'S EDITION
OF PLAYS

VALLEY FARM.



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VALLEY FARM

A DOMESTIC DRAMA
IN FOUR ACTS

BY

ARTHUR LEWIS TUBBS

*Author of "The Penalty of Pride," "The Fruit of His Folly," "The
Finger of Scorn," "Followed by Fate," "The Heart of a Hero,"
"A Double Deception," "A Scheme that Failed," "Dinner
at Six," "Through the Keyhole," etc.*

BOSTON

WALTER H. BAKER & CO.

1903

VALLEY FARM

CHARACTERS

HAROLD RUTLEDGE, *a young New Yorker.*

PERRY DEANE, *a son of the soil.*

DAVID HILDRETH, *a New York lawyer.*

SILAS HOLCOMB, *owner of Valley Farm.*

AZARIAH KEEP, *a clock tinker.*

JENNINGS, *servant at the Rutledge mansion.*

HETTY HOLCOMB, *a country flower, transplanted to city soil.*

ISABEL CARNEY, *niece to David Hildreth.*

MRS. RUTLEDGE, *Harold's mother.*

ALVIRA HOLCOMB, *sister of Silas.*

LIZY ANN TUCKER, *who borrows but "never gossips."*

VERBENA, *hired girl at the farm.*

Time in playing: about two hours and a quarter.



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SYNOPSIS

ACT I. — Valley Farm. An afternoon in August. The engagement.

ACT II. — The Rutledge mansion, New York City, the following December. The serpent has crept into Eden.

ACT III. — Same as before, three weeks later. Parted.

ACT IV. — At the farm again. An evening in the next March. The triumph of love.

COSTUMES AND CHARACTERISTICS

HAROLD RUTLEDGE. — He is a handsome young man of fashion, good-natured, and not proud, but easily influenced. In Act I he wears a light summer suit, with straw hat, and carries a tennis racquet. In Act II, evening dress. Act III, handsome cutaway suit. Act IV, heavy winter suit, with ulster, etc., for travelling.

PERRY DEANE. — A fine-looking, sturdy young farmer, somewhat impulsive and outspoken. In first act he wears a plain working suit, with broad-brimmed straw hat; in Act III, his clothes are much the worse for wear, and he is pale, haggard, and evidently in "hard luck." In the last act he is more like his former self, wearing a neat suit. Overcoat and cap for entrance.

DAVID HILDRETH. — An elderly, substantial professional man, jovial and kindly by nature, but stern and business-like upon occasion. He wears plain clothes of good material, suitable to the season — in Act I a light summer suit, Act II a handsome business suit, with overcoat and silk hat, and in Act IV a winter suit, with ulster, etc.

SILAS HOLCOMB. — A typical farmer, true to life, not exaggerated to the extent of being a comical "Rube." Rather let him be a simple-minded, tender-hearted old man, full of dry humor and with a smiling countenance. In first act he has on his working clothes — cheap trousers, checked shirt with vest but no coat, and an old straw hat. In Act II he is "dressed up" in his best clothes — new boots, etc.; should have

the appearance of feeling rather uncomfortable in his unaccustomed attire. For the last act he again wears a suitable winter farm suit.

AZARIAH KEEP. — An eccentric character part, that of a little, rather bent old man, very deaf and consequently with an abstracted manner. He speaks in a high-pitched voice, after the manner of most deaf people. Should wear in the first act a calico or gingham shirt, with no coat or vest, but a linen duster; straw hat or an old white "plug" hat; he carries a small, rusty satchel, and a large, faded umbrella rolled up. In Act IV he has a heavier suit and a big overcoat, fur cap, and a tippet wound many times around his neck; knit mittens. He still has the umbrella, but not the satchel.

JENNINGS. — Livery of the butler in a fashionable house — knee breeches, coat with brass buttons, etc. He is very stiff and dignified, and always stands staring straight ahead of him, while his features remain fixed. During his scene with Silas and Alvira, he may once or twice appear to have some difficulty to keep from smiling, though there should be no more than a mere hint of such inclination.

HETTY HOLCOMB. — A bright, pretty young country girl, — happy and ingenuous. In Act II, upon the arrival of Silas and Alvira, she is her old, natural self, but in her scenes with Mrs. Rutledge and Isabel, and particularly in the third act, she is more the matured woman, and seems to have lost some of her country simplicity, this being replaced by a mood calculated to match those of her proud antagonists. In the third act scene with Perry she for a moment again becomes like the Hetty of old, but with her determination to accompany him back to the farm is once more the desperate and almost heartbroken wife. In Act IV she is subdued and sorrowful. She wears in the first act a pretty light summer dress, with large hat; may have a tennis racquet. In Act II, a handsome dress, suitable for the dinner hour. In Act III, a rich, but not elaborate, street dress. She enters wearing hat, cloak, and furs, which she lays off and then resumes for her departure. Act IV, plain dark or black dress.

ISABEL CARNEY. — A proud, haughty city belle, disdainful of country people and unscrupulous in her scheming to reach the end she desires. In Act I, a delicate summer costume, with large hat and lace parasol. Act II, handsome house

Front matter

dress; change to elegant evening gown for her second entrance. Act III, winter street dress; wraps, etc.

MRS. RUTLEDGE. — About fifty or fifty-five years old; a dignified woman with an abundance of gray hair and a face rather youthful for her years. Very stately and proud. Her first dress in Act II is a rich house costume, which she changes to black velvet, with diamonds, or some other elegant attire. In Act III she is richly but more plainly dressed.

ALVIRA HOLCOMB. — She is a typical "old maid" — about forty-five — comical, but by no means a caricature. Hair slightly gray in the back, with a "false front," side curls, etc. In first act she wears a plain calico dress; gingham apron, which she changes to a neat white one. In Act II she enters with a plain black alpaca dress, bonnet, heavy shawl, etc. Change to her "best dress," with white kerchief, large brooch, etc. Act IV, plain winter house dress.

LIZY ANN TUCKER. — A fussy little old woman, with a shrill voice and an inquisitive manner. Thin gray hair, combed straight back, and in a small knot. In the first act she is attired in a plain calico dress, and has on a small straw hat or sun bonnet; in Act IV, a winter dress, shawl or sack, with old-fashioned fur collar or cape and large muff; hood or "cloud."

VERBENA. — A gawky country girl, slow-witted and lazy. She drags her feet when she walks, moving slowly, and drawls her words, speaking in short, detached sentences. Act I, short calico dress, apron; her hair is in pig-tails, some of it hanging about her eyes, and she presents a rather untidy appearance. In Act IV she has on a thicker dress, rather more tidy, her hair being in better order.

NOTE.

If possible to have a window in flat for last act, let it be thinly coated over with whitewash on the inside, to represent frost; then, on the sill outside, place some cotton, sprinkled with diamond dust, for snow. To further add to the effect, have a quantity of white paper torn in small bits and let this be dropped from above outside the window, to give the appearance of a snowstorm. This may be kept up for a time,

then Alvira may pull down the curtain. A further realistic effect may be gained by letting a generous supply of the torn paper be dropped at one side of the door, without, every time it is opened, and fanning this to represent a strong wind. The door may be quickly shut, so that this effect can be easily produced.

PROPERTIES

ACT I.

Two tennis racquets. Box to represent well, with a pail of water inside; or, if the scene is set as an interior, Alvira may simply go in another room for the water. Two glass tumblers. Teacup for Lizy Ann Tucker, also a small packet supposed to contain cinnamon and dried currants. Knitting for Alvira. Chopping bowl and knife. Palmleaf fan. Tin pail. Rusty old satchel and large, faded umbrella for Azariah.

ACT II.

Numerous bundles, carpet bag, boxes, etc., for Silas and Alvira; several apples and small packages in carpet-bag or boxes. Writing materials on desk. Tray with afternoon tea things — teapot, containing steaming hot tea; cream pitcher, loaf sugar in bowl, cups, saucers and spoons. Call-bell on table. Knitting or sewing work for Alvira.

ACT III.

Paper and envelopes, pen and ink on desk. Satchel for Hetty.

ACT IV.

Cheap paper novel, with the covers torn off. A country newspaper. Part of an old newspaper for Mrs. Tucker. Work-basket with knitting or sewing. Small package for Mrs. Tucker, supposed to contain something she has borrowed. Salt to represent snow on the shoulders and heads of the characters who enter from out-of-doors.

VALLEY FARM

ACT I.

SCENE. — *The yard at Valley Farm. Set house, with porch L.; fence along back with open gate c.; old-fashioned well up L.; bench down R.; flowers and vines growing by porch and along the fence, etc. Cornfield or meadow backing. Discovered, ALVIRA HOLCOMB, seated on bench R., sewing or knitting; LIZY ANN TUCKER, standing c., with an empty teacup in her hand, and VERBENA, seated on steps of porch, chopping something in a wooden bowl. If more convenient, this may be set as an interior, same as Act IV., with a few slight changes in the action and dialogue.*

ALVIRA. Pretty hot t'-day, ain't it, Mis' Tucker?

LIZY ANN. Dretful. Seems t' me it's the hottest day we've had this summer. I wouldn't 'a' come 'way over here 'n the bilin' hot sun, only we didn't have a bit o' m'lasses in the house, 'n' he'll have a fit if he don't git a fresh m'lasses cake fer his supper. I promised him one, 'n' I s'pose he's lottin' on it. I didn't know but you'd be willin' t' lend me a little in this teacup.

ALVIRA. Why, of course; jest as well as not. Verbeny, you git Mis' Tucker some m'lasses out o' that jug in the cellarway.

LIZY ANN (*going and handing the cup to VERBENA, who sets her bowl down on porch, and rises very leisurely as she takes the cup and prepares to go into house*). Not more 'n half full, Verbeny. I'll be ever so much 'bliged, Miss Holcomb.

ALVIRA. Oh, you're welcome. Now, Verbeny, for pity's sake don't take all day. (*VERBENA shuffles into the house, dragging her feet.*) Land! that gal's enough t' try the patience of a dozen Jobs and all their wives.

LIZY ANN. Mortal slow, ain't she? I don't s'pose she earns her salt.

ALVIRA. Oh, she ain't s' bad as that, but I do git out o' patience sometimes. Se' down and fan y'rself. (*She takes a palmleaf fan from the bench by her side and holds it out.*)

LIZY ANN (*taking the fan*). Thanks. (*She goes and sits on the floor of the porch and fans herself vigorously.*) I see the young folks playin' some game out in your side yard as I come along. They was runnin' around all sorts. Seems t' me it's pretty hot f'r sech vi'lent exercise. I should 'most be afeared t' git so het up.

ALVIRA. That's what I told Hetty, but they don't seem t' mind it. That's what they call lawn tennis. It belongs t' Mr. Rutledge.

LIZY ANN. Oh, that city feller what's stayin' up t' the hotel? He's over here a good deal, ain't he?

ALVIRA. Yes, he comes over once in a while. He seems t' be a very nice young man.

LIZY ANN. He's nice-lookin' enough, as fur's that goes, but y' can't al'ays tell about them city folks. I kind o' mistrust the best of 'em.

ALVIRA. Harold Rutledge is a perfect gentleman, I can say that f'r him.

LIZY ANN. Wal, I hope he is, 'cause they's consid'able talk about — I d' know's I'd better say anything. I ain't used t' gossipin', you'll admit that, Miss Holcomb, but I thought mebby it wás my duty t' tell y'.

ALVIRA. I don't know what y' mean.

LIZY ANN. Why, I mean about him and your Hetty. There, I hope you don't think I'm meddlin', but it's common talk, and —

ALVIRA (*rising*). What's common talk?

LIZY ANN. Why, that he's playin' sweet on her, jest f'r his own amusement. It ain't s'posed he has any idee o' marryin' her, and if he don't — well, it's thought mebbe nobuddy else will. They'll say she's be'n trifled with.

ALVIRA. I call it a pretty note, t' talk like that. It ain't no sech thing. You can't convince me Mr. Rutledge means any harm by our Hetty. (*Enter VERBENA from house with the teacup.*) There's y'r m'lasses, Mis' Tucker.

(*VERBENA gives the cup to LIZY ANN.*)

LIZY ANN. I'm ever s' much obliged. (*About to go.*) I hope I ain't offended y' any, Miss Holcomb. I wouldn't 'a' said anything, only I thought mebbe you'd ought t' know. I make it a p'int never t' repeat nothin'. I guess I'll have t' be goin'.

ALVIRA. Oh, I s'pose you meant it all right, but I don't see the sense o' sech talk.

LIZY ANN (*she has reached the gate, but now comes gradually back down c., as she talks.* VERBENA, *who has taken the bowl and resumed chopping, now stops, and listens eagerly to what LIZY ANN is saying, staring at her in open-mouthed interest*). Wal, it's the third summer he's be'n around here, y' know, and he's kep' payin' her more 'n' more attention. He's took her t' picnics, 'n' out ridin', 'n' on the lake, 'n' — well, they say he's real sweet on her. I heard he kissed her last week.

ALVIRA. Kissed her?

LIZY ANN. Yes, Susie Bates see him do it. They was out walkin', after dusk, down there by the gris'mill. They didn't know anybuddy could see 'em, but Susie happened t' be goin' along 'n' she got full sight of 'em jest as he done it. She told Abby Turner, 'n' she told her mother, 'n' she told me. I guess it come straight enough.

VERBENA. Huh! (*She follows this expression with a smothered giggle.*)

ALVIRA (*looking around*). Verbeny, you go in the house! That's chopped fine enough.

(*VERBENA slowly drags herself into the house, with another giggle, taking the bowl.*)

LIZY ANN. If she ain't heard the hull thing!

ALVIRA. Wal, what of it? You say ev'rybuddy's talkin' about it anyway, so what's the difference? (*LIZY ANN is again going up; ALVIRA follows her.*)

LIZY ANN. Oh, I didn't mean jest that. I hope she won't go 'n' tattle it. Land, I 'most lugged off your fan. (*ALVIRA takes the fan.*) Wal, good day, Miss Holcomb. I'm much obliged f'r this m'lasses. I'll bring it back inside of a week. (*Looking off to R.*) They're still playin' that game. Land, I should think they'd drop! [*Exit to R.*

ALVIRA (*coming down just as VERBENA pokes her head out of door*). Wal, what d' you want now?

VERBENA. Nothin'.

ALVIRA. Then go 'n the house 'n' peel some p'taters. It'll soon be supper-time.

VERBENA. All right. Say, I seen him, too.

ALVIRA. See what?

VERBENA. Kiss her.

ALVIRA. What you talkin' about? Kiss who?

VERBENA. Hetty. That city feller. Last night. In the orchard. I see 'em.

ALVIRA. I warrant y' you was snoopin' around. You'd better tend t' y'r own affairs. Go 'n' peel them 'taters.

VERBENA. Huh! But I did, — so!

[*Exit to house.*]

(ALVIRA is about to go up steps and follow VERBENA, when DAVID HILDRETH and ISABEL CARNEY enter from L.; he comes down c., while she pauses in gate and looks off to R., with an angry expression on her face. ALVIRA sees them and returns.)

HILDRETH. Good afternoon, Miss Holcomb.

ALVIRA. Why, how d' do, Mr. Hildreth? I'm glad t' see y'.

HILDRETH. Thank you. You know my niece, Miss Carney. Isabel!

ALVIRA. How d' do? (ISABEL bows coolly, hardly looking at ALVIRA.) Won't you se' down? You must be tired, it's so hot.

HILDRETH. Thank you. (*He goes and sits on bench, fanning himself with his hat.*) It is rather warm to-day. You see, Miss Holcomb, I — that is, Miss Carney and I — are planning a little excursion on my steam yacht, and we came over to invite Miss Hetty to accompany us. I hope you are willing.

ALVIRA. Why, of course I be, 'n' I ain't no sort of a notion her pa'll object. Wouldn't you like a drink, Mr. Hildreth? You do look so warm.

HILDRETH. Why, yes, I would. Out of the well, here. (*Rises and goes toward well.*)

ALVIRA. You can have milk jest as well, if you want it. Sweet 'r buttermilk.

HILDRETH. No, thank you; a draught from "the old oaken bucket" is good enough for me. How about you, Isabel?

ISABEL. I don't care for either, thank you.

ALVIRA. I'll git some glasses. *[Exit to house.]*

ISABEL. So you insist upon inviting Hetty Holcomb to accompany us, do you?

HILDRETH. Why, of course I do. Why not?

ISABEL. Uncle David, you know why not. *(Pointing off r.)* Look! You see them?

HILDRETH. Yes, I see them. It strikes me they are a very good-looking young couple.

ISABEL. You know what I mean. It is going too far. The innocent little country girl is playing her cards very well, and the first he knows she will have the upper hand.

HILDRETH. M'm! I suppose you're afraid he will marry her.

ISABEL. Uncle David! Why do you say such things? Of course not. I don't think Harold Rutledge has quite lost his senses yet. But people are talking, and — well, it may put false notions into her head and she might make trouble for him. Think of a breach-of-promise suit, for instance.

HILDRETH. Pshaw! Not much danger of that, I guess. Besides, I am inclined to think Rutledge means it.

ISABEL. Means what?

HILDRETH. Why, to marry her, of course. Why not?

ISABEL. Why not? How provoking you are! There are a thousand reasons why not. Think of his mother, — proud, aristocratic. What would she say? Oh, it is too ridiculous!

(She is up c. by gate, looking off to r., he on bench. ALVIRA enters with two tumblers; HILDRETH rises.)

ALVIRA. Sorry t' keep y' waitin' so long, but Verbeny asked me something, 'n' it takes f'rever t' git anything through her head. *(She goes to well and fills a tumbler with water, offering it to ISABEL.)* Have a drink, Miss?

ISABEL. No, thank you.

HILDRETH (*as he takes water from her*). I will. Thanks. (*Drinks.*) Ah, that's good.

(ISABEL *has sauntered off to R.*)

ALVIRA. Land, she's cooled it off con'idable. 'Tain't nigh s' hot as 'twas. Your niece, ain't she?

HILDRETH. Yes.

ALVIRA. Wal, she's as stuck up as ever was, if I do say it t' y'r face. She ain't much like you.

HILDRETH. I suppose that is meant as a compliment to me, but — really, Miss Carney isn't so bad at heart. You mustn't judge her too hastily.

ALVIRA. I ain't. Folks is like apples. Some of 'em's smooth and fair outside, with bad hearts, and others are better inside th'n they look. It's my opinion of her that she's a nice, shiny pippin on the outside of her exterior, but a kind of a crabapple inside. Mebbe I'm wrong, but I'm a pretty good jedge of apples, 'n' folks too.

HILDRETH. Ha! ha! Then I suppose — I mean I hope — that you take me for a pound sweet.

ALVIRA. Wal, I d' know. I might say you was a green-ing. (*They laugh; she is looking off to L.*) Here comes Perry Deane. I s'pose you know him?

HILDRETH. I have met him once or twice. Seems to be a smart young fellow.

ALVIRA. He is. Why, Perry's almost like one o' our own. You see, he's always lived next t' us, 'nd we kind o' look on him as one of the family.

HILDRETH. I see.

(*Enter PERRY from L.; he pauses c. a moment, looking off to R., with a troubled expression.*)

ALVIRA. Hello, Perry. Got through your work early t'-day, didn't y'?

✓ PERRY. Yes, Miss Holcomb; it was too hot to work.

ALVIRA. Yes, y' might get a sunstroke. Here's Mr. Hildreth.

✓ PERRY (*coming down*). How are you, Mr. Hildreth?

HILDRETH. Well, thank you. (*Going up.*) Guess I'll get

my niece and saunter back to the hotel. It's getting on toward supper-time. I'll see Miss Holcomb first about to-morrow's sail. Good-day.

(They reply as he goes off to R., through gate.)

PERRY. To-morrow's sail. What does he mean?

ALVIRA. Why, he's going t' have a picnic 'r something, on his steamboat, 'nd he come over t' ask Hetty t' go along.

PERRY. And she'll go, of course.

ALVIRA. I s'pose she will.

PERRY. Yes, as she goes with them and stays with them half the time. They are winning her away from us — from me — and filling her head with all sorts of high notions.

ALVIRA. You mustn't think that, Perry. Hetty ain't that kind. She'll never f'rgit her own folks or her old friends. She does git "aspirations," as she calls 'em, I know, jest as a young one gits measles 'n' chicken-pox, but I reckon she'll git over 'em in time. I've often told Silas they wouldn't no good come o' her runnin' round with them city folks s' much, but he's so easy-goin', 'n' so sure she'll do jest what's right, that he won't pay no 'tention t' what I say. Not that I b'lieve it, either, 's I know of, but it ain't al'ays safe t' mix breeds, whether it's folks 'r hens. I reckon a common little hen wa'n't cal'lated t' run around with a prize Leghorn —

PERRY. I don't like your comparison. She's as good as any of them — better!

ALVIRA. Good land, I know that, 'n' I didn't mean anything. But they're rich 'n' stylish 'nd we're jest plain country folks. Not but what we're jest as good, but you know —

PERRY. Yes, I know, and it's true. They are not our kind, and no good will come of Hetty's getting their ways and notions. I don't want to lose her, Miss Holcomb; I mustn't. I want her to be mine; you know I do, and we've been as good as engaged all these years, ever since we were children. And now, if — no, I won't lose her, and if that city fellow trifles with her, he shall answer to me!

ALVIRA. Mercy, Perry, you 'most scare me. You say you 'nd Hetty have be'n as good as engaged f'r years. But be y'? Have y' ever asked her, right out?

PERRY. Why, no, not exactly; but we — it has sort of been understood —

ALVIRA. That's where you're wrong. Ask her. Make her say she'll be yours, then you can be sure, not b'fore. I tell you, girls don't like these hang-offish men.

✓ PERRY. I suppose that's true. You ought to know.

ALVIRA. Me? Oh, I s'pose you mean Azariah Keep. Wal, mebbe I do. Everybuddy knows jest how it is b'tween him 'n' me, I guess. There he's been hangin' round me ever since his first wife died, over six years ago, 'n' he ain't said it yet. Sometimes I think mebbe it's b'cause he's so deaf 't he can't tell whether he's popped 'r not.

✓ PERRY (*smiling*). I dare say that's it.

ALVIRA. Wal, you ain't deaf, 'n' I c'n tell you it ain't safe t' wait seven 'r eight years b'fore askin' her. Some girls have other chances. Oh, I ain't sayin' I never had, but my advice t' you is that you'd better tell Hetty all about it, f'r if y' don't you won't have nobuddy but y'rself t' blame.

✓ PERRY. That's true, and I will tell her the very first chance I get.

(*Voices are heard off R. ALVIRA goes up and looks off, PERRY is down R.*)

ALVIRA. Here she comes now, with the rest of 'em.

✓ PERRY (*starting toward R.*). I'll go, till they are gone.

ALVIRA. You can't now, they'll see y'. They'll soon be goin'.

(*PERRY pauses, as MR. HILDRETH and ISABEL enter from up R., crossing to L. of gate; they are followed by HAROLD RUTLEDGE and HETTY HOLCOMB, who come down through gate to C.*)

HETTY (*looking back*). Are you going so soon?

HILDRETH. Yes, we'll walk along. See you to-morrow. Good-day, all.

(*The others, with the exception of PERRY, reply; he does not look at them. ALVIRA goes up and calls after them.*)

ALVIRA. Speakin' of apples, there's a lot o' them early ones on the ground there in the orchard. You might fill y'r pockets. It's too early f'r pound sweets 'r greenings!

HILDRETH (*having paused L.*). Thanks. Maybe you could lend me a basket.

(ISABEL, with a haughty, injured air, has gone on; he now follows her and exits to L.)

HETTY. Why, there's Perry! Hello, Perry; I didn't know you were here. You know Mr. Rutledge.

HAROLD. Yes, we have met several times. How do you do, Mr. Deane? (He goes and extends his hand to PERRY, who takes it rather mechanically, submitting to a cordial shake.) We must be good friends now.

PERRY. Friends?

HAROLD. Why, yes, of course. You are such an old friend of Hetty's, you know, and —

HETTY (speaking quickly and laying her hand on HAROLD'S arm). Yes, Perry, I have told him all about you, and that you are just like a brother to me. Why, we have been together almost every day since we were little children.

PERRY. Y-yes, all our lives.

(He looks at her an instant, as if puzzled, then turns away with an expression of apprehension and suppressed emotion.)

VERBENA (poking her head out of the door of house and calling loudly to ALVIRA). Say! come 'n' see 'f I've peeled enough 'taters! (She disappears.)

ALVIRA. Yes, yes! (Going to steps.) Land, what a child! (On porch.) Won't y' stay t' supper, Mr. Rutledge?

HAROLD. Thank you, Miss Holcomb, not to-night. I have promised to be back at the hotel at six.

ALVIRA. Wal, I couldn't offer y' no hotel cookin', jest plain, hullsome food. We're goin' t' have some cold biled cabbage and some fried eggs. Mebbe that wouldn't touch the spot with you, but Silas jest lots on cold biled cabbage.

HAROLD (smiling good-naturedly). Oh, it's a tempting array, I assure you, and some other time I may avail myself of your kind hospitality.

ALVIRA. All right. Le' me know when you're comin', 'n' I'll have some riz biscuit. [Exit into house.]

HETTY. You mustn't mind Aunt Alvira, Harold.

HAROLD. Mind her? Why, I think she's charming.

[PERRY casts an angry look at him and hastily exits R. 2 E.]

HETTY. Now you're making fun of her. I won't allow that, you know.

HAROLD. Oh, but I wasn't. I like your Aunt Alvira, indeed I do.

HETTY. I want you to like all my friends, and — (*turning to R.*) why, where is Perry? He's gone.

HAROLD. There he goes. (*Pointing. She looks.*) I am afraid he doesn't fancy me very much, and I — I imagine I know why, too.

(*He is about to put his arm about her when VERBENA clatters onto porch from house, carrying a tin pail, and clumps down steps to the well, where she proceeds to draw water. HAROLD and HETTY separate in some confusion.*)

VERBENA. Never mind me. I didn't see nothin'.

HETTY. Verbena, that will do. Go into the house.

VERBENA. Nope. Not till I git water. Go on. I won't peek. (*Turning her head away, as she bends over the pail.*)

HETTY (*to HAROLD*). Isn't she provoking?

HAROLD. Very.

VERBENA. Got t' water the hens. (*Offering them pail.*) Have some?

HETTY. Verbena, go into the house at once.

VERBENA. Huh! needn't git huffy. I'm goin'. (*Up c. to gate.*) Mad, ain't y', 'cause I caught y' sparkin'? (*She giggles as she goes toward L.*) Needn't think I'll tell. Might git caught m'self. He! he! [*Exit to R.*]

HAROLD (*looking after her till she disappears, then again about to embrace HETTY*). Now —

HETTY. Be careful; there's Mr. Keep.

(*AZARIAH KEEP has entered from R. and stands leaning over the fence, looking at them. He has a satchel, and an umbrella over his head.*)

AZARIAH. How d' do? Folks t' hum? (*HETTY nods, going up c.*) Hey? (*He comes through gate.*)

HETTY. Aunt Alvira's in the house. (*Loudly.*) I say, Aunt Alvira's in the house.

AZARIAH. Thanks. Guess I won't go in jest yet. I'll se' down here t' git cooled off. Hot day, ain't it? (*Puts down umbrella.*)

HETTY. Very warm.

AZARIAH. Yes, looks some like a storm. (*He has sat down on edge of the steps, putting the satchel and umbrella on porch.*) Who's he? (*Motioning toward HAROLD.*)

HETTY. That's Mr. Rutledge.

AZARIAH. Who?

HETTY. Mr. Rutledge — (*louder*) — Rutledge!

AZARIAH. Oh, Rutledge. Sure enough. I frgit names. (*To HAROLD.*) You're the city chap they say 's shinin' up to 'er, be y'?

HAROLD. Why, Mr. Keep, I —

AZARIAH. Hey? Speak louder. I'm a little hard o' hearin'.

HETTY. Never mind, Harold. (*To AZARIAH.*)— Better go in the house. Aunt Alvira's in there.

AZARIAH. What's that? A little louder.

HAROLD. I'm going, Hetty. Will you walk a ways with me?

HETTY. Yes, as far as the other side of the orchard; no farther.

HAROLD. All right, then that will have to do. Come on.

(*They go up c.; AZARIAH looks after them curiously. They glance back, nodding and smiling. He waves his hand at them as they go out L.*)

AZARIAH. Guess mebbe it's true.

(*Enter ALVIRA from house.*)

ALVIRA. Wal, Azariah Keep, is that you? Where'd you come from? (*He does not notice her.*) Azariah!

AZARIAH. Hey? (*Looking up at her.*) Oh, you there, Viry? Thought I'd stop in a minute. (*Rising and taking his satchel and umbrella.*)

ALVIRA. Comin' in?

AZARIAH. Hey?

ALVIRA. I say, I'm glad t' see y'. You ain't be'n over 'n quite a while.

AZARIAH. Yes, it's a good mile 'n' a half. I'm about tuckered out.

ALVIRA. Better come on in. (*Screaming.*) Come on in!

AZARIAH. Oh! don't care 'f I do. (*He goes up steps, stumbling and dropping his satchel.*)

ALVIRA. Land sakes! did y' hurt y', Azariah? (*She helps him up.*) You come near havin' a fall. I say — fall!

AZARIAH. Oh, yes, fall. 'Tain't the fust fall I ever had. Fell in love long ago.

ALVIRA. Now, Azariah Keep, don't you git sentimental. (*She goes into house.*)

AZARIAH (*as he follows*). Give her a hint that time. Go'n' t' ask her t'-night, sure's preachin', 'r my name ain't Keep.

[*Exit into house.*]

(*After a slight pause, SILAS HOLCOMB enters L. U. E., down through gate, pausing and looking back thoughtfully.*)

SILAS. My little gal! I hope she'll be happy. (*As he comes down c., PERRY enters R. 2 E.*) Hello, Perry, that you?

PERRY. Yes, Mr. Holcomb. I've been waiting to speak to you.

(*They are c.*)

SILAS. Want t' speak t' me, do y'? Wal, I guess we got a few minutes b'fore supper. Anything I c'n do for y'?

PERRY. It's — it's about Hetty, Mr. Holcomb. I —

SILAS. Oh! About Hetty, is it? What's she be'n up to now?

PERRY. It's something I have intended to say for a long time, and now I am almost afraid to say it. I'm afraid it's — too late.

SILAS. Too late, eh? Wal, better out with it 'n' we'll see.

PERRY. It's this, Mr. Holcomb — I love Hetty; I have ever since I can remember, and I want her for my wife.

SILAS. Sho! so that's it, is it? Wal, hev y' asked her?

PERRY. No. I never get a chance nowadays. She's always with those city people, that Mr. Rutledge. She seems to be fascinated with his handsome face and stylish ways, while I — well, I don't count any more. She hardly speaks to me now, and it's all his fault. I hate him!

SILAS. Oh, I guess y' don't hate him, Perry.

PERRY. I could kill him! I will, too, if he trifles with her, and —

SILAS. Hold up, there, my boy! Mr. Rutledge ain't that kind of a feller, 'n' I reckon you're kind o' gitt'n' too riled —

PERRY. Oh, I suppose he has fascinated you too, maybe, but he can't fool me. I tell you he'll have his fun with her, and then throw her over. He's using her for a plaything, that's all, a —

SILAS. Stop! I've got a good deal o' patience, Perry, 'n' I feel for y', but I can't hear y' talk like that. If y' keep on I'll have t' tell y' somethin' I was s'posed t' keep t' m'self f'r a spell yet.

PERRY. What do you mean? Not that he — that she?

(*He starts excitedly up c., just as LIZY ANN TUCKER hurries in from r. At the same time AZARIAH KEEP enters from house, followed by ALVIRA. SILAS is r. c.; AZARIAH, l. c., by steps, and ALVIRA on porch. LIZY ANN comes down c. PERRY brushes past her and goes out to r.*)

LIZY ANN (*looking back*). Land, what's the matter with him? If looks c'd kill, I'd hate t' have him look at me. Looks as if he c'd bite a tenpenny nail in two.

ALVIRA. Oh, I guess it ain't nothin' much. I didn't s'pose you'd be over agin t'-day, Lizy Ann.

LIZY ANN. N'r me. But I had t' race back through all this hot sun. I f'rgot t' ask if you c'd lend me a little mite o' cinnymon. He likes it in his m'llasses cake 'n' I'm all out.

ALVIRA. I guess so. (*Calling.*) Verbena!

LIZY ANN. I'm real sorry t' trouble y', but I guess it's wuth it, traipsin' 'way over here in the hot sun twice in one afternoon. How d' do, Mr. Keep? (*AZARIAH pays no attention to her.*) Sakes alive! ain't he deaf? (*At the top of her voice.*) How d' do, Mr. Keep?

AZARIAH (*looking around at her*). Hey?

LIZY ANN. Land, that man makes hay whether the sun shines 'r not, don't he? (*To AZARIAH.*) I say, it's hot t'-day, ain't it?

AZARIAH. Louder, please.

LIZY ANN (*screaming*). Hot! H—o—t!!

AZARIAH. Oh, yes, hot. 'Tis hot.

LIZY ANN. I guess it is, tryin' t' talk t' you. (*Wiping her face with a apron.*)

ALVIRA. I guess Verbenny didn't hear me. You'd better come in, Lizy Ann, 'n' I'll git y' that cinnymon.

LIZY ANN. All right. And if you've got 'em t' spare, I guess I'll borry a few dried currants. They do add so to a cake. (*She goes up steps, following ALVIRA into the house.*)

SILAS (*as they disappear*). If she ain't a case f'r borryin'. She'd better wait a few minutes and take the cake. She'll git it all piecemeal, if she keeps on. (*AZARIAH is going up c. SILAS turns and speaks to him.*) Going, Azariah?

AZARIAH. Hey?

SILAS. No, straw! I vum, y' might as well talk to a hitchin'-post. (*Louder, to AZARIAH.*) I say, you'd better stay and have a bite.

AZARIAH. Stay all night? Thanks, but I don't b'lieve I can. Guess I'll hev t' be joggin' along. Got some tinkerin' t' do up t' Blodgett's. Good-day. Mebbe I'll be back this evenin'. Got somethin' t' say t' Alviry. (*He goes off to R.*)

SILAS (*he stands a moment looking after AZARIAH before speaking*). Somethin' t' say! Wal, I guess after tryin' t' say it f'r nigh ont' seven years, y' won't git it out t'-night. (*He turns to L. and his face brightens as he sees HETTY, who runs in from L. and goes to him, throwing herself into his arms and resting her head on his shoulder. He puts his arm about her and they come slowly down c.*)

HETTY. Oh, father, I'm so happy!

SILAS. Are you, little one?

HETTY. Yes, very, very happy. He loves me — me, a simple little country girl, when there are so many others whom he might love; others who are rich and cultured and beautiful. But no, it's Hetty Holcomb he loves — Hetty Holcomb — and that's me.

SILAS. Yes, — my little Hetty.

HETTY. You're glad too, aren't you, father?

SILAS. Why, of course I am. I'm always glad to have my little girl happy. But it's going t' be pretty hard t' lose her. I can't f'rgit that.

HETTY. Oh, but you won't! He says we'll come here every summer, and — and you shall come to see us sometimes, and — just think, I'm going to the city, to see the world, to hear lovely music and see grand pictures and live in a beautiful house. Harold says I can take singing lessons — you know I can sing a little now — and learn to paint, maybe, and — (*looking up at him and noticing that he looks sad*). Oh,

but you don't look glad a bit. You think I'm heartless, because I am glad to go away.

SILAS. No, my dear, not that; but — are you sure it ain't all that, all you're goin' t' see 'n' do, that makes you think y'r so happy? Be you sartin' sure y' love him?

HETTY. Love Harold? Oh, father, how can you ask that? Of course I do. Hasn't he asked me for my hand?

SILAS. Your hand, little one, — yes. But what about y'r heart? It don't mean happiness, the kind o' happiness that lasts, unless the hand y' give him's got y'r heart in it.

(He looks down tenderly at her; she is about to speak, when LIZY ANN TUCKER enters quickly from house, coming down steps. She pauses a moment c.)

LIZY ANN. Oh! I didn't know they was any one here!

HETTY. Why, how do you do, Mrs. Tucker?

LIZY ANN. So! y' do speak t' common folks, don't y'?

HETTY. Why, what do you mean? I —

LIZY ANN. Oh, I didn't know but you'd be so sot up, seein' you're so thick with them big-bugs, thet y' wouldn't notice ordinary mortals like me.

HETTY. Now, Mrs. Tucker, I call that unkind. You should know me better than that.

LIZY ANN *(going up)*. Wal, y' can't al'ays tell. If I've misjudged y', I hope y'll f'rgive me. *(Insinuatingly.)* It ain't ev'ry country gal thet can have a city lover 'n' git kissed out walkin' after dusk.

HETTY. Why, Mrs. Tucker, I —

SILAS. See here, Lizy Ann Tucker, what you drivin' at? If you've got anything t' say, out with it, 'r —

LIZY ANN. Oh, it ain't my way t' say nothin'. I never gossip. But I've heard a few things. *(She is up in gate.)*

SILAS. What do you mean?

LIZY ANN. Oh, nothin'; only I guess some folks 'd better watch their daughters 'n' kind o' see what's goin' on. *(She starts to go; SILAS goes up c., angrily.)*

SILAS. Wait a minute. I want t' know what you mean.

HETTY. It's wicked of you, Mrs. Tucker, to talk so. What have I ever done —

LIZY ANN. I ain't got nothin' t' say. *(She starts to go off r., but pauses a moment, turning back.)* Here comes Perry

Deane. I should think, after the way you've treated him, you wouldn't need no explanation frum me. Good-day.

[*She exits R.*

HETTY (*going to him, with a white, scared face, almost in tears*). Father!

SILAS. Never mind, dearie, don't you fret.

HETTY. But what did she mean about — about Perry?

SILAS. There, there, it ain't nothin'. She ain't wuth noticin'.

HETTY. Oh, I — (*She pauses, an expression of surprise and dismay coming to her face, as the truth dawns slowly upon her. She turns and sees PERRY, who has entered R., and now stands looking fixedly at her.*)

SILAS (*who has parted from HETTY and is now L. C.*). Wal, Perry —

HETTY (*going to SILAS and speaking softly to him*). Leave me with Perry, father. I want to speak to him.

SILAS. You're goin' t' tell him?

HETTY. Yes.

SILAS. Be careful, Hetty. (*Close to her, in a half-whisper.*) He loves you too.

(*SILAS goes into house; HETTY goes up near PERRY, who has turned his face away from her.*)

HETTY. How do you do, Perry? I'm real glad to see you.

PERRY (*turning to her*). Glad? Are you, Hetty?

HETTY. Why, of course I am. Somehow, I have seen you very seldom of late, and — you don't act quite the same, and —

PERRY. Don't you know why, Hetty? Can't you see? Oh, I can't bear it to have you forgetting me and —

HETTY. Forget you, Perry? Oh, no, I could never do that. Why, we have been such good friends always, and I'm sure we always will be.

PERRY. Friends, Hetty? Is that all you have thought we were? Have you never thought that we might be more than that to each other?

HETTY. Why, Perry, I — (*She draws away from him slightly, as if almost frightened at his fervid manner.*)

PERRY. Oh, you must have known what my hopes were, what I have been working and saving and waiting for all these years, ever since we were little children.

HETTY. Why, no, Perry, I didn't think — I — I —

✓ PERRY. What! You never thought of being my wife? You — don't love me?

HETTY. Not in that way, Perry. I can never be your wife.

✓ PERRY. Never — be — No, you don't mean that, Hetty; you don't mean that you won't marry me — that —

HETTY. No, I never can. Oh, Perry, you mustn't say such things to me. It isn't right. I am — *(She pauses, in confusion, looking at him pleadingly. He gazes at her an instant, as if dazed, then he begins to realize the truth.)*

✓ PERRY. You don't — mean — you and —

HETTY. Y-yes.

(She stands c., with drooping head, holding up her left hand, on the third finger of which glistens a diamond engagement ring. He gazes at it a moment, as if stunned, then seems to comprehend, puts one hand a moment over his eyes, as if bewildered, then straightens up and with an air of determination goes up c. and exits to l., not looking back. HETTY follows him, but pauses c., looking after him, and stands thus with a sad face as the curtain falls.)

ACT II.

SCENE. — *An elegantly furnished room in the Rutledge mansion, New York City. An archway across L. U. E. opens to hall; there are doors R. and L. leading to other apartments. A table, with books and ornaments, down R.; handsome pictures, luxurious furniture, etc. Desk, with writing materials, up R. Discovered, MRS. RUTLEDGE seated R. of table, ISABEL CARNEY L. of table, DAVID HILDRETH C. On the table is a tray with afternoon tea things. MRS. RUTLEDGE pours tea and passes the cup to ISABEL, who gives it to HILDRETH. He takes it, while she offers him sugar, holding a lump over the cup with tongs.*

HILDRETH. One lump, please. (*She drops sugar into his tea; he stirs it.*) Here I sit, sipping tea with you, when I really ought to be off down town. I have a dozen important things to see to.

ISABEL. Important! Thank you. You are not very complimentary. Is he, Mrs. Rutledge?

MRS. RUTLEDGE. I don't know, my dear. When a man neglects his business for a woman, she — (*Pausing, with a coquettish look at HILDRETH.*)

HILDRETH. She knows that she is charming, eh? And when a woman makes it her business to be charming, why — what other business is worth a man's attention?

ISABEL. Dear me, Uncle David, that is almost an epigram. Be careful, or you will say something witty.

MRS. R. Now, my dear — .

HILDRETH. Oh, that's just the way she misuses me. Never mind, I'll pay her back. I've a good notion now not to tell you what I came for.

ISABEL. Oh, do!

MRS. R. You mustn't punish us both, Mr. Hildreth, for Isabel's naughtiness. Surely you wouldn't be so cruel.

HILDRETH. As not to satisfy your woman's curiosity? Well, it's this. I have four seats for the opera this evening, and I thought you might like to go.

ISABEL. Of course. What is the opera?

HILDRETH. "Tristan and Isolde," with Nordica, Schumann-Heink, DeReszke, and a fine cast.

MRS. R. Oh, I am sure it will be delightful. As it happens, we have no engagement for this evening.

ISABEL. But you said four seats, Uncle David. Who is to occupy the fourth?

HILDRETH. Why, I thought perhaps Mrs. Harold might accompany us. I think she would enjoy it.

ISABEL. Oh! (*She speaks in a tone that indicates disapproval.*)

(*They have been sipping their tea; MRS. RUTLEDGE now rises and rings the bell on the table.*)

MRS. R. You are very kind to remember my son's wife, Mr. Hildreth, but I am afraid she would hardly appreciate it.

HILDRETH. Why, I thought she was very fond of music!

MRS. R. Music of a certain class — yes; but Wagner, I fear, is rather beyond her comprehension. (*Enter JENNINGS L.*) Jennings, you may remove the tea things. (*JENNINGS takes tray and exits L.*)

HILDRETH. M'm — and mine too, for that matter. But I pretend to enjoy it. You have to nowadays. Perhaps your son's wife could not cultivate her taste in any better way than by going along and pretending, the way the rest of us do.

ISABEL. Uncle David, don't be rude.

HILDRETH (*he has risen*). Oh, I beg pardon; I didn't mean anything. But Wagner, you know —

MRS. R. Yes, I understand. But I must ask you to excuse Mehetible. If you care to take Isabel and me, I am sure we shall appreciate your kindness.

HILDRETH. It shall be as you say, to be sure.

MRS. R. Of course you know, Mr. Hildreth, that I did not approve of my son's marriage, and that it was, and is, a great disappointment to me. You were there last summer when it occurred, so there is no reason why I should not speak quite plainly to you about it. I can never become reconciled to calling that uncouth country girl my daughter.

HILDRETH. I — ah, really, I can't understand why you should feel so about it. She is pretty, talented, graceful, and to me her ingenuousness is most charming.

MRS. R. What you are charitable enough to call "ingenu-

ousness" is anything but that to me. It is greenness, awkwardness. In fact, I refuse to be embarrassed by being seen in society in her company. (*Going toward L. U. E.*) So we are to accompany you this evening, Mr. Hildreth, Isabel and I?

HILDRETH. Yes.

MRS. R. Thank you. Now I trust you will excuse me for a few minutes. (*HILDRETH assents; she pauses in L. U. E.*) You will remain to dinner with us, Mr. Hildreth?

HILDRETH. Thanks, but I couldn't. I haven't my evening duds on, you know, and I have an appointment at six. I'll get around to call for you at half past seven.

MRS. R. We will be ready.

[*Exit L.*]

ISABEL (*again sitting R.*). Uncle David, you must learn not to praise Harold's wife and take her part, if you care for Mrs. Rutledge's friendship.

HILDRETH (*glancing toward L. cautiously*). To tell the truth, I don't know as I do, if that's the kind of a woman she is.

ISABEL. Uncle David!

HILDRETH. Well, I mean it. Poor little Hetty, I can see what kind of a life she leads. If it wasn't for her husband, I imagine hers would be a sorry lot. I'm sure he will never go back on her.

ISABEL. Oh, you are sure of that, are you? Well, I'm not.

HILDRETH. What do you mean by that?

ISABEL. Oh, nothing, only that it is not to be expected that a man of Mr. Rutledge's culture and position should remain constant to such a green, countrified —

HILDRETH. See here, Isabel, are you in league with that woman to make it unpleasant for that poor little wife and win her husband away from her?

(*He steps toward her, angrily; she rises, almost frightened.*)

ISABEL. Why, I — what do you mean?

HILDRETH. Just what I say. You know. (*She turns her eyes away from him.*) Look straight at me and tell me the truth. (*Taking hold of her shoulders and compelling her to face him.*) Tell me, Isabel, are you doing this thing?

ISABEL (*getting away from him and recovering her composure*). Don't be absurd, Uncle David. And be careful

what you say. I will take much from you, but I will not be insulted.

HILDRETH. I'll speak what I think the truth. Isabel, I am sorry to say it, but I believe you capable of doing just this thing. If not, why are you here staying so long?

ISABEL. Why, I am Mrs. Rutledge's guest. Surely, she has a right to invite whom she pleases to her own house?

HILDRETH. But she never invited you here for a month or two before — indefinitely, in fact. It doesn't look any too well, either.

ISABEL. Are you losing your senses?

HILDRETH. I hope not. And I also hope that you are not losing your sense of right and wrong.

ISABEL (*angrily*). Uncle David, I will not submit to such accusations.

HILDRETH. You have been seen out with Harold Rutledge alone — riding, to the theatre — more than once. It must be stopped.

ISABEL. Must! You dare command me?

HILDRETH. I am your guardian, all the father you have had for years. It is my duty —

ISABEL. You will please remember that I am of age — my own mistress.

HILDRETH. I have nothing more to say to you. I have warned you. Next, I shall speak to Mr. Rutledge himself, and warn him.

ISABEL. Don't you dare do such a thing!

HILDRETH. Then don't drive me to it.

(HILDRETH *is down* R. C., ISABEL, C. JENNINGS *enters* L. U. E.)

ISABEL. Well, Jennings?

JENNINGS. I was looking for Mrs. Rutledge, miss. There has some one arrived.

ISABEL. Did they give you their cards?

JENNINGS. No, miss; they don't seem to be that kind. I asked their name, but they said just tell Mrs. Rutledge it was some one to see her, some one she would be glad to see, and —

(*He is interrupted by* SILAS HOLCOMB, *who hurries in* L. U. E., *followed by* ALVIRA. *They carry carpet-bags, old-*

fashioned satchels, numerous boxes, bundles, etc. SILAS pushes past JENNINGS down C.; ALVIRA pauses at back, depositing her luggage on chairs and floor.)

SILAS. I vum, needn't think we 's go'n' t' stay out 'n that entry all day. Thought we'd come right in — (*Recognizes HILDRETH and ISABEL.*) Wal, I'll be gum-swizzled, if it ain't Mr. Hildreth 'n' Miss Carney! See who's here, Alviry.

HILDRETH. Why, it's Mr. Holcomb, and Miss Alvira! I declare, where did you come from?

SILAS. Mullenville. Left there this morning.

(*HILDRETH shakes hands cordially with them, but ISABEL bows coolly and turns to L., going up. JENNINGS stands up L. C., as if waiting for orders.*)

ALVIRA (*to HILDRETH, nodding her head toward ISABEL.*) Guess she ain't none too glad to see us. Stiff's a poker, ain't she? Precious little we care. We come t' see our Hetty. Where is she?

(*ISABEL goes out L. U. E.*)

HILDRETH. I dare say she is upstairs. I will send for her.

(*HILDRETH is about to cross to speak to JENNINGS, when SILAS stops him.*)

SILAS (*to HILDRETH, nodding his head toward JENNINGS.*) Who's that stuck-up feller? One o' the comp'ny?

HILDRETH. That? Oh, that's the butler.

SILAS. Oh, 'tis? (*Going up to JENNINGS and extending his hand.*) How d' do, Mister Butler? Any relation to Sam Butler up in Warren County? (*JENNINGS remains like a statue, staring straight ahead. SILAS looks at him a minute, puzzled, then goes back to R.*) Wal, I swow! won't even speak to a feller. S'pose he's some big-bug.

HILDRETH (*trying to repress a smile.*) No, he's a servant.

SILAS. Servant? Wal, by hemlock, I thought y' said his name was Butler.

HILDRETH. No, butler is what they call them here. His name is Jennings.

SILAS. Y' don't say? Wal, that beats me.

ALVIRA. Land, Silas, ain't you green? I knew you'd show off. (*To JENNINGS.*) I wish you'd go 'n' tell Hetty — I

mean Mis' Rutledge — that they's somebuddy here t' see her. Y' needn't say who 'tis, 'cause we want t' s'prise her.

[Exit JENNINGS, L. U. E.]

SILAS. I wouldn't talk about bein' green, Alvira. I didn't ask the man on that trolley car how they ever give it a hard enough shove t' keep it goin' s' long.

ALVIRA. Mebbe y' didn't; 'n' I didn't try t' stop one o' them auterbeely wagons, thinkin' it was runnin' away s' fast y' couldn't see the horse.

SILAS. Wal, when y' come right down to it, I d' know which of us got fooled the wust. I guess it's tuther 'n' which. I say, this town beats all the places I ever heerd tell of fer noise 'n' hubbub. All git up 'n' git thar, ain't it?

HILDRETH. Well, it is a little bit livelier than Mullenville, I must admit. I suppose you have come for a nice long visit?

(HILDRETH stands c., SILAS R. C., while ALVIRA is circulating about the stage, examining the furniture, pictures, etc. She now comes down.)

ALVIRA. Jest about a week, that's all. Y' see, we can't be gone no longer 'n that. I s'pose everything 'll go t' wrack 'n' ruin in that time. Verbeny'll jest take it easy, I warrant, 'n' let things go ev'ry which way. Lizy Ann Tucker promised t' run over ev'ry now 'n' then 'n' kind o' keep an eye on things, but I expect I'll have an awful job ketchin' up when I git home.

SILAS. Think what I'll have, then. Azariah Keep's goin' t' do the chores, 'n' I know about how he'll do 'em.

ALVIRA. You ain't no call t' say anything ag'inst Azariah.

SILAS (to HILDRETH). See? Hit her on a tender spot. Y' know, her 'n' Azariah —

ALVIRA. Silas Holcomb, you keep still! Don't you pay no 'tention to him, Mr. Hildreth. He's always goin' on about me 'n' Azariah. (She is seated L.) I wonder why Hetty don't come. I'm jest dyin' t' see her.

HETTY (heard calling joyfully off L. U. E.). Where are they? Where are they? (She runs in and to SILAS, throwing her arms about his neck. ALVIRA and he both put their arms about her, caressing her. She cries on SILAS'S shoulder.)

SILAS. There, there, little gal, don't cry. Ain't you glad t' see us?

ALVIRA. Land sakes, Silas Holcomb, ain't you got a bit o' sense? Can't you see they're tears of joy? (*To HETTY.*) How'd y' know 'twas us?

HETTY. I guessed it. I knew it couldn't be anybody else. (*Wiping away her tears.*) There, I won't be so silly. Oh, I'm so glad, so glad, to see you. Let me look at you. (*Looks first at one, then at the other, rapturously, then hugs and kisses them again.*) Now, sit right down here and tell me everything — everything! (*She gets them both to sofa and sits between them.*) How did you happen to come, and how did you ever find the place, and how is everything at home, and everybody, and — oh, you know, just tell me!

SILAS. I vum, you ask questions enough fer a census taker. Wal —

ALVIRA (*interrupting him*). We wanted t' see you, 'n' ev'rybuddy's well, 'n' ev'rything's all right, 'n' we found our way by askin' what we didn't know, 'n' — here we be. (*Looking about.*) So this is where you live? I must say it's pretty nice.

HETTY. Yes, it's beautiful, isn't it? But never mind that now; how are things at the farm? Are there any changes?

(The following two speeches are spoken together, rapidly. As they proceed, both SILAS and ALVIRA get more and more excited and talk faster and faster, finally ending out of breath, with their mouths close to HETTY'S ears. HILDRETH stands looking on, much amused.)

SILAS. Wal, we got a new pigpen, 'n' a new roof on the corn-crib — you know how it used t' leak; the brindle cow had a calf a week 'r two ago, 'n' it's a beauty, 'n' I traded horses last week with Zeke Hammond, the sorrel, y' know, that you used t' ride on bareback; 'n' we've got the fence fixed there where it was broke down s' long, 'n' I started t' put new shingles on the barn but thought I'd leave it till spring, 'n' we had the biggest crop of apples we've had in years, but p'taters is a poor yield, 'n' —

ALVIRA. Wal, everything's about the same, only I managed t' git the best room papered at last, 'n' the front steps fixed, 'n' a new plank put in the woodshed floor, there where 'twas

broke s' long; 'n' Verbeny broke the blue Lincoln pitcher all t' smash, 'n' we sold over sixty pounds o' butter sence you come away, 'n' I made me two new dresses, this one 'n' an every-day one; 'n' Joe Harper's wife's got a new baby — a girl; 'n' Minnie Plum don't sing in the choir any more — mad b'cause they let Carrie Mead sing a solo, 'n' —

(At this point HETTY springs up, laughing, putting her hands over her ears. SILAS and ALVIRA pause, looking at her in surprise, then at each other, finally both jumping up and speaking together again, to each other.)

SILAS. Why don't y' talk yer head off? Rattlin' on like a mowin' machine, 'n' never givin' nobuddy else a chance t' git a word in edgeways —

ALVIRA. Why don't you give me a chance t' say somethin'? Anybuddy'd think you was wound up 'n' couldn't stop. And they say men can't talk —

HETTY *(getting between them)*. Oh, you don't either of you say a word too much, if you would only talk one at a time.

HILDRETH *(who has been standing R., very much amused)*. You might have them draw cuts and see which gets the privilege of talking first. I'll have to go now; stayed longer than I ought to already. I hope I'll see you often while you are here, Mr. Holcomb. And you too, Miss Alvira.

SILAS. Hope y' will, Mr. Hildredth, hope y' will.

ALVIRA. Course y' will. We're go'n' t' stay a hull week.

HILDRETH *(going up)*. You must let me take you about to see some of the sights.

SILAS. Guess we will. Glad t'.

ALVIRA. We cal'late t' see ev'rything wuth seein' in New York while we're about it.

HILDRETH. I guess you'll have to start right in, then. A week isn't any too long to do it in.

HETTY *(who has followed him up; they are now in L. U. E.)*. Oh, Mr. Hildreth, how kind of you!

HILDRETH. Nonsense! It's my own pleasure I'm thinking of. *(To SILAS and ALVIRA.)* Good-day. See you again in a day or so. *(They reply and he goes out, followed by HETTY.)*

ALVIRA. Nice man, ain't he?

SILAS. Guess he is. Ain't much like that niece o' his.

ALVIRA. I should hope not — stuck-up piece!

(They have taken, one a carpet-bag, the other a satchel or bundle, and are opening them, down c., as HETTY returns.)

HETTY. Oh, what's that?

ALVIRA. Something we brung y'.

SILAS. Jest a few things.

HETTY. From the farm?

SILAS. Yes.

HETTY. Oh, let me see! Hurry up!

ALVIRA. Land, Silas, ain't she jest as much of a child as ever? She ain't changed a bit.

HETTY. Why, of course I'm not. How could I — to you, anyway? From the farm — dear old home! *(They are handing her articles and she is almost weeping over them.)*

SILAS *(producing two or three apples)*. Here's some o' them Northern Spies you like so, 'n' a couple o' pound sweets.

ALVIRA. 'N' some dried corn 'n' a few cranberry beans, t' make you some succytash; 'n' I brought you some thor'wort, so 't you could make some tea if y' git t' feelin' kind o' all dragged out — you 'r him.

SILAS. There's a few ears o' popcorn, 'n' a bottle o' maple syrup.

ALVIRA. 'N' I made you a new gingham apern, in case yer girl gits sick 'r anything, 'n' you have t' wash the dishes. 'N' here's a holder Lizy Ann made a-purpose t' send y', 'n' Verbeny sent this bunch o' life-everlastin'.

(They have been handing articles to HETTY until her lap is full. She is alternately laughing, then almost in tears.)

HETTY. How kind of them, how kind of you all! Oh, I am so pleased I don't know what to say or do.

ALVIRA. Land, don't say 'r do anything. We know. *(Looking about.)* Is this yer best room?

HETTY. Well, this is one of the parlors.

ALVIRA. One of 'em? Land, y' don't have two, do y'?

HETTY. Why, yes. Then there is the drawing-room —

SILAS. Drawin'-room? Oh, I s'pose that's where you take them drawin' lessons you wrote t' us about?

HETTY *(smiling)*. Well, no, not exactly. That's only a name for it. *(She has risen and is c., with her arms full of bundles, etc., while others are on the sofa, floor, and chairs.)* I

usually take my drawing in the music room, where I also have my singing lessons.

SILAS. Do tell?

HETTY. Yes, and then there's the conservatory —

ALVIRA. What's that? Where y' keep the preserves?

HETTY. Oh, no; where the flowers and plants are.

ALVIRA. Oh, that's it.

SILAS. The hothouse, Alvira. Huh! don't show off y'r greenness.

ALVIRA. Don't you say nothin', Silas Holcomb! You ain't got no call t' brag.

HETTY. Father, ring the bell, please.

SILAS. What bell?

HETTY. That one on the table there.

SILAS. Where? (*Sees bell on table.*) Oh, this one? (*He rings the bell.*) Jest like an ice-cream s'loon, ain't it? Guess I'll take strawberry 'n' v'nilly mixed. What you go'n' t' have?

HETTY. Oh, father, you know better. It's to call Jennings.

ALVIRA. Jennings! Hetty, I'm afeared city ways is makin' you lose y'r good manners. How can you call a man by his last name? Y' ought t' say "Mister" Jennings.

HETTY. Oh, no. It isn't the custom here.

ALVIRA. Land sakes! ain't the custom t' be p'lite! Ain't it shockin', Silas?

SILAS. I d' know. 'Spect we'll see lots o' shockin' things 'fore we git back t' Mullenville. (*Enter JENNINGS L. U. E.*) Here he is now.

HETTY. Jennings, you may take these things to the pink room and the one adjoining, please. We will come up soon and attend to them.

(*JENNINGS takes several of the articles, while SILAS, HETTY, and ALVIRA gather up the others.*)

HETTY. Dear me, I haven't asked you half I wanted to. How is Mrs. Tucker? and how is Verbena? and how is Mr. Keep, and everybody?

ALVIRA. Oh, they're all well, 'n' sent their love to y'.

HETTY. And Perry — Perry Deane? Has he ever come y' home yet?

ALVIRA. No. It's jest as it was when I wrote you about it. He went away the day you was married, last summer, 'n' nobuddy ain't seen him n'r heard a word from him sence.

SILAS. Some folks think he done somethin' desprit, he was that cut up over losin' you. But 'tain't no'eres likely. Perry's got too much sense fer that.

(They are about to go out, preceded by JENNINGS, when MRS. RUTLEDGE enters and they pause as they meet her, L. U. E.)

HETTY. Oh, Mrs. Rutledge, this is my father and my aunt, Alvira Holcomb, from Mullenville. They have come to make me a visit.

(MRS. RUTLEDGE bows coldly.)

SILAS. I s'pose you're his ma? Glad t' meet y'. Hope I see y' well.

ALVIRA. Y' see, Mis' Rutledge, we thought we'd come 'n' see Hetty 'n' chirk her up a bit. Hope we won't put y' out none. If y' ain't got but one spare room, Silas c'n sleep with y'r hired man, 'r on the lounge here 'n the best room. 'N' you needn't worry 'bout the extry work, f'r I'm willin' t' wipe the dishes and make our own beds, 'n' mebbe I'll make y' a good batch o' my riz biscuit while I'm here. We intend t' stay a week, but if y' coax us too hard we might make it two.

MRS. R. Jennings, show these persons to the two back rooms in the third story. *(She disdains them entirely. They look at her blankly. HETTY seems about to burst out angrily, but with an effort refrains from so doing. JENNINGS goes out with some of the things.)*

ALVIRA. Persons? I'd have you understand, madam, that we ain't "persons." We're respectable folks, from one o' the best fam'lies in Mullenville.

HETTY. There, there, Aunt Alvira, don't. Go with Jennings and I will be up in a few minutes.

(ALVIRA tosses her head, saying, "Persons, indeed!" and flaunts haughtily after JENNINGS, followed by SILAS, who smiles encouragingly at HETTY as he goes out.)

MRS. R. I wish you to understand, Mehitable, that I do not approve of you inviting your relatives here unknown to

me. I prefer to choose the people who are to be entertained here.

HETTY. I did not invite them. They came quite unexpectedly to me.

(They are down c.)

MRS. R. Oh, I see you wish to make it appear so — because you were afraid I would not allow you to have them, no doubt, and —

HETTY. Do you mean to imply, Mrs. Rutledge, that you don't believe me?

MRS. R. Oh, not exactly that perhaps.

HETTY. It must be exactly that, or the opposite. You believe me, or you do not. My father and my aunt took me entirely by surprise, but now that they are here, I don't wish to have them made to feel that they are unwelcome.

MRS. R. So your wishes are to have precedence, are they?

HETTY. Why, no, but I — I am sure Harold would wish to have them made welcome here, and —

MRS. R. This is my house. It shall be as I say. Your guests may remain to-night, but it will not be convenient for me to entertain them any longer than that. What is more, they cannot have any of the rooms except the two I have mentioned, on the third floor.

HETTY. But, Mrs. Rutledge, I —

MRS. R. Pray say no more about it. It would be quite useless.

HETTY *(almost weeping)*. You are very hard, Mrs. Rutledge. I don't know what I have done to deserve such treatment from you.

MRS. R. Oh, don't resort to tears, my dear, I beg of you. They will not affect me in the least. You want to know what you have done? You tricked my son into marrying you, that is what you did, and —

HETTY. That is not so, and you know it.

MRS. R. What! You dare?

HETTY. Dare defend myself against such accusations? Yes. I have stood much from you, Mrs. Rutledge, and I am willing to stand much more, if I must, for my husband's sake, and to keep peace; but be careful — you may drive me too far!

MRS. R. (*growing almost livid with rage*). How dare you speak to me like this? I shall tell my son!

HETTY. Tell him what you please. Perhaps he has not got beyond believing what I also can tell him, if you make me do it.

MRS. R. You! What can you tell him?

HETTY. Much. I can tell him how you have misused and persecuted me ever since I came here; how you have never lost an opportunity to slight me and make me feel that I am an intruder. Oh, I have hidden it all from him and tried to appear happy when my heart was almost breaking, because I love him and do not want to mar his happiness; but there is a limit even to my patience and endurance.

MRS. R. Dear me, what a pitiful story that would make, to be sure. But he would simply laugh at you, my dear — laugh at you!

HETTY. Then he's not the true man I believe him to be. You know your son loved me, Mrs. Rutledge, or he never would have asked me to be his wife. There was nothing but love to marry me for — nothing but his love for me and my love for him.

MRS. R. That sounds very pretty, and I must admit that you are quite charming in a rage, but you are deceiving yourself. Perhaps my son did love you — once — or thought he did — there in the country, where you were in your own element. But here — surely you can't expect to hold your own in comparison with ladies of beauty and refinement — of a station which you can never reach.

(*HETTY stares at her for an instant, as if the meaning of her words were gradually dawning upon her, then she covers her face with her hands and weeps. Enter HAROLD and ISABEL L. U. E.*)

HAROLD. Mother! Hetty! Why, what is the trouble I —

MRS. R. Simply a little scene, Harold. Your wife forgot herself for a moment, that is all, and said things for which I am sure she will soon be willing to apologize.

HETTY (*facing her proudly*). I have no apology to make. It is you, Mrs. Rutledge, who should apologize to my father and aunt for the manner in which you have treated them.

MRS. R. Harold, will you allow your wife to speak to me like this?

HAROLD. Why, I don't understand. Your father, Hetty, and your aunt? Are they here?

HETTY (*going to him and speaking in a pleading tone. They are R., MRS. RUTLEDGE, L., and ISABEL up L. C.*). Yes, Harold, they arrived quite unexpectedly only a few minutes ago, and Mrs. Rutledge —

MRS. R. I refused to pretend a welcome which I did not feel, and your wife, Harold, flew into a rage and became most insolent to me. Nothing but an apology shall cause me to overlook it.

HETTY. That I shall never make.

MRS. R. Indeed? Then you must suffer the consequences. (*About to go.*) Harold, when you have listened to her story, you will be kind enough to come to me. I, too, have something to say. [Exit L.

HAROLD (*starting after her, then coming back*). Why, mother, wait — I — Hetty, has anything so serious happened? Tell me.

HETTY. She received my father and Aunt Alvira most coldly and told Jennings to put them in the third story back rooms, in the servants' quarters. Then she told me that they could remain over night, but no longer. Oh, Harold, must I see them treated like this? And I was so glad to see them — so glad!

HAROLD. Don't worry, Hetty, I am sure mother will relent and let them remain. But what did you say to her that she says requires an apology? I hope you didn't forget what she is.

HETTY. No. I did not forget that she is your mother; but I also remembered that I am your wife and that I have some rights as such.

HAROLD. And what did you say?

HETTY. I — (*She is about to speak when she notices ISABEL, who stands up L., looking on with an insinuating expression. HETTY pauses suddenly, and with one angry glance at ISABEL turns away.*)

ISABEL (*disdaining her*). Your mother, Harold, was no doubt justified in her demand for an apology. If you will allow me to say —

HETTY (*turning upon her furiously*). I fail to understand, Miss Carney, why you should have anything to say about it, or why you should speak to my husband in such familiar terms.

HAROLD. Hetty! Why, what do you mean? Remember to whom you are speaking, and —

HETTY. I know very well to whom I am speaking. Perhaps I know her even better than you do. If you prefer to listen to her rather than to me, you may do so. (*She goes R.*) If I am to have the privilege of saying anything further, it shall be to you alone. [*She exits proudly R.*]

(*HAROLD stands C., looking after her a moment, as if bewildered. ISABEL goes up and lays her hand caressingly on his arm. She speaks gently, with a show of tenderness.*)

ISABEL. Harold, have I offended you? (*He shakes his head, still gazing R.*) If I have been hasty, forgive me; it was all because of my interest in you — because of my pity for you — my —

HAROLD. Pity? For me? Why, Isabel, what do you mean? Why do you pity me, for what?

ISABEL. Do you think I am blind? Do you think I have failed to see the sorrow that threatens you? (*He looks at her in amazement, but she pretends not to notice.*) Oh, Harold — forgive me. I know I ought not to call you "Harold" any more, but it is so difficult to realize that you should be only "Mr. Rutledge" to me now.

HAROLD. Why, Isabel, why should you be any different from what you have always been? Surely, such old friends as we can still call each other by our first names.

ISABEL. Thank you. Oh, you have taken such a load from my mind. It is so hard to forget the past, to forget what we used to be to each other. (*She looks down in apparent shyness, feigning to be very much affected, at the same time getting close to him and with seeming unconsciousness leaning against him. He is thrown off his guard and takes her hand, speaking with considerable tenderness.*)

HAROLD. Why should we forget it? Can we not be just as good friends as ever?

ISABEL. Friends? Ah, but only friends. You don't know a woman's heart. We never forget. The idol once enshrined

in a true woman's heart remains there forever. (*Pausing, in much confusion.*) Oh, what am I saying? Forgive me. Say you will forget it? (*Looking pleadingly up into his face, with her hand upon his arm.*)

HAROLD. Forget what, Isabel? That you still think so kindly of me? That you still have a place for me in your heart? No; why should I forget that?

ISABEL. Oh, don't speak to me like that! Don't! It is more than I can bear! (*She bursts into tears, hiding her face in her hands against his arm.*)

HAROLD. Why, I didn't know — I never dreamed —

ISABEL (*sobbingly*). Forgive my weakness. If my love for you —

HAROLD. Isabel!

ISABEL (*recklessly*). Yes, I must speak this once, even though you think me unwomanly — then I will be silent, forever. I was foolish to come here, — weak and foolish, — and I will go away and try to forget, though it should break my heart.

HAROLD. Why, Isabel, are you so unhappy?

ISABEL. Oh, Harold, it is not for myself alone. I could bear it, if only you were happy — if I could know that you were as happy as you deserve to be.

HAROLD. Do you mean that you think I am not happy with her — with my wife?

ISABEL. You have read my heart. I fear — I know — that you have begun to see your mistake, that you realize she is unworthy of you, and —

HAROLD. Isabel! Remember, she is my wife.

ISABEL. Yes, while I — I —

(*She seems to forget all but her own grief and again weeps, laying her head upon his breast in such a way that he is almost compelled to embrace her. He mechanically puts his arm about her and she nestles closely to him. They stand thus a moment in silence, as HETTY appears R., about to enter, then starts back and pauses, looking at them. At first she shows only amazement, then her expression changes to one which indicates that a terrible truth is dawning upon her, and finally, with flashing eyes, she turns and again exits R. Just as she disappears, ALVIRA HOLCOMB enters L. U. E. She has on her best dress and is looking down, tying a large gingham apron behind her.*)

ALVIRA. There, I've got my dress changed and slicked up a little and I feel better. (*Looking up.*) Land, you here? Why, it's Harold Rutledge!

(*HAROLD and ISABEL separate, she with an indignant glance at ALVIRA. HAROLD shakes hands cordially with her.*)

HAROLD. Well, well, Aunt Alvira, this is a pleasant surprise!

ALVIRA. Pleasant, is it? Wal, that's more 'n some folks c'd say. One or two don't seem overjoyed. But it don't worry me none.

HAROLD. You came quite unexpectedly, it seems?

ALVIRA. Wal, yes, we did. We didn't wait fer no special invite. Didn't think 'twas necessary. We cal'lated they'd be room fer us wherever our Hetty was, 'n' so we come right along, 'n' here we be. (*Turns and looks off L.*) Here's Silas.

(*Enter SILAS L. U. E. He has brushed his hair and has an air of being "washed up."*)

SILAS. How are y', Harold? Glad t' see y'. (*Extending his hand.*)

HAROLD. I can say the same, Mr. Holcomb. (*Shakes hands with him cordially.*) You took us by surprise.

SILAS. Reckon we did. Jest up 'n' took a sudd'n start. Fine house y' got here. All free fr'm mor'gidge?

HAROLD (*smiling*). Oh, yes, quite.

(*ISABEL has gone up L., where she stands proudly looking on. ALVIRA goes R. and sits, knitting or sewing. HAROLD and SILAS are C.*)

SILAS. Must be wuth a snug pile, though it's all house 'n' no ground. Give me lots o' room t' spread out in. D' know how I'd ever git used t' sech new-fangled notions 'n' s' many fixin's. I guess our Hetty's got right int' your city ways though, ain't she? She al'ays was a kind of a lady.

HAROLD. Yes, of course, she — a — would you like to have me show you about the house a bit before dinner, Mr. Holcomb?

SILAS. Dinner? Guess y' mean supper, don't y'? 'T's most six o'clock.

ALVIRA. No, Silas, it's dinner. Did you ever hear o' sech a thing — dinner put off till 'most bedtime ev'ry day? A reg'lar hot meal, too.

SILAS. Y' don't mean it? 'Tain't good for y'.

ALVIRA. That's jest what I think. It's sure t' lay heavy on yer stummick, and as fer you, Silas, you'll have the nightmare as sure's preachin'.

SILAS. Wal, I guess I'll have t' resk it. I'm s' hungry I could eat 'n ordinary meal 'n' one o' your biled dinners on top of it. (*HAROLD has gone R., and he now follows him, looking back.*) Comin', Alviry?

ALVIRA. No, I'm kind o' tired. Guess I'll set here a spell.

HAROLD. Very well. Hetty can show you about the house to-morrow.

SILAS. All right. (*To HAROLD, as they are going out.*) Don't s'pose you got no pigs t' show me, n'r anything like that, but I don't mind lookin' at all yer purty things.

(*Exeunt HAROLD and SILAS R. U. E. There is a moment's silence, then ALVIRA turns her head and looks keenly at ISABEL.*)

ALVIRA. You visitin' here too?

ISABEL. Yes.

ALVIRA. Make yerself perfectly at home, don't y'?

ISABEL (*coming down*). I don't understand.

ALVIRA (*rising and going toward R., where she pauses, turning and giving ISABEL another meaning look*). Oh, you don't? Wal, I don't b'lieve it's necessary t' explain. Mebbe you'll be able t' fig're out what I mean, if you'll take time t' think it over. [*Exit R. U. E.*]

ISABEL. Why, I — how dare she? (*Goes and looks after ALVIRA a moment, angrily, then turns to C. and meets HETTY, who enters R.*) Oh, you are here?

HETTY. Yes. I was looking for my father and aunt. I thought they were here.

ISABEL. I think you will find them in the conservatory. Mr. Rutledge has been kind enough to show them about.

HETTY. Thank you. I will find them. (*Going up R.*)

ISABEL (*crossing to L. C.*). I suppose, Mrs. Rutledge, that you thought to drive me from this house by speaking of me to your husband as you did, but you have failed. I am his mother's guest, and his friend, and as such quite indifferent to your insults and to your desire to be rid of me.

HETTY. Pardon me, Miss Carney, but I prefer to dismiss the subject. You will excuse me. [*Exit R. U. E., with dignity.*]

ISABEL. Dear me, what grand airs our little country girl has all of a sudden! It is quite amusing. But I'll have the best of her yet. She would not be so complacent if she knew how I hate her, and that I will stop at nothing when I seek revenge. (*Enter MRS. RUTLEDGE, L.*) Ah, Mrs. Rutledge, I was about to go and look for you.

MRS. R. And I was looking for you. Where is Harold?

ISABEL. In the conservatory, I believe, with your country guests.

MRS. R. No, don't call them my guests. They are not. I have arranged to have them dine separately in the back dining-room. Mehetable may sit with them if she prefers.

ISABEL. An excellent idea. And Harold?

MRS. R. He will dine with you and me, to be sure. I cannot be humiliated, even before the servants, by those uncouth people. I will have Jennings summon them.

(*She is about to ring when HAROLD and the others are heard laughing off R.*)

ISABEL. They are coming.

(*ISABEL and MRS. RUTLEDGE are L. C. Enter R. U. E., HAROLD, with ALVIRA on his arm. He is laughing and chatting with her, in an excellent humor. SILAS and HETTY are close behind.*)

HAROLD. Ah, mother, here you are! Is dinner ready? We're nearly famished. Aren't we, Aunt Alvira?

ALVIRA. I be. Land, I b'lieve I could eat all you've got m'self.

SILAS. As fer me, I'm that gone I feel like an empty meal sack.

MRS. R. Yes, Harold, dinner is about to be served, but —

HAROLD. Good. We will go right in. (*Starting.*)

MRS. R. But, Harold, I have something to say to you.

I —

HAROLD. Oh, never mind now. I guess it will keep till after dinner. Come, Aunt Alvira, we'll lead the way. (*He and ALVIRA go to L. He looks back.*) Come, Mr. Holcomb, you bring Hetty. Coming, mother? — Isabel?

(Exeunt HAROLD and ALVIRA, followed by SILAS and HETTY, arm in arm, all laughing and chatting. MRS. RUTLEDGE looks after them indignantly, nonplussed. ISABEL goes to her and they stand C., with angry faces, gazing off L., as the curtain falls. The voices of the others float back to them.)

ACT III.

SCENE. — *Same as Act II. Three weeks have elapsed. It is afternoon. Discovered, MRS. RUTLEDGE seated R. C., with a book. After a brief pause ISABEL CARNEY enters L. U. E., wearing her wraps and furs. She comes down and pauses C.*

ISABEL. Here I am, Mrs. Rutledge, back again.

MRS. R. Did you have a pleasant ride?

ISABEL. Delightful. The weather is perfect and the sleighing excellent. We drove through the park and the longest way home. Oh, I did enjoy it so much!

MRS. R. I am glad. And was Harold good company to-day?

ISABEL. Splendid; quite his old self — more so than I had seen him before since — since —

MRS. R. I know, and I consider it good news. (*Rising.*) Isabel, I believe he cares less for her every day. All we have to do is to keep on as we have begun and be patient.

ISABEL. Dear Mrs. Rutledge, you are so clever.

MRS. R. At least, I am persevering, and that counts for as much or more than cleverness sometimes. Mark my word, Harold is beginning to tire of her. She must be made to think that, and to feel that he is ashamed of her. (*As she speaks she looks carefully about and her tone is cautious.*) She is proud — too proud to stay here if she can be made to think that he no longer cares for her.

ISABEL. But can that be done?

MRS. R. I am sure it can. But it must be brought about without either of them realizing what it means. She must be made to leave here of her own free will.

ISABEL. But Harold, — would he permit it?

MRS. R. He must think she no longer loves him. Leave it all to me, and do as I direct. Once she leaves, the rest will be easy, — a divorce, for desertion, you know.

ISABEL. Oh, Mrs. Rutledge, how clever! But are you sure it would be — a — quite right?

MRS. R. Can you doubt my motive, my dear? Is it not

for my son's good and his happiness, as well as for yours and for my own? Right? It is always right for a mother to seek that which is best for her child.

ISABEL. Forgive me. But, somehow, I am not sure it will be so easy. You remember how Harold sided with her about her father and aunt, and insisted upon their staying for ten days and being treated as honored guests?

MRS. R. And how I submitted? Ah, my dear, I know how to handle Harold. I saw that it would not do to cross him in that, so I yielded. But my forbearance was rewarded, for he himself wearied of them before they left, and I am sure he was more than once mortified by their uncouth ways and ill manners.

ISABEL. Yes, I noticed it on several occasions. (*Going up L.*) But I must go upstairs for a moment now. I don't know how to thank you for my delightful ride this afternoon.

MRS. R. Hush, my dear. Mehetible must not know that Harold took you at my request. She must think he asked you himself. We must encourage her jealousy, before we take a bolder step. Trust it all to me.

ISABEL. I will. You have only to direct me and I will do as you say. (*About to go, looking off.*) Sh! here is Harold now. (*She goes out as HAROLD enters, L. U. E., smiling at him.*)

MRS. R. Well, Harold, Isabel tells me you had a pleasant ride.

(*They come down.*)

HAROLD. Why, yes, it was very pleasant. The sleighing is excellent and the air most invigorating. But I — (*glancing back toward L. U. E.*) — somehow I felt as if it were hardly the thing for us to go off so and leave Hetty at home. Do you think it was quite right, mother?

MRS. R. Oh, Harold, how absurd you are. Of course it was right. Isabel is my guest and one of your oldest friends. What more natural than that you should take her for a drive? Particularly as your wife had no desire to go.

HAROLD. Then you spoke to her about it?

MRS. R. Why, of course. She seemed quite indifferent; said she had to practise her singing lesson. Really, she cares for nothing else, it seems to me — nothing but her music and painting. The way she neglects you seems to me quite shameful.

HAROLD. I am sure you misjudge her.

MRS. R. Ah, in the kindness of your heart you say so, but you know what I say is true. Surely, you are not so blind you cannot see that her head has been turned by all the splendor and luxuries you have given her. You know it was for them she married you.

HAROLD. Mother, look at me! Do you really believe that?

MRS. R. (*at first faltering a bit, then looking straight at him and speaking with determination*). Yes. And you know it is true.

HAROLD. I know she seems to be wrapped up in her lessons, and she depends less and less upon me for society and entertainment, but I am not sure that it is all her. Perhaps I too am to blame. She may think me neglectful.

MRS. R. Ah, my noble boy, it is like you to take it upon yourself, but you cannot deceive me. You know the truth as well as I do. It is but the inevitable result of your foolish marriage to —

HAROLD. Hush, mother. I wish you wouldn't say such things. She is my wife; don't be unjust to her. (*Going R.*) I am going for a smoke now, and perhaps a little snooze.

MRS. R. Very well. A nap is just the thing after your ride in the crisp air. (*He goes out R. She looks after him a moment, with a knowing smile.*) It's sure to work — like a charm. Well, "all's fair in love and war," and it is war between you and me, my pretty little lady, and I intend to win. (*She is about to exit L., when HETTY, wearing her wraps, enters L. U. E.*) Oh, it's you! Have you been out?

HETTY (*down to R. C.*). Yes, for a little walk. My head ached and I thought the cool air would do it good.

MRS. R. I hope it is better. Isabel had a headache, too, and has been for a ride. She came in quite refreshed and cured.

HETTY. Indeed? (*She seems indifferent, carelessly removing her gloves.*)

MRS. R. Yes; Harold took her for a drive in the park. I believe I told you they were going?

HETTY. No. You gave me the impression that you wished to go with him. Miss Carney was not mentioned.

MRS. R. Well, you see, I changed my mind; I found I could not go —

HETTY. I understand. It is quite evident that my husband preferred her company to mine, and that you were trying to deceive me.

MRS. R. Can you wonder that he prefers her society to yours? She is brilliant, charming —

HETTY. While I am his wife. That is something you seem to forget, and which you are trying to make him forget also. Oh, I am not blind!

MRS. R. Dear me, I hope we are not going to have another scene.

HETTY. We are not. It would be quite as distasteful to me as to you. (MRS. RUTLEDGE *exits proudly* L. HETTY *looks after her, starts up* C., *then comes down to* R. C. *and stands by table, first with an expression almost of hatred, which gradually softens. Then she presses her lips tightly together, as with determination, throws her gloves upon table and goes up to the desk, sits and is about to write a note. She pauses, undecided.*) Yes, I will. I will go away from here. I will not stay to submit to their insults. Even he has ceased to care for me. He — (*Enter* JENNINGS L. U. E.) Well, Jennings?

JENNINGS. There's a gentleman wishes to see you, ma'am.

HETTY. A gentleman? To see me? (*Rises.*)

JENNINGS. Yes, ma'am.

HETTY. Is there no mistake? Perhaps it is Mrs. Rutledge —

JENNINGS. No, it was you in particular he asked for,— Mrs. Harold Rutledge.

HETTY. And his name?

JENNINGS. He wouldn't tell it, ma'am. He said just to say it was an old friend from the country.

HETTY. Oh, from Mullenville! Show him in at once. (JENNINGS *exits* L. U. E.) I wonder who it can be. (*She stands eagerly looking off; starts back in surprise as* JENNINGS *shows in* PERRY DEANE.) Perry Deane!

[*Exit* JENNINGS.]

(PERRY *is dressed in a rather dilapidated suit, with no overcoat; is haggard and unshaven, and presents a dejected appearance, with a general air of having been in hard luck. He stands before HETTY a moment with bowed head, as if ashamed to look her in the face.*)

✓ PERRY. Yes, it's Perry Deane. I almost wonder that you knew me. I suppose I have changed.

HETTY. Why — a — yes. (*She looks at him a moment, in bewildered surprise, then extends her hand.*) But I am glad to see you, Perry, very glad. (*He does not take her hand.*) Why, Perry, don't you want to shake hands with me?

(*They have slowly come down c.*)

✓ PERRY. Yes, but I — I don't know as you would let me do so, if you knew what I am. Look at me, Hetty. Can't you see what I have come to? Do I look like the Perry Deane you used to know?

HETTY. N-no, you don't. You have met with misfortune? Tell me, Perry, what has happened to you? How long have you been in New York?

✓ PERRY. Since last fall, almost as long as you have. You see, I couldn't stay there, on the farm, after you left; there was nothing I cared for, and so I came here. Yes, came because I knew you would be here and I might sometimes see you. Oh, I know it was foolish — wrong, perhaps; but I didn't care. I didn't intend to let you know I was here; I only thought I might catch a glimpse of you sometimes, and —

(*He seems weak. HETTY offers him a chair.*)

HETTY. Oh, Perry, you should not have had such thoughts of me. Sit down. (*He sits.*) Why, you seem weak and ill.

✓ PERRY. Thank you. I knew you would say I had done wrong, but I couldn't help it. You left me and married another, who never has and never can love you as I do —

HETTY (*she is standing, now draws away from him*). Perry!

✓ PERRY. Oh, you needn't be afraid of me. I love you — I can't help that — but I have manhood enough left to know what is right, and I wouldn't do anything to cause you any trouble for the world. It wasn't for that I came here — to tell you this. I came for — for help.

HETTY. Help? Then you are in trouble, Perry? You came to ask me to assist you?

✓ PERRY. Yes, I had to; it was a last resort. (*He has risen, and stands with his hand on the chair.*) It's this way, Hetty;

I — oh, I'm ashamed to tell you, but — well, you see, losing you, and all, made me feel as if I didn't care what became of me, so I got reckless. I had over two hundred dollars saved up — for our wedding, as I always hoped —

HETTY. Oh, Perry, you mustn't speak of that.

PERRY. It's the truth. I came here, and of course my money began to go. I was green, I suppose, and an easy victim. I fell into the hands of men who are on the watch for just such game as I, and it wasn't long before my two hundred dollars had dwindled down to hardly enough to pay for a meal and a night's lodging. Then, with what little I had left, I gambled. Luck seemed to be with me at first, and I won. They were simply leading me on. But I managed to keep a little ahead, for a while, till I got bolder and bolder. At last I staked all and lost all. Then — you'll be glad you didn't shake hands with me, Hetty, when I have told you the rest —

HETTY. Go on, Perry. Tell me it all now, — the worst.

PERRY. Well, I drank, more and more, and once I — I stole. (*She starts.*) Yes, I had to have something to eat, and I saw no other way to get it. I took two apples from an old woman's stall. But I have paid her since, and confessed to her. I couldn't be dishonest, Hetty, not in that way, whatever else I might do that was wrong. I hate a cheat, and that is what has brought the worst upon me.

HETTY. I don't understand. What do you mean?

PERRY. That I have come to you to ask you for money — money that I may get out of the city and away from the officers —

HETTY. No, no, Perry, not that! You are not a criminal?

PERRY. I don't know any better name for a man who has done what I have. It was last night, in a place down on the Bowery. I had staked all I had, all but a few cents, on the game, and when I lost I was sure I had detected one of the men cheating. He was a desperate character, and it led to trouble. He sprang at me, and in self-defence I took up a heavy beer glass and struck him on the head with it. He fell, and in the excitement I got away. I overheard some men talking about it a few minutes later, and they said he wasn't expected to live. I suppose they are looking for me now.

HETTY. Oh, Perry! Perry! how could you do such a thing?

✓ PERRY. Oh, I was crazy; I didn't know what I was doing. But it's too late to think of that now. I must get away.

HETTY. And you want me to help you?

✓ PERRY. Yes; help me to leave the city, to get away where they can't find me. Don't say you won't do it, Hetty. If you were ever my friend, don't fail me now, when a few dollars might save me.

HETTY. Where would you go? What would you do?

✓ PERRY. I don't know. I can't tell. Only I must go, somewhere, and at once.

HETTY. I know. Go back to Mullenville.

✓ PERRY. What! home? Never!

HETTY. Do those men know where you came from?

✓ PERRY. No, not even my real name. You are right. They would not find me there.

HETTY. You will be safer there than anywhere else. How much money will you need?

✓ PERRY. I don't know. I ought to have some new clothes. I hate to go back looking like this. Then there's the fare. Could you let me have twenty dollars? Oh, I'm ashamed to ask you for it, ashamed to come to you in such a condition; but there was not another person in this whole city that I could go to, no one else to ask for help.

HETTY. I have no money, except what belongs to my husband, and I won't use that — not even for your sake, not for my own.

✓ PERRY. Why, what — has anything happened?

HETTY (*pausing a moment, in deep thought, then looking fixedly at him and speaking with slow determination*). Perry, what if I were to go with you?

✓ PERRY. You — you go — go with me? I — why, I don't understand. Where? What for?

HETTY. Home, back to the farm; because I am unhappy here and am no longer wanted. Will you take me with you?

✓ PERRY. But your husband! What would he think — what —

HETTY. That I could stand persecution and ill treatment no longer, perhaps, and he would be right. Oh, he has not ill-treated me, except in keeping me here where others could do so. I have asked him to take me away, that we might have a home of our own, but he only said I was foolish and

imagined things, and that this was the best place for us. And now I have even come to doubt his love, to think that he prefers another.

PERRY. You mean Miss Car —

HETTY. Yes; I have seen her in his arms. Only this afternoon he took her for a ride and left me at home. She has been here for weeks, and she and his proud, heartless mother have done everything in their power to humiliate me and make me unhappy. They set themselves above me, scorn me, and have even won my husband away from me. I can stand it no longer. Perry, I want you to take me home — back to those who love me and who will be kind to me.

PERRY. I — why, of course, I — but do you think it would be right, Hetty? Remember, he is your husband, and — No, Hetty, it is your duty to stay here.

HETTY. But I can't, I will not! I will go away, then if he loves me still, let him come for me. When he comes, promising to give me a real home, then I will return to him. If he loves me, the test will not be too severe.

PERRY. And you hope he will come? You still love him?

HETTY. Yes. Now let us go at once. (*Going R.*) I will pawn one or two of my jewels and that will give us all the money we need. Wait for me here. I will soon be ready. Hush! somebody is coming. (*She returns, as MRS. RUTLEDGE speaks off L.*) It is Mrs. Rutledge. Go in there. (*Motioning him R.*) She will not find you.

(PERRY goes out R. 2 E., and HETTY hurries out R. U. E. After a brief pause, MRS. RUTLEDGE enters L.)

MRS. R. Jennings! (*Looking about.*) Why, I was sure I heard voices. (*Rings bell.*) There must have been some one here. (*Enter JENNINGS L. U. E.*) Jennings, did not some one call just now?

JENNINGS. A gentleman, ma'am.

MRS. R. And for whom did he ask?

JENNINGS. For Mrs. Harold Rutledge. He seemed to be an old friend of hers, ma'am.

MRS. R. From the country, no doubt. That will do, Jennings. (*Exit JENNINGS L. U. E.*) They must be in the library. Well, I will not disturb them. But he shall not remain here as her guest if I can prevent it, and I think I can.

She shall not be encouraged in her low taste and the cultivation of such vulgar people. [Exit L.]

(There is a noticeable pause, then HETTY hurries in R. U. E. She has on her hat and heavy wraps and carries a small satchel. She goes to R., and calls softly.)

HETTY. Perry! I am ready. (Enter PERRY R.) We must hurry, before any of them come. I will write a few words to Harold. (She sets the satchel on a chair and goes to desk, writes a few words, folds the paper and puts it in an envelope, which she addresses. This she lays in a conspicuous place on table R. C., the envelope unsealed.) Come!

(She starts toward L. U. E., taking the satchel. PERRY is about to follow her, but pauses.)

✓ PERRY. Wait. Do you realize what you are doing?

HETTY. I do.

✓ PERRY. And have you thought what they may say and think? Do you know what others may say?

HETTY. I am innocent, so what need I care? I am determined. If you will not take me, I shall go alone.

✓ PERRY. Then I have nothing further to say.

(He takes satchel from her and they hurry out L. U. E. After a pause, ISABEL CARNEY enters L. She glances about, then carelessly goes and sits by table R. C. She reaches over to take a book, and her hand touches the note HETTY has left. She takes it up, thoughtlessly, and after holding it in her hand a moment, carelessly glances at it.)

ISABEL. A letter for Harold. No stamp, and (looking at it more closely) in a woman's handwriting. Why, it's hers — his wife's! How curious! What could make her write him a letter and leave it here like this? (Rising.) I wonder — (she turns the envelope over) — it is not sealed. (About to take out the letter, pauses.) Oh, it burns my fingers! I must read it. (Takes out the letter and reads aloud.) "I have gone, with one I can trust — to a place where I will be welcome. If you blame me, remember that I am not all to blame. Good-bye." Gone! with — (Pressing the forefinger of her right hand, folded, to her lips, in deep thought, the letter in the other hand.) Good! she plays right into our hands. It could not

have worked better. (*Rings bell.*) The rest ought to be even easier. (*Enter JENNINGS L. U. E.*) Jennings, did Mrs. Rutledge — Mrs. Harold, I mean — just leave the house?

JENNINGS. Yes, she did.

ISABEL. Alone?

JENNINGS. No, miss; with a gentleman.

ISABEL. Do you know his name?

JENNINGS. I think I heard her call him Deane, miss.

ISABEL. That will do. (*JENNINGS is about to go out.*) Wait. Tell Mrs. Rutledge I would like to see her here. (*Exit JENNINGS L. U. E.*) It was Perry Deane. What can he be doing in New York? Never mind; Harold must think he came for her — former lover — they have eloped, and — Oh, it's charming! I hardly expected such good luck as this.

(*She has replaced the letter in the envelope, which she now seals, holding it behind her as MRS. RUTLEDGE enters L.*)

MRS. R. You wished to see me, Isabel? Why, what has happened? You look excited.

ISABEL. And perhaps you will be so in a few minutes. Is Harold there?

MRS. R. In the smoking-room, I think.

ISABEL. Will you call him? I have something to give him.

(*MRS. RUTLEDGE goes out R.; ISABEL stands c., with the letter behind her, a triumphant look upon her face. After a brief pause, MRS. RUTLEDGE re-enters, followed by HAROLD. They pause R.*)

HAROLD. What is the matter? Mother said you wished to see me, Isabel.

ISABEL (*her expression has changed to one of sorrow; she now pretends to be almost overcome with emotion*). I — I fear it is bad news, Harold.

(*Turning away from him, as if to hide her emotion. He goes to her.*)

HAROLD. Isabel! Tell me, what has happened?

ISABEL. Your wife —

HAROLD. Hetty! What of her?

ISABEL. She is gone!

HAROLD *and* MRS. R. Gone!

ISABEL. Yes, gone with —

HAROLD. Tell me what you mean! Tell me at once.

MRS. R. Yes, Isabel, what — tell us what has happened.

ISABEL. If I must. Well, Jennings saw them leave the house, and I — I found this on the table. Read it. It may explain.

HAROLD (*seizes the envelope and tears it open. As he glances at the contents, he grows pale and reels as if struck a blow, crushing the paper in his hand and leaning against the table or a chair for support*). It is true — true!

(*He starts up C., toward L. U. E., as if to go out, then turns and looks perplexedly at ISABEL and MRS. RUTLEDGE, from one to the other.*)

HAROLD. No! I won't believe it! There is some mistake. (*ISABEL points to the note in his hand.*) Then who — who —

ISABEL. Perry Deane.

(*He has gone back to R. C.; as she speaks the name he opens his lips, as if surprised, then pauses an instant, staring straight ahead of him. Finally he seems to comprehend, and his expression becomes one of anger.*)

HAROLD. Oh! Now I understand!

(*He sets his teeth firmly together, grasps table or the back of a chair with his right hand and with the other dashes the letter to the floor. MRS. RUTLEDGE goes and lays her hand caressingly on his arm. ISABEL stands up L. C., looking at them with flashing eyes and an exulting smile.*)

CURTAIN.

ACT IV.

SCENE. — *The sitting-room at Valley Farm, plainly but comfortably furnished. There is a table, with old-fashioned spread, L. C.; chairs, pictures, etc., as seen in a typical farmhouse. Door in flat leading out-of-doors, also a window. Door L. leads to kitchen, another R. to the "best room." It is early in the evening in March. The windowpanes are frosted and there is snow on the sill outside. Discovered, VERBENA seated in an easy-chair by the table, reading a paper-covered novel, her elbows on table and her chin resting in her hands. After a pause, ALVIRA enters L. unnoticed. She looks over VERBENA'S shoulder a moment, then snatches the book. VERBENA looks up, surprised.*

VERBENA. Gi' me my book!

ALVIRA. It ain't your book 'n' I know it. (*Looking at cover.*) "A Mad Love"! Nice trash fer you t' be wastin' your time on. Where'd you git it?

VERBENA. I found it up in the garret. Le' me have it. I want t' finish about them lovers. They was jest goin' t' make up when you took it. I want it.

ALVIRA. Wal, you can't have it. 'Tain't fit fer young girls t' read.

VERBENA. But I s'pose you can?

ALVIRA. What's that? You needn't fling out. I guess they's things enough t' do, without readin' them novel-books. I s'pose it's one o' them old ones Hetty had. I ought t' burned 'em up long ago. I'll do it now.

(*She starts toward L.*)

VERBENA (*running to her and trying to get the book*). Oh, don't, Miss Holcomb, please don't — not till I see how they made it up. I can't never stand it t' leave 'em right there, 'thout never gitt'n' married. Le' me finish jest this one 'n' I won't read another one — honest!

ALVIRA (*hesitating*). W-a-l, I s'pose if you're goin' t' suffer t' know how the silly things come out, you might's well know

and done with it, 'stead o' mopin' round thinkin' 'bout it the hull time. (*Giving VERBENA the book.*) There! finish that one if y' want t', 'n' then burn it up, 'n' don't you let me ketch you readin' another one of 'em.

VERBENA (*snatching the book and eagerly looking for her place*). No, ma'am, you bet I won't.

ALVIRA. Won't what? Let me ketch y'?

VERBENA (*sinking into a chair, absorbed in the book*). Yes, ma'am.

ALVIRA. Then give me that —

VERBENA (*holding the book behind her*). I mean — no, ma'am, I won't read another one.

ALVIRA. Wal, see 't you don't. Now you go 'n the kitchen 'n' stay, 'cause I expect comp'ny this evenin'. (*VERBENA is mumbling over the book, paying no attention to what ALVIRA says.*) Do you hear?

VERBENA (*absent-mindedly*). Y-yes, ma'am.

ALVIRA. You don't neither! Come, do as I say, 'r you don't git that pair married after all. (*VERBENA rises, slowly, and shuffles L., still bending over the book, mumbling to herself. She stumbles over table or a chair.*) Fer the land's sake, look where you're goin'. (*Exit VERBENA L., still reading.*) If that child ain't enough t' try a saint. (*Tidying up furniture, etc., then smoothing her dress and hair.*) I wonder if Azariah 'll really come t'-night. He said he would, 'n' that he had some-thin' t' say to me, but it's snowin' so I d' know's he'll git here. (*Goes and looks out of door or window.*) It ain't snowin' quite s' hard's it was, 'n' I guess it ain't drifted s' awful bad. I do hope he'll come.

(*She has brought in a work-basket containing her knitting, which is now on table. She goes and sits by table and knits. In a moment, SILAS enters D. F. He wears a cap pulled down over his ears, has a muffler about his neck, and has on knit mittens. There is snow on his cap and shoulders; he shakes it off as he comes in.*)

SILAS. Wal, Viry, sett'n' here all alone? I reckoned Azariah'd be over t'-night, didn't you?

(*Hanging his cap and muffler on nail or hook up L.*)

ALVIRA. I thought mebbe he would, seein' it's Friday. He usually does come Fridays.

SILAS. Yes, 'n' Saturdays and sometimes Sundays, 'n' pretty nigh al'ays Mondays 'n' Tuesdays, 'n' as a rule on Wednesdays and as like as not on Thursdays.

(Sitting other side of table, after getting the "county paper" from his pocket or elsewhere. He reads.)

ALVIRA. Now, Silas!

SILAS. Wal, ain't it a fact? 'N' ev'ry time he comes, he's got somethin' t' say t' y', 'n' then he never says it. *(Referring to paper.)* Wal, jest listen t' this: "Miss Cordelia Bennett has bought a new organ. There is music in the air."

ALVIRA. Wal, I declare! An organ, poor's they be. I don't see where she's ever go'n' t' git money t' pay for it, for my part. There's our organ in the best room, waitin' for somebuddy t' play on it. I wish Hetty would. She ain't teched it but once 'r twice sence she come home over two months ago, 'n' she gits sadder 'n' sadder every day. Oh, dear, I wish she hadn't never married him.

SILAS. Sometimes I 'most wish so too, Viry, then agin I kind o' think mebbe he ain't t' blame quite s' much after all. He seemed t' love her.

ALVIRA. I know he loved her, at first, but it was a mighty poor kind o' love, I say, that would let another woman — two of 'em — step in and make him act as he did and treat her as he treated her. I guess I saw a few things. Don't tell me he wa'n't t' blame.

SILAS. I ain't stickin' up for him, but I do say 't I think she was kind o' hasty, leavin' the way she did, with Perry. I s'pose if they didn't understand, it must 'a' looked cur'ous like. Poor little Hetty, though, she didn't know what else t' do, 'n' she wa'n't a mite t' blame.

ALVIRA. Of course she wa'n't. Then what you talkin' so for? *(Wiping her eyes.)* I declare, I'm 'most a-cryin'. *(SILAS slyly wipes his eyes; ALVIRA looks at him.)* 'N' you be too, Silas. Wal, it ain't nothin' t' be ashamed of, cryin' b'cause our little Hetty's life has b'en wrecked by a heartless lot of city folks.

SILAS *(who has again been busily reading paper)*. I vum, Lem Hackett's barn over Spencerville way, 's all burnt up,

'n' a horse 'n' two cows 'n' a hull lot o' crops with it. Wal, I'm sorry fer Lem. That's bad luck.

ALVIRA. I should say it was. (*There is a knock on door in flat.*) There's somebuddy. You see who 'tis, Silas.

(*SILAS goes and opens the door, admitting LIZY ANN TUCKER. She is very much muffled up in old-fashioned hood, fur cape, muff, etc. She shivers as she comes in hurriedly, shaking off the snow.*)

ALVIRA (*rising*). Wal, I declare, Lizy Ann Tucker! be you crazy?

LIZY ANN. No, I ain't. 'Tain't so dretful bad. I've seen worse. Huh! I've tramped through bigger drif's than there is now. Where can I put my things?

ALVIRA. You'd better let me take 'em. I'll put 'em in the kitchen where they'll dry. (*She takes LIZY ANN'S hood, furs, coat, etc.*) I can't imagine what you come over here sech a night's this for.

(*Going L.*)

LIZY ANN. Wal, y' see, he went to the store t' set, 'n' I was lonesome, so I thought I'd run over a spell. I felt jest like visitin'.

ALVIRA. Jest as if that was anything new. [*Exit L.*]

SILAS. Have a chair, Mis' Tucker. You must be jest about tuckered out. Wal, I vum, made a joke, didn't I? "Mis' Tucker tuckered out."

(*He laughs good-naturedly; she smiles.*)

LIZY ANN. Oh, no, I ain't. I don't feel it much. (*Looking around.*) Where's Hetty?

(*She is seated L. c., he standing c.*)

SILAS. I reckon she's up in her room. I put up a stove for her, 'n' she stays there consid'able of the time.

LIZY ANN. Takes her trouble pretty hard, don't she?

SILAS. Wal, I d'know. She — I s'pose she does.

LIZY ANN. That's what they say. Y' know, she ain't hardly showed her face out o' the house sence she come home 'most three months ago (*enter ALVIRA L.*), 'n' everybuddy knows she's left her husband 'r he left her, as well as they want t'. It didn't need t' be in the paper.

SILAS. In the paper? It ain't, is it?

ALVIRA (*coming down*). What do you mean, Lizy Ann? I know they's somethin', 'r you wouldn't 'a' come 'way over here at night alone in all this snow.

LIZY ANN. Land, didn't I tell y' I jest wanted a little visit? I never git tired o' hearin' about what you see down t' New York. (ALVIRA *sits and resumes her knitting*. SILAS *also sits*.) Tell me some more about that place where the folks are all made out o' wax.

SILAS. Oh, that "Eden Muzee" place. That was the all-firedest queer place I ever struck. Wa'n't it, Alviry?

ALVIRA. I should say it was. Folks standin' round, 'n' when y' spoke to 'em they wa'n't folks at all — jest wax; as nat'ral 's life, too. But the worst was that place down cellar — "Chamber of Horrors" they called it, — 'n' it was, too. Land, it give me the shivers so I ain't got over 'em yet. Folks gitt'n' cut up, 'n' hung, 'n' ev'rything like that.

LIZY ANN. Wal, now, what'd they want t' have all that fer?

ALVIRA. Goodness only knows, I don't. Y' had t' pay fifty cents t' go in, too. Oh, we see lots o' queer things. Didn't we, Silas?

SILAS. Guess we did. Mr. Hildreth 'n' I went where they was more 'n a hundred 'n' sixty girls in the ballet. (*He should pronounce this word as spelled*.)

LIZY ANN. You don't say! Do they let the women vote?

ALVIRA. No, Lizy Ann, he means one o' them exhibitions where the shameless creatures come out 'n' dance around without enough clothes on t' say so.

SILAS. Somethin' like this, y' know.

(*He gets in middle of floor, whirls around and kicks up his foot*.)

ALVIRA. Silas Holcomb! be you crazy? Ain't you ashamed o' yourself? 'N' you a good Methodist!

SILAS. Wal, I jest wanted t' show Lizy Ann how —

LIZY ANN. I guess you needn't go no further.

ALVIRA. I should say not. Them ballets must be perfectly scandalous. I'm shocked at you, Silas Holcomb!

SILAS. I don't see how you know so much about it. You wa'n't there.

ALVIRA. One o' Mis' Rutledge's hired girls told me all about it. I wouldn't go t' one of 'em for five dollars.

SILAS. Y' wouldn't need t'. It only cost a dollar. Wuth it, too.

ALVIRA. Silas!

LIZY ANN. Tell me somethin' else y' saw.

ALVIRA. Wal, one day we went way up in Central Park t' see a needle.

LIZY ANN. You didn't! What kind of a needle?

ALVIRA. I guess you'd 'a' laughed. They called it "Cleopatry's needle." I thought it was a queer thing t' go t' see, but I didn't say nothin'. 'N' when we got there, what d' you s'pose it was?

LIZY ANN. I couldn't guess.

ALVIRA. Wal, it wa'n't a needle at all, but a monument as high as this house.

LIZY ANN. And no eyehole to it?

ALVIRA. No, not a sign of one. Jest a great big stone thing standin' up there with some kind o' crazy writin' all over it. They said it come all the way from Egypt, too.

LIZY ANN. Wal, the fools ain't all dead yet.

ALVIRA. No, 'n' they don't all live in the country, neither.

(Enter HETTY L. She is attired in a black, or plain dark-colored dress, and is pale and sad. She is about to cross and go out R., but pauses as LIZY ANN speaks. ALVIRA rises and goes up L.)

LIZY ANN *(looking straight at HETTY with a curious, penetrating gaze)*. How d' do?

HETTY. Good-evening, Mrs. Tucker. I hope you are well.

LIZY ANN. I be, thank y', 'n' hope you're the same. Look kind o' pale, seems t' me, 'n' thin. I wouldn't fret m'self t' death over one man, 'f I was you. They's plenty more.

(Rising.)

HETTY. Why, Mrs. Tucker. I — you don't understand.

LIZY ANN. Oh, I s'pose you've got y'r reasons fer not tellin' nobuddy anything about y'r trouble, but it might be jest as well t' 'xplain a few things, 's t' let folks say things their own way. I —

ALVIRA (*coming forward and interrupting*). There now, Lizy Ann, they ain't no use talkin' about it. Folks can say what they want t'; they can't think no harm o' Hetty. They know better.

LIZY ANN. I ain't sayin' they could, 'n' I ain't got nothin' t' say. You know I never gossip, 'n' what you say t' me's sacred.

SILAS (*near HETTY, who is R.*). Wa'n't it warm enough up in your room, Hetty?

HETTY. Oh, yes, thank you, father, but I left my book in the parlor and I came down for it. Maybe I'll sit in there and read for a while.

SILAS. All right, I would. It's nice 'n' warm in there, 'n' it won't be s' lonesome. [Exit HETTY R.]

LIZY ANN (*looking after HETTY, meditatively*). It ain't true, of course it ain't.

ALVIRA. What ain't true? See here, Lizy Ann Tucker, they's somethin' you want t' say, so you might's well out with it.

(LIZY ANN *has gone L. and again sits by table; ALVIRA is C., and SILAS up L.*)

LIZY ANN. Wal, I d'know's it's anything worth mention-in', but I thought mebbe you'd ought t' know. Y' see, we take the "Weekly New York Times," 'n' I declare, some weeks we don't hardly look at it. He says he'd ruther read the "County Banner," 'n' that's about all he has time for, 'n' as fer me, wal, sometimes I look at the receipts 'r the fashions, 'n' now 'n' then I read the short story.

ALVIRA. 'N' what's the "Weekly New York Times" got t' do with Hetty 'n' us?

LIZY ANN. I was jest comin' to it. Y' see, I al'ays save all the back numbers, t' put on the pantry shelves 'n' under carpets 'n' such, 'n' sometimes they come in real handy t' do things up in, 'n' —

SILAS. Stick to y'r text, Lizy Ann.

LIZY ANN. Wal, this mornin' I was lookin' over a lot of old ones, 'n' I happened t' find one dated last January, with a long piece in it about your Hetty.

SILAS. About Hetty?

ALVIRA. In the paper?

LIZY ANN. Yes, all printed out as plain as day. I brung it over. *(She fumbles in her pocket and produces a part of an old newspaper, talking all the time.)* It's called "A Scandal in High Life," 'r somethin' like that, 'n' tells how Mis' Harold Rutledge eloped with an old lover from the country 'n' her husband was thinkin' of gett'n' a divorce. *(HETTY enters R. in time to hear the last sentence; stands in door, listening.)* I'll let you read it.

(She rises, opens the paper and SILAS and ALVIRA look over her shoulder. They are greatly excited and interested.)

SILAS. What a 'tarnal lie!

ALVIRA. Oh, it would jest kill Hetty if she knew it. Don't you tell her, will you, Lizy Ann?

LIZY ANN. You needn't worry. She'll never find it out through me. I ain't one t' tell things.

(HETTY, who has shown great distress as she hears what has been said, now gives a faint cry and almost falls. The others look around in dismay and SILAS runs and catches her in his arms.)

ALVIRA. You've heard!

HETTY. Yes, I — I hear, but I don't understand. Let me see the paper.

(She holds out her hand, weakly.)

LIZY ANN *(putting the paper behind her)*. It ain't nothin' you want t' see. Jest a piece 'n the paper, without a word o' truth in it.

HETTY. I must see it. *(She revives and goes toward LIZY ANN, demanding the paper.)* It can do no good to keep it from me now. Let me know the worst.

ALVIRA. I guess you might 's well show it to her, Lizy Ann.

(LIZY ANN hands the paper to HETTY, who turns toward L. as she takes it. SILAS tenderly helps her to a chair by table. She sits and reads hurriedly. The others watch anxiously a moment, then she rises, lays the paper on table and falls into SILAS'S arms, sobbing.)

SILAS. There, there, little one, don't you mind. Of course we know it ain't so, and they won't a soul believe a word of it.

LIZY ANN. Of course they won't.

HETTY (*looking up, almost calm*). My husband believed it. He believes it now. He thinks me a guilty woman. Oh, how could he?

ALVIRA. I don't believe he does. He 'd ought t' know better.

HETTY. But it speaks of — oh, a divorce! He could even do that! I can never forgive him — never!

LIZY ANN. Wal, I don't s'pose you 'd ought t' come away the way you did, with Perry Deane. I s'pose it did look kind o' — wal, of course you didn't mean nothin' wrong by it, but —

HETTY. I understand. I was blind and foolish. It was wrong, and I am to blame, but nothing should have made him think me capable of such an act.

ALVIRA. I lay the hull thing t' his mother and that schemin' Isabel Carney. If it hadn't be'n for them —

HETTY. Never mind. It is ended now, and I shall never see him or them again. I must try to forget. (*Going R.*) Yes, perhaps sometime even to forgive. [*Exit R.*]

LIZY ANN. I hope you don't blame me for its gitt'n' out?

ALVIRA. It wouldn't do no good to, now. I s'pose you meant all right.

SILAS. But of course somethin's got t' be done. We can't let him go on b'lieving that about her. (*There is a knocking on door in flat.*) There! I guess that's Azariah sure, this time. Come on, Mis' Tucker, you 'n' I'll go 'n the kitchen. He didn't come t' see us.

(*He goes L., followed by LIZY ANN and they go out as ALVIRA opens the door, admitting PERRY DEANE. He wears an ulster, cap, etc.*)

ALVIRA. Why, Perry Deane, is that you?

PERRY. Yes, Miss Holcomb. I suppose you're surprised to see me?

ALVIRA. Wal, some. You ain't b'en over in s' long.

PERRY. I know it. I had my reasons for staying away, and now I have a reason for coming.

ALVIRA. I s'pose you mean about Hetty. But I hope you know we understood how it was, 'n' never blamed you for

anything. Why, we al'ays felt grateful to y' for bein' such a good friend to her 'n' bringin' her back to us in her time o' trial.

✓ PERRY. Yes, Miss Holcomb, I know you trusted and believed in me, and it is that which has helped me bear all that I have had to go through. And she trusted me too; that was better than all; and yet, see what it led to. But now —

ALVIRA. Why, Perry, has anything happened?

✓ PERRY. Yes; much has happened, and there is something else coming — soon. But you must wait, Miss Holcomb, and trust me a little while longer. I want to see Mr. Holcomb at once. Is he here?

ALVIRA. Yes, in the kitchen. I'll call him. (*Starting L., then pausing.*) But what is it, Perry — what —

✓ PERRY. You will soon know. But not yet.

ALVIRA. Wal, I s'pose — but I can't imagine — [*Exit L.*

(PERRY has his cap in his hand; he now removes his overcoat. While he is doing this SILAS enters.)

SILAS. Hello, Perry. Viry said you wanted t' see me.

✓ PERRY. Yes, Mr. Holcomb. I have news for you. (*He puts his coat and cap on a chair up R. or L.*) Of course you will imagine it is something about — about Hetty, and it is, — about Hetty and her husband.

SILAS. Her husband, eh? What about him?

✓ PERRY. Well, I have no idea you have seen anything that appeared in the city papers about her — and — well, me? I didn't myself for some time after I brought her back to you.

SILAS. But I have seen it, jest t'-night. Lizy Ann Tucker's here 'n' she's got an old back number over two months old, with it in. Says he's go'n' t' have a d'vorce. Is he?

✓ PERRY. I might have known Mrs. Tucker would get the start of me, if there was any news to tell, but there are one or two things I don't believe even she has found out. No, Mr. Rutledge has made no effort to get a divorce; he wants none. The trouble was all the result of the scheming of his proud, disappointed mother and that unscrupulous Miss Carney. They succeeded in driving Hetty away, then almost succeeded in making her husband believe in her guilt. Had it not been for Mr. Hildreth, — Heaven bless him, — they might have succeeded entirely.

SILAS. I al'ays liked that man.

✓ PERRY. Well, he liked Hetty. He saw how she had been wronged and made the victim of those jealous women, and he resolved to get at the truth of the matter.

SILAS. I begin t' see. And you've been helping him?

✓ PERRY. I've been doing all I could. I want to see that poor little wife happy again, and I believe I shall too, and soon.

SILAS. Why, is he comin' back to her? Do you think —

✓ PERRY. I know. I have had considerable correspondence with Mr. Hildreth, with the result that Mr. Rutledge sees and believes his wife's complete innocence, as well as his own weakness and unkindness in being so easily influenced. And he is not only coming back — he is here.

SILAS. Here? You don't mean —

✓ PERRY. Yes; he and Mr. Hildreth are at the hotel. They arrived on the evening train and were to follow me here in half an hour. It is nearly time for them now.

(He goes and looks out of window.)

SILAS *(greatly excited, hurrying first toward R., then L., then up to PERRY)*. And Hetty? She don't know — she'll be so happy! Shall I tell her?

✓ PERRY *(again coming down)*. No. Don't let her know a thing about it until she sees him.

SILAS. The shock might be too much for her.

✓ PERRY. No, joy never kills. You know she will be glad to see him?

SILAS. Glad? It's the only thing that can make her glad. Her heart's jest breakin' for him. She thinks she can't forgive him, but she can — she will. All she wants is the chance, I'm sure o' that. Glad? It'll be heaven to her. Perry, you're the right stuff. *(Grasping PERRY's hand.)* I'm proud of you.

✓ PERRY. No, no, Mr. Holcomb, don't thank me for it. After what happened, it was no more than I owed to them both.

SILAS. But you're good, Perry, and unselfish, you needn't say you ain't. Don't I know how you loved her, and how it 'most killed you t' give her up?

✓ PERRY. Don't speak of that now, Mr. Holcomb. I was not noble, or kind. I was wicked. I almost wished they would be unhappy, and when she left him I was — yes, I was secretly glad, for I thought she might forget him in time and be free, so that she might yet be mine. But when I saw how true she was to him, and how she really loved him and could never be happy without him, why, I conquered myself and had no wish but to see her happy again, even in his arms. And I thank Heaven if I have been the means of bringing them together again.

(He walks up to window and stands looking out.)

SILAS. And I say you're a man, ev'ry inch of you, and I like y'.

✓ PERRY *(turning and looking at him)*. Thanks, Mr. Holcomb. You do me good.

(A loud and long knocking is heard on door in flat.)

SILAS. That's Azariah Keep. I could tell his knock 'mong forty thousan'. He thinks ev'rybuddy else's deaf jest b'cause he is. *(Goes and opens door, admitting AZARIAH KEEP, who has on his "best clothes" and is much muffled up in a big overcoat and a huge tippet wound many times around his neck.)* Wal, y' did come, didn't y', Azariah? Guess y' got 'most snowed up.

AZARIAH *(brushing off the snow)*. Snows some.

SILAS. Guess it does. All out o' breath?

AZARIAH. Hey?

SILAS. I say, I guess you're all out o' breath.

AZARIAH. Yes; tired 'most t' death.

(SILAS gets hold of the end of his tippet and turns him around and around as he unwinds it. AZARIAH finally totters and falls into a chair. SILAS and PERRY look at him, laughing.)

✓ PERRY. Good-evening, Mr. Keep.

AZARIAH *(panting as he glances up at PERRY)*. Oh, — that you, Perry? How are y'? Told Alviry I'd be over, 'n' 'tain't my way t' disapp'int her. *(To SILAS.)* S'pose she's t' home?

(Gets up and removes his coat.)

SILAS. Oh, yes, she's out in the kitchen — her 'n' Lizy Ann Tucker.

AZARIAH. What 'd you say?

SILAS. I said she was out in the kitchen. You might go out there. It's warmer there by the fire.

AZARIAH. Kitchen? Oh, don't care 'f I do. Got some-thin' t' say to 'er. (*Fumbling in his pocket and finally producing a letter.*) Got it all writ down, so 'f I don't git a chance t' say it I can hand it to 'er 'n' she can read it. (*Chuckles to himself as he goes L.*) Might 'a' mailed it, but I dassent trust the postoffice. [*Exit L.*]

SILAS. Wal, I reckon Azariah's found a way t' pop at last. Took him long enough, didn't it? I declare, I can't think o' nothin' but his comin', though — Hetty's husband. T' think he's comin' back to her 'n' she's goin' t' be happy ag'in. It's 'most too good to be true. (*The jingling of sleigh-bells is heard in the distance. SILAS starts.*) There! I bet that's them.

PERRY. Yes; I guess it is.

(*SILAS runs to door and looks out; PERRY to window. The bells sound nearer, and nearer, and soon a "Whoa" is heard as the sleigh is supposed to stop outside. The bells stop, with one or two little jingles. SILAS rushes out, followed by PERRY, and they soon return, accompanied by MR. HILDRETH and HAROLD RUTLEDGE, both in heavy coats, etc., with snow upon them.*)

SILAS. Wal, I vum, this is a surprise. Harold, my boy, I'm s' glad t' see y' I could hug y'.

(*Again shaking HAROLD'S hand cordially and putting his arm on his shoulder kindly.*)

HAROLD. Then you don't bear me any ill will, Mr. Holcomb? You — you are willing to forgive me?

SILAS. Why, of course I be. We ain't go'n' t' say another word about nothin' that's happened — jest let it all go 'n' start all over ag'in.

HILDRETH. That's the way to talk, Mr. Holcomb, and just what I have been trying to convince this penitent young man you would be willing to do. But he thinks he has done something terrible, quite past forgiveness.

HAROLD. No, not that — I never felt so hopeless as that, but when I think of Hetty and how unhappy she must have been, and how blind I was when I might have seen that I was breaking her heart by neglect — oh, when I think of all that, I can't forgive myself. (*Pauses a moment and turns away from the others as if to hide his emotion, then turning, again resolutely to SILAS.*) But I have come to ask her pardon, Mr. Holcomb, humbly and penitently, and to promise her that if she will go back with me it shall be to a home of our own, where we will have no one to interfere with our happiness.

SILAS. Never mind, Harold, there ain't no use sayin' anything about it.

(*HAROLD and SILAS are down L. C.; MR. HILDRETH and PERRY conversing inaudibly together up R.*)

HAROLD. But I want to tell you, I want you to know, to feel sure, that I shall treat her differently in the future. My mother sees her mistake now and is sorry for her part in our unhappiness. She will do all she can to atone. As for — Miss Carney — well, she has passed out of our lives. If Hetty will forgive me, if she will go back —

SILAS. She will, she will — don't you worry. She never loved you s' much as she does now, and your comin' back for 'er will be the happiest minute of her life.

HAROLD. Then let me go to her, let me see her.

SILAS. So you shall, in just a minute. They's jest a word I want t' say to y' first. You know —

(*His voice dies down as he leads HAROLD up L., they talking confidentially together, as MR. HILDRETH and PERRY come down R.*)

HILDRETH. Yes, sir, it's all fixed. The man got well, your debts are paid, and you have nothing to worry about. I'm glad to see you have made a fresh start and are doing so well. I don't think you will ever get into such a scrape again.

PERRY. No, Mr. Hildreth, I don't think I ever shall. It has been a lesson to me, and I shall try to profit by it. I owe a great deal to you, and I — I'm sure I don't know how to thank you.

HILDRETH. Don't try, then. It isn't at all necessary. This is one of the things we are going to forget.

(PERRY *silently grasps his hand and presses it warmly.*
Enter LIZY ANN TUCKER, L., with her things on. She has a small package, which she is tucking into her muff or pocket. She is followed by ALVIRA.)

LIZY ANN. Thanks, Miss Holcomb. I'll see that you git it back inside of a week. (She sees MR. HILDRETH.) Land! is it — (Sees HAROLD and is nearly overcome with surprise.) Wal, I — do — declare! If it ain't her husband!

ALVIRA (*opens her mouth but is at first too surprised to speak; rushes up to HAROLD, and takes hold of him*). Har—old Rutledge! Is it you?

HAROLD. Yes, Aunt Alvira. Will you kiss me?

(*He looks pleadingly at her. She smiles, and he puts his arm about her, kissing her tenderly. At this point an organ off R. begins playing softly.*)

ALVIRA. Listen! It's her. It's Hetty, Silas, playin' on the organ. Does she know —

SILAS. Not yet.

HAROLD. Let me go to her.

(*He starts toward R., but falters as he reaches the door. A sweet female voice, supposed to be HETTY'S, begins singing a pathetic song off R., with the organ accompaniment. HAROLD covers his face with his hands and weeps, leaning against the door.*)

LIZY ANN (*softly to ALVIRA*). I guess I'll be goin'.

(*Pulls her cape about her and goes to door.*)

✓ PERRY. Wait a minute, Mrs. Tucker. I'm going your way.

(*Gets his overcoat.*)

SILAS. Better stay awhile, Perry.

✓ PERRY. No, thanks, not to-night. (SILAS *helps him on with coat.*) I'll come over again soon, though — if you all want me.

SILAS. Want y'? I guess we do.

ALVIRA. Why, of course we do, Perry; always.

(PERRY shakes hands with HILDRETH, then goes and takes HAROLD'S hand, pressing it warmly, with a meaning look straight into his eyes. HAROLD smiles at him kindly, putting his left hand on PERRY'S shoulder and shakes his hands cordially. PERRY turns to go out, almost overcome. MRS. TUCKER has gone to ALVIRA and again speaks softly to her.)

LIZY ANN (to ALVIRA, with a glance at HAROLD). I'm real glad.

(PERRY opens the door in flat; LIZY ANN goes out and he follows her. HETTY is still singing softly off R. HAROLD is again by door R., about to exit, but hesitating, as if half afraid. At this point VERBENA enters L., poring over her book.)

VERBENA (without looking up). Say! Mr. Keep wants t' know —

(Looks up, sees the others, drops her book and stands staring open-mouthed at HAROLD. ALVIRA goes and takes hold of her, urging her off L., again; as they are about to go out, VERBENA runs back and grabs her book, still looking curiously at HAROLD. ALVIRA gives her a gentle push, and she stumbles off L. ALVIRA follows, motioning to SILAS and HILDRETH, who follow her cautiously, leaving HAROLD alone by door R. He listens a moment longer, then calls gently, "Hetty." There is no reply, and he calls again, louder. The music suddenly stops. HAROLD hurriedly goes up R., and is not at first seen by HETTY, who, after a brief pause, enters R.)

HETTY. What voice was that? I heard some one call me. It seemed like —

(She stands motionless, her hands clasped tightly, looking straight ahead in a bewildered manner.)

HAROLD (softly). Hetty!

HETTY. Like — his — voice!

HAROLD. Hetty — my wife!

HETTY (turns and sees him. She is almost overcome, and for an instant seems about to fall). You! (He goes to her, and is about to support her. She shrinks from him.) No!

don't touch me! I am not your wife. I am nothing to you now; you — you are nothing to me. Why have you come here?

HAROLD. For you, Hetty — to ask your forgiveness, to beg it, on my knees.

(About to kneel to her, but she stops him.)

HETTY. No. It is too late.

HAROLD. Too late? Oh, you don't, you can't mean that. I know I have wronged you, but I have not believed what you think. It was only my pride which kept me from coming to you long ago, — pride and the belief that you no longer cared for me. They told me —

HETTY. They told you, and you believed. You let them influence you; you let them come between us. They tortured me, they won you from me, they made me believe I was no longer wanted there, even by you, so I came away with an old friend, one whom I could trust, and then you believed that I — that — oh, how could you think that of me?

HAROLD. I did not; never for a moment did I believe it. True, my mother and — another — tried to make me believe, and made every effort to keep me from coming to you. They were even responsible for the story that I was to seek a — forgive them, Hetty — a divorce; but it was false. As soon as I had a hope that you still loved me, I came to you. For you do love me still, Hetty; say that you do. *(She hesitates, with bowed head. He puts his arm about her, she yielding to his embrace.)* Say you forgive me, darling — that you will forgive and forget.

(She still hesitates, draws away from him and stands for a moment looking steadily into his eyes; finally says, "Harold!" and falls into his arms. He kisses her tenderly. Enter L., SILAS, looking in cautiously; he is followed by ALVIRA, who looks over his shoulder. As they see HAROLD and HETTY, ALVIRA begins to cry; SILAS puts his arm about her, himself almost in tears. VERBENA enters L., followed by AZARIAH KEEP. She points to HAROLD and HETTY, and he looks at them bewildered. VERBENA has her novel; she now opens it to the last page, to which she points rapturously, then to HAROLD and HETTY, as much

as to say, "They've made it up." She then clasps the book in her arms, hugging it. AZARIAH looks puzzled, then breaks into a grin, and smiles broadly, denoting that he understands. ALVIRA sees him and VERBENA, and points to them, she and SILAS smiling pathetically. HAROLD is bending over HETTY, while her head is still buried on his breast. They do not see the others. AZARIAH steals over to ALVIRA, and slyly slips the letter into her hand. She looks at it, puzzled; he begins putting on his overcoat, as if about to go.)

CURTAIN.

THE MAGISTRATE.

A Farce in Three Acts. By ARTHUR W. PINERO. Twelve male, four female characters. Costumes, modern; scenery, all interior. The merits of this excellent and amusing piece, one of the most popular of its author's plays, are well attested by long and repeated runs in the principal American theatres. It is of the highest class of dramatic writing, and is uproariously funny, and at the same time unexceptionable in tone. Its entire suitability for amateur performance has been shown by hundreds of such productions from manuscript during the past three years. Plays two hours and a half. (1892.)

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A Drama in Four Acts. By ARTHUR W. PINERO. Eight male and five female characters; scenery, all interiors. This is a "problem" play continuing the series to which "The Profligate" and "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray" belong, and while strongly dramatic, and intensely interesting is not suited for amateur performance. It is recommended for Reading Clubs. (1895.)

THE PROFLIGATE.

A Play in Four Acts. By ARTHUR W. PINERO. Seven male and five female characters. Scenery, three interiors, rather elaborate; costumes, modern. This is a piece of serious interest, powerfully dramatic in movement, and tragic in its event. An admirable play, but not suited for amateur performance. (1892.)

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