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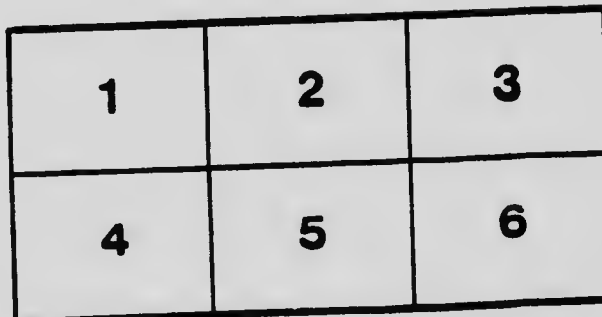
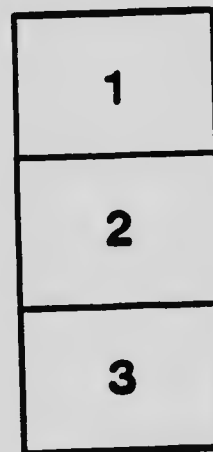
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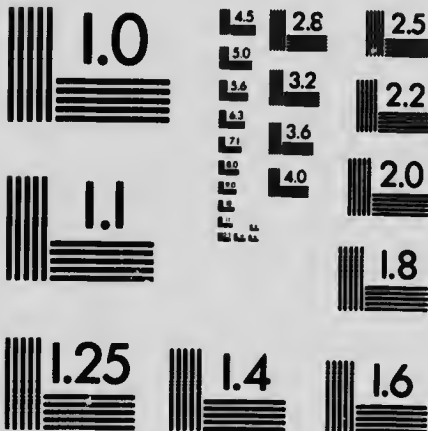
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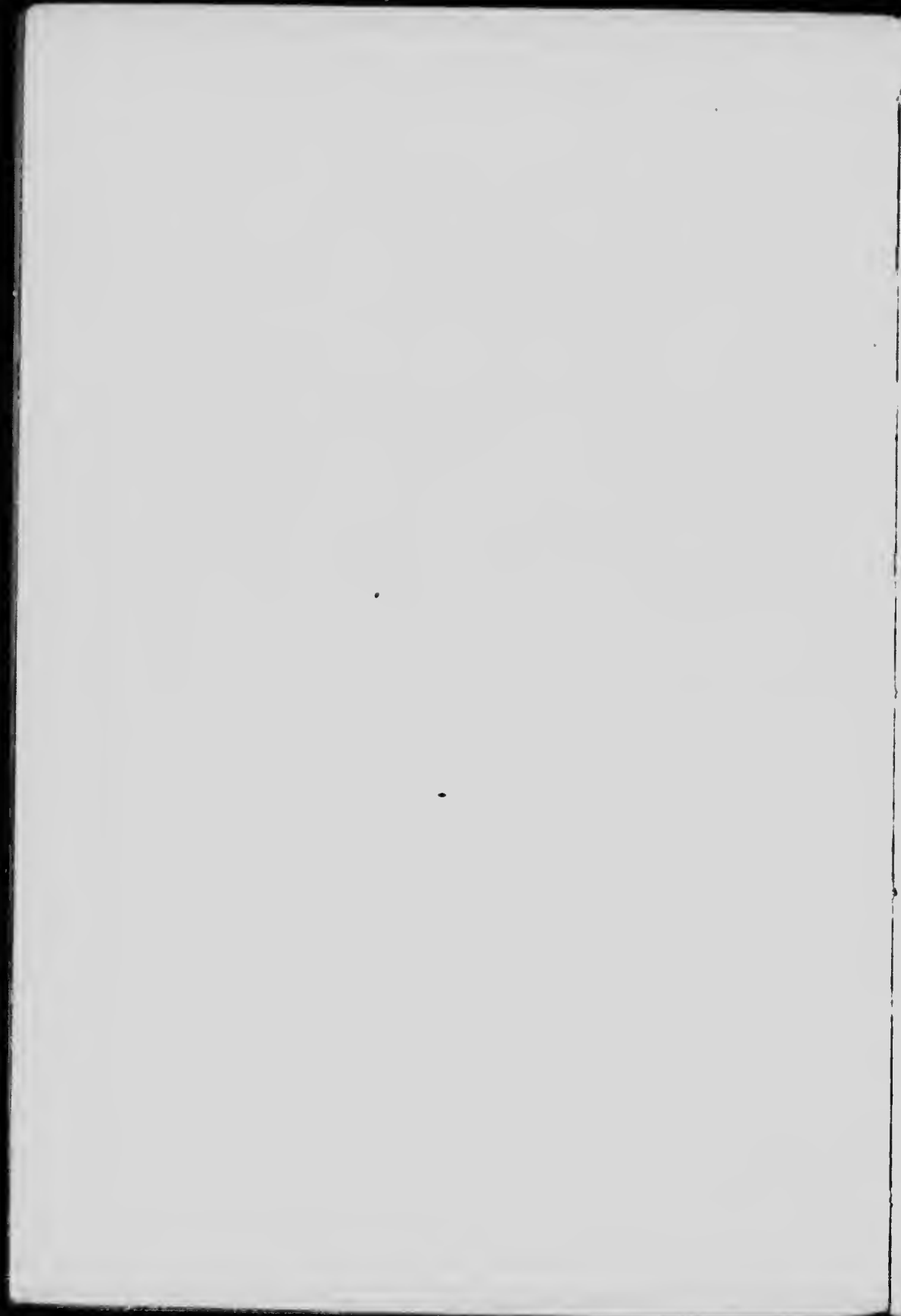
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**ELIZA COMES TO
STAY**

A FARCE IN THREE ACTS

By

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CHARACTERS

THE CRITERION THEATRE, LONDON.

February 12th, 1913.

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ALEXANDER STOOP VERRALL	Mr. Fred Groves.
MONTAGUE JORDAN	Mr. Eric Lewis.
HERBERT, a valet	Mr. Chas. Esdails.
A PORTER	Mr. Young.
LADY PENNYBROKE	Miss Carlotta Addison.
MISS VERA LAURFNCE	Miss Diana Cortis.
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ELIZA COMES TO STAY

ACT I

The SCENE is the Breakfast-room in the HONBLE. SANDY VERRALL'S Flat in London. It is most charmingly furnished, everything that a luxurious man about Town could desire is there. There is a door a little L. of C. opening into the Hall of the Flat and showing the Hall door beyond. There is another door up R. above fireplace, there are deep windows R.C. The Hall door bell rings and HERBERT, a most immaculate man-servant, goes up and opens the door.

MAN'S VOICE (*outside*). Mr. Verrall.

HERBERT. Yes, bring it in. (*And two carmen bring in a rocking-horse, its head is tied up in brown paper.*) Put it down there.

(The men put it down L.)

1ST MAN. I'm a bit of a blood with the 'ounds meself.

(They go out into the Hall.)

2ND MAN (*holding out paper to HERBERT*). Sign, matey.

(HERBERT signs paper—then closes the Hall door on the men.)

(SANDY VERRALL comes in R.)

SANDY. Hello! Herbert! It's come—splendid. I suppose there isn't room for it in the nursery.

HERBERT. I'm afraid not, sir.

SANDY. Never mind, it can stay there, I rather like the look of it there. (*Taking paper off horse.*) How exciting to be on intimate terms with a rocking-horse again. What did you say the nurse's name was?

HERBERT. Allaway, sir—Ann Allaway.

SANDY. Ann Allaway. No H., I remember. Send her to me, will you? Did a parcel of books come?

HERBERT (*as he goes out*). There is a parcel on the table, sir.

(*Exit R.*)

SANDY. Good, good. (*He goes to table, cuts the string with the bread-knife and undoes the parcel.*) Here we are—*The Dumpy Book* and *The Podgy Book* and *Chatterbox*. How I used to loathe *Chatterbox* when I was a little boy, but I suppose it's the right thing for little girls to read—but after all, Herbert, she may not be old enough to read. (*He has been looking at the books and has not realized HERBERT'S absence.*) Where is Herbert?

(*MRS. ALLAWAY, a plump, elderly, most respectable-looking female comes in R. and comes down to R. of table C.*)

MRS. ALLAWAY. You wish to see me, sir?

SANDY (*putting down the books and sitting L.C.*). Oh! Ah! Yes. Mrs. Allaway, you're the nurse. Now let me see, have you ever been a nurse before?

MRS. ALLAWAY. Yes, sir.

SANDY. Of course you have, or you couldn't be one now, could you? Foolish of me. Now about this little girl, it's a very serious matter, you know. I never had a little girl before—it's rather a puzzle for me, but I can rely on you, can't I?

MRS. ALLAWAY. Yes, sir.

SANDY. I mean you'll see she has her food regularly, and all that.

MRS. ALLAWAY. Yes, sir.

SANDY. And is there a nice fire in the nursery?

MRS. ALLAWAY. Yes, sir.

SANDY. I don't suppose she really wants a fire—such a nice warm day, but little children like fires in their nursery—don't they?

MRS. ALLAWAY. Yes, sir.

SANDY. And I want her to have everything she likes—we won't spoil her, of course, but we'll just give her everything she likes. You see, she hasn't got anybody in the wide—wide world to look after her except you and me.

MRS. ALLAWAY. Poor little thing, sir, it do seem tragic.

SANDY. Now will you hear her prayers when she goes to bed, or shall I?

MRS. ALLAWAY. I will, sir.

SANDY. Good. That's all right, and then you'll read her to sleep.

MRS. ALLAWAY. No, sir, I don't hold with that.

SANDY. Good, no reading to sleep—don't hold with that. Now does she take her meals with me, or does she take them with you in the nursery?

MRS. ALLAWAY. That's as you please, sir.

SANDY. As I please, good—it will I suppose depend on circumstances. I told you I wouldn't get a perambulator, because I didn't know her size—if she wants one, she must have it. You can get it at the stores. I've got a rocking-horse, you see, to be on the safe side. She may be here at any moment. Mr. Jordan has gone to fetch her. He went off by the nine-thirty train this morning. (*He goes to door c. and calls.*) Herbert! Bring me that paper-covered book that's on the table beside my bed. (*He comes back into room and stands in front of table.*) I've got a book on the subject of young children, nurse. I read most of it last night—quite a lot of it was inter-

esting—very interesting—but a good deal of it didn't seem to apply to me, it's called Dr. Chavasse's advice to a mother. Do you know it?

MRS. ALLAWAY. Yes, sir.

(HERBERT enters c. with the book—SANDY takes it and opens it.)

(Exit HERBERT C.)

SANDY. Ah, here it is. I wonder why Dr. Chavasse put so many bits of poetry into it; they don't seem to me quite necessary—still it's a very interesting book, and it may be useful to turn to in an emergency—*Advice to a Mother*. You, of course, are a mother, Mrs. Allaway?

MRS. ALLAWAY. Seven, sir.

SANDY. Seven—ah! Then I suppose you don't need advice. I'm not a mother, so I do.

MRS. ALLAWAY. You don't know how old the little girl is, sir?

SANDY. I haven't the least idea—five, six—seven, perhaps eight. Won't it be nice to have a little golden-haired, blue-eyed child playing about the flat, making the rafters ring with her happy laughter?
(Puts book on table.)

MRS. ALLAWAY. I don't hold with noisy children in a flat, sir.

SANDY. Oh, you don't hold with noisy children in a flat—good. Perhaps you're right, and after all there aren't any rafters there—so it doesn't matter whether they ring or not. Well, nurse, I think we've done all we can for the moment—all we can do now is to wait the little lady's arrival. I think I'll go back to my study and read another play.
(Picks up play from under table.) I'm reading plays for a lady friend of mine who is going to take a theatre. I'm getting so sick of the job. You do like the rocking-horse, don't you?

MRS. ALLAWAY. Some children take to them, some don't.

SANDY. Oh, she's sure to like riding—her father was in a Cavalry regiment—he was a splendid fellow—he saved my life, ye know. However, I'll tell you about that another time—I must go and read this play.

(HERBERT enters c. and comes to the table with some breakfast dishes.)

SANDY. By Jove, I forgot my breakfast, but I'm too rattled this morning to think of anything and much too excited to eat. I don't think I shall manage anything but a cup of tea and a bit of dry toast.

HERBERT. Very good, sir.

(SANDY goes off r.)

HERBERT (to MRS. ALLAWAY). I've never known him so excited about anything as he is about this.

MRS. ALLAWAY. Well, it's a novel experience for a young man. I'll go and look after my nursery fire.

(Exit r.)

(The Hall door bell rings, HERBERT goes up and opens it, and ALEXANDER VERRALL comes in. He is a grim-visaged gentleman of about 60, dressed in a somewhat old-fashioned style—as he comes in the clock strikes 12.)

VERRALL. Twelve o'clock, precisely the time I meant to arrive. My nephew at home, Herbert?

HERBERT. Yes, Mr. Verrall.

VERRALL. That's fortunate. Is Lady Elizabeth here? (Crosses to r.c.)

HERBERT. No, sir.

VERRALL. She's late then—unlike her. (He puts his somewhat antediluvian top hat upon the breakfast-table.) Your master lunches early.

HERBERT. This is breakfast, sir.

VERRALL. To be sure—how foolish of me. (The Hall bell rings again.)

(HERBERT attends to it. LADY ELIZABETH PENNYBROKE enters, she is a tall, angular old lady dressed well out of the fashion and with a veil that seems to inconvenience her nose—her face dimly reminds one of a horse.)

VERRALL (advances to her). Ah, Elizabeth.

LADY ELIZABETH (bushing up her veil and peering at him). Ah, Alexander, is that you? I'm early. (Sits in armchair L.C.)

VERRALL. You're not—you're late. Herbert, it might be as well if you told my nephew that I am here, and that Lady Elizabeth is here. (Sits on settee R.)

HERBERT. Yes, sir.

(HERBERT goes out R.)

VERRALL. What trouble is Sandy in now?

LADY ELIZABETH. His letter to me said that he had something startling to communicate.

VERRALL. Practically—what he wrote to me.

(HERBERT re-enters and comes down to L. of table c.)

VERRALL (chuckling). Did you tell Mr. Sandy I'm here?

HERBERT. Yes, sir.

VERRALL. What did he say?

HERBERT. Damn, sir.

VERRALL. Oh!

LADY ELIZABETH. And what did he say when he heard I was here?

HERBERT. Just the same, my lady, but a trifle more softly.

VERRALL. These expressions must convey a different meaning in London than they do in the country.

HERBERT. Very probably, sir. The master told me to tell you what he'd said—and I was to give your ladyship and you, sir, his blessing—because he didn't mean it. The master is a little put out this morning.

(HERBERT takes MR. VERRALL'S hat from the table.)

VERRALL. That's my hat. (*Rises.*)

HERBERT. I was about to place it on the rack in the hall, sir. Mr. Verrall may come in to breakfast at any moment.

VERRALL. I'll take care of it, please, that hat's been sat on once already.

(HERBERT gravely handing the hat to MR. VERRALL.)

HERBERT. Indeed, sir!

VERRALL. With your permission—

(*He carefully replaces it on the table. HERBERT goes out.*)

LADY ELIZABETH. The proper place for a hat is a head or a hall.

VERRALL. That depends entirely on the hat. (*Sitting.*)

(*The HON. SANDY VERRALL comes in r.*)

SANDY. Auntie, my dear, how are you? How rippin' of you to call at this ungodly hour. (*HERBERT enters c. with teapot, he puts it on table.*) Uncle Alexander, you're lookin' top hole as usual. Do you mind if I have a little snack? All right, Herbert, I'll manage.

HERBERT. Very good, sir. (*He goes out c.*)

SANDY. You have breakfasted, Uncle Alexander?

VERRALL (*snaps*). Eight o'clock.

SANDY. Eight. Top hole. (*Sits top of table c.*)

VERRALL. What do you mean by that, sir?

SANDY. I haven't the least idea. (*He looks blandly at STOOP, as he picks hat off table.*) Your hat. May I remove it, it takes my thoughts from my tea.

(*STOOP rises and takes it from him and goes back to his seat.*)

LADY ELIZABETH. I took the slow train. I wanted to think over your communication, I can't think when I'm rattled.

SANDY (*springs from the breakfast-table and goes across to LADY PENNYBROKE.*) Can't you, aunt? Nor can I. I can't think when I'm rattled, and oh! my gracious, I'm so rattled now. That's why I wrote to you, an extraordinary thing that has just happened to me. I've had a sort of legacy left me.

VERRALL (*starting forward*). My dear Sandy—
(*Rising.*)

LADY ELIZABETH. How large?

SANDY. I don't know—about the usual size, I suppose.

VERRALL. What's that?

SANDY. About three feet, shouldn't you think?

LADY ELIZABETH. Three feet?

SANDY. It's a girl—a—a—dear little golden-haired girl.

VERRALL (*gasping*). A girl. (*Sinks back on to settee.*)

LADY ELIZABETH. A golden-haired girl.

SANDY. Yes, isn't it lucky I'm fond of children?

VERRALL. What are you going to do with it?

SANDY. What *can* I do with it?

VERRALL. Send it back.

SANDY. Where to?

VERRALL. Where it came from.

SANDY. I would if I could, but I can't.

VERRALL. Have you got it here?

SANDY. No, not yet. I've sent Jordan to Berkshire to fetch it. I expect it every minute.

LADY ELIZABETH. And what are we to infer from this ridiculous rigmarole?

SANDY. There's nothing to infer—that's the extraordinary part of it. I'll show you the letter explainin' my legacy. And you can give me your advice.
(*Going up to door R.*)

VERRALL. When did it occur?

LADY ELIZABETH. And who left it to you?

SANDY. I'm turnin' the spare bedroom into a nursery now.

LADY ELIZABETH AND VERRALL. What !!
SANDY. Can't help it. No way out, wait till you read the letter. I'll get it.

(The HON. SANDY hurries off R.)

(LADY ELIZABETH and STOOP turn and gaze at each other in bewilderment.)

LADY ELIZABETH. Alexander, what does this mean ?

VERRALL. Elizabeth, I smell a rat.

LADY ELIZABETH. You shock me.

VERRALL *(chuckles)*. I didn't always live in the country, Elizabeth.

LADY ELIZABETH. Oh, if Sandy has got into mischief Gregory might hear of it, and alter his will—

(SANDY re-enters with an open letter in his hand and crosses to LADY PENNYBROKE.)

SANDY. Now, Aunt Elizabeth, just you cast your eye over that—and see what you think of it.

(She takes the letter in grim silence, adjusts her spectacles, and begins to read the letter. SANDY watches her breathlessly.)

VERRALL *(clearing his throat)*. I really think, Sandy—

SANDY. Do be quiet, please—it's a most extraordinary letter she's readin'.

(LADY PENNYBROKE finishes the letter in silence, then returns it to SANDY.)

VERRALL. May I peruse—

SANDY *(handing him the letter)*. Certainly. You see I've shown you this because it's a family matter, and *(he beams honestly at them both)* with all your faults you're both sportsmen at bottom. Of course, you won't breathe a word of it outside this room.

ELIZA COMES TO STAY

LADY ELIZABETH AND VERRALL. Not a word.

(VERRALL *puts on his glasses and reads*—SANDY *watches him fascinated.*)

LADY ELIZABETH. It begins to dawn on me that—

SANDY. Be quiet, please. He's readin' it.

VERRALL (*as he finishes the letter and returns it to SANDY*). I am speechless.

SANDY. Thank you. Can't you picture it, Aunt Elizabeth—a little, golden-haired, blue-eyed cherub, laughin' and singin' about the place, turnin' everything into sunshine and all that—it's top hole, ain't it, Uncle Alec?

VERRALL. I saw nothing in the letter about blue eyes—

LADY ELIZABETH. Or golden hair.

SANDY. One can't put everything in a letter, one must take *something* for granted. Dear little Major Vandam!

VERRALL. Who's he?

SANDY. I believe, not unconnected with the Salvation Army.

VERRALL. Vandam, Vandam. (*Suddenly with an idea.*) That's the man on the Matterhorn glacier who got you back.

SANDY. That's the man. Well, you know, he saved my life and it was a hundred to one on his losing his own in the effort. I gave him my word that any mortal thing man could do for him in return, I'd do, and he asks me to cherish his little child.

VERRALL. He's dead.

SANDY. Yes, dead—quite dead—and I've sent for the child—who is destitute in a—practically a work-house, I suppose, in Reading. I'm so glad he got my letter swearing to do it before he died. It must have been a relief to him now, as he says here, you see (*referring to letter*) leaves the poor little thing friendless, alone—destitute.

VERRALL. You have definitely accepted the trust ?

SANDY. Definitely, of course. He saved my life.

LADY ELIZABETH. Can you afford to increase your establishment like this ?

VERRALL. Have you got any means beyond the seven hundred a year your father left you ?

SANDY. Of course I haven't, but I don't worry about money, there's a lot of that knocking about to be had for the asking.

VERRALL (*rising and clearing his throat*). Sandy, I am not an emotional man, but your attitude in this regrettable affair impresses me. You are doing a noble thing, I should like to shake hands with you, and then say no more about it.

SANDY (*shaking hands*). Thank you, uncle.

LADY ELIZABETH. You may kiss me, Sandy.

SANDY. Thank you, aunt.

(*She solemnly hoists her veil and SANDY kisses her.*)

SANDY. By the way, I didn't finish my breakfast ; there are such a lot of things happening aren't there ? (*He goes back to the breakfast table and pours himself out some tea*). I told you I was rather rattled this morning. Now I'll tell you something else—I'm going to be married.

VERRALL AND LADY ELIZABETH. What ?

SANDY. The future Mrs. Sandy will be here in a few minutes, and I'm going to propose to her.

LADY ELIZABETH (*aghast*). Sakes alive !

SANDY. What *do* you mean by saying, "Sakes alive." I am going to be married—I've got this child so I'm going to get married—it's so splendid to start off with a ready-made child—seems to save such a lot of trouble.

VERRALL. Trouble !

LADY ELIZABETH. Bless us !

SANDY. My wife and I will have everything we want right from the word "go." Top hole I call it.

VERRALL. You don't propose to saddle yourself with a wife just because you've got this child ?

SANDY. Uncle Alexander; I've got this child. It's only right and proper I should have a wife. I am sorry you don't see my point. To-day I am going to ask Miss Vera Laurence to marry me.

VERRALL (*aghast*). The actress!

SANDY. You're quite right—the actress, positively the only one, Aunt Elizabeth. (*He rises and goes to Lady PENNYBROKE and sits on floor R. of her chair.*) Aunt Elizabeth, I'm in love, awfully in love—you know what love is—all good women do.

VERRALL (*with gathering wrath*). You contemplate marrying an actress?

LADY ELIZABETH. Introducing a stage player into your home circle?

VERRALL. Preposterous.

LADY ELIZABETH. Unspeakable.

VERRALL. Your Uncle Gregory will disinherit you.

LADY ELIZABETH (*gathering herself together and rising a quivering indignant angularity*). Is there an Ayreated Bread shop in the neighbourhood?

SANDY (*huffily*). There is no such word as Ayreated—it's "Aerated," and it's just across the road.

LADY ELIZABETH. Alexander, will you accompany me there, I feel I need it.

(ALEXANDER rises and takes up his hat.)

SANDY. Aunt Elizabeth.

LADY ELIZABETH. Not another word! (*Going up to door c.*)

SANDY (*appealingly*). Uncle Alexander!

VERRALL. I accompany your aunt. (*Going up to door c.*) You will receive communications from your family, as to what measures they will adopt under this most unlooked for calamity.

(*They sweep up towards the door—SANDY opens it for them smiling—they go out—he follows them into the Hall.*)

SANDY. I'll open the hall door for you—there's sometimes a little trouble with the latch.

(*He opens the door and LADY ELIZABETH stalks out. SANDY comes back into room, ALEXANDER is about to follow LADY ELIZABETH but SANDY catches him by the arm and pulls him back to just inside the door.*)

SANDY. Won't you come back in the course of the afternoon and discuss it calmly?

VERRALL. I will endeavour to do so, but for the moment your aunt is obviously upset.

SANDY. Perhaps after she's had a glass of port and a bun she'll be more amenable.

VERRALL. I fear not—but I will endeavour to bring her back to talk this marriage over.

SANDY. Good.

(*VERRALL goes out. SANDY shuts the Hall door and comes down into the room.*)

(*HERBERT comes into the Hall with a pile of plays—SANDY groans.*)

SANDY. More plays!! Put them with the others, Herbert. (*With a little sigh.*) I'm very worried, ye know—what with everything—a child for the first time—and all these plays to read. (*He turns and looks at the plays HERBERT is holding.*) Do you think you could judge a play, Herbert?

HERBERT. I'll do my best, sir.

SANDY. Just dip into those you've got there, will you, and—and report—only dip—don't worry to dive.

HERBERT. Yes, sir.

SANDY. And—er—the nurse now—your relation—Mrs. Allaway—no H. I *did* remember. (*He beams.*) She has intelligence, eh?

HERBERT. Yes, sir.

SANDY. Let her dip too. (*Crosses to mantelpiece.*)

HERBERT. Yes, sir.

(*There is a pause till HERBERT is off c., then the Hall door bell rings, SANDY says, "My child—my new*

ELIZA COMES TO STAY

child." HERBERT opens door and VERA LAURENCE enters.)

SANDY. It's you, it's you—oh, my dear! (Going up to meet her.)

(VERA LAURENCE, most attractive, with a wealth of auburn hair comes into the Hall.)

VERA. Oh, Sandy, you said that as if I was a breath of fresh air. (Crosses down R. to front of settee.)

SANDY. You are—you are—you are.

VERA (defiantly). No, I'm not—all the fresh air I've got is—is the same thing as oxygen out of a cylinder. Oh yes, take my hat—take my old wraps. Oh, and, Sandy, isn't that a dream of an umbrella? (He takes her things and places them on back of settee as she talks.) It isn't meant for rain, once that was opened to the rain it would never go back and be slim and elegant again. (Sits on settee.) Oh, Sandy, dear, they opened me to the rain too soon. Oh, it's nice to sit here—and—and—sort of collect oneself. What were you doing when I blew in—

SANDY (sitting beside her). You didn't blow in, I knew you were coming.

VERA. Of course, it was an appointment, I forgot, but I kept it.

SANDY. To the moment.

VERA. What were you doing when I came punctually to my appointment?

SANDY. I was tryin' to concentrate on three things.

VERA. Three—

SANDY. You—your plays—and my little golden-haired, blue-eyed child.

VERA. Oh, I forgot—of course—has she come yet?

SANDY. No, she's being fetched now. She ought to arrive every minute. I've fixed the nurse and the nursery. I've got two *Dumpy Books* and a *Podgy Book*. Oh, that's right. You know they must have them. I've got a *Teddy Bear* and a *rocking-horse*.

But I feel with so much to think about, that I'm at a loose end.

VERA. I've been at a loose end ever since I can remember. I only get any real rest when I come here.

SANDY (*tenderly*). You mean that?

VERA. You're very real, Sandy.

SANDY (*comes down beaming*). I am real, aren't I, really? But nobody seems to understand it but you. We're going to be married, aren't we—of course we are.

VERA. Are we? I didn't know, you've never said a word.

SANDY. Oh, but you knew it, didn't you?

VERA. Yes, I knew it. But you might have asked me.

SANDY. I've been so busy.

VERA. Have you taken the Novelty Theatre for me?

SANDY. It's nearly settled.

VERA. Have you been able to get me a play?

SANDY (*chuckles and rises*). Have I been able to get you a play!!! Look! (*And he points triumphantly to the stacks of plays*.) And yet you read in the papers that regular managers can't get plays—why I just advertised in the daily papers and in three days I got these—more than I really want—of course one or two of them may be bad plays, but after all, one must expect that, mustn't one—when one first goes into management.

VERA (*pensively*). Which one of those plays will give me what I want?

SANDY. I don't know.

VERA. I want—big things. (*She stretches herself lazily—beautifully*.) I want a "vehicle to express myself"—

SANDY. Vehicle to express yourself—quite so.

VERA. Is it there?

SANDY. How can we tell till we read 'em?

VERA. Of course—we've got to read them—what a nuisance authors are.

SANDY (*sitting beside her again*). I say, to jump to something more important, have you ever studied *Dr. Chavasse's Advice to a Mother*?

VERA. Certainly not.

SANDY (*rises and gets book from table C. and returns to his seat*). Oh, you must, it's most interesting—I read it all last night—here we are with this child coming and we've had no experience up to now—oh, we must study this. (*He opens book.*) It seems to tell you about everything. Now look here, paragraph 70, "Have you any remarks to make on sugar for sweetening a baby's food?"

VERA (*curtly*). I have no remarks.

SANDY. Exactly, nor have I, but it tells you here. (*He reads with great emphasis.*) "A small quantity of sugar in an infant's food is requisite, sugar being nourishing and fattening, and making cow's milk to resemble somewhat in its properties, human milk; but bear in mind it must be used as directed." That's in italics, so it's important.

VERA. When is the child coming?

SANDY. Any minute now. That's why I want to be ready. Paragraph 92. "Have you any objection to the child when it is cutting its teeth, sucking its thumb?" I couldn't answer that, could you?

VERA. No.

SANDY. The answer is, "Certainly *not*, the thumb is the best gum-stick in the world—it is convenient—it is handy"—that's a little joke—"handy in every sense of the word—it is of the right size—neither too hard nor too soft—there is no danger of its being swallowed and thus of choking the child." Now that's sheer common sense, isn't it?

VERA. My dear Sandy, you can surely leave all this to the nurse, we needn't be bored by it.

SANDY (*a little damped*). I didn't mean to bore you—I'm getting interested in the idea. I've never had a child of my own before. (*Rises, puts book on table, then goes over and plays with rocking-horse.*)

VERA (*suddenly*). Sandy, shall we be well off when we marry?

SANDY. Oh no—about seven hundred a year. (*She makes a face.*)

VERA. Sandy, dear.

SANDY. Then I come in for Uncle Gregory's bit. He told me so.

VERA. How big a bit?

SANDY. I've never thought much about it—but quite ten thousand.

VERA. A year?

SANDY. Yes—why?

VERA (*sighing*). Nothing, money doesn't matter, does it?

SANDY. Not a bit. (*The bell rings.*) My child! My new child! Do you mind if I answer the bell? Herbert's concentrated on a play.

(*He goes up and opens the door, he looks out into the Hall. HERBERT is seen coming down the passage reading an MS. as he comes. He passes out of sight towards the Hall door—SANDY turns with a beam towards VERA.*)

SANDY. Did you see that, I believe he's found a good one first go off—aren't we lucky this mornin'?

(*HERBERT comes in with the play open in one hand and a large Teddy Bear in the other. The bear has a label on it.*)

SANDY (*delighted*). Oh, the Teddy Bear. I'm glad it came in time.

HERBERT. Shall I take it to the nursery, sir?

SANDY. No, put it on the floor by the door, so she can see it first thing—it will be homely for her. (*HERBERT puts it on floor by table c.*) In front of the Hall door, Herbert. (*HERBERT places the Bear in the doorway c.*) (*Pointing to the play that the valet is reading.*) How do you like that one, Herbert?

BLIZA COMES TO STAY

HERBERT. The opening is a little rechauffee, as it were, sir.

SANDY. Oh?

HERBERT. The dramatis personæ bears no relation to real life, up to now, sir. The first act begins with the butler and the parlour-maid dusting the drawing-room chairs, sir.

SANDY. I know—N.G. (*He takes the MS. and scribbles on the outside N.G., then puts it on floor in corner L. where there already is a pile of plays.*) Well, try another. (*And from the pile he hands him more MSS.*) How does nurse like hers?

HERBERT. She started on it, sir, but I don't rely on her judgment, she seems to hanker for a clown, sir.

SANDY. Does she only go to the theatre at Christmas?

HERBERT. I fear so, sir—she has a cousin who's a dresser at Drury Lane, sir.

SANDY. Oh, really.

HERBERT. Yes, sir.

(The valet disappears and SANDY goes and poses the bear in an attitude of welcome.)

VERA. How old is your Uncle Gregory, Sandy?

SANDY. About fifty-eight, I think.

VERA (*sitting up*). Oh my gracious!

SANDY. But he doesn't look it. Bless him, you'd take him for forty. (*He is playing with the bear.*) He squeaks.

VERA. Your uncle?

SANDY. No, the bear.

VERA. Isn't he anything of an invalid?

SANDY. Bless you, no. He's a trojan.

VERA. Why he might marry again, and have children of his own.

SANDY. Top hole.

VERA. But where should we be then?

SANDY (*pointing to the pile of MSS.*). We've got

each other and all this material. (*The Hall door bell rings.*) She's come! She has come this time, I feel it in my bones. (*He flings the door open.*) Jordan! At last!

(MONTAGUE JORDAN, a very cheerful plump little man of fifty, grips SANDY warmly by the hand and jumps over the bear.)

SANDY (*very excited*). Got her?

JORDAN. She's in the cab.

SANDY (*joyfully to VERA*). He's got her—he's got her. I sent him all the way to Berkshire to fetch her and he's got her. Isn't he a splendid fellow?

JORDAN (*sitting L.C.*). Can I have a little brandy and water?

SANDY. Not before lunch. Why the devil did you leave the poor little thing in the cab?

JORDAN. I never had a daughter—*can't* I have a little brandy and water?

SANDY (*suddenly distressed*). You look ill.

JORDAN. I *am* a little ill.

VERA (*pause*). Shall I go down and fetch her up?

JORDAN. It isn't necessary, she'll come up of herself. Not too much water, Sandy. (*SANDY has gone to the sideboard and poured out some brandy and water—JORDAN clutches it.*) She's coming!

SANDY (*beaming*). Let's all stay quite still and see what she says when she sees the bear. I love the wonder in a baby's eye—don't you?

(A girl of about 18 appears in the doorway in a shabby, shapeless frock, too large in the waist, too small in the back, too long in the skirt—she is a curious type of humanity altogether: her lank hair is drawn tighly off her forehead and knotted into a little bun on the top of her head, upon it is perched a little straw hat—she wears glasses and carries a large untidy brown paper parcel—she peers round the room for an instant taking them all in, then she advances a little until she

reaches the bear—she gives a little squeal then stoops down and looks at it.)

ELIZA. It's stuffed, silly place to sit it. I might have trod on it.

SANDY (*grasping JORDAN's arm feverishly*). Who is it?

JORDAN. The legacy—the blue-eyed, golden-haired—

SANDY. Jordan! Jordan! (*And he seizes JORDAN's brandy and water and swallows it at a gulp.*)

ELIZA. I'm Eliza Vandam, that nice fat gentleman fetched me by train.

SANDY (*l. of rocking-horse*). But this—this—can't be—it's impossible—read, Jordan, read. (*He takes out letter and recites it.*) "The apple of her father's eye! The darling of his heart!" (*Wildly to ELIZA.*) Oh, you've been mixed up. You have been mixed up, haven't you?

ELIZA. I don't know—father said a gentleman had promised to cherish me. (*She turns to SANDY.*) I recognize you by instinct—you've promised to cherish me.

SANDY. Yes—you've come a long way, won't you sit down?

(*ELIZA gets chair from top of table c., drags it to front of table and sits down then bends her gaze on VERA.*)

ELIZA. You're his sister, I can guess that—you're as like as two peas.

SANDY (*rubbing his head*). Don't guess any more for a minute, do you mind? I—I'm trying to collect myself. (*There is a long and awkward pause—at last VERA says quietly.*)

VERA. Perhaps Miss Vandam would like to go to her room.

JORDAN (*rising*). To remove the dust of the journey, put your hair straight and other little things ladies love to do.

ELIZA. My hair don't worry me.

SANDY. Doesn't it, how wonderful!

(The NURSE enters.)

SANDY. Nurse, please take her to her room.

ELIZA. Where's my box?

NURSE. It came up by the lift, miss, it's in your room—shall I take that? *(Offers to take the bundle.)*

ELIZA. Lord, no! A parcel don't worrit me—it's only odds and ends. *(Rising and going up stage.)*

MRS. ALLAWAY. This way, miss.

JORDAN *(gallantly)*. Mysteries of the toilette.

ELIZA. No, it's two petticoats, a camisole, a pair of boots that I couldn't stuff into the box. I feel a little strange for the moment—but I shall settle down—I shall settle down.

(She goes off R., following the NURSE, JORDAN closes the door with a gasp and stands with his back against it.)

SANDY. I've sworn to cherish her.

JORDAN. And she means to settle down!

(CURTAIN.)

ACT II

The same scene a week later, about 12 o'clock in the morning.

(JORDAN sitting L. of table C. in an uncomfortable chair, reading a play. He is apparently finishing it—does so with a growl and tosses it despairingly over his shoulder.)

JORDAN (*with almost a sob in his throat*). Why do they write 'em? Oh! there ought to be a law about it. (*Then he goes hurriedly to the pile of MSS. which has increased, and angrily seizes another play—he shakes it fiercely.*) Come on, you stodgy-looking beast—I'm at ye (*and with a growl he returns to his chair, fidgets for a minute*). If I don't stick to this deuced uncomfortable chair, I shall sleep from sheer fatigue. "Bobby's little Lapse." Comedy, 4 Acts. Pretty title. How many little laps did Bobby have, I wonder?

(HERBERT enters R., also with MS. He crosses to L., puts play on floor and takes another from the pile.)

HERBERT. Sorry to disturb you, Mr. Jordan, but Mr. Verrall requires another.

JORDAN (*amazed*). Another?

HERBERT. The master started reading shortly after 9 this morning. He's got through eleven already, sir. I don't fancy he dips so deeply as he did early in the week.

(HERBERT takes a few more plays under his arm and turns back towards door R.)

JORDAN (*with a gulp*). Where's Miss Eliza Vandam?

HERBERT (*L. of JORDAN*). She confines herself very much to the nursery, sir. I gather from Mrs. Allaway she indulges her literary tastes in the form of a diary for hours together. I should think the young lady's impressions would be good light readin', sir—in after years.

JORDAN. I shouldn't wonder.

HERBERT. She was a cruel blow to the master, sir, she don't seem to "fill his eye" as the saying is.

JORDAN. Fill his eye? (*He lifts his hands in despair.*)

HERBERT. He's taken to reading these plays very strenuous, sir, regards them as an antidote, I fancy, sir. I've found his light up when I've called him every morning.

JORDAN. Do you mean he reads all night?

HERBERT. Judging from the plays I pick up round the room in leaving, sir, I think he must do.

JORDAN. Herbert, you are in for the reading stakes too? Are your instructions the same as mine? Mr. Verrall told me to put the play back in its envelope after I had read it and write V.G. or G. or N.G.—very good, good, or no good on it—as I felt, you know.

HERBERT. Yes, sir.

JORDAN (*sadly to himself*). I write "N.G." quite prettily now.

(*SANDY enters from his room R., he looks very tired, he has got a small towel round his forehead pinned with a safety pin. He comes down straight to table C., puts down bundle of MSS. which he is carrying, looks at MONTY, and shakes his head sorrowfully, then says quietly.*)

SANDY. Herbert—more vinegar—don't let it run down my neck this time.

HERBERT (*getting vinegar cruets from sideboard*). No, sir.

(SANDY sits on sofa and HERBERT drops vinegar on to the towel on SANDY'S forehead.)

SANDY. Thank you—that's all right—and in future, Herbert, I *do not* wish Miss Vandam to supply the pins to put this cloth upon my forehead. You ought to know what I want by now.

HERBERT. The cloth itself was the young lady's idea, sir—and the pins—er—well, she understands pins, sir.

SANDY. Well, don't let it occur again. More vinegar—*this* side.

(HERBERT drops vinegar on SANDY'S temple. The door opens and ELIZA peeps in. She watches the scene for a moment. SANDY having drops of vinegar put on the towel most carefully by HERBERT, and MONTY JORDAN trying to be absorbed in his play. At last she comes in quietly and shuts the door behind her, she comes down to SANDY'S sofa and looks at him—he waves HERBERT away and sits up and faces her in the silence of despair.)

ELIZA. Ain't your head no better?

SANDY. My head's quite well, thank you.

ELIZA (R.C.). Then, Herbert, take his bandage off and save the vinegar.

HERBERT. Yes, miss. (He unpins the towel, returning the pins to ELIZA VANDAM. She puts them in a difficult skirt pocket. He is in doubt what to do with the towel.)

SANDY (fiercely). Give it to me.

(SANDY has a ferocious eye on ELIZA as he does so.

HERBERT gives him the towel and he stuffs it defiantly into his trouser pocket.)

ELIZA (L. of settee). I shouldn't put it in my pocket, it's damp vinegar. I should put it on the back of a chair or something, to dry.

(SANDY mechanically takes the towel from his pocket and hands it to her. ELIZA shakes it out and hangs it on the back of a chair up stage. As she shakes the towel it gives MONTY a shower bath. He takes out handkerchief and wipes his eye.)

ELIZA (*tenderly to SANDY*). There now—you just rest—you'll be all right. There's a lot of fight in you yet.

SANDY (*hoarsely*). Go away.

ELIZA. Yes—— (*Then softly*.) You're going to cherish me, I'm not afraid of it and I know you ain't, father told me.

SANDY. Don't say "ain't."

ELIZA (*a little bewildered*). Eh?

JORDAN (*intervening*). Mr. Verrall means it is usual to say, "you are not" not "you ain't."

SANDY (*feebly*). Don't worry about me, Eliza. (*He chokes a little*.) Just take a little book to read—and—I'll take a little rest. (*ELIZA watches him*.) Herbert, give her one.

(HERBERT goes gravely and fetches a play from the pile. ELIZA takes it delightedly.)

ELIZA. Me too. I know all about it, Mrs. Allaway has told me. Here—— (*She motions HERBERT to move away, then goes to SANDY behind settee, sure of not being overheard*.) Here—you're tired—you're tired because of me. I know. I've found out—don't get tired. I like you—and—and please don't get tired because of me—because you know I *could* clear out if I wanted to—but—but somehow—I don't want to. I read the *Podgy Book* you gave me and your *Dumfy Book*, and I take your Teddy Bear to bed with me every night and—and—that all shows that I like you—and I hope your head will be better soon.

(*A pause*. HERBERT stands motionless at the back. JORDAN is trying to be absorbed in his play.)

ELIZA (*she looks round then turns again to SANDY*). Here—can't we ever talk really alone?

SANDY. Oh no, no—oh—do—do please go away.

ELIZA (*smiles at him*). All right—I'm not a fool. (*She goes to the door, then turns with a sudden thought and comes down R. of settee.*) Did you really say you didn't like the way I do my hair?

SANDY. Yes, I did say it. I don't like it at all, but tastes differ—some people may revel in it. I don't matter.

ELIZA. You do matter, you are the only thing that does matter—I'll see to it—now you will rest, won't you? (*She says it very simply and her voice is really a very nice voice though SANDY has not heard it yet.*)

SANDY. Go away.

(*And she goes quietly away, exits R., closing the door behind her in a whisper, as it were.*)

SANDY. Oh, my gad—she's a dreadful proposition—she looks straight at me and unsettles me. Herbert, I don't drink in the day-time as a rule, but—give me a whiskey and soda.

HERBERT. Yes, sir. (*He proceeds to get it.*)

SANDY. No—I don't want it—damn everything.

(*Exit HERBERT C.*)

JORDAN (*closing MS.*). I have nothing in common with "Bobby's Lapse." (*Calmly.*) N.G., I think. (*He signs MS.*) I'll put it in the corner. (*And he's it on a pile of envelopes now about 5 feet high in the corner—then he comes down and sits on the end of the sofa occupied by SANDY. He moves SANDY's legs to make himself comfortable.*) (*Sandy is too far bored to mind.*) You look worried, Sandy.

SANDY. You'd be worried if you were in my place.

JORDAN. Where did Miss Vera Laurence meet your Uncle Gregory?

SANDY. Here, the afternoon of the day we got engaged. Why?

JORDAN. I saw her lunching with him at the Savoy yesterday.

SANDY. You don't say so! Fancy o'd Gregory askin' her out to lunch. *(He chuckles.)* He's a bit of a blood, ain't he?

JORDAN. Don't say "ain't he."

SANDY. Eh?

JORDAN. Say "is not he."

SANDY. What's the matter with you?

(The door R. opens quietly and ELIZA comes in.)

ELIZA. I don't like this play, Mr. Sandy. I read most of it yesterday. *(At the sound of her voice SANDY has turned on the sofa with a stifled groan, throws his feet into MONTY'S lap, closing his eyes. She comes down on tip-toe, to JORDAN. She looks at SANDY, then whispers.)* Is he asleep?

JORDAN. Yes, I think he must be, you see he was up all night reading.

(JORDAN rises, putting SANDY'S feet carefully on sofa, and ELIZA goes and cautiously peers at SANDY. MONTY crosses to C.)

ELIZA. Yes. He's asleep.

JORDAN *(taking the MS. and envelope from her)*. You don't like it?

ELIZA *(abstractedly watching SANDY)*. I don't understand the beginning—when I read the last lines. *(She takes the MS. from him and finds the place.)* The man says: "Misery—misery—that's all our lives have led to!" and then his wife says: "My God, and we've tried so hard." And he says: "We have tried, Mary," and she says: "Is this the end?" and he says: "I wonder"—and the curtain comes down very slowly.

JORDAN *(sighs deeply)*. Thank you. *(Takes back MS., puts it in envelope, takes out fountain pen.)*
N.G. Oh dear! *(He puts the MS. on pile in corner.)*

(A pause, while ELIZA looks at SANDY in awe, at last she says with a little sigh.)

ELIZA. I like his face, don't you?

JORDAN. Er—I don't know, I'm sure.

ELIZA. Oh, I do. Perhaps you think it's a little pasty—lots of people would, but I like it. I took to it at once.

JORDAN. Er—— (Quite at a loss.) You—er—surprise me.

ELIZA. While he's asleep, can I sit here and talk to you? (Very softly.) I wouldn't wake him for worlds—so tired—the poor dear (taking MONTY'S arm) but it is a treat to talk to something in trousers now and again.

JORDAN. Er—quite so.

ELIZA (crosses and sits on L. arm of settee). I am glad he's asleep. I can take him all to pieces and digest him comfortably, bit by bit. (Then with a little rush of ecstasy.) Oh, I do think he's beautiful, don't you? Don't you just love his hair, it's so smarmy—and—my! ain't he, I mean "has not he" got a little foot? Grey tops to his boots too, I'll be bound those boots cost more than eight and eleven.

JORDAN. Er—doubtless.

ELIZA (looking at her own boots). You know I was taught it was wicked to make myself look nice. So I've never done it.

JORDAN. One wouldn't have thought so, really.

ELIZA. Oh, I *could* do it, don't you worrit. I'm not a fool.

JORDAN. Well, now you mention it—why don't you make yourself look nice?

ELIZA. Well, if it is not wicked for *him* to look so nice—I don't see why it should be wicked for me—do you?

JORDAN. Not at all.

ELIZA (musingly). And yet I don't know—there's a lot in it—you see, he's a man, so he can look as

beautiful as he is and be quite safe, because he can look after himself. But if I were to look as beautiful as I could—it—it would be dangerous. I should be always getting into trouble.

JORDAN. What a distressing theory. If one may ask, how did you get imbued with this—er—philosophy?

ELIZA. From old Aunt Helen—father's sister, you know. When she was young—she told me this herself, you know—oh, she was always telling it me—when she was young she was beautiful and she was always making herself more beautiful—beautiful clothes—beautiful shoes (*she strokes SANDY'S boots tenderly*), and so she was so beautiful that she was always getting into trouble. It got so at last that her people turned her out and she never had any peace at all in her life till she took to being "dowdy" and she *was* dowdy and no mistake—but anyhow she was *safe*—she's dead, you know.

JORDAN. Is she—I'm sorry.

ELIZA. She wanted me to be safe from the beginning—she said: "You don't know what men are, they're ravening wolves—if you want to enjoy your meals and go to bed in peace, stick to your bun, my dear."

JORDAN (*failing to follow*). Eh?

ELIZA (*patting the back of her head*). This little thing screwed tight at the back. "You've got to wear clothes, I know," she says. "But don't look at 'em, when you buy 'em, and don't worrit how you put 'em on—if you've got merry eyes, no matter how well you can see, wear spectacles—pull your curls off your forehead and you will be safe." Well, I've done it since she told me—and she was right. I'm quite safe up to now.

JORDAN. Admirable. Most admirable.

ELIZA (*abstractedly toying with SANDY'S boot*). But—but—I wish I could be in danger just for once. I feel I should like it so.

JORDAN. My gracious.

ELIZA (*who has turned a dreamy gaze on SANDY*). He is a beautiful man, isn't he? He grows on me. I think one can be too safe, don't you?

JORDAN (*flurried*). I—I think he's going to wake up—hadn't you better go back to your room?

ELIZA (*rising and following MONTY to L.C.*). Oh, no. I don't mind telling you I don't care much for Miss Vera Laurence.

JORDAN (*not knowing what to do, says*). Really, you surprise me.

ELIZA (*emphatically*). No—I think Miss Laurence is a—er—er—

JORDAN. A—er—er—charming lady.

ELIZA (*calmly*). (*Putting finger to her nose.*) Yes—that's exactly what I mean. (*JORDAN watches ELIZA with growing alarm.*) Do you think he'd like me better if I have hair like hers?

JORDAN. I—er, I don't know.

ELIZA. I wonder where she got hers. Aunt Helen wore hair like hers, only she was much fairer—it cost a lot of money. (*Softly.*) Do you think it would worry him if I sat quietly in that corner and read another?

(*The hall door bell rings. ELIZA darts from sofa, seizes a play and seats herself on stool L. SANDY sits bolt upright and hisses at JORDAN.*)

SANDY. I've sworn to cherish her. What am I to do?

JORDAN. Don't go to sleep again.

SANDY. I wasn't asleep.

JORDAN. I know.

(*SANDY turns round and looks at ELIZA. She looks up and catches his eye.*)

SANDY. Oh, you're there, are you, Eliza? I'm afraid I've been asleep.

ELIZA. Yes, Mr. Verrall. (*A pause.*) Does my

reading here worrit you, Mr. Verrall? I read very quietly.

SANDY. Worry me? Not at all.

ELIZA. Thank you, Mr. Verrall. (*She returns to her reading.*)

SANDY (*to JORDAN*). I say, under the circumstances, she can't call me Mr. Verrall.

JORDAN. What can she call you? (*Standing with back to fireplace.*)

SANDY. Don't you think she might call me "Uncle"?

JORDAN (*dryly*). It's been used in other cases—but I don't think it convinces anybody (*Sits on R. arm of settee.*)

SANDY. I don't care, we'll try it. I say, Eliza, don't call me Mr. Verrall—er—call me "Uncle—Uncle Sandy."

ELIZA. Yes. Uncle Sandy—I wonder is it as safe as it sounds?

SANDY (*looking at her in amazement*). I beg your pardon! What do you mean?

ELIZA (*demurely*). I don't know.

SANDY (*looks blankly at JORDAN*). Ye know she worries me, she worries me very much. I've bitten off more than I can chew. Eliza— (*Then he breaks off.*) Look here, I can't call you Eliza, it sounds like dust-pans. I—I shall call you—er—I shall call you Dorothy. (*He turns to JORDAN.*) Couldn't have anything more damned respectable than Dorothy, could you?

JORDAN. Yes, I like Dorothy.

SANDY. So do I.

ELIZA (*looking up demurely*). Am I Dorothy?

SANDY (*fiercely*). Yes.

ELIZA. I'm glad.

SANDY (*sits staring at her. She reads intently. He turns to JORDAN*). I say, what *are* we to do about her appearance? She's a sight.

JORDAN. Remember her aunt.

SANDY. Blow her aunt. I can't have her about the place like this—she's—she's a discredit. She doesn't fit anywhere—she sticks in at the front and she sticks out at the back and her hair makes my head ache. If she's going to sit about in this room and have her meals with me, she'll have to be altered, ye know.

JORDAN. You must put her into some charitable home.

SANDY. How can I when I gave my word I'd cherish her like my own child?

ELIZA (*looking up from her play*). You'll like this one, uncle. It's got a beautiful name. "How he loved her."

SANDY (*rising and clearing his throat*). Er—Dorothy!

ELIZA. Yes, uncle.

SANDY. Are those er—clothes—the—er—things you're wearing now—the only clothes you've got?

ELIZA. Oh, no—I've got lots of others—a box full.

SANDY (*eagerly*). Er—what are they like?

ELIZA. Just like these.

SANDY. Oh, my gracious— (*Then fiercely*) Stand up.

ELIZA (*rises; demurely*). Yes, uncle.

SANDY. Turn round.

ELIZA. Yes, uncle.

SANDY (*after surveying her, turns to JORDAN*). Did you ever see anything like it? It worries me, you know—it worries me. For Heaven's sake, stand on a chair and look in that glass.

ELIZA. Must I? I'd rather not.

SANDY. Why?

ELIZA. I've seen myself before—I'm such a pity.

SANDY. You know it.

ELIZA. Oh, yes.

SANDY. But dash it—you—you've got to look respectable—anyhow.

ELIZA. I'm looking dreadfully respectable. That's what's the matter with me.

SANDY. Well, then *don't, don't*. Change it. Look like anything else, but don't look like that.

ELIZA. Very well, uncle—if you think I shall be safe.

SANDY. Safe! Oh, my gracious—— (*He turns to JORDAN.*) Monty, for the love of Heaven take her to the Stores and get her some proper clothes.

JORDAN (*indignant*). Do your own dirty work. I'm not a lady's maid. (*Goes up to window R.C.*)

ELIZA (C.). I'm so glad you don't like me like this—if you can spare me, I'll go and do a little piece of shopping.

SANDY. Have you got any money?

ELIZA. No. Father said you'd cherish me.

SANDY. I see your point. Thoughtless of me. (*He goes to table and writes cheque.*) You can get everything you want at the Stores round the corner.

ELIZA. I know I can. I was walking in them for two hours yesterday. I made a note of all the things that would make me dangerous.

SANDY. Then for the love of the Lord, go and make yourself dangerous. Here's a cheque. They'll cash it for you in the banking department.

ELIZA. I'll go at once. (*Rushes up to door R. and calls.*) Mrs. Allaway, Mrs. Allaway, bring my hat. (*And then comes back to C.*) I know exactly what you want. You want me to look like Miss Laurence.

SANDY. Not at all. I only want you to make yourself look worth looking at.

ELIZA (*delightedly looking at the cheque*). I will—I will—I promise you I will. (*MRS. ALLAWAY enters R. with hat. ELIZA takes it and goes up to door C.*) Oh, I am so glad you're leading me astray. (*She hurries out C.*)

SANDY (*blankly*). What the devil does she mean by that?

JORDAN (*slowly*). I don't often say anything very

serious, but I'm going to say it now. Go abroad. *(A long pause—the two men look at each other and JORDAN goes on.)* She's not a golden-haired, blue-eyed baby—she's a woman—if you can manage it, go abroad to-day.

SANDY *(softly)*. Somehow, I think you're right. *(He goes and rings bell.)* Yes, you are right. I've got a nurse for her, she'll have my flat, Herbert is here. I'm not breaking my word, she'll have everything she wants.

(HERBERT enters.)

HERBERT. Yes, sir?

SANDY. Herbert, I am going to Dieppe—pack up. I should like to get away as soon as I can—arrange it, will you? *(Then almost angrily.)* What time do the damn trains start?

HERBERT. The same as usual, sir. There's no need for you to hurry, sir.

(The hall bell rings.)

SANDY. That's Vera, and I haven't found her vehicle.

(MONTY rises. HERBERT opens the door and VERA comes slowly in and they greet each other.)

VERA. Sandy, dear, I've dipped into these—Good-morning, Monty.

JORDAN. Good-morning, you are looking radiant.

SANDY *(looking at the plays she carries with an almost apathetic inquiry)*. All no good?

VERA. Oh yes, no good. I have initialed them.

JORDAN *(taking the plays from her)*. *(Sadly.)* Then I may as well place them on the pile. *(He adds them to the pile in the corner.)* And I must be going. I don't think your train leaves much before eight, so I shall see you again.

VERA. Train leaves? *(She turns to SANDY for explanation.)*

SANDY. I am going away for a little—I'll tell you about it. (*Goes up to writing-table and gets several letters from drawer and puts them in his pockets.*)

JORDAN. Talk it over—I'll be back in an hour or so.

(*Exit JORDAN.*)

VERA. Sandy, dear, I think your Uncle Gregory is a most charming gentleman. (*Sits on settee.*)

SANDY. I'm so glad you like him. He's a rum 'un to look at, but he's a sport.

VERA (*taking off her gloves*). I've had luncheon with him since I've seen you. I told him all about my ambitions.

SANDY (*crossing and sitting next to her, eagerly*). Did you tell him about our engagement?

VERA. Oh no, only about my ambitions and hopes. He was awfully sympathetic, said that every woman ought to have the right to "express herself" and he only wished—he had the chance to work it for me. I'll make myself comfy here. (*She arranges herself on the sofa—SANDY helps her with cushions.*) You know he made me wonder if the playing of parts is really the best way for a woman to "express herself."

SANDY. I've often said that to you, Vera.

VERA. Yes, I know—but one can't express oneself in private life—economically—one's got to have a lot of money behind one to do it properly. (*She looks at him and gives a little sigh, then turns on the sofa and has a peevish altercation with a cushion, when it is over she turns her eyes sadly to him and says.*) Reading those plays has been dreadfully boring. Talking of things that bore one, how's dear Eliza?

SANDY (*rising*). She's too "grown-up."

VERA. You mean she's made love to you?

SANDY. No—I know nothing—I was asleep. (*Crosses to R.C.*)

VERA. Sandy— (*She sits up and looks at him, then says with a smile.*) Sandy—you are "attracted" by her.

SANDY (*aghast*). My goodness gracious, have you seen her? (*Goes back to settee and leans over L. end.*)

VERA. Yes, but men are odd creatures—they take strange fancies into their foolish heads—but, of course, she may be attractive, I haven't seen it yet, but I'm only a woman. (*She makes herself more comfortable, shifting her cushions.*) Where does her attraction lie? I love personal experiences—as an artist they show me real life.

SANDY. Don't talk such nonsense. When we are married you'll know what real life is.

VERA. Oh, I don't want to live "real life," I only want to be able to depict it. (*A pause.*)

SANDY (*solemnly*). I believe you've come here to make a row.

VERA. This is one of my bad mornings.

SANDY. What a funny girl you are, I think you want watching.

VERA. Yes, I'm worth watching. (*She rises.*) Take me to Pascalls, Sandy, I want some gloves.

(*He watches her thoughtfully for a minute while she arranges herself at the glass.*)

SANDY. Gloves? Why, of course, gloves—yes—(*He goes up to Hall and calls.*) Herbert!

HERBERT (*heard off*) Sir!

SANDY. I'm going out for about twenty minutes, but I shan't want any gloves—I mean lunch—lunching out. (*VERA satisfied with her appearance strolls up.*) And oh, Herbert!

HERBERT (*voice*). Sir!

SANDY. See that Miss Eliza Vandam has all she wants.

HERBERT. Yes, sir.

VERA. Tender solicitude. . . .

SANDY. Don't be silly, I promised to look after her like my own child.

(*VERA goes out laughing, SANDY following her, bangs the door irritably.*)

(HERBERT comes down into the room and goes to dresser. MRS. ALLAWAY enters R.)

MRS. ALLAWAY. Where's Miss Eliza gone?

HERBERT. Out, something's up, she went down the stairs three steps at a time. I wonder would it worry master if she broke her neck.

MRS. ALLAWAY. Miss Eliza has a very affectionate disposition when you get her by herself.

HERBERT. I daresay that's why master's gone to Dieppe in such a hurry.

(The hall door bell rings. Exit MRS. ALLAWAY R. HERBERT goes out C. and opens it to LADY ELIZABETH and ALEXANDER STOOP.)

LADY ELIZABETH. Ah, Herbert, good-morning.

HERBERT. Good-morning, my lady.

STOOP. Is my nephew in?

HERBERT. No, sir, but he will be back in about fifteen minutes.

STOOP. Shall we wait, Elizabeth?

LADY ELIZABETH. Yes, Alexander. (Sitting chair L.C.)

STOOP. We will wait, Herbert.

HERBERT. Yes, sir. (He is about to take STOOP'S hat but he snatches it away and goes and seats himself on settee. HERBERT goes up to dresser and busies himself there.)

LADY ELIZABETH. How is the little child? I hope we may be allowed to see her.

HERBERT. She is out at present, my lady.

STOOP. With her nurse?

HERBERT. Yes, sir.

LADY ELIZABETH. Does my nephew find the nurse satisfactory, Herbert?

HERBERT. Quite, my lady.

LADY ELIZABETH. It was an experiment.

HERBERT. It was, my lady.

STOOP. But, after all, you have not suffered much

Inconvenience from the arrival of the—er—little tot?

HERBERT. No more than must have been expected under the circumstances, sir.

STOOP. Quite so—shouldn't have known what to do with it if it had happened to me.

HERBERT. It would have puzzled me, too, sir, and I was a family man.

STOOP. *Was?* All dead?

HERBERT. Oh, no, sir—divorced.

LADY ELIZABETH (*horrified*). All of them?

HERBERT. Oh no, only me, my lady.

STOOP. Perhaps this is hardly the place to discuss these details of domestic life.

LADY ELIZABETH. I should have liked to have seen the little Elizabeth before we left.

STOOP. Her name's Eliza, Elizabeth, not Elizabeth.

LADY ELIZABETH. My name's Eliza, Alexander, but I prefer to think of myself as Elizabeth. Elizabeth was a Queen, Eliza was a housemaid.

STOOP. False sentiment.

(The hall door bell rings. HERBERT goes out to open it, and ELIZA'S voice is heard off in tones of delight.)

ELIZA (*off*). Oh, Herbert, please take these boxes to my room.

HERBERT. Yes, miss.

LADY ELIZABETH. A woman's voice!!!

STOOP (*looking at LADY ELIZABETH*). "Boxes to my rooin!"

(HERBERT comes from hall laden with large boxes of millinery, dress-boxes, etc. He crosses stage and exits R. STOOP and LADY ELIZABETH watch HERBERT off, then turn on each other amazed.)

LADY ELIZABETH. Is our visit opportune?

STOOP. Don't leap to conclusions. *(He goes and*

peeps into hall, then comes quickly down.) Elizabeth—she is in the corridor.

LADY ELIZABETH. What is she like?

STOOP. Personally, I fear the worst.

(ELIZA comes into the doorway. She is completely transformed—she has a magnificent head of fashionably-dressed golden hair, surmounted by a large Gainsborough picture hat. Her dress completely concealed by a long fawn Ascot dust coat. The effect is striking, not unattractive, but quite startling to people accustomed to dress respectably. She stands for a moment nonplussed at seeing the visitors, then quickly recovering herself she assumes as far as possible the walk, tone and general style of VERA LAURENCE and sweeps languidly into the room.)

ELIZA (*L. of table c.*). How do you do—I didn't know we had visitors.

(STOOP gasps at the word "we.")

LADY ELIZABETH. May I inquire whom it is I have the honour of addressing?

ELIZA. I'm Dorothy—didn't you know? I live here.

LADY ELIZABETH. Who with?

ELIZA. With uncle.

STOOP. And who is your uncle?

ELIZA. The Hon. Sandy Verrall, Esq.

STOOP. You are not—er—Miss Laurence?

ELIZA. Oh no—he's going to marry Miss Laurence.

LADY ELIZABETH (*in a sepulchral tone*). What is he doing with you?

ELIZA. He's cherishing me.

STOOP (*rising and taking up his hat*). Elizabeth, I think—we had better adjourn.

(LADY ELIZABETH rises in a quiver.)

LADY ELIZABETH. I feel with you, Alexander.

(ELIZA blandly preening herself—and trying unseen to see herself in the glass. HERBERT enters R. calmly.)

HERBERT. I've placed the dress-boxes by your wardrobe, miss, and the hat-boxes on the bed.

ELIZA. Thank you, Herbert. (*Exit HERBERT C.*)

LADY ELIZABETH (*to STOOP*). Come, Alexander. (*Going up to door C. ALEXANDER follows her.*)

ELIZA (*with great society manner*). Oh, I can't have you running away like that. Won't you stay to lunch? I'm sure we shall be delighted—we see so few people.

STOOP (*choking*). I much regret but—er—a previous engagement—er—

ELIZA. Well, if you must go, of course you must—but before you go would you mind telling me if you like my hair? I've not quite made up my mind whether I do or not—but if you don't like it, I'll change it. I only took it on approval. (*To LADY ELIZABETH.*) It's so convenient to be able to change it any minute—is not it?

LADY ELIZABETH. I'll never forgive Sandy for this.

(*ELIZA who has been admiring herself in the glass suddenly turns round in an attitude of attention, listening.*)

ELIZA. Hush! He's coming. (*Then to the amazed old people she says.*) You just stay where you are, don't say a word and I'll hide here and pop out and surprise him. (*She gets behind curtains up R.C.*)

(*SANDY and VERA heard talking and laughing on the stairs outside the hall door. Then the latchkey is heard to turn and the door opens.*)

SANDY. Shan't keep you two minutes—then lunch and Uncle Gregory.

(*He comes down into the room followed by VERA LAUR-*

ENCE and is brought up short by the petrified figures of LADY ELIZABETH and his UNCLE ALEXANDER. On recovering from his surprise he greets them cordially.)

SANDY. Hullo, Aunt Elizabeth, here you are again. Uncle Alec too—splendid. Why, what's the matter?

STOOP (*grimly*). Nothing unusual, I suppose.

SANDY. How fortunate you're here, I can (*he turns to VERA*) take this opportunity to introduce to you—

(ELI. *pops out coquettishly from the curtains and says "Peep Bo" and disappears again.*)

SANDY (*aghast*). What the devil's that?

STOOP (*grimly*). As if you didn't know.

(ELIZA again *pops out roguishly at SANDY—"Peep Bo."*)

SANDY (*looking amazedly around*). Did she say "Peep Bo" at me?

STOOP. She certainly did.

SANDY. Who is it?

(A grim silence is the only answer he gets from the old people.)

SANDY. A friend of yours?

STOOP. Sir—

SANDY. You must have brought her with you, I know nothing of her.

STOOP. Really "Uncle Sandy"! (*Crosses to fireplace.*)

SANDY (*jumps*). What! (*Then wheels towards the curtains in a fury.*) Come out of that—out of it at once, you—you terror.

(Again ELIZA *puts her head out coquettishly.*)

ELIZA. "Peep Bo," I see you.

SANDY. Yes, and I see you. Come here at once.

(Amid a solemn pause, ELIZA comes slowly and demurely down on SANDY'S right, VERA is on his left.)

SANDY *(fiercely pointing)*. What have you got on your head?

ELIZA. My hat—and my hair.

SANDY *(stamps furiously)*. That's not your hair!

ELIZA *(suddenly blazes out and points at VERA)*. And that's not hers!

VERA *(wheeling on ELIZA)*. Upon my word!

SANDY *(between the two)*. Vera, I beg—

ELIZA. If she'll take off her hair, I'll take mine—that's fair!

VERA. You silly child, how dare you!

ELIZA. I dare anything.

(SANDY lifts his clenched fists above his head with a stifled groan. VERA checks him with a languid smile.)

VERA. Don't let her distress you, Sandy—let us humour her. *(She smiles sweetly at ELIZA.)* Will you take yours off first or shall I take mine?

(ELIZA glares at her for a moment, then with a snort of defiance, she rapidly removes her hat and hair and hurls them to the ground as if they were a Herald's glove, standing revealed in all the glory of her little bun. VERA looks at her with a slow smile, then languidly removes her hat, which she puts carefully on chair.)

SANDY. Vera, Vera, I won't hear of it.

VERA. I look very well with my hair down. *(And she removes a pin or two and shakes down the abundant wealth of her hair.)*

(ELIZA stares at her amazed, then gives a despairing sob.)

ELIZA *(flashing defiance at VERA)*. It's real, it's real, but I don't care! This is a fight between us.

ELIZA COMES TO STAY

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SANDY (*half frantic*). What for?

ELIZA. For you.

SANDY (*with a gasp*). Dieppe! Dieppe! (*Rushes out C.*)

(QUICK CURTAIN.)

ACT III

SCENE. *The same. A month later.*

(The hall door bell rings and HERBERT opens the door to LADY PENNYBROKE.)

LADY PENNYBROKE. Good-morning, Herbert. Is Miss Dorothy in?

HERBERT. No, my lady. Miss Dorothy is at the photographers.

LADY PENNYBROKE. Is she likely to be long?

HERBERT. I shouldn't think so, my lady. She's been there close on three hours.

LADY PENNYBROKE. Three hours.

HERBERT. Miss Dorothy takes a remarkable interest in her appearance, my lady.

LADY PENNYBROKE. She's quite right. Sakes, where do your flowers come from? *(She prods a beautiful bunch of roses that lies on the table still wrapped in tissue paper.)*

HERBERT. Mr. Jordan sends them for Miss Dorothy.

LADY PENNYBROKE. Montague Jordan.

HERBERT. Yes, my lady—he sends them every day. Miss Dorothy's room might be a florist's shop.

LADY PENNYBROKE. Herbert, you interest me. I shall stay to lunch. *(Goes to armchair L.C. and sits.)*

HERBERT. Yes, my lady.

(And as he leaves the room by door c., MRS. ALLAWAY enters R.)

LADY PENNYBROKE. Ah, Mrs. Allaway. Miss Dorothy's at the photographers, I hear.

MRS. ALLAWAY. Yes, my lady—she's anxious to be took as a type of English beauty for an illustrated paper. She wants Mr. Verrall to have a copy sent him while he's abroad. Here are some proofs that came home yesterday, my lady. (*Goes to writing-table, gets photos and hands them to LADY PENNYBROKE.*)

LADY PENNYBROKE (*studies them*). It's a remarkable metamorphosis in a month—the girl has achieved style—and an air. It's wonderful what a good dress-maker can do with raw material.

MRS. ALLAWAY. Miss Laurence took her in hand as soon as Mr. Verrall went abroad, my lady; not that Miss Dorothy wouldn't have improved of herself. She's as quick to catch on to anything as a magpie. (*Takes photos back to writing table.*)

LADY PENNYBROKE. Does she see much of Mr. Montague Jordan?

MRS. ALLAWAY. He's been giving Miss Dorothy a lesson on the piano morning and afternoon, every day, for the past three weeks, an hour a lesson. She can very nearly perform the "Blue bells of Scotland," if she takes it slow and deliberate. Miss Dorothy hopes to have it perfect against Mr. Verrall's return.

LADY PENNYBROKE (*dryly*). Let's hope she will—my nephew is very musical. By the bye, have you heard when he is expected back?

MRS. ALLAWAY. No, my lady.

LADY PENNYBROKE. He has been gone a month.

MRS. ALLAWAY. Just a month, my lady. (*Clock starts to strike 12.*)

LADY PENNYBROKE. And Miss Dorothy has been seeing a great deal of Miss Laurence.

MRS. ALLAWAY. They're as thick as thieves, if your ladyship will pardon the expression.

(*The hall bell rings, as the clock strikes.*)

That's Mr. Jordan, my lady, each morning at twelve on the strike.

(Exit R.)

(MONTAGUE JORDAN heard from the hall.)

MONTAGUE. Morning, Herbert. Anything further heard of your master?

HERBERT (off). We expect him home by the end of the week, sir.

MONTAGUE. Ah, good.

(He enters c.)

Ah, good-morning, my dear Lady Pennybroke. (Puts hat and stick on chair above writing-table and comes down to LADY PENNYBROKE.)

LADY PENNYBROKE. Good-morning, Monty. I hear you give Dorothy music lessons.

MONTAGUE (a little abashed). I—er—Dorothy was extremely desirous to learn the piano and I thought that any little thing I could do, I'd do—for everybody's sake.

LADY PENNYBROKE. Is she a promising pupil?

MONTAGUE. Most—she has almost mastered some minor melodies already, and, if I may say so, renders "The Blue Bells of Scotland" with a depth of feeling that I find quite unusual in that piece.

LADY PENNYBROKE. Have you fallen in love with her, Monty?

MONTAGUE (taking off his gloves). Now how remarkable that you should ask me that. I ask myself the same thing every morning.

LADY PENNYBROKE. If she has come on like this in one month—what will she be like at the end of six?

MONTAGUE. I tremble to think.

LADY PENNYBROKE. Well, I won't disguise from you the fact, that from every point of view, I think it would be a good thing for you to marry her, because

under her altered condition it is impossible for Sandy to go on "cherishing" her indiscriminately.

MONTAGUE (*goes up and puts gloves in hat*). I—er—
I—er—quite agree with you. I feel it is undeniably
somebody's duty to marry her immediately—and—
er—putting my own feelings entirely on one side, I
feel that as Sandy's oldest friend I'm the man for the
job—post.

LADY PENNYBROKE. Has Dorothy any idea of
your intention?

MONTAGUE. I have essayed to arouse her suspi-
cions in the usual way. I send her flowers every
morning, and whenever I happen to catch her eye,
I endeavour to hold it with meaning.

LADY PENNYBROKE. I should pass from the realm
of vague preliminaries now. I should adopt a more
definite attack.

MONTAGUE. Again it's remarkable you should say
that to me, it's what I said to myself coming up in
the lift this morning. (*Crossing to R.*)

(DOROTHY *comes in looking most attractive, charmingly
gowned in the best possible taste. She puts hand-bag
and sunshade on table C., then down to LADY PENNY-
BROKE.*)

LADY PENNYBROKE (*greeted her affectionately*). Ah,
my dear.

DOROTHY. I'm so sorry I was out—good-morn-
ing, Professor. I'm not so very late, am I? I prac-
tised "Blue Bells of Scotland" for an hour before
breakfast this morning, and, please, I'd better change
that tune now, because the old gentleman in the flat
below complained twice yesterday and sent up his
butler this morning to ask me to stop when I'd hardly
begun.

MONTAGUE. Did you stop?

DOROTHY. How could I? I tell you, I'd hardly
begun. (*She goes to the writing-table and takes up an
unfinished letter.*) I've written to Uncle Sandy to

tell him I've learnt the piano, and after I'd been photographed I went to Harrod's and bought a violin—

MONTAGUE. What for?

DOROTHY (c.) Well, there wasn't one in the house. I asked Herbert. You see, I heard Mr. Kubelik at the Queen's Hall yesterday, and I thought it was such a pretty accomplishment that I'd learn it too. Uncle Sandy dotes on music—so this afternoon you can come and give me lessons on that, it will be a nice change for the old gentleman downstairs, won't it?

MONTAGUE. I—er—I am not very familiar with the—er—violin—but (*very cheering*) we can make a start, we can make a start.

DOROTHY. I'll just put a postscript to Uncle Sandy, that I can do the piano and hope to do the violin before he comes back. (*Catches sight of flowers on table c., picks them up and smells them and shakes her head at MONTY, then puts flowers down, kisses the back of her hand and blows it to MONTY. She goes to the writing-table and writes.*)

LADY PENNYBROKE (*rises, crosses and whispers to MONTY*). I'll leave you together—ask her to marry you now.

MONTAGUE (*aghast*). Now!!

LADY PENNYBROKE. Now—no time like the present.

MONTAGUE. No, no, I couldn't—it—it's too early in the morning. I tell you what, dear Lady Pennybroke, you tell her that my intentions are honourable and all that—break it to her for me, remind her of my house in Kensington Square and my little shooting box in Scotland—pave the way, as it were. I'm not attractive in myself—perhaps (*giggles*), but my surroundings are most adequate. (*Then as it were to himself, overawed by the mental picture.*) I'm in love and I'm proposing, most unusual. I've never done such a thing in my life before. I—I'll go for a little

brisk walk to—to brace myself—and—and then I'll come back and do it during the lesson. (*Going up behind settee for his hat, LADY PENNYBROKE calls him back, he comes down L. of table.*)

LADY PENNYBROKE (*R. of table*). I have your full authority to arrange this match?

MONTAGUE. My full authority. I am convinced that I am quite definite about it. (*Goes up and gets hat and stick.*)

LADY PENNYBROKE. Go and take your little walk then.

DOROTHY (*rising and crossing to L.C. with letter in her hand*). The violin was 18s. 6d., some others cost more—but I thought that would do to learn on—it's only a small-sized one, you know. When I've learnt how to do it, I'll get one of the full-sized ones—they're that high, as tall as I am very nearly and twice as fat. I should think it's better to play those big ones in the open air.

LADY PENNYBROKE (*sitting on settee*). I shall expect you back in about half an hour, Monty.

MONTAGUE. Half an hour, delightful.

DOROTHY. Going! how about my lesson?

MONTAGUE (*slightly embarrassed, up at door c.*). I have a little commission to execute for Lady Pennybroke, but I shall return in half an hour precisely, so it must be regarded as, shall we say, merely *Au Revoir*.

(*He goes out.*)

DOROTHY (*taking off hat as she goes up stage, puts it on table up R., then crosses to fireplace and places stool in front of fender, stands on it and arranges her hair in glass*). That is a kind little man—he does appreciate me.

LADY PENNYBROKE. Do you appreciate him?

DOROTHY. Oh, yes, I dote on him. I dote on every one who appreciates me.

LADY PENNYBROKE. How would you like to have him all to yourself?

DOROTHY. He'd be very useful.

LADY PENNYBROKE. I mean, how would you like to marry him?

DOROTHY (*turning and facing LADY PENNYBROKE, gasps*). Holy Christmas!

LADY PENNYBROKE. I beg your pardon.

DOROTHY. Now don't you go putting ideas like that into his head.

LADY PENNYBROKE. It's in his head already.

DOROTHY (*whistles, then jumps off stool and crosses to c.*). My!!—if Uncle Sandy heard that wouldn't he be furious?

LADY PENNYBROKE. Sandy would be delighted, it would relieve him of a great responsibility.

DOROTHY. What do you mean?

LADY PENNYBROKE. I mean it would relieve him of you.

DOROTHY (*goes to LADY PENNYBROKE*). Am I a great responsibility?

LADY PENNYBROKE. Of course you are.

DOROTHY. Does—does Uncle Sandy want to be relieved of *me*?

LADY PENNYBROKE. Of course he does.

DOROTHY (*backing to c.*). Why does he—I love him. I'd—I'd die for him—I—I'd let him jump on me, if he wanted to—

LADY PENNYBROKE. He doesn't want to—if only you were safely married he could come home again.

DOROTHY (*c., looking at LADY PENNYBROKE in bewilderment*). You mean I've driven him from his home?

LADY PENNYBROKE. I honestly believe so.

DOROTHY. Oh—oh—ah. But I'm different now—he's sure to come back when he sees my photograph. (*Sitting on arm of settee.*)

LADY PENNYBROKE. Not at all—the more attractive you are—the more he'll have to stay away.

DOROTHY. Well, that's the foolishest thing I've ever heard in my life.

LADY PENNYBROKE. Montague Jordan has a charming house in Kensington Square, as you know, you would be mistress of that. He also has a house-boat at Staines or somewhere—it might have been a shooting-box—I don't know, it's all so sudden. He would be your devoted slave, and would make life very happy for you.

DOROTHY. How could I be happy away from Uncle Sandy?

LADY PENNYBROKE (*in a whisper*). Sakes alive, girl, don't you know what life is—what men and women are?

DOROTHY (*slowly*). Not quite, there's something at the back of my head that troubles me. Uncle Sandy said he was going to cherish me—well, why doesn't he?—after I've made up my mind to be cherished by Uncle Sandy—I don't seem to hanker for Mr. Jordan.

LADY PENNYBROKE (*making up her mind to put things clearly to the child's mind*). Sandy promised to cherish Miss Laurence, they're going to be married. He can't cherish two people at once, it's against the law. You marry Monty and cherish him. Sandy will do likewise with Miss Laurence—but stay in Sandy's flat, you can't. A man is only allowed by law to cherish one woman, and Sandy was booked before you came. Marry Monty and spare Sandy trouble.

DOROTHY (*much distressed*). Will it spare Sandy trouble?

LADY PENNYBROKE. Of course it will—it will spare us all.

DOROTHY (*rising and crosses to c.*). (*Draws a long breath. Sets her teeth and makes up her mind.*) Very well. I'll marry Monty—if it will spare Sandy trouble—but it does seem a pity, doesn't it, when—when I've wasted so much time on getting myself right. (*She walks up and down thinking—at last she says suddenly.*) I wish I could forget how to play the

"Blue Bell's of Scotland" now, but I never shall—it's sort of burnt itself in— (*She walks up and down again.*) Mr. Jordan won't want to hear it any more—he's heard it. (*Then suddenly with great vehemence, she turns to LADY PENNYBROKE.*) I believe you—I trust you—you belong to a world I don't know. Tell me, will it help Sandy if I marry Mr. Jordan?

LADY PENNYBROKE. Yes.

DOROTHY (*shutting up like an oyster*). Very well—I'll marry him.

LADY PENNYBROKE. That's good—he'll be delighted.

DOROTHY (*up L. by window, after a long pause*). I shan't, I hate the idea. I don't know much about married life—but somehow—I have views, it's instinct—that's all I've got, instinct. I *belong* to Uncle Sandy. Mr. Jordan can teach me music, and I'll marry him—but I *belong* to Uncle Sandy—he—he has taught me something I don't understand.

LADY PENNYBROKE. Well—I'm an old woman and I see what you mean in a sort of dim way—but it's no good being sentimental. Marry Monty, and all will be well.

DOROTHY. I will—poor Monty—poor me.

LADY PENNYBROKE. Happy Sandy.

DOROTHY. Yes, that's all I'm thinking about. (*Then with a sudden flash crosses to L. of table c. and picks up flowers.*) Do you think he's going to cherish Miss Laurence.

LADY PENNYBROKE. That is the present understanding.

DOROTHY (*throws flowers on to table in a temper*). It's a pity, she's no good.

LADY PENNYBROKE. She has been very good to you. She has—has— (*at a loss for a word*) well, she has given you style—made you—presentable.

DOROTHY (*sitting on edge of table c.*). Oh yes, she's made a difference to my outside, but she hasn't changed my inside. I'm still *me* just the same, no

matter if I do look dangerous. (*Then with another flash.*) Don't you think I'm a friend of hers, because I'm not, she's been very useful to me, very kind, oh very, very kind, but I know what I know. (*And she puts her fingers alongside of her nose—winks and nods wisely.*)

LADY PENNYBROKE (*stiffly*). That's a very vulgar action, I shouldn't repeat it.

DOROTHY (*c.*). I won't. Uncle Sandy doesn't know Miss Laurence—I've smelt her out, her outside is beautiful but her inside is rot, she doesn't care a button for anything but herself, her *dresses*, her *food*, her *beastly old hair*—is her nose powdered enough or too much. Uncle Sandy oughtn't to be allowed to want to cherish her—somebody ought to tell him. (*Crosses up L. to window.*)

LADY PENNYBROKE (*stiffly*). When you're safely married to Mr. Jordan, you can tell him yourself.

DOROTHY (*coming back to c.*). Well, as you've arranged this marriage for me, you may tell Mr. Jordan that I'm not going to let him kiss me or anything like that. I don't hold with it and I'm sure Uncle Sandy wouldn't like it either.

(*DOROTHY walks up and down stage trying to control herself.*)

LADY PENNYBROKE. I have not arranged this marriage. It is Mr. Jordan's own wish—and it is a remarkable match for you, and a very good thing for him, for up to now his only serious aim in life has been collecting birds' eggs—unsuccessfully. (*DOROTHY sits on arm of chair L.*) And above all, it will make poor dear Sandy a happy man again.

DOROTHY (*choking*). Do you mind not talking any more about it just now? I'm not saying much. I'm trying to be a lady, and self-controlled, but (*she suddenly breaks out passionately*) there's a hell of a lot going on inside me—that nobody knows about, and—

(LADY PENNYBROKE is appalled, DOROTHY explains feebly.)

That's the trouble with me. I overflow, I can't help it. I'll get it under—in time—give me time. I've rushed myself into goodness and sometimes I feel I'd better sit still for a bit and breathe. You see, I've developed my outside first and my inside hasn't quite come up to the scratch as yet—but it's going to—it's got to, you needn't worrit.

LADY PENNYBROKE. No. I won't "worrit."
(Suddenly realizing what she's said.) Oh, I am sure there's no such word—I don't know why—but I love you.

DOROTHY (after a pause, rises and goes slowly to her and kneels beside her and kisses her hand). That's the best thing I've heard in a month of Sundays—you love me. Oh, don't say it again—just let me be like this for a minute. (And she holds the old lady's hands tight against her face and whispers.) You love me—somebody loves me at last. (Then she breaks into a little nervous laugh, half a sob.) Somebody loves me—now we shan't be long.

(The bell rings.)

DOROTHY. That's Monty. I've learned to know his ring. It's such a "I hope nobody'll hear me" sort of ring.

LADY PENNYBROKE. A sidelight on a man's character that speaks volumes for his fitness for the married state. He will probably put his views before you now.

DOROTHY (directly). You love me, you said just now, and—and—you think I ought to marry him.

LADY PENNYBROKE (flustered). It's a dreadful muddle. I'm afraid I'm only thinking of Sandy's comfort.

DOROTHY (slowly). So am I. (Rising and sits on edge of table c.)

(MONTAGUE comes in c. timidly, puts hat on writing-table and goes down L.)

DOROTHY. Back again? You weren't long.

MONTAGUE. No. I didn't go far.

DOROTHY. How far did you go?

MONTAGUE. Only as far as the Hall door. It was raining, and as I had no umbrella, it did not seem expedient to venture further.

DOROTHY. Why didn't you take a cab?

MONTAGUE. I did think of it—but as I didn't want to go anywhere in particular a cab seemed a useless extravagance.

LADY PENNYBROKE (*rising*). I have been having a little chat with Dorothy on a subject very near your heart, Monty.

MONTAGUE (*shyly*). Oh, you're most welcome, I'm sure.

LADY PENNYBROKE. And now I will leave you to talk it over between yourselves. I presume—there is a fire in the drawing-room. (*She takes up newspaper.*) As you will not need the daily paper I will take it with me.

(MONTAGUE goes up and opens the door for her. She goes out gravely R., MONTAGUE closing the door behind her.)

(DOROTHY sits pensive on edge of table c.)

MONTAGUE (*coming down c., breaking the ice*). I don't want to seem too bold, but—er—in the words of the old saying—a penny for your thoughts.

DOROTHY (*dreamily, as if talking to herself*). I was thinking what an awful waste of time it's been.

MONTAGUE. What?

DOROTHY. The making myself dangerous.

MONTAGUE. Oh, don't think that.

DOROTHY. After all that swotting with new clothes and new hair and at least fifteen new hats, and then to come a mucker like this at the finish.

MONTAGUE. I do not quite follow you.

DOROTHY (*crossing to settee and sitting R. end*). Think of the poetry I've learnt, think of "Blue Bells of Scotland" till I got blood to the head. Think of my tight stays.

MONTAGUE. Really, Dorothy.

DOROTHY. And trying on scores of shapes and kinds till I got a pair that fixed me. Think of all the kid gloves I've bust up the back before I got my hands to melt properly. Oh, oh, oh, what a cruel waste it seems.

MONTAGUE. Really, Dorothy.

DOROTHY. Yes, it is—it is—even you must realize that.

MONTAGUE. If I could see your point, I would doubtless agree with you—but I *don't* see your point.

DOROTHY (*with a sudden outburst*). It hasn't been easy—it hasn't been easy, I don't care what anybody says. I've swotted and swotted for weeks to be a lady, and now that I am a lady I'm thrown on the dust heap.

MONTAGUE (*aghast*). Who said so?

DOROTHY. Lady Pennybroke.

MONTAGUE. You must have entirely misunderstood her. Lady Pennybroke is well aware that you have at least one friend who would not allow you to be subjected to such a proceeding; I fear Lady Pennybroke has not approached you on the little matter that is on my mind. (*Sits L. of her and takes her hand.*) You have no reason to regret anything, Dorothy. You have proved yourself a young woman of remarkable force of character—by your own efforts you have in a few short weeks evolved from what appeared at first sight most unpromising material, you have evolved, I say, a finished article that would prove an ornament to any gentleman's home.

DOROTHY (*pulling her hand away*). I won't be an ornament in any gentleman's home, although I'm only a fresh-made lady. I'm just as particular as a

stale one—one that's been one always, I mean. However, I suppose what I feel about things doesn't matter—my life has been all like that—I ought to be getting used to it by now.

MONTAGUE. If you will marry me—what you feel will be the only thing in life that does matter.

DOROTHY (*pause—then suddenly*). Shall I have to be married in a church?

MONTAGUE. It is usual.

DOROTHY. What church?

MONTAGUE. I have not allowed my thoughts to leap so far—am I—Dorothy—am I to I understand that you—you will marry me?

DOROTHY (*in a dull voice*). Of course—didn't you fix it all up before you asked me?

MONTAGUE. I—er—hoped—

DOROTHY. You must have known all the time I couldn't say no.

MONTAGUE (*taking her hand and kissing it*). Dorothy, my dear, you—you enchant me.

DOROTHY. What on earth you want to do it for I can't think. It seems silly. (*MONTY drops her hand.*) Ah, well—we won't talk about it. After all, it doesn't matter much to us, does it—we shall get over it in time.

MONTAGUE. I—er—I may be in error—but you scarcely seem to me to be approaching our union in the right spirit.

DOROTHY. I haven't got any spirit now. I'm just going back to the old *me*.

MONTAGUE. I—er—I—er—am a little unaccustomed to—er—interviews of this momentous character. I have never asked any one to marry me before—it—er—is perhaps a little agitating to both parties. Shall I leave you for a little?

DOROTHY. Yes.

MONTAGUE. Yes. (*Rising and crossing to L.C.*) Perhaps it would be well. I will come back when our mental balance is a little restored—and—~~and—~~

(Crosses to her.) When I come back, will you come out with me to lunch at the *Carlton*—and—and then we will drive to my little house in Kensington Square—and you shall see all the treasures—which—which I lay at your feet.

DOROTHY. Shall I see your collection of birds' eggs?

MONTAGUE. Why, of course. I will keep nothing from you.

DOROTHY. Ain't I lucky?

MONTAGUE. Not lucky—worthy is the word. Will you be ready when I come back? (*Gets hat and stick.*)

DOROTHY (*rising listlessly*). Why should you bother to go? Wait for me here. I'll go and get ready now.

(*As she reaches the door R. LADY PENNYBROKE comes in.*)

LADY PENNYBROKE. Had your little talk?

DOROTHY (*in a dull voice*). Yes!

LADY PENNYBROKE. My dear. (*She kisses her.*)

DOROTHY. Monty is taking me out to lunch. I'm going to get ready.

(*She goes out R.*)

LADY PENNYBROKE (*looks at him curiously. There is a pause—she sits down then looks at him again*). Satisfactory?

MONTAGUE (*sits L.C., then stiffly*). Yes and no. I cannot fathom an allusion to a dust heap.

LADY PENNYBROKE. I do not follow you.

MONTAGUE. She said you said that now that she was a lady she was thrown upon a dust-heap.

LADY PENNYBROKE. Dust heap?

MONTAGUE. You apparently referred to it.

LADY PENNYBROKE (*sitting on settee*). Why should I refer to a thing I have rarely, if ever, seen?

MONTAGUE. Precisely the question I put to myself—so unlike you.

LADY PENNYBROKE. Putting side issues away, you had better telegraph your news to Sandy—it will relieve his mind.

MONTAGUE (*rising*). I will do so at once.

(*He goes to writing-table and takes telegraph form, goes to table C., sits L. of it and writes.*)

MONTAGUE. How wonderful to find the right thing in the right place, in anybody's house but one's own. (*Writes and reads telegram.*) "Dear Sandy, I am going to marry Dorothy next month. Congratulate me. Monty." Terse and to the point, eh?

LADY PENNYBROKE. Admirable, but—two per cent. halfpenny a word. I should cut out "dear."

MONTAGUE. Perhaps you're right—cut "dear."
(*He does so.*)

LADY PENNYBROKE. "Sandy" is unnecessary. Cut "Sandy."

MONTAGUE. Sandy unnecessary—cut Sandy.
(*Does so.*)

LADY PENNYBROKE. Read it again.

MONTAGUE. "I am going to marry Dorothy next month. Congratulate me. Monty."

LADY PENNYBROKE. Admirable—stay! I marry Dorothy next month. Congratulate me. Monty. Why "*I am going to marry*"—redundant!

MONTAGUE. Perhaps you're right. (*He alters telegram—writes.*) I marry Dorothy next month. Congratulate me. Monty.

LADY PENNYBROKE. Admirable—but why "congratulate me"?

MONTAGUE (*alters wire*). Perhaps you're right—cut congratulate me. (*Does so.*) Now how does it go? "I marry Dorothy next month. Monty."

LADY PENNYBROKE. Admirable, but why next month, when it might be this or the month after next?

MONTAGUE. Perhaps you're right. Cut next month. (*He does so.*)

LADY PENNYBROKE. Has he got the facts—read it.

MONTAGUE (*does so*). *I marry Dorothy.* MONTAGUE.

LADY PENNYBROKE. Admirable. I wonder would it be wise to cut another word?

MONTAGUE. Eh?

LADY PENNYBROKE (*drily*). Dorothy!

MONTAGUE. Dear lady, then it would be meaningless. (*Reads.*) "I marry Monty." (*He looks at her blankly.*)

LADY PENNYBROKE. You're quite right. I was letting my thoughts run away with me—send that telegram.

(*The hall door is heard to open with a latch-key. And after a pause SANDY comes in c.*)

LADY PENNYBROKE and MONTAGUE. Sandy!!

MONTAGUE. My dear Sandy, you've come back?

SANDY. Have I? What an observant fellow you are. Auntie, my dear! how delightful to find you here. (*He greets her.*)

MONTAGUE. I was just sending you this telegram.

SANDY. Oh!

MONTAGUE (*chuckling*). It'll tickle you to death when you read it.

SANDY. Let's read it. (*He takes it.*) "I marry Dorothy, Monty."

SANDY. I get nothing but telegrams about people getting married. I had two yesterday, one from Vera Laurence and the other from Uncle Gregory. She married him at a registrar's on Friday.

LADY PENNYBROKE (*aghast*). What!

SANDY. Don't know why they did it on Friday—such an unlucky day.

MONTAGUE (*wringing his hand*). My poor fellow, and here am I flaunting my happiness before your aching heart.

SANDY. I haven't got an aching heart. I've got an aching void. I breakfasted early. (*Rings bell by door c.*)

LADY PENNYBROKE (*recovering her breath after the shock of SANDY'S announcement*). Gregory married to that woman?

SANDY. You mustn't talk of Vera like that.

LADY PENNYBROKE. I *will*. I feel it. Gregory and that woman married.

SANDY (*coming down c.*). Don't take it to heart, it might have been worse, it might have been me—don't let us harp on it. Let us consider the incident closed and turn to this other eccentricity. (*He looks at MONTY.*) What do you want to marry Dorothy for?

MONTAGUE (*jauntily*). Oh, the usual reason, I suppose.

SANDY. Really, what's that?

MONTAGUE (*bashfully*). Love—oh, you know!!

SANDY. Oh yes, foolish of me. What sort of hair is she wearing now? (*Crosses to fireplace.*)

MONTAGUE (*annoyed*). Her own, delicious—simple.

LADY PENNYBROKE. Dorothy has developed in a most amazing way, these last few weeks have wrought wonders. You wouldn't know her.

SANDY. Really? That's good.

(HERBERT *answers bell.*)

SANDY. Lunch as soon as you can, Herbert.

HERBERT. Yes, sir. (*Exit c.*)

SANDY. Staying to lunch, auntie?

LADY PENNYBROKE. Yes.

SANDY. Monty?

MONTAGUE. I am lunching with Dorothy at the *Carlton*, then I'm taking her to see my little place.

LADY PENNYBROKE. Monty, show Sandy Dorothy's photographs. I think he will be amazed at the metamorphosis.

MONTAGUE (*gaily*). Where are—ah! here they are. Charming—so charming— (*He hands them proudly to SANDY.*) Now perhaps you will understand my feelings on the matter.

(SANDY comes c., looks at the photographs, first at one, then at another, then at all together, bewildered and amazed.)

SANDY. I don't believe it—I simply don't believe it.

MONTAGUE (*chuckling*). I thought you'd be tickled to death.

SANDY (*stamps angrily*). I'm not tickled, damn it—this is not Dorothy—my Dorothy—

MONTAGUE. She's my Dorothy now.

SANDY. What infernal nonsense. She couldn't have grown into this in three weeks, it's preposterous. She's got a figure. She's got an eye, she's got style—she's got charm—who told you you could take her out to lunch?

MONTAGUE. Upon my word!!

SANDY. I forbid you to do so, on the very day that I come home—unheard of, positively unheard of. If the poor child wants to be taken out to lunch, I'll take her out to lunch myself.

LADY PENNYBROKE. You forget they are engaged to be married.

SANDY. No such thing, he collects birds' eggs—not wives.

MONTAGUE. How dare you address such words—

SANDY. Don't you shout at me in my own flat, I won't have it. You mustn't get married to anybody, do you hear? You're too old—you're too fat, you're too settled down. Go and look at yourself in the glass—it's indecent—it's positively indecent, you're my oldest friend and I won't hear of it. (*He looks at photograph.*) 'Pon my word, she's deucedly attractive. (*Walking up and down stage.*)

MONTAGUE. Give me back those photographs.

SANDY. I shall do no such thing. (*Crosses L. then up to c. and down again.*)

MONTAGUE. I decline to stand calmly by while you gloat over my property.

SANDY. Your property—pish! She's really most attractive.

LADY PENNYBROKE. You don't propose to raise any obstacle, it's an excellent match for Dorothy.

SANDY. Is it? (*He turns and looks at MONTY who is puffing heavily with rage.*) Is it really? Don't wobble and breathe so hard. Be placid, I want to look at you.

(*A long pause. MONTY sweats under SANDY's cold scrutiny.*)

A good match for her, is it? Well, women do take to funny things. Well, there are your photographs. After all, it's nothing to do with me. (*He bundles the photographs on to MONTY.*)

MONTAGUE. Nothing whatever to do with you, and although you are my oldest friend, I tell you your behaviour is unpardonable. Your words unforgettable. Unforgivable.

SANDY. Yes, I'm sorry. (*He takes MONTY's hand.*) But I was looking at you with a young woman's eye, you see, if I was a young woman that is how you would appeal to me. But as I'm not a young woman—there's no harm done and we're friends just the same. Take your bride elect to lunch. I'm very hungry. Auntie, you and I will lunch together, after all, marriage is all right for those who want to get married—but it can't teach us anything, can it?

LADY PENNYBROKE (*shocked*). Sandy!

SANDY (*a pause*). Perhaps that remark was a little indelicate. I'm rattled. I want food. (*A pause.*) And where is the wonderful Dorothy? I suppose I'd better give her my blessing. (*He rings.*) If you're going to lunch at the *Carlton*, you'd better get a move on you.

(*Enter HERBERT.*)

Tell Miss Dorothy that Mr. Jordan is getting impatient for his lunch.

MONTAGUE. No such thing.

(Exit HERBERT. LADY PENNYBROKE rises and crosses to L., sits on stool.)

DOROTHY (heard in the passage). Put lavender in the boxes if you like, Mrs. Allaway. Don't you worrit. I'm really quite happy as I am.

SANDY. She's quite happy as she am—that's good.

(And DOROTHY comes in R., dressed exactly as she was when she first appeared. A shabby shapeless frock, too large in the waist, too small in the skirt, her hair drawn off her forehead and knotted in a bun on the top of her head. The little straw hat perched askew and the spectacles on her nose. She does not know that SANDY is present. She comes slowly down to C., putting on a grubby pair of cotton gloves.)

DOROTHY. I'm sorry to have kept you waiting, Mr. Jordan, but it took longer than I thought to make myself respectable. I had forgotten the knack of it somehow.

MONTAGUE. Great heavens, Dorothy!

DOROTHY (she sees SANDY, and wilts—there's a long pause). You're back—and—and—I'm the old me again. (Then vehemently.) I'm not—I'm not—really—this is only for him. The new me was for you. This—this—(she indicates herself) this—is anybody's and it's going to lunch at the Carlton,

SANDY (drily to MONTY). Shall I ring for a taxi?

MONTAGUE. Certainly not! Dorothy, what does this mean? I can't take you out like that.

DOROTHY. Can't you—it's all I've got.

MONTAGUE. Don't be absurd.

DOROTHY. This is all I've got of my own—all the rest is Uncle Sandy's.

SANDY. My dear girl, I can't wear 'em, and judging by your photograph, you can.

DOROTHY (with a sudden blaze of happiness). Oh, have you seen my photographs?

MONTY. Take those things off at once. You—you—shock me.

DOROTHY. I won't. I'll be married and live and die in them.

LADY PENNYBROKE. Have you taken leave of your senses, girl?

DOROTHY (*demurely*). Uncle Sandy, he's going to show me his birds' eggs.

MONTY. In those clothes, never! Take them off at once and do something to your hair.

DOROTHY. I won't be ordered about. Don't let him do it, Uncle Sandy.

SANDY. I can't interfere. You're going to marry him, I'm not.

MONTY. Are you going to put your other clothes on?

DOROTHY. No, I am not—so there.

MONTY (*going to her*). I insist.

DOROTHY. Pooh!

MONTY. I—I—— (*He becomes almost speechless.*)
This is beyond belief—— (*Goes up stage.*)

SANDY. You'll get on better when you're married.

MONTY (*stamps at SANDY*). Silence, Sandy!
(*Coming down to her.*) Dorothy, you disobey me.

DOROTHY. I won't go out with you in Uncle Sandy's clothes.

SANDY. They're your clothes. I gave 'em to you.

DOROTHY. I prefer myself as I am, so there.
(*Pulls her hat with a jerk over her eyes.*)

MONTY. Once for all, will you take off those—those—things.

DOROTHY. No—no—no.

MONTY. Then I absolutely decline to take you to the Carlton.

DOROTHY. I'm jolly glad.

SANDY. Perhaps he won't show you his birds' eggs either.

MONTY. Certainly not.

DOROTHY. I don't want to see 'em, so there.

LADY PENNYBROKE. This is a most unseemly wrangle.

MONTY. Most unseemly. I am distressed beyond words.

DOROTHY. You said you wanted to marry *me* you didn't say you wanted to marry Uncle Sandy's clothes.

SANDY. Oh, blow the clothes—go and put 'em on at once. I want to see how you look in them.

DOROTHY (*delighted*). Do you really? (*She claps her hands with glee.*) I will—I will. But I won't go out with *him* in them.

MONTY. I forbid you to put them on at his bidding.

SANDY. Monty!

MONTY (*Jeely mopping his brow*). Oh, this is most unseemly—most unseemly. I don't know where I am. (*Walking up and down stage then sits L.C.*)

SANDY. I think you're in the cart.

DOROTHY. First you want them on, then you don't want them on. What *do* you want?

MONTY. I don't know. Oh, most unseemly. Most unseemly.

SANDY (*severely*). Go and put them on.

DOROTHY (*very quietly*). Yes, Uncle Sandy.

(*And she goes out R. like a lamb.*)

MONTY. What—what am I to make of this?

SANDY. Make the best of it. (*Goes up to door R.*)

MONTY. She cannot love me.

SANDY. I told you so, but you wouldn't believe me. (*Coming C.*)

MONTY. It—it is unprecedented. (*Rising.*)

SANDY. No, it isn't—*do* look in the glass.

MONTY (*stamps about in a rage, then stops suddenly and turns to LADY PENNYBROKE*). Lady Pennybroke. Lady Pennybroke, you are responsible for this.

LADY PENNYBROKE (*rising, greatly irate*). I!!
Man!

MONTY. What was your allusion to a dust heap?
LADY PENNYBROKE. Montague! (*Sits in arm-chair L.C.*)

(MONTY *sits top of table c.*)

SANDY. Now don't you two quarrel as well. Let us look at this matter sensibly. Monty, you're an ass to want to marry a girl who obviously doesn't want to marry you—as man to man, don't you think you are?

MONTY (*Jeely*). I had no idea she would adopt this attitude.

SANDY. What man can have any idea of what attitude any woman will adopt? That's why we love 'em. They're so damned incomprehensible—but now as my oldest friend, I must speak plainly, it may be all very well for a man to marry a woman who loves *him*—but for a man to marry a woman who *doesn't* love him just because he's ass enough to love *her* seems to me to be asking for trouble.

MONTY. I don't wish to ask for trouble. I have always been very happy in the past.

SANDY. Again, as my oldest friend—take my advice, keep on being happy in the past—there's no future for you.

MONTY. Lady Pennybroke, would it be better to regard the engagement as dissolved?

LADY PENNYBROKE. Don't consult me.

MONTY. You helped me into it, I thought you might help me out of it.

LADY PENNYBROKE. She wants to marry Sandy. Nobody else will do.

SANDY. She wants to marry me, does she—now, isn't that like a woman? I suppose I've got something to say in the matter?

LADY PENNYBROKE. Very little. I know women.

SANDY. Do ye? You're a marvel.

MONTY. You haven't seen her yet.

SANDY. Yes I have—I—I—have seen bits of

her. She wants to marry me, does she? I must have a serious talk with the young lady—and show her the error of her ways.

MONTY (*who has been thinking deeply*). Lady Pennybroke, I shall ask you to convey to Dorothy—that—that—I release her from her—her—engagement to me. I—I— (*He rises.*) I have had a trying morning. I will go home. (*Gets hat, gloves and stick from chair L.*)

SANDY. Yes, I think you're better off at home.

MONTY (*coming to c.*). I have never found myself in such a difficult position before.

SANDY. Go home and think it over. That's the wisest thing.

MONTY (*putting on gloves*). But you see it was all definite a quarter of an hour ago. And *now* it's all indefinite—most unsettling.

SANDY. You've tried dealing intimately with the opposite sex, your experience is not unusual. I—I— (*He looks towards the door.*) I will have a talk to her.

MONTY (*up by door c.*). Meanwhile, I will go home. You know my telephone number if there are any developments.

SANDY. You are going?

MONTY. Yes. Telephone if you want me. (*To LADY PENNYBROKE.*) B-r-r-r, it's all your fault.

(*He goes out with great dignity.*)

SANDY. Well, now that he's gone, you can tell me when all this began to happen.

LADY PENNYBROKE. I only heard of it this morning, and as the girl has completely won me over I did my best to promote the match.

SANDY. You thought it a good thing for her to marry Monty?

LADY PENNYBROKE. A most admirable match for her.

SANDY. 'Pon my word. Good, bad or indifferent. None of you women have any real sense of decency.

LADY PENNYBROKE. Sandy!!

SANDY. How dare you suggest that any young girl should marry that—that dear old lady.

LADY PENNYBROKE (*rising*). I had intended to lunch with you, Sandy, but perhaps—in your present mood, I shall be better off at home. (*Sweeps up to door c., then stops in thought.*)

SANDY. All right. (*Sits on settee.*)

LADY PENNYBROKE (*she goes to him with genuine feeling, over back of settee*). You've got this girl on your hands. You say women have no sense of decency—well, I'm old but I've got this sense left. I'd trust a man, and even though you are my nephew—I feel you're a man, you've got a problem to face with this young woman. I leave you to it. (*Going up.*)

SANDY. Aren't you going to stay to lunch?

LADY PENNYBROKE (*up c. by door*). No. No. I'll go to the stores—alone. I—I want to think.

SANDY. But—but what am I to do about Dorothy?

LADY PENNYBROKE. You will do what you please. Men always do.

SANDY. I wonder, do we?

LADY PENNYBROKE. You *don't*—you do what *we* please, but you don't know it.

SANDY (*lamely*). I don't like your going like this. (*Rising and going up to her.*)

LADY PENNYBROKE. I do. I—I'm upset—nobody's fault but my own. I can collect myself at the stores.

SANDY. Well, if you must—you must.

LADY PENNYBROKE Sandy. (*She has got to the Hall with SANDY*). Sandy, I'm very glad you did not marry that Laurence woman—but I am trembling for Gregory.

SANDY (*chuckles*). Oh, Uncle Gregory will keep his end up. He's a sport.

LADY PENNYBROKE. I—I don't know what to say

about Dorothy. I—I think I'd better leave it to you.

SANDY (*vacantly*). Yes, yes, I think you'd better leave it to me. Good-bye, dear.

LADY PENNYBROKE. Good-bye, dear.

SANDY. Good-bye.

(*And he closes the hall door after her, comes back into the room, stands lost in thought, picks up one of the photographs from writing-table.*)

And she's a very difficult problem which ever way you take her.

(*HERBERT comes in c. and begins laying lunch.*)

SANDY (*still looking at the photograph*). Any news in London, Herbert?

HERBERT (*calmly, as he proceeds with laying the cloth, etc.*). I see Miss Laurence has married Mr. Gregory, sir.

SANDY (*amazed*). You see?

HERBERT. Charmin' pictures of them in the *Mirror* this morning, sir.

SANDY (*immensely astonished, but concealing his astonishment under a mask of indifference*). Oh, really.

HERBERT. Quite good as likenesses too, sir.

SANDY. Oh, really, you surprise me. (*A pause.*)

(*DOROTHY comes in quietly. Sweetly, simply dressed. She has the paper, the "Daily Mirror" in her hand.*)

SANDY *leans on back of armchair L.C. He stares at her in blank amazement but says nothing. She sits down on settee with perfect sangfroid and opens her paper, after a pause she says gravely.*)

DOROTHY. It's very nice to have you back again, Uncle Sandy—the flat hasn't been a bit like itself without you.

SANDY (*lamely*). Hasn't it?— (*A long silence.*)

DOROTHY. I—I see that Miss Laurence has married our uncle.

SANDY. Oh, yes.

DOROTHY. I wish I knew what to say to you about it, but I don't.

SANDY. I don't think there's need to say anything.

(HERBERT is laying lunch.)

Herbert, don't fidget with those forks, I'll ring when I want lunch.

HERBERT. Yes, sir.

(HERBERT goes out gravely.)

DOROTHY (*nodding her head in thought*). She has married your uncle—well I can tell you, it's a very good thing.

SANDY. You think it is?

DOROTHY (*gravely*). I'm sure it is.

SANDY. I suppose it is—I thought it was myself when I got his telegram.

DOROTHY. I don't know your Uncle Gregory, but from his photograph in this paper I think it serves him right.

SANDY (*vaguely*). He's a sport.

DOROTHY. What's that?

SANDY. I don't quite know.

DOROTHY (*after a silence*). I—I was silly that day.

SANDY. What day? (*Crosses to table c.*)

DOROTHY. The day she and I made fools of ourselves with our hair—the day that drove you away.

SANDY (*pulls himself together*). You—you are now a different proposition—you—you are a woman now. (*Takes chair from top of table c., places it L. of table and sits.*)

DOROTHY. I am a woman always.

SANDY. It makes it very difficult for me.

DOROTHY (*demurely stroking her hair*). This is my own hair, Uncle Sandy. I mean it grows on me, all except a little piece like a sausage that I have to twist mine round to make it stick out properly.

SANDY. It's—it—still makes it very difficult for me.

DOROTHY (*putting down the paper*). I don't think anything ought to be difficult for anybody.

SANDY. You must be very young.

DOROTHY (*calmly*). I am—look at me.

SANDY. No. I—I don't want to look at you—it upsets me to look at you. (*Turning away.*)

DOROTHY (*softly and still not looking at him*). It's a very good thing to be upset sometimes. You—you did like my photographs, didn't you? (*Leaning towards him.*)

SANDY (*dreamily falling in love without realizing it*). Yes. Charming. Very charming.

DOROTHY. You wouldn't have liked me to have married Mr. Jordan, would you?

SANDY. No, no, certainly not—not for a moment.

DOROTHY (*putting down the paper, says in a whisper almost*). I wonder what you'll do with me?

SANDY. Yes, I'm wondering too. (*He gets a bright idea.*) I think I'll put you into a convent.

DOROTHY (*calmly*). I won't go into a stuffy old convent.

SANDY. We won't choose a stuffy one, we'll choose a nice bright one. Yes, a convent, that's a good idea let's go out and inquire about one now.

DOROTHY. I don't want to go into a convent.

SANDY (*leaning over L. end of settee*). But—but—I've got to do something with you.

DOROTHY. What was that dreadful thing your Uncle Gregory did?

SANDY. He married Miss Laurence at a regis— (*Then he sees her point and glares.*) How dare you put such ideas into my head!

DOROTHY. Somebody must put ideas into your head, and—and somehow I thought—that being a woman I was the proper person.

SANDY. You don't mean it, but somehow you are becoming a most improper person.

DOROTHY. I told you I was a woman.

SANDY (*looking at her and feebly waving his hands*

at his own helplessness). I—I can't get away from you (*backing away from her.*)

DOROTHY (*still looking at the paper*). That's as it should be—now I know that I'm content. (*A pause—then she says very quietly, rising.*) Could you give me twenty pounds?

SANDY (*amazed*). Eh!—why, of course I could.

DOROTHY (R.C.). Then with that I can start out for myself.

SANDY. But you can't start out without me.

DOROTHY. I shall *always* have you—and I'll repay you the £20. Give it me now, and I—I'll go away and fight for myself.

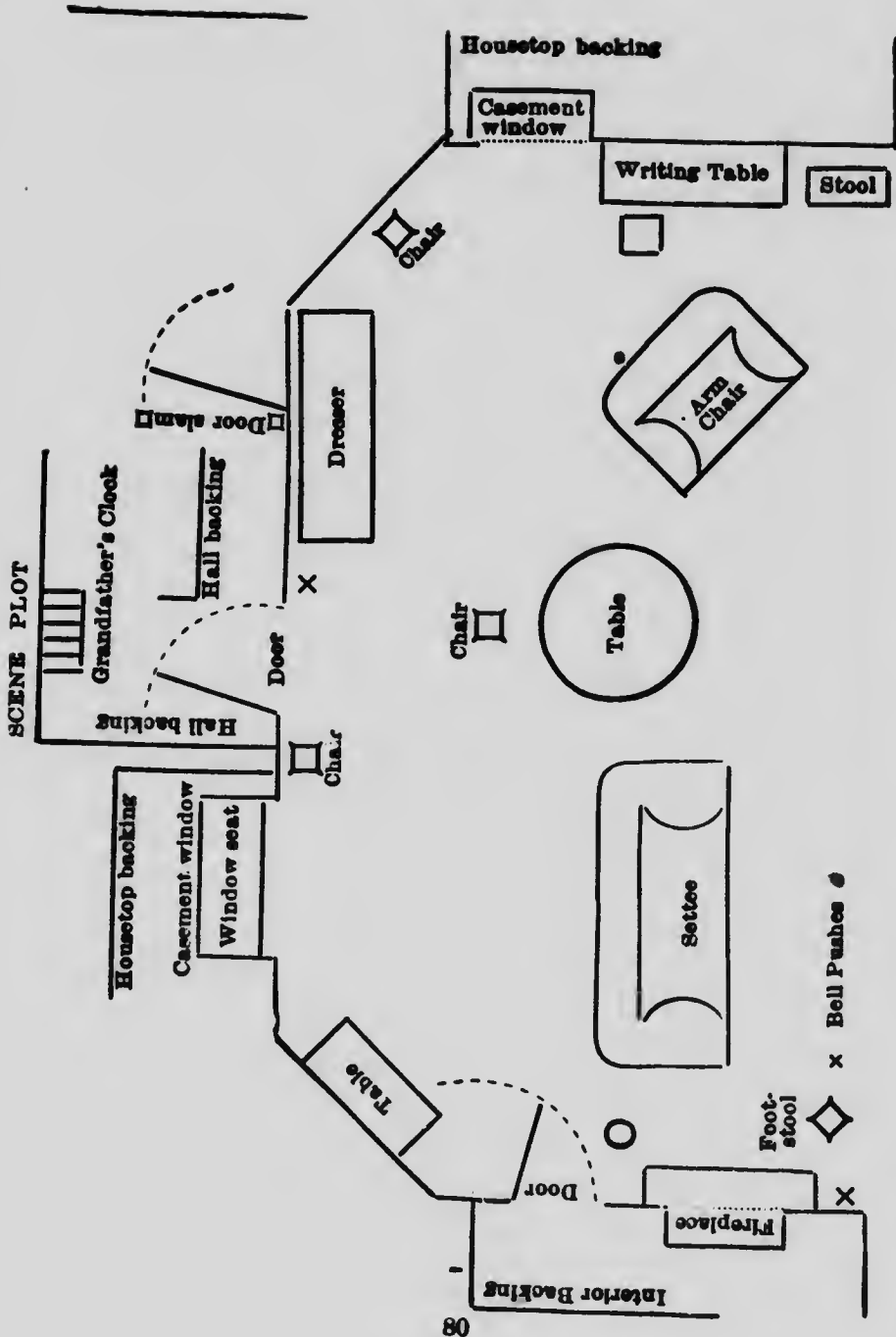
SANDY (*looking at her in bewilderment—fascinated*). But—but I don't want you to go away.

DOROTHY. What do you want to do—you don't seem to know.

(*She turns and looks at him—there is a long pause.*)

SANDY (*slowly*). I do know what I want to do. (*SANDY comes to her quietly, takes her in his arms and kisses her, then says very tenderly.*) Put on your best hat and we'll go out and buy a special licence.

(CURTAIN.)



1



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