

## An International Comedy

By W. R. Gilbert

**W**HEN Jack Adams was twenty-four he found himself unexpectedly Lord Portsea with a ruinous Abbey on his hands and a poverty that was increased a hundredfold by the responsibilities connected with his new position. "There is only one thing to do, I shall let the Abbey," he said to his mother. "Impossible!" Lady Portsea held up her hands at the very idea. "What's the good of owning the Abbey if you let it, John?"

"What's the good of living in it if it ruins me?"

"All we need is money."

"But we have none."

"It's quite easy. You must marry an American girl."

Lord Portsea looked at his mother in silence.

"A nice American girl, of course. You see I too have—have—obligations. Debts in fact! Since you came into the title I've been obliged to spend continually. Mourning frocks, hats, extra maids, visitors. Money flies. So you must not lose this wonderful—I call it extraordinary—chance. In fact it looks as if Providence favored you. Wait till you see her."

"What on earth do you mean, mother?"

"There is one staying at the Beeches now with the Stoddarts-Stoddarts. Stoddart-Stoddart knows her father. Fabulously rich, my dear—fabulously! They want us to drive over and dine quietly to-night. What do you say, John?"

"I'll be hanged!" murmured Lord Portsea.

"At any rate you can see her. That won't do you any harm."

They were being presented to each other.

"How do you do?" asked Lord Portsea.

"Pleased to meet you," said Mamie Kinnersly.

It was evident she used a merely civil phrase, for she looked at him as she might have looked at a worm.

Something surprised him greatly. She was petite, this American girl, and he had thought they were all monsters, with broad shoulders, big hips and a conspicuous way of carrying themselves.

After dinner he found himself beside her. Lady Portsea had managed it well, herself vanishing to the other end of the room, as soon as the young people were together.

"Have you heard this new soprano?" asked Lord Portsea.

He wished she would not stare at him like that. Her little red mouth had such a scornful curve, her gray eyes held a haughty glance. He saw she was very young.

Instead of answering his question she suddenly dropped her voice very low and said. "Lord Portsea, I'd like to tell you what I think of you straight. Well, I think you're just the meanest thing that ever was. I do so."

"What do you mean?"

"I know all about it."

"About what?"

"This marrying."

"I'm not married."

"I didn't say you were. I don't suppose you will be. Your man told my maid all about it before dinner. Well I tell you straight, Lord Portsea, I'm not that kind of a girl. I wouldn't marry a lord even if it was to save my life. I want to have a good time. If my dad tries to make me marry I'll tell you what I'd do, I don't say I'd kill myself, but I would disappear."

"I'm sorry you feel like that."

"Well, I do, and I thought I'd tell you the very first chance I got. I'd never marry a man I didn't respect, and I could not respect a lord who married for money, and sold his old, old name, that came in, in the time of the Normans, for the dollars of a man who was a track layer on the railway twenty-five years ago."

Suddenly she interrupted herself.

"Smile at me," she said, "they're watching us, don't let them see we're quarrelling."

She looked up into his eyes with the loveliest smile he had ever seen.

Lord Portsea's smile was less successful and no wonder. He had never felt so serious in his life.

Now I expect you feel pretty badly

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