

## THE PLAYERS

“Again,” commanded Mr. Mowbray Gore, his mobile face professionally unmoved. “And don’t forget the breath before each letter H.”

“Damn the letter H!” said Mr. Pomfret.

“Don’t,” objected his tutor, speaking from the height of perfect—perhaps too perfect—elocution, and with an easy command of the baffling consonant, “it’s the most elegant letter in the alphabet. What would the English language be without it?”

“None the worse that I can see,” returned his pupil, with impatient decisiveness. “I got on very well without it for fifty years and made a million of money. The letter Haitch——”

“Aitch,” murmured the Professor.

“Aitch”—the correction was accepted doggedly—“would never ’ave ’elped me to twc-and-sixpence more.”

“Perhaps not,” Mr. Mowbray Gore observed blandly. He was a clean-shaven man of indeterminate age, with the flexible face of the actor, a wide, straight mouth, bushy eyebrows and a luxuriant head of grey hair. His manners and gestures (of which he was somewhat prodigal) were precise even to the degree of posing, while his enunciation and general speech were nicely calculated to advertise his business. “Perhaps not. But now,” he added, with a not too subtle touch of flattery, “the mastery of the troublesome letter is