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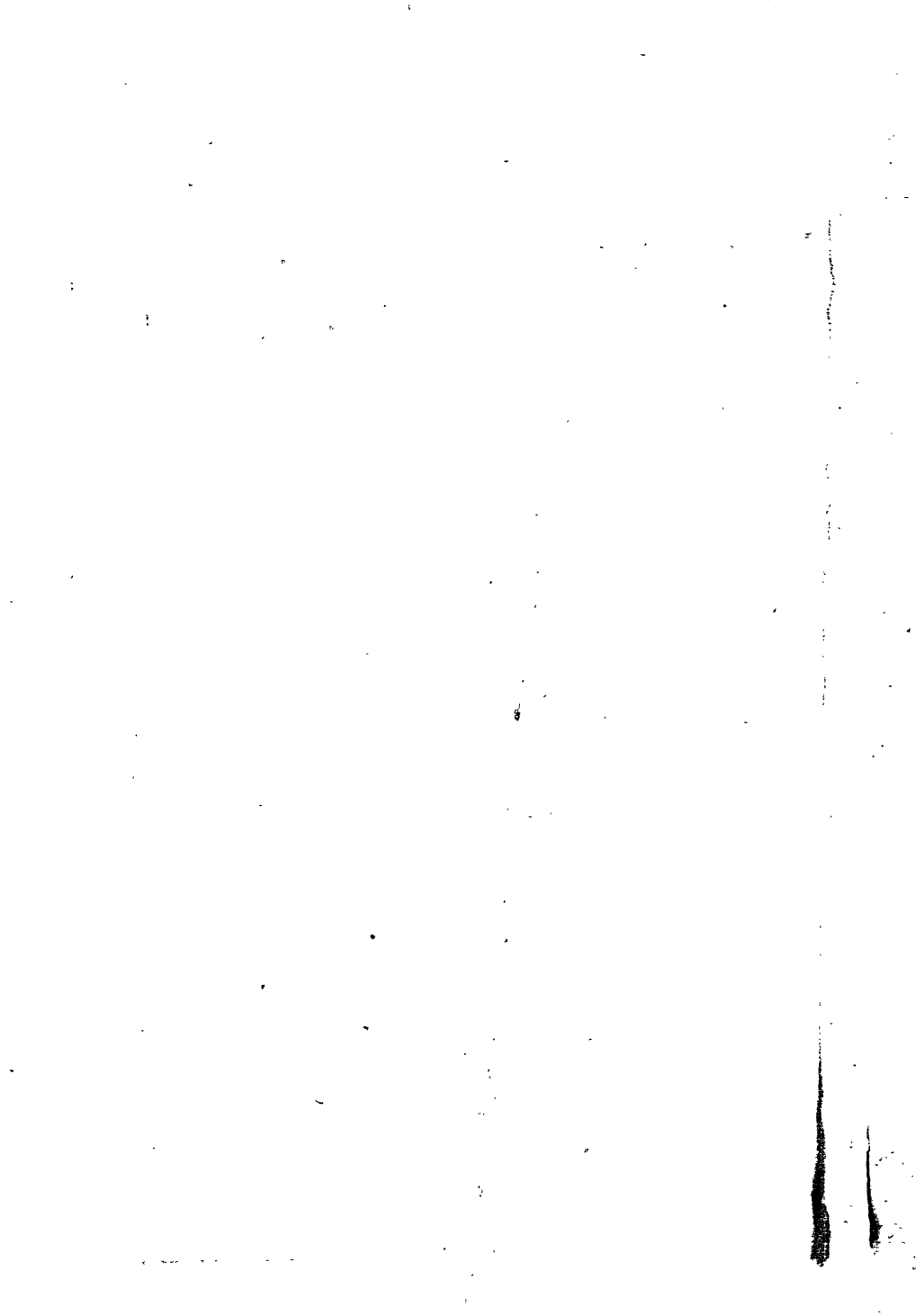


**Cousin
Charlotte's
Visit...**



A Play for Girls

BY
GERALDINE FITZ-GERALD.



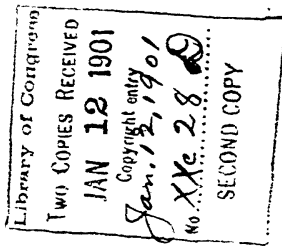
COUSIN CHARLOTTE'S VISIT

A PLAY IN THREE ACTS.

FOR GIRLS' SCHOOLS

BY
GERALDINE FITZGERALD.

HALIFAX, N. S.
HALIFAX PRINTING CO., 161 HOLLIS ST.
1900.



CAST OF CHARACTERS.

(COUSIN CHARLOTTE'S VISIT.)

MISS ELEANOR FAIRFAX, (an elderly lady of means.)
FANNIE FAIRFAX, }
JUNE FAIRFAX, } (her neices.)
CHARLOTTE IRWIN, }
DOBSON, (her housekeeper.)
KATIE, (the housemaid.)
A trained Nurse.

Scene.—An English Country Mansion.
Costumes of the day.

TIME IN PRESENTATION, THIRTY-FIVE MINUTES.

Miss Jan. 29/15

c
r
o
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w

5/11/15
d.c. Jan. 24/15

Cousin Charlotte's Visit.

Scene throughout represents a pretty sitting-room in Miss Fairfax's villa. Doors at back are open, showing garden or lawn.

ACT I.

KATIE (*entering*). Goodness! Three o'clock, and the parlor not done yet! Where can those worthless girls be? Fanny! June! Off on another rampage, I'll be sworn! The idea of depending on two scapegraces like those nieces!

(*Enter Dobson.*)

KATIE. Oh, there you are, Dobson! Look here! You see this! Three o'clock, and this room hasn't seen the sight of a dust rag yet. As for me, I'm that worn out, I can't do another hand's turn. (*Sits and rocks.*)

DOBSON. Where are Fannie and June?

KATIE. Fanny and June! Did you ever yet see Fanny and June where they ought to be?

DOBSON. Well, well, the poor children, they're young. They'll get sense bye-and-bye. You must remember what you were yourself at thirteen years of age.

KATIE. Fanny is fifteen!

DOBSON. Well, even so. You must have patience with children. It may take a long time to lead them into the right way, but you can never drive them there.

KATIE. If they were mine, I'd make them mind, drive or lead, if I had to whip them every day.

DOBSON. Ah, youth, youth! Years will teach you, my dear, that you must be tolerant. Take an old woman's advice. Kindness, gentleness, are the winning cards. It is love, love, love, that makes the world go round.

KATIE. Why, there come the girls now. Fannie Fairfax, where have you been?

(Enter Fanny and June at bar.)

FANNIE. Down to the river to get cat-tails.

KATIE. I'd like to cat-tail you.

JUNE. Just try it once!

KATIE. Why haven't you been at your work all the afternoon?

FANNIE. We can't work all the time.

JUNE. Aunt Midge is an old slave-driver; just as soon as we finish one job she has another ready. She's too mean anyhow.

DOBSON (*reproachfully*). Now, now, you ought'n't to talk that way about your aunt, that's taking care of you.

FANNIE. Humph!

JUNE. I'm sure I don't want her to take care of me, I'd just as soon go to the orphan asylum. There I'd have a holiday once in a while.

FANNIE. And we could go to school and learn something.

JUNE. Oh, I'm not so anxious about that!

KATIE. Did you know your aunt was looking for you?

JUNE. Looking for us? What for?

DOBSON. She wants to see you both, so go and wash your faces; I'll gather up these. Hurry now—(*looking at June's shoes.*) Why child, what a condition you are in! Mud up to your knees! How in the world did you do that?

FANNIE. She fell in the water. Oh, Dobson, you should have seen us! I had to climb up in one of those big willows and bend down the bough so she could catch it and pull her feet out. They were stuck tight in the mud. Ha, ha, ha!

JUNE. Well, you needn't laugh so hard! You wouldn't think it so funny if it was you.

DOBSON. Now, what shall I tell your Aunt? That means a pair of new boots, of course,—these are ruined.

JUNE. I'd just as leave go barefoot.

FANNIE. She can hold them under the pump and hang 'em to dry. They'll be as good as new.

KATIE. Well, what will you two be up to next? One would think you had lived in the wilds of America.

FANNIE. Don't I wish we did!

DOBSON. Come, come, children!

KATIE. Here comes Miss Fairfax, girls.

(Enter Miss Fairfax, with a nurse.)

MISS FAIRFAX. Are my nieces here?

FANNIE and JUNE. Yes, Aunt. Good afternoon, Aunt.

(Dobson places chair and exit.)

MISS F. It does not surprise me to find you in this condition—it does not surprise me in the least. Still, I think that in my illness, when I am obliged to depend entirely on strangers, you would try to show a little unselfishness, a little gratitude. Here, you have been four years members of my household, entirely dependent on my generosity, and have you ever given the slightest return? I am not obliged to take care of my brother's children. Pray, what would become of you if you were to forfeit my good will? The position of shop girls, factory hands, is not an enviable one. (Pause.) Well, it was not this that I had to say to you, but it bears on the subject. Your cousin, Charlotte Irwin, is coming here to-day on a visit, and since there is no one but you two to entertain her. I hope you will try to behave yourselves. You will be excused from all duties about the house during her stay, as I have hired a new maid. Your cousin will arrive this afternoon,—about five, the telegram says, does it not, nurse?

NURSE (consulting telegram.) It says she is to drive from Starville, and may be here before five.

MISS F. That's true. Go now, and have Dobson put on your best gowns, and tell Kitty I wish tea served in this room.

(Exit Fanny and June.)

(To Nurse) And you, I wish you would inquire exactly when the train arrives. (Exit Nurse.) Another of my helpless, reckless relations thrown upon me for hospitality! It seems the whole family of Fairfax must have plotted beforehand to squander their portions, and then apply to me for a share of mine. First, the father of these children! Nothing would satisfy him but he must invest £2,000 in Colorado silver mines. Water got into the mines, and he lost it all. I don't know how it is, my enterprises always prosper! And then when I blamed him for his loss, he demanded how could

he prevent what was the will of Providence? But glad enough was he, when dying, to leave me his orphans. Little good though I could see in him, I find still less in June and Fannie.

(Enter Katie and Nurse.)

NURSE. The train has come, Miss Fairfax. The carriage is just driving to the depot to meet the young lady.

MISS F. Ah, so soon! This will put an end to peace and quiet in the house, I suppose. Katie, tell my nieces to receive their cousin, and make her at home. And remember, no noise—no music! Of course, she is as boisterous as the rest.

NURSE. You may find her right different, Miss Fairfax.

MISS F. They are all alike, selfish, extravagant, interested.

(Exeunt, Nurse, Miss F. and Katie, the latter hurriedly setting the furniture in order.)

(Enter Fanny, she is tying her sash, etc.)

FANNY. I wonder what our new cousin will be like! If she locks anything like her photograph, she must be one of those goody-good girls. Of course, she and Aunt Midge will hate each other before they're acquainted half a day. Well, anyhow, June and I will put in a jolly time the next two weeks. We'll just do everything Aunt tells us not to do. She can't say anything, because Cousin Charlotte is a visitor, and then, she's eighteen years old.

JUNE. *(Without.)* Fanny!

FANNY. Well!

JUNE. Are you dressed?

FANNY. Oh! I've been ready this half hour. I'm standing here waiting for you.

(Enter June, Dobson and Katie, the latter giving the finishing touches to June's toilet.)

JUNE. Ready, indeed! I suppose you're going to receive your cousin in your bare feet!

FAN. Dobson, did you ever see our Cousin Charlotte?

DOB. Yes, when she was a very little one.

JUNE. Was she nice, Dobson?

DOB. One of the most angelic dispositions, my child.

JUNE. Dobson, I think she must be a changeling!

DOB. A changeling? Why?

JUNE. If she has an angelic disposition, she can't be a niece of Aunt Midge.

KAT. And she can't be nearer than thirty-second cousin to you, June.

FAN. Oh, listen, isn't that the carriage?

JUNE. Oh, let us see!

KAT. (*pulling her back by the dress.*) Come back here, June Fairfax!

FAN. (*at the door.*) Yes, they're driving up the avenue!

JUNE. Oh, Dobson, should I kiss her when she comes in?

FAN. You might wait until she asks you.

(*Enter Charlotte.*)

DOB. Ah! My sweet young lady, 'tis welcome you are, my dearie.

CHAR. My kind old friend, Dobson! It seems really like coming home, to meet you.

DOB. And so you are at home, my dear, and so you are. For here are your two cousins, Frances and June. Now make her welcome, girls.

FAN. You don't know how glad we were, Cousin Charlotte, when we heard you were coming.

DOB. You must be very good friends, all of you.

CHAR. I am sure I shall love them. I have been so many years among strangers, that I am quite prepared to appreciate my aunt and cousins.

FAN. And we have been so anxious to see you, cousin.

JUNE. We were just asking Dobson a lot of questions about you.

CHAR. I hope she gave me a good reputation. Dobson and I are old friends, are we not, Dobson?

DOB. We ought to be, Miss Charlotte, for I made your acquaintance the day you were born.

CHAR. So you did.

DOB. I was young and spry as the best of them, then. Eighteen years have made a great change in me.

CHAR. But, I daresay, they have made still more in me.

DOB. Yes, yes, but you have changed for the better, my bird. But, now, Miss Charlotte must have a cup of tea this minute, for it's a long, hot journey she's had.

(*Fanny proceeds to pour the tea. Exit Dobson.*)

FAN. All the way from London! You're quite a traveler, cousin.

CHAR. Yes, I believe I have seen more of the world than most girls of my age.

JUNE. And been at boarding-school in France!

FAN. And studied music and painting! How I envy you, Cousin Charlotte.

JUNE. You'll play for us some day, won't you?

FAN. If we can coax Aunt Eleanor out of the house for the occasion:

CHAR. Does she dislike music?

FAN. (*carelessly.*) Not when she's well, but she's laid up nearly all the time, now.

CHAR. Really? I knew she was delicate, but not that she was an invalid.

FAN. Well, she seems strong enough sometimes, but lately she needs a nurse nearly all the time; she can't stand the least noise.

CHAR. Poor Aunt!

FAN. Poor *nieces*!

CHAR. Are you not, then, fond of her?

JUNE. Oh—Yes, we adore her!

FAN. She has such a lovable disposition!

JUNE. And is *so* generous! Sis, give Charlotte some cream!

FAN. With all my heart, for she will find a scarcity of "the milk of human kindness" here!

JUNE. Poor Cousin! Is one lump enough?

CHAR. Quite! "Your pity is so sweet." But really, you astonish me. I thought you were devoted to Aunt Eleanor. Indeed, I must acknowledge to feeling a little jealous once in a while. I used sometimes to think, "What a poor, lonely girl I am; how fortunate for Fanny and Mildred to be in the care of good Aunt Eleanor!"

JUNE. Just what we so often said about you.

CHAR. About me!

FAN. How fortunate you were to be *out* of the care of good Aunt Eleanor.

CHAR. But has not she been like a mother to you?

FAN. Well, there are mothers and mothers. She's quite a unique specimen.

CHAR. Ah, girls, it must be that you do not understand her. She certainly means well by you. Have you ever tried to find the way to her heart?

FAN.—There is no way—'tis a blind alley.

JUNE. If you undertake to look for her heart, better furnish yourself with a microscope.

CHAR. No, but seriously, girls, how much happier you'd be in trying to find her good qualities and bearing with her little failings. Remember, she's old, and may not be with you long. Wouldn't it be sad for you if she were to die now?

FAN. Sad!—Oh, yes indeed!

JUNE. There might be two opinions about that.

FAN. June!

JUNE. Well, you might as well be honest about it. Fanny Fairfax. You know we couldn't be worse off than we are now, and—why—to be plain, she'd leave us her money,

CHAR. She has then made a will in your favor?

FAN. Oh, yes, some years ago; you see, she gave us to understand when we came, that we were to be her heirs.

CHAR. Indeed, I hope you may.

JUNE. But, anyhow, we'll forget all our scrapes and troubles while you are here.

FAN. What shall we do to entertain you, Cousin Charlotte, since we can't have music or games?

CHAR. You won't find me hard to entertain. My tastes are very simple.

JUNE. I suppose you wouldn't like to go out picking blackberries?

CHAR. Oh, wouldn't I! I'd be charmed!

FAN AND JUNE. Really?

FAN. Why, then, we can go on a picnic to-morrow.

JUNE. Dobson will put us up a lovely lunch.

FAN. And we'll take Mr. Parker's boat and go up the

river. The bushes are just covered with berries.

CHAR. Oh, what fun that will be! What a change from the city!

FAN. Oh, we can have lots of that kind of fun.

JUNE (*dancing around, clapping her hands*). And I'm going to do whatever I like for two whole weeks.

(*Curtain.*)

ACT II.

(*Enter, laughing, Fanny and June, carrying Tennis Rackets.*)

FAN. If you only knew what a ridiculous figure you cut, sprawling across the grass.

JUNE. Well, you needn't laugh so hard, I won the game, all the same.

FAN. I'm three ahead of you still, though.

JUNE. I beg pardon, you're only two.

FAN. I was four last night, when we lost the ball in the currant bushes.

(*Nurse opens door at L.*)

NURSE. Will you please keep quiet. You have just awaked your Aunt out of the first sleep she's had to-day (*she closes door*)

FAN. Oh, dear! It's always the same, sick or well, we can't have a bit of fun.

JUNE. I declare, I forgot all about her. Say, Fanny, it's too bad.

FAN. Too bad! What's too bad?

JUNE. To wake her up. She hasn't slept for two nights.

FAN. Oh, bah! She'll have time enough to sleep before Gabriel's trumpet calls her.

JUNE. Say Fanny, we never asked how she feels to-day. You know the other day Charlotte told us she always questions the nurse whether we have inquired for her.

FAN. Charlotte is too much of a busybody!

JUNE. Why, I thought she told us out of kindness, so that we'd be careful.

FAN. Well, you're as simple as a baby! Do you suppose Charlotte is looking after your interests or mine?

JUNE (*innocently*). I don't know.

FAN. Charlotte is just trying to insinuate herself into Aunt Midge's favor.

JUNE. Charlotte! Do you think so, sister?

FAN. Do I think so? Anyone not born blind could see that. I'd like to know why she waits on her day and night, if she doesn't expect to gain something by it. You remember when the two weeks of her visit were up. Well, she had planned to visit Clarisse Holden, her greatest friend. She intended to spend the rest of the summer there.

JUNE. Yes, and I know she was dying to go, for the day she received the letter she hesitated a long time, and then went in a hurry and telegraphed that she couldn't go.

FAN. She has been crafty enough to gain the good graces of Aunt Midge.

JUNE. Well, I'd just as leave she'd gain them. I don't love Aunt Midge hard enough to be jealous.

FAN. You little goose, who's talking about love? Don't you see that if she takes a notion to Charlotte she'll win her all the money, and we'll be left out in the cold.

JUNE. Why, could she leave her money to anyone else, I thought—

FAN. Thought! You thought! You never do think, that's the trouble. Why, don't you know that the money is her's, and she can do what she wants with it? We think we are badly off as it is, but what would we do if we hadn't a shelter, nor a house to stay in.

JUNE. Oh, Fanny, 'tis our own fault. Why weren't we good and nice to Aunt all the time?

FAN. She never would have liked me, she hated me from the first.

JUNE. And I know I never could learn to wait on her. Once when Dobson sent me up with the tray, I spilled gravy all over the counterpane. You should have heard her order me out of the room.

FAN. June, do you know what the doctor says of her?

JUNE. That she has the "brown-creatures," or something of that sort.

FAN. No, he says she is apt to take a bad spell and die very suddenly.

JUNE. Poor thing! Really, Fanny, I feel right sorry for her. Say, let's begin and be good.

FAN. O', that would be all very fine if Charlotte wasn't here.

(Enter Charlotte L.)

CHAR. Ah, girls, it was too bad to break up your game, and now I'm sorry to disturb you, but Aunt Eleanor is coming in here while her room is being arranged.

JUNE. Why, we don't mind, we'll go out. I guess we were pretty noisy just now.

FAN. And you may be sure Charlotte did not fail to call her patient's attention to it.

CHAR. On the contrary, Fanny, I did nothing of the kind.

FAN. You've been trying to supplant us here ever since you came. I'd like to know what right you have to make yourself mistress in this house. If Aunt Eleanor wants someone to take care of her, 'tis we who have the first right.

CHAR. That is exactly what I think, Fanny.

FAN. Why, then, did you not go when the term of your visit was up?

CHAR. Because Aunt Eleanor begged me to remain near her. And besides I had not the least idea that you were anxious, or even willing, to take care of her.

JUNE. Sister! Shame!

MISS F. *(without)*. Charlotte! Charlotte!

CHAR. Yes, Aunt, here I am!

(Exeunt June and Fanny, enter Miss Fairfax.)

CHAR. How do you feel now, Aunt Eleanor?

MISS F. *(peevishly)*. Where have you been? I sent you ten minutes ago to prepare this room, and now, where are the pillows?

CHAR. Here they are, Aunt. I'm very sorry to have kept you waiting. Let me put this one under your feet.

(Charlotte sits and fans Miss F.)

MISS F. How awkward you are, Charlotte! I'm not get-

ting a bit of that breeze. (*Coughs.*) Close that door.

CHAR. (*closes door.*) Now, Aunt, hadn't you better take a little of this mixture?

MISS F. No, not now. Sit down here, Charlotte, I have something to say to you. 'Tis about Fanny and June. How have they behaved toward you since you came?

CHAR. (*sitting on ottoman.*) Why, really Aunt, I have seen so little of them since your illness, that—

MISS F. Yes, yes, but you were at meals together, you saw them every day! Were they polite? Were they kind?

CHAR. Well—we don't seem as much in sympathy as I would like, but no doubt it is my fault.

MISS F. (*nodding.*) Fanny has acted spitefully, I'll warrant. Yes, I have heard. There are others to tell me things, too. I know that Fanny has an unbearable temper.

CHAR. But she will grow out of that, Aunt. She is young, and really has a good heart.

MISS F. She will have to grow out of it. And June? I suppose she is a pretty fair copy of her sister.

CHAR. Why, I am very fond of June. I fancy we would be very good friends, only I cannot come between her and her sister.

MISS F. Those children have been here four years, and yet, in all that time, they have not done as much to win my favor as you have in two months.

CHAR. But perhaps, Aunt Eleanor, you don't know me as well as them. It's easy to be amiable when one is a visitor.

MISS F. You have not been here in that capacity. A visitor does not watch at midnight by the pillow of a cross invalid. A visitor does not go into the kitchen to prepare with her own hands little dainties for her hostess.

CHAR. Indeed, dear Aunt, it gave me great pleasure to be able to do some little acts of kindness.

MISS F. Yes, and it will give me great pleasure to reward them. Tell me, now, how are you situated financially? Your father left you but a small fortune.

CHAR. Yes, and I have spent the whole of it upon my education. I now intend to earn my living by teaching.

MISS F. Yes, by teaching those about you, lessons of love and unselfishness. You will not feel obliged to gain

money by your talents when you have heard this paper. 'Tis my last testament, signed the other day. In a former will, I bequeathed my whole estate to Fanny and June. That, however, is now null and void. This is the latest.

CHAR. Indeed, I hope 'twill be a long time before this is executed, dear Aunt.

MISS F. I cannot expect that ; but my particular care is to distribute my wealth justly, and have it well employed. Here is the will. (*Reads*). "To my niece, Charlotte Irwin, I give and bequeath my entire fortune of a quarter of a million."

CHAR. Did I hear it aright ? To *me*, Aunt ?

MISS F. Yes, to you, my child. You are surprised. I expected you would be. Sit down. There is no reason to be agitated.

CHAR. Indeed, dear Aunt, I should never know what to do with so much money.

MISS F. You would find use for it. One soon becomes accustomed to riches.

CHAR. But Fanny and June, Aunt, are they to have nothing ?

MISS F. I shall reconsider June's claims, in view of what you have said of her. But they both belong to a class of girls for whom I have no use. They have no high-bred tendencies.

CHAR. Ah, dear Aunt, how much better for them to be as they are, than to flatter you with the hope of reward.

MISS F. No, Charlotte, the family of Fairfax is an old and aristocratic one. I desired to perpetuate its high standing. But, these children would only bring discredit upon it.

CHAR. Well, I have not given up the hope that they will yet make amends for the past.

MISS F. We shall see. But now I shall go back to my room. I should not have risen to-day, the exertion was too much (*rises painfully with help of stick ; when half way across the stage is seized with coughing spell*).

CHAR. Ah, Aunt, you feel worse ? Shall I call the nurse ? Good Heaven, she is insensible ! Nurse ! Katie !

(*Enter Nurse.*)

NURSE. What is the matter ?

CHAR. Quick, the other side. I can scarcely support her.

NURSE. Poor old soul ! This is what the doctor feared. I'm afraid 'tis all over with her. (*Exeunt Nurse and Charlotte with Miss Fairfax. The will falls to the floor. Pause. Enter Fanny.*)

FAN. Gone ! They had a nice little tête-a-tête here, and goodness knows what stories that spiteful Charlotte told about me. What does it matter, anyhow ? She'll be gone soon, and we can get on the good side of Aunt. (*Picks up paper.*) What is this ? Signed Eleanor Fairfax. Could it be—Gracious ! 'Tis a will, and dated yesterday. (*Reading.*) "To my niece, Charlotte Irwin, I will and bequeath, my entire fortune of a quarter of a million." She has made Charlotte her heir. Can it be true ! June and I to be left penniless ? We can never undo this ! Oh, why were we such fools ? Not a cent ! If she were to die now, where could we go ? We would have to be dependent on Charlotte. Never ! I would rather starve ! Oh, if I had only suspected this, how differently I would have acted.

(*Enter Katie.*)

KATIE. Oh, Fanny, Fanny ! Something terrible has happened !

FAN. (*aside*). Can she mean the will ?

KATIE. Your Aunt,—poor child ! She took a bad turn, and—Oh, how can I tell you ?

FAN. What ? what ?

KATIE. She is dead.

FAN. Dead ! Great Heavens !

KATIE. We thought she was only in a faint, but the nurse said 'twas all over, and no use to go for the doctor. Oh, I must go and bring Mr. Parker over right away.

(*Exit Katie.*)

FAN. Our Aunt dead ! I wonder if 'tis really so ! I don't dare to go into the room—'tis too horrible. What will June say ? Dead ! But I have thought of this often lately—*I shouldn't be so surprised (shudders ; then, suddenly) Ah,*

the will! the will that leaves Charlotte everything, and us nothing! 'Tis the latest. 'Twill take effect. No, I can prevent it. No one will dream that I have found it (*putting paper in her bosom*). Let it stay there. The last will gives us everything. Now, Charlotte, cry all the tears you have, but they'll do you no good; your patient will never, never, make another will.

(*Curtain.*)

ACT III.

(*Scene, the same. Night. CHARLOTTE reading near lamp. JUNE on chair, asleep.*)

CHARLOTTE (*closing book, turning*). June!—Fast asleep! Poor little one! An easy conscience makes this sister sleep when she wishes to watch, while the other one watches even in sleep. (*Waking her.*) June! Sh—sh—. Don't you think we had better go to bed? I don't see any sign of Fanny. I guess you must have been dreaming yourself when you thought you saw her.

JUNE. No, no. She got up the night before last and came down stairs and into this room. I crept out into the corridor, and peeped over the banister. I'm positive about it. I was as wide awake as I am now.

CHAR. And you think she was asleep?

JUNE. Fast asleep.

CHAR. But how could you see her? Wasn't everything dark?

JUNE. She had a lighted candle.

CHAR. I've noticed Fanny very abstracted of late. She seems to be worried about something.

JUNE. Yes, ever since Aunt died; and I've found her so often looking through books and manuscripts, as if she had lost something.

CHAR. Whatever is the matter, she is very much changed. But come, we'll go up now.

JUNE. Sh—wait a minute! Don't you hear a noise?

CHAR. Someone is coming downstairs.

JUNE. 'Tis Fanny—come, stand back here.

(Enter Fanny, asleep. Her eyes are open and fixed. She speaks in the manner of one talking in sleep.)

FAN. No one sees me.—They will never guess it. Here—I hid it in this drawer, but the keys are gone—(feels in bosom.) lost! Oh, if I could only find it.—She can never make another will.—Ah, when I find it I will give it back to Charlotte, poor Charlotte!—I must be quick, they are coming to bury her. (Starts, then laughs lightly). But she is dead, she will never come out of her grave.—“To my niece, Charlotte Irwin, I give and bequeath.” (She nervously hides paper in her bosom.) It is dark—(shivers) and cold. But how can I tell them I stole the will?—Come in, June, it is too damp to play.

(Exit Fanny.)

JUNE. There, didn't I tell you? But I never heard her talk before. I should have been dreadfully frightened if you were not here.

CHAR. She tried to open this drawer.

JUNE. Yes, and she said something about a will. Could it be the one the lawyer has been looking for?

CHAR. Where is the key of this drawer, June!

JUNE. Lost! Dobson has looked all over for it.

CHAR. Run and fetch me a screw-driver from the sewing machine, quick.

(Exit June.)

Fanny got possession of that paper some way or other and hid it, perhaps during her sleep. I've heard of such things. Oh, Heaven help me to set all right.

(Enter June.)

JUNE. What are you going to do with the screw-driver, Charlotte?

CHAR. You'll see. (She proceeds to take off the lock.)

JUNE. Why, Charlotte, this looks as if we were breaking into other people's property.

CHAR. I hope 'twill turn out to be breaking into our own property.

JUNE. Oh, see, the lock is coming off!

CHAR. There, hold it, while I look at these papers. Move the lamp nearer.

JUNE. Oh, there's something with a red seal!

CHAR. 'Tis the will! Oh, how fortunate! 'Tis Aunt Eleanor's lost will.

JUNE. Oh, Charlotte, then Fannie did not take it after all!

CHAR. Yes, June, she took it, but she has repented, and we will forgive her, because she is our sister. Run now, wake her, and bring her down.

(Exit June.)

She has suffered enough, poor child. What anxiety she must have gone through this last month! And I am to be heiress to such a fortune! Oh, how much good I shall do with this money, but I must not forget the injunction that charity begins at home.

(Enter Fannie and June.)

CHAR. Fannie, I have here a paper which I wish to receive from no hands but yours.

FANNIE. It is the will! *(falling on her knees.)* Oh, Charlotte, can you forgive me! I didn't intend to keep it. It was only a moment's temptation, but I lost it and had not the courage to tell you.

CHAR. *(embracing her.)* We will not let such a wretched thing as money come between us, dear cousin. There will be plenty for all to be happy with. Now, I want you two to adopt me as a sister.

BOTH *(embracing Charlotte.)* Dear, dear Charlotte, how good you are! How we love you!

DOBSON *(without).* Fannie! June!

FANNIE. Here we are, Dobson, the whole family! What, have you a letter?

(Enter Dobson.)

DOBSON.—A telegram.

ALL. A telegram! For Charlotte!

DOBSON. No, for you.

FANNIE (*reads*). Fannie and Mildred Fairfax! What can it be!

MIL. Open it quick!

DOBSON. But what are you all doing up so late?

CHAR. Oh, just acting a little comedy.

FANNIE. Gracious, Dobson, it can't be true! Our father has been dead five years.

JUNE. Our father!

CHAR. You haven't received news of him!

JUNE. Read it, quick! What does it say?

DOBSON. "My daughters: I have heard the news of my sister's death, and am hastening home to you. I shall now be able to repair the past, and give you a beautiful home. Expect me within a week.

Your father."

JUNE. But, Dobson, is he risen from the dead?

DOB. I won't say that, but wonderful things happen in America.

FAN. Our father alive!

JUNE. And coming home to take care of us! Ah, how happy we shall be!

CHAR. Now 'tis your turn to be congratulated, girls.

FAN. Dear Cousin Charlotte!

JUNE. Oh, how splendidly things have turned out!

CHAR. Yes, we've seen a good deal of trouble together, but, all's well that ends well.

END.