

"Along Came Ruth"

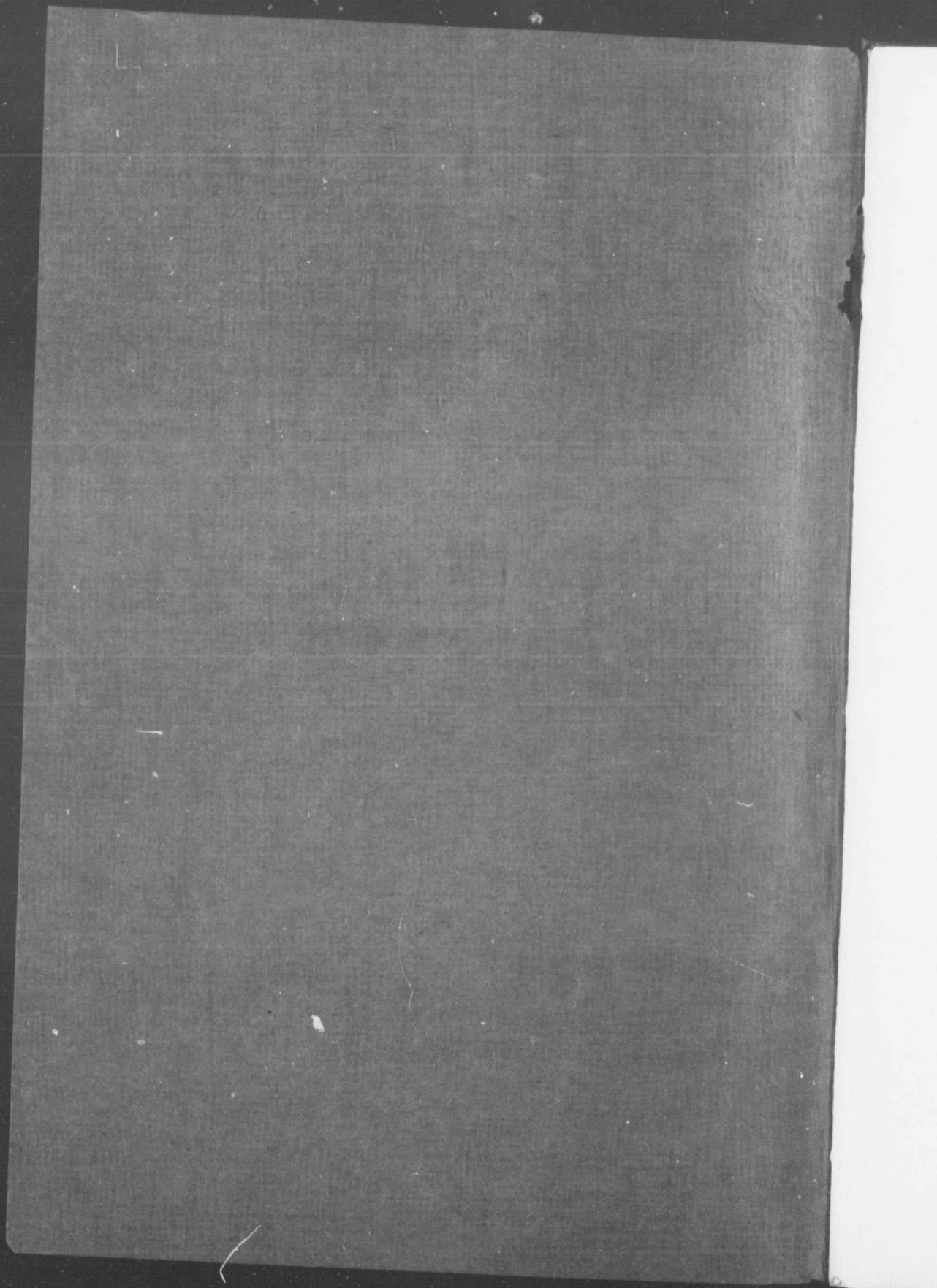
A Comedy in Three Acts



ADAPTED BY
HOLMAN DAY

From the French "La Demoiselle de Magasin"

BY
FONSON and WICHELER



Car. Day, Holman F.

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ACT I.

DISCOVERED : *Oscar dusting furniture.*

Hubbard. Who was that you was promenading upstairs this morning ?

Oscar. Rusticator feller to look at our furnished room.

Hubbard. Take it ?

Oscar. (*Takes vase, sit on tabourette L. and polishes*) : Nothing doing.

Hubbard. (*At desk*) If you'd had some gumption you could have *made* him take it.

Oscar. Them kind want marble palaces for five dollars a week.

Hubbard. Sold any goods this morning ?

Oscar. Miss Tinker was in and had a hank o' carpet thread charged.

Hubbard. All the business you can do up to ten o'clock in the forenoon ? (*Gets down from stool and comes to chair L. of table*).

Oscar. Nobody don't hardly come in here no more.

Hubbard. Good Cephas ! What have I spent years training you for if you can't turn to and *make* business ?

Oscar. Expect me to go out and lassoo 'em ?

Hubbard. But you can't sell anything when they *do* come in. You can't even let a furnished room.

Oscar. If nobody don't want nothing, how ye going to make somebody take something ?

Hubbard. When I ain't on the job you let the business go to the devil, you fat lummo.

Oscar. I don't see *you* selling no cartload a day !

Hubbard. What's that ? (*Comes Right C.*)

Oscar. (*At sideboard*). Excuse me, Mr. Hubbard, it slipped out.

Hubbard. You be a little less slippery. You don't know how to handle a customer.

Oscar. I'll try if he'll come in.

Hubbard. There's art in selling goods. I've tried to beat some notion of it into that head of yours, but it's harder'n the leg of this table. S'pose a customer comes in that store door—(*Captain Nathan Hodge enters and is not observed at first*)—We've got to be polite, show your manners—(*Sees Captain Hodge*). Hi! Shut that door behind you, Captain Hodge. I ain't running a victualling saloon for all the flies along Main Street.

Hodge. (*At door.*) I found it open.

Hubbard. (*Hodge closes door.*) No reason, is it, why it hadn't ought to be shut? Haven't you got any manners?

Hodge. (*At centre.*) I wouldn't come in *here* after 'em if I didn't have.

Hubbard. What *have* you come for?

Hodge. Might look at some furniture.

Hubbard. (*Plays very gruffly all through this scene.*) Furniture? Down to business, then.

Hodge. Dunno as you've got anything I want—but I'll take a peek before paying carfare to Boston. (*Looking at furniture.*)

Hubbard. That's the trouble with this town—it's everybody riggity-jig up to Boston. Why don't citizens patronize home merchants?

Hodge. (*Corner down L. C.*) Well, you *can* go into a Boston store without having your head yapped off.

Hubbard. (*R. C.*) Just let me remind you that three generations of Hubbards have run this business here and we know how to keep a furniture store. Now what do you want to buy?

(*Oscar L. Hubbard catches Oscar looking at him.*) You go to doing something. Sprinkle down this floor and lay the dust—swat the flies. Now, Captain, out with it—what you looking for?

Hodge. (*R. C.*) Parlor set—want to surprise my wife on her birthday.

Hubbard. (*Oscar sprinkles floor, advancing to L. of Hubbard.*) Here's a sample chair.

Hodge. I only want to surprise her—I don't want her to drop dead.

Hubbard. What do you mean?

Hodge. That color would paralyze a Figi.

Hubbard. (*Bumps Oscar.*) Git out of my way. (*To Hodge.*)

You slurring my taste?

Hodge. I ain't horraying for it.

Hubbard. Who do you think knows most about good furniture, you or me?

Hodge. I've got a right to know what I want.

Hubbard. (*To L. of chair.*) A lot of this new fiddle-de-dee stuff probably. I had an old aunt who could crochet better furniture than they sell in Boston nowadays. I'm going to send for your wife to come in here—(*X's to R. Hodge to L. C.*)—she's got more sense than you have.

Hodge. Look-a-here; I told you this is a surprise. You keep your mouth shut.

Hubbard. Who's running my business—you or me?

Hodge. (*Exit on speech.*) You run yours and I'll run mine. Why, even your clerk could teach you how to run yours. (*Exit*)

Hubbard. (*Looks at Oscar, who hastily checks his grin and keeps on with his sprinkling. Hubbard goes to desk and paws over papers.*) Here you, take this bill down to the Harborview House and stick to Pennell till he pays it.

Oscar. (*Getting his coat and hat from room L.*) Been there eight times in two weeks.

Hubbard. (*Sits L. of table R.C.*) You tell him we've got to have this four hundred dollars today or I'll sue. Then hurry to Colonel Bradford and pay the rent.

Oscar. Ye-ap, but you ain't forgot that bank's holding a three hundred dollar draft for them Grand Rapids bedsteads have ye, Mr. Hubbard? And the bill for curled hair.

Hubbard. Trying to tell me my business? You hiper!

(*Starts at him, waving him out.*)

(*Note "Hiper" is a New England word for "Hurry."*)

(*As Oscar opens door leading into the street, he meets Mrs. Hubbard and Priscilla entering from outside. He steps back and holds door open.*)

Mrs. Hubbard. Where are you going, Oscar?

Hubbard. (*Up C.*) Let Oscar go away about his business. Scoot! (*Oscar exits.*)

Mrs. Hubbard. There's nothing wrong in my asking Oscar what he's going to do.

Hubbard. He's gone to pay Colonel Bradford the rent, seeing you've got to stick your nose into everything.

(Sits L. of table R.C.)

Mrs. Hubbard. You're so touchy, Israel.

Hubbard. Why ain't you minding your home instead of out switch-tailing up and down street in the morning?

Mrs. Hubbard. I took Priscilla to see a new piano teacher from New York. *(Sits on R. side of table L.C.)*

Hubbard. She can play a piano now, can't she? Banged all day yesterday whatever it was.

Priscilla. 'Twas the "Angels' Serenade" papa.

Hubbard. The angels couldn't help hearing it.

Mrs. Hubbard. Israel Hubbard, what's the matter with you?

Hubbard. Nothing. *(Sits on chair L.C.)*

Mrs. Hubbard. Are folks slow paying up?

Hubbard. D'ye ever know people in this blasted town to settle till ye'd tipped 'em upside down and jounced it out of their pockets? *(Allan Hubbard enters from living apartments. Lawyer's green bag in hand.)*

Allan. Good morning, folks.

Mrs. Hubbard. Morning, Allan.

Allan. Guess you and Priscilla went out pretty early, mom.

Hubbard. You don't know what *early* is—you young barn owl. Why ain't you home abed nights?

Allan. *(Above table R.C. Surveys the three solemn faces.)* What seems to be the matter?

Hubbard. Look-a-here, how long is it going to be before you can settle down to work?

Allan. *(Coming to C.)* You know what I'm doing in Judge Emerson's office.

Hubbard. Sitting on the back of your neck with your feet cocked up on a table. I've seen you.

Allan. *(Beside Mother.)* I'm reading law—working.

Hubbard. Do you call that working?

Mrs. Hubbard. For goodness sake, Israel Hubbard, leave that boy alone.

Priscilla. We've got to study to be anything.

Hubbard. All right. Combine against me—the whole of you.

Allan. Up now you have told me to study hard and be a lawyer.

Hubbard. If I'd the right sort of a boy to go into business with me, things might have been different.

Mrs. Hubbard. My son a furniture dealer?

Hubbard. That's what your husband is, ain't he?

Mrs. Hubbard. It isn't the same thing at all. (*Hubbard rises, throws down paper and goes L.*)

Hubbard. (L.C.) No, everybody's expected to veneer and varnish his young ones these days.

Mrs. Hubbard. Israel Hubbard, you have always talked as much as I have about pushing our children up in the world.

Hubbard. Huh! I'm beginning to understand that when they've been pushed up—and backs are nearly broken pushing them up—it'll be Allan Hubbard, Esquire, sprouting spread-eagle language in court, and Miss Priscilla Hubbardine, banging music that'll drown out Flynn's boiler shop—and they'll say to the other dudes: "Father means well, but he's so old-fashioned—didn't have opportunities—so devoted to business—poor father."

Allan. Now, dad, you're dead wrong. You can't blame me for being ambitious. There's such a thing as a family staying in one line too long and you told me once that you've always been sorry because your father wouldn't let you go into the horse business.

Mrs. Hubbard. (Rises and drops into chair again.) Allan, your father didn't say that.

Hubbard. (Snappishly.) Yes, I did too. I get so hungry for a horse trot, I enjoy even the nightmare. (*Sits.*)

Mrs. Hubbard. Israel, are you losing your mind?

Hubbard. No, I'm losing my money. All petered out. My back is broke. Can't pay my bills.

Allan. It's the town, dad—the town's too slow.

Hubbard. Slow! A team of Scarborough clams could go faster trotting tandem.

Allan. All they do is talk about their Pilgrim great-grandfathers and don't seem to want any new blood to come in.

Hubbard. Well, it isn't *my* way to hug and kiss every stranger that comes along.

Allan. Dad, there you go yourself—sagging back.

Hubbard. (In chair C.) Well, I guess I'm worried. I've watched that door until my eyes and heart ached. Your

great-grand-father Ichabod used to run this store, and he saved for his son Warren. And Warren, my father, saved and laid by for me. And I've tried to save and lay by for my children, Allan and Priscilla. Now look at us! But I've always been proud of this little store that has given us a living all these years, and I'm going to hang on. Run along, children. Mother and I will manage some way.

Allan. Have a little patience, father. So long, sis! (*Begins exit.*) I'll show you. (*Exit. Closes door.*)

Mrs. Hubbard. Here, Priscilla, take my things. (*To Priscilla, who is making exit.*) I wouldn't practise this forenoon, girlie. Your father seems to be nervous. (*Priscilla exits.*) Israel—I didn't realize. I'll let the hired girl go.

Hubbard. (*Rises and crosses to desk.*) Keep her. I need victuals to brace up my courage.

Mrs. Hubbard. Goodness gracious Don't I know how to cook?

Hubbard. If I remember right you don't.

Mrs. Hubbard. (*Sits.*) Israel Putnam Hubbard! (*Enter Ruth Ambrose, interrupting them.*)

Hubbard. (*At desk.*) Good morning, ma'am.

Ruth. I saw a "Room to Let" sign outside, sir?

Mrs. Hubbard. (*R. of table R.C.*) Yes, that's for our furnished room.

Hubbard. (*Gruffly.*) We want a man—a man minds his own business.

Mrs. Hubbard. Or I might let it to a very quiet—very old lady.

Ruth. Oh! Then I hope you'll excuse me for asking.

Mrs. Hubbard. But just one moment, Miss—is it Miss?

Ruth. Yes—it's Miss. My name is Ruth Ambrose.

Hubbard. (*R. getting off stool.*) (*In low voice to wife.*) Say, you know you wouldn't have a girl messing around.

Mrs. Hubbard. (*To husband.*) But I want to see who she is. (*To Ruth.*) Are you alone?

Ruth. Yes, alone.

Hubbard. Huh! What did you say?

Ruth. I said I was quite alone in the world, sir. I have lost my parents.

Mrs. Hubbard. Oh, poor child.

Hubbard. What's your line of business?

Ruth. I have none.
Hubbard. Rusticator, eh?
Ruth. What—
Hubbard. I say, down here to loaf for the summer?
Ruth. No—oh, no.
Hubbard. Don't want a roomer who'd be out flirting up and down the street.
Mrs. Hubbard. Israel Hubbard, where are your eyes? Can't you see that this is a quiet, respectable young lady?
Hubbard. Huh! Can't tell much from looks nowadays.
Mrs. Hubbard. There! There! (*X. to L. of table R.*) I wish you'd come up with me and look at the room, Miss Ambrose—if I remember your name right?
Ruth. (*C. at chair.*) How expensive is it?
Mrs. Hubbard. It's a big room—with an alcove. I think we have to get five dollars a week.
Ruth. Oh, I can't afford it.
Mrs. Hubbard. And yet, for you, I might be able to shave the price a mite.
Ruth. (*Advancing to R. of chair C.*) It's kind of you, but I must take a very little room until I find a position—some place where I can earn money.
Mrs. Hubbard. (*Sitting L. of table R.*) It's hard to find such a place, though—business is so dull in small towns.
Hubbard. Cities are hogging it all.
Ruth. Haven't you any idea where I could find something in a store here?
Hubbard. (*R.*) The Queen of Sheba couldn't, not if she wore her royal diadem.
Mrs. Hubbard. Dustin may want a girl in his bakery.
Hubbard. What! Send her to a man who even begrudges the air he puts into a doughnut hole.
Mrs. Hubbard. Mrs. Blish was saying something about needing a new milliner?
Hubbard. Them dude drummers will be pestering her to go buggy-riding every night. Use ordinary common sense.
Ruth. But why couldn't I go to work for you sir?
Hubbard. For me?
Ruth. Yes, sir.
Hubbard. What can you do?
Ruth. Couldn't I be your clerk?

Hubbard. Got one.

Ruth. But you must do so much business here.

Hubbard. The Hubbards have always led in the furniture business. Business is slack with me. High cost of living, Mexican War, and the income tax all hurt, you know.

Ruth. But I would try so hard to make new business. (*Advances more to R.C.*)

Hubbard. How could you make new business? Young woman! I don't even know where you came from, nor about your references.

Ruth. (*C.*) I have never worked anywhere to get references. I have been graduated from the Eastern Normal School only this week.

Hubbard. Thought a girl went through normal academy so she could go to teaching school.

Ruth. But a teacher only earns a bare living at first, and it may be years before she can be promoted, and she only works half the year. I want to work hard, and work all the time. But I'll not trouble you any longer, sir. I'll try to find something to do. (*Starts for door up L.C.*)

Hubbard. Hope to see you again.

Ruth. (*Goes to door, puts left hand on doorknob.*) Good day. I thank you both.

Mrs. Hubbard. (*Impulsively, crossing quickly to Hubbard.*) Wait! Israel, I wish you'd take her. (*Ruth lingers at door.*)

Hubbard. Oh, cat's foot. You don't wish any such thing.

Mrs. Hubbard. But she can help me around the house.

Hubbard. What! Ask that schoolmarm to pot-wallop?

Mrs. Hubbard. And then—now don't laugh—she opened the door with her left hand—and that brings luck.

Hubbard. Did you drop a dishrag this morning? And did a black cat chase you down street? Such stuff is poppycock. (*Turns to Ruth.*) Miss Ambrose. (*X's to Ruth about C. She has her left hand on doorknob, placing it there as she turns. He makes sure her left hand is on knob.*)

Ruth. Yes, sir? (*Comes down L.C.*)

Hubbard. (*R.C.*) I've been thinking this thing over very carefully. I'm not so sure but what I might teach you this business.

Ruth. (*L.C.*) You will? Oh, I'm so thankful! (*Sits C.*)

Hubbard. (*Sits L. of table.*) Wait—wait. You ain't hired yet. Sit down. You're neat and nice—but there are thousands of girls who are neat and nice—and they never get anywhere. Ability—ability, that's what counts.

Ruth. Yes, sir.

Hubbard. Now, are you the kind of girl that has to be told what to do every time to turn around?

Ruth. I'm sure I wouldn't bother you with questions.

Hubbard. I'd want you to have plenty of get-up-and-get—hustle—if I had you here I'd expect you to act for me—as you might say, for Israel P. Hubbard, per Ruth—believe that's your name.

Ruth. (*Nods.*) You see, sir, I'm out *hunting* for work,—not *waiting* to have it brought to me.

Hubbard. I can teach you the business so that you'll know it.

Ruth. I'm *sure* you can, sir.

Hubbard. Now, as for wages. (*Rises.*)

Ruth. (*Rises and breaks in eagerly.*) Oh, yes, sir! The wages! I do need to earn something *so* much.

Hubbard. (*Moving about R.C.*) You understand what I promise to do—give up time and effort to teach you the furniture business?

Ruth. Yes, sir!

Hubbard. Now tell me. Did them teachers in normal school pay *you* or you pay *them*?

Ruth. I paid—but I have no more money left.

Hubbard. Oh, I shan't charge anything for teaching you. But, of course, you don't expect to be paid wages at first.

Ruth. No—no, sir.

Hubbard. Certainly not. I'm only taking you in as a pupil because you seem to have sprawl and gumption. You appreciate what I'm doing for you, don't you?

Ruth. (*Meekly.*) Yes, sir.

Hubbard. You can live right here with us—same as my other clerk—board and room free. There you have it. Come back in a day or so and go to work. (*X's to desk R.*)

Ruth. (*Rises.*) But why can't I begin right now? I'm so eager to be doing something. I could work to-day and when the store is closed I'll go to the railroad station for my little trunk. May I stay right now?

Mrs. Hubbard. You shall stay, my dear child. Come with me. I'll show you your room. Priscilla, Priscilla! That's my girl, dear. She'll be good to you.

Ruth. Ah, you have a little girl?

Mrs. Hubbard. (*Laughing.*) A little girl!

Hubbard. (*Laughing.*) She's quite a bouncer of a little girl. Go look at her. (*Ruth follows Mrs. Hubbard toward door. Hubbard X's to foot of table.*) Just a minute, mother! Step back—let her open the door. It's a notion, Miss Ambrose. Turn the knob. (*Ruth obeys.*) (*Hubbard X'ing to Mrs. Hubbard.*) By thunder! That's it! That's it! (*To his wife.*) She did it with her left hand—and you know what I've always said about that sign! It's all right. (*Exeunt Mrs. H. and Ruth, as Oscar enters.*) How did you make out with Pennell?

Oscar. He's gone carting a drummer off to some place.

Hubbard. You blasted turtle, you never get anywhere on time except to your meals.

Oscar. (*Getting apron.*) He's been gone two hours—I couldn't fly and catch him—I ain't no hummingbird.

Hubbard. Colonel Bradford is getting ready to drop on me for the rent—I can tell by the way he's looking at this store every time he rides past. I need that money—need it like time.

Oscar. Oh, he's out there now, making a trotting hoss course of Main Street as usual.

Voice of Hubbard. (*Off R.*) Stop tanking those bits, boy! Don't you know how to hold a pair of horses?

Hubbard. He's headed in here. Hide, you hessian—keep out of sight.

Bradford. (*Enters.*) Good morning, Hubbard.

Hubbard. How do you do, Colonel Bradford. (*Exhibits nervousness.*) You're quite a stranger.

Bradford. How's that? (*Is curt.*)

Hubbard. Of course, I see you driving past often but you're quite a stranger—you don't drop into the store.

Bradford. I usually wait till I have business before I drop into any stores in this town. Now, Mr. Hubbard.

Hubbard. Oh, by the way, has my clerk found you yet? I sent him with the rent money.

Bradford. Oh, did you? Haven't seen him.

Hubbard. Then he's probably flying around town trying to find you. It just came to me all of a sudden to-day about that rent. You know how things get overlooked, Colonel, in the rush of business?

Bradford. I came in to say something about that rent. Usually I can't find what I want in this town, but I have thought, possibly—I might use a little furniture—let it go on the rent.

Hubbard. By gracious, Colonel, I can fix you out fine. Ain't you building some kind of a new house on your estate?

Bradford. Yes, a bungalow.

Hubbard. (*Looking disappointed.*) Oh, a bungalow. I thought it *might* be some kind of a place to live in.

Bradford. You don't think a bungalow is a silo, do you?

Hubbard. Well, if it's a place to live in, why not let me furnish it?

Bradford. (*Looks around store impatiently.*) You haven't anything suitable. My dear man, that bungalow is where I'm going to entertain my city friends—because my big house is too stiff and old-fashioned. I'm afraid it's no use to talk—you haven't the right kind of stuff.

Hubbard. (*Shows same chair that Capt. Hodge had refused.*) Now here's a nice home-manufactured plush—

Bradford. That in a bungalow? Useless—useless, Mr. Hubbard. So you'd better send your clerk with the rent, or I'll drop in again before dinner. Good morning. (*Exit.*) (*Hubbard stands for a moment looking after him. Oscar enters, peeking out of window to make sure that the Colonel has gone. Hubbard turns on him.*)

Hubbard. You heard him, did you?

Oscar. Ye-ap!

Hubbard. Blast ye, if you was worth your wages, you would have had that money for me. You're getting me into a scrape.

Oscar. I ain't to blame.

Hubbard. (*Working over L.*) You *are* to blame—you ain't up and doing. When Miles Standish Bradford gets mad you can hear him from here to Boston. But listen, first! I've got a piece of news for you.

Oscar. (*L.C.*) All right.

Hubbard. (C.) Don't you think we're doin' too much business here in this store for one clerk?

Oscar. Hadn't noticed it.

Hubbard. Well, I've been keeping an eye out, and I think we need some ginger.

Oscar. Wal, maybe we do need *that*!

Hubbard. I've hired a young lady for a store girl.

Oscar. (Indignantly). Store girl? Where do I get off?

Hubbard. Why, you're going to be—say, general factotum.

Oscar. Factotum?

Hubbard. I'm promoting you. No higher wages—but you're promoted. You'll general manage around—(Waves his hands about) and the store girl will meet the customers, sell goods, and so forth.

Oscar. I reckon I know when I'm fired, Mr. Hubbard. All right! I'll quit.

Hubbard. (X'ing to C.) Want to skin out because you think I'm getting close to the wind? That's nice gratitude.

Oscar. (L.C.) I won't leave you in the lurch, Mr. Hubbard. I'm fired, and fired sudden. I'll stay a month or I'll stay six months.

Hubbard. (As *Ruth enters.*) Ah, Miss Ambrose. Here, I want to introduce Oscar. Oscar, come over here. This is Ruth Ambrose. Now mind your manners, and remember what I told you. (Exit *Hubbard L.*)

Ruth. I'm very glad to know you—well—I'm going to begin now and call you Oscar. I may, mayn't I? I want to feel as if I'd been here a long time—I want to get right into the spirit of the store. You are the clerk—the salesman, are you?

Oscar. He just said I'm the "factotum."

Ruth. Oh, factotum. Oh, that's a real fine position, Oscar. That makes you confidential man—sort of manager, doesn't it?

Oscar. I'm glad somebody knows what it is.

Ruth. That *is* a splendid position, and I congratulate you. While I was taking off my hat just now, Mrs. Hubbard told me that I would find Oscar one of the nicest fellows in the world—ready to help anyone. They all like you so much.

Oscar. Huh! They act like it.

Ruth. I'm sure we shall get along beautifully.

Oscar. Maybe. Things happen sometimes when you don't expect 'em to happen.

Ruth. (*Going to furniture up R. C. and working.*) Now I must get busy. I must get to work. There are a lot of good things here, but they are so cluttered up that one spoils the other. Oscar, take all those things and put them out of the way. Oscar, if we only had some draperies.

Oscar. There's some on that box over there, but I think Mr. Hubbard is keeping them for the moths. What did he tell you to do ?

Ruth. (*Arranging furniture.*) Why, I don't need to have Mr. Hubbard tell *me what* to do. He told me I wouldn't be worth anything at all if I had to run to him with questions all the time. He gave me a lecture on ability. He said he wanted me to go ahead—act for him, as you might say : "I. P. Hubbard, per Ruth." Yes, he did say just that ! Oscar, move that couch behind the table and I'll find something to decorate it with.

Oscar. He's mighty cranky about what is done around here. I warn you.

Ruth. But I'm ordered to go to work. Now, why not pitch right in and change the arrangements of this store ?

Oscar. What's the matter with it, just as it is ? This is the way it always *has* been.

Ruth. That's just why it ought to be changed. (*During arranging.*) When one goes into a furniture store, they all buy things if they look as if they would make a home cosy. So we must arrange things so that they will look that way. Oscar, roll that table down in front of the sofa. (*During talk, business of re-arrangement goes on briskly. Oscar picks up his gait as work proceeds. Gets vase for table.*) How long have you been here ?

Oscar. I came into this store when I was 14, and I'm 24 now. Figure it out.

Ruth. Do you live in the family ? the same as I do ?

Oscar. I don't get enough pay to live outside of it.

Ruth. But I don't get any pay at all, as yet ! Mr. and Mrs. Hubbard are good people, aren't they ?

Oscar. Ye-ap.

Ruth. And business is good, isn't it ?

Oscar. Well, I'll tell you—(*Stops work and sits.*)

Ruth. Oh, don't sit down to tell me. Keep on hustling, Oscar. We'll make business good.

Oscar. Say! We got a fellow in this town named Pliny Bangs who has organized the new Board of Trade here. He's like *you!* Always on the dead run like the devil owed him four dollars. You ought to meet him.

Ruth. (*At chest down L. Busy with work.*) Why, I'd like to meet him, Oscar. My gracious, who in the world ever stuck these lovely vases in this chest? There—How's that?

Oscar. (*Sitting down, surveying room.*) Gosh!

Ruth. Oscar, don't look so glum. Don't you ever smile?

Oscar. Smile? I've forgotten how.

Ruth. Honestly, you look as if you had. Oh, isn't it too bad! Won't your laughing muscles work, Oscar? (*Displays spirit of roguish girl. Begins to tease him with girlish frolicsomeness.*) Why, they need massaging. (*Goes to him.*) Now, Oscar, you must have a smiling face for customers. (*Oscar is facing audience. She dances behind him, puts her fingers in the corners of his mouth and draws his mouth into grotesque smile.*) Say, "What can I show you to-day, sir?"

Hubbard. (*Enters and stares at this exhibition. Ruth withdraws her fingers and backs away. Oscar stares at Hubbard without altering his expression.*) What ye standing there making faces at me for, you devilish jack o' lantern?

Ruth. (*At window draping.*) Run outside, Oscar, and tell me how it looks from the street. (*Exit Oscar, rubbing his face with his hands.*)

Hubbard. (*Looks around store.*) Great Sancho! What are you doing here? I don't want my store tipped upsied down. (*Oscar rushes in.*)

Oscar. Say! Miss Ambrose, it looks fine and dandy.

Hubbard. What do you know about the looks of anything? You're making my furniture store look like a whoppy-doodle's nest.

Oscar. But ain't it primped up—what? Why, it jumped you, didn't it, Mr. Hubbard, the minute you popped in here? We want to jump the public. Just step out there and take a peek. That'll show you. (*Hubbard steps back.*) (*To*

Ruth :) Say, let me have one little whack at that window on my own account, will you?—just an idea of mine.

Ruth. Of course, Oscar. We'll work together. (*Oscar digs out some vases with artificial flowers.*) But we mustn't make him angry.

Oscar. I told you he was awful cranky.

Ruth. I don't want to be discharged.

Oscar. Whisper! He always starts off bow-wow! After he jaws awhile, he comes around and says you're just right. (*X. to L.*)

Ruth. Your idea of putting the flowers in here, Oscar, is lovely! You've got an artistic nature.

Oscar. You're joshing now. I'll bet you're making fun of me. (*Starts to take flowers away.*)

Ruth. (*Up C.*) Oscar, you put those flowers back. Look at me. Do you think I'm that kind of a girl?

Oscar. Well—no—not—not any more. (*Goes up to window.*) (*Enter Hubbard.*)

Hubbard. (*L.C.*) That window isn't bad at all! Whose idea? (*Oscar X'es to sideboard.*)

Ruth. (*R.C.*) Well, 'twas mostly Oscar's idea. (*X'es to table R.C.*)

Oscar. No, it wa'n't none o' my doing, neither. You done it yourself.

Hubbard. (*Follows Ruth. Oscar up to window.*) Don't pay any attention to Oscar. He always starts off bow-wow and then comes back and agrees you're right. (*X. down L. Ruth goes about her work briskly.*)

Oscar. (*Coming down R.C., back of sofa C.*) It looks better, anyway, So you like it. do you, Mr. Hubbard?

Hubbard. I say, it isn't bad. (*Turns vase around on pedestal in window.*) There! Now it's all right.

Oscar. (*X'ing down to L.C.*) Then I'm satisfied.

Hubbard. What's the matter with you? (*Ruth works over to sideboard L.*)

Oscar. Well, I can be satisfied, can't I? I'm satisfied because I'm satisfied that you're satisfied.

Hubbard. Shut up! Did you overhear what Colonel Bradford said—that he was coming back here?

Oscar. Ye-ap.

Hubbard. Keep out of his sight. Bimeby, you dodge down to the hotel again and tackle Pennell. (*Starts for desk R.*)

Oscar. All right. (*Looks out of window.*) Suffering Cicero ! He must have seen me come in here ! Scoot, Mr. Hubbard. Here's the Colonel. (*Grabs his hat and exits.*)

Hubbard. Miss Ambrose, I've got to get. Urgent business. Act for me. I. P. Hubbard per Ruth. (*Exit L. She stares after him somewhat puzzled. Enter Col. Bradford, who gazes about the store and surveys her with some interest.*)

Ruth. Can I be of service, sir ?

Bradford. I'm looking for Mr. Hubbard's clerk.

Ruth. He's out.

Bradford. But I'm pretty sure I saw him come in.

Ruth. Oh, yes, sir. He came in but he had to rush out again—we are so very busy, you know.

Bradford. Then I'll talk with Mr. Hubbard.

Ruth. But he has gone out—urgent business—very important. He—he said so.

Bradford. Look here ! You're not doing their lying for them, are you ? I beg your pardon, humbly beg pardon—but I have a wicked temper—I forgot myself.

Ruth. (*Stiffly.*) As I told you—both gentlemen are out, but I am in full charge here. I act for Mr. Hubbard in all matters.

Bradford. You do, eh ? What are you doing here, by the way ?

Ruth. I'm the new store girl—the new clerk. (*Col. Bradford looks her over and then puts his eyeglasses on and makes a general survey of the interior.*)

Bradford. Well, I must say there's been quite a change in a very few minutes.

Ruth. Isn't it as good ?

Bradford. It's better—distinctly—decidedly better. Very fine taste. Has quite a city touch.

Ruth. Oh, you're not laughing at me, are you ?

Bradford. The folks in this town don't consider me much of a humorist.

Ruth. You have made me feel very proud, sir. The changes are mostly my ideas.

Bradford. I don't know anything I say should make you feel proud.

Ruth. (Gives him a smile that makes him perk up and take an additional interest in her.) Oh, such a leading citizen must have fine taste.

Bradford. How do you know I'm the leading citizen ?

Ruth. That is plain to be seen, sir. (*Curtseys.*)

Bradford. Well—er—I do own this block and—er—considerable property, but no matter about that, my name is Bradford.

Ruth. (Looks at him with fresh interest.) O—o—oh ! Now I remember you, sir.

Bradford. (Shows gratification.) That's very interesting.

Ruth. Yes, the Governor came to our Normal School once and you were with him.

Bradford. (L. C.) Ah, yes, when I was a member of the council.

Ruth. (R. C.) Oh, there's no mistaking you, sir. I asked one of the girls, "Who is that distinguished looking elderly gentleman ?" (*Colonel loses his bland smile.*) And she said it was Colonel Miles Standish Bradford, a direct descendant of the famous Plymouth Captain.

Bradford. "Elderly gentleman," eh ?

Ruth. Oh, but you had on a frock coat and a silk hat. And formal clothes like that make any gentleman seem so sort of dignified and venerable. Oh, I don't mean that. But that was only first impression, sir. You don't seem at all old, in these clothes. (*Brightens up.*)

Bradford. (R. of C.) So you've just starting out in life, eh ?

Ruth. Yes, sir.

Bradford. (L. of chair C.) You ought to have a better job than this.

Ruth. Oh, Mr. Hubbard is going to teach me the furniture business. He knows all about it.

Bradford. Does, eh ? He tried to sell me that plush set for my new bungalow.

Ruth. Of course it would never do for a bungalow—but couldn't you use it somewhere else ?

Bradford. There's no telling what such a persuasive young lady might make me do.

Ruth. (R. of chair C.) You think you could use it ?

Bradford. Well, I—I—

Ruth. You might have Mrs. Bradford drop in and look at it.

Bradford. There's no Mrs. Bradford—I'm not married, my dear young lady.

Ruth. Oh, it must be lonely for you. But I suppose your relatives—

Bradford. My relatives are an old aunt who lives in Wiscasset and raises coon cats and a nephew who lives in New York and raises hell—I humbly beg your pardon—but I just got a stack of bills from him this morning.

Ruth. (*X'into R. of table.*) He is lucky to have a good uncle.

Bradford. How do you know I'm good?

Ruth. Oh, a girl can see. But I must beg *your* pardon, Colonel Bradford. A store girl should know enough to keep her tongue quiet.

Bradford. But see here—I rather like to hear your tongue run on. (*Comes closer. Begins to purr.*) What is there about me that looks good? (*Enter Captain Hodge.*) Oh, the devil! Go ahead with your business, Captain.

Hodge. I want to see Hubbard.

Ruth. (*X to Hodge C.*) He's away—but I have full charge.

Hodge. He didn't say he was going to my house, did he?

Ruth. He said it was very important business, and hurried out.

Hodge. Hurried out! Just what I was afraid of! If I catch him up to my house telling my wife about that parlor set, I'll keelhaul him.

Ruth. Oh, you're looking for a parlor set.

Hodge. Not here. (*Starts for door.*)

Ruth. But wait—please wait. Colonel Bradford, make him come back.

Bradford. Captain! Just one moment! This young lady has fine taste. Glance around this store.

Hodge. Does look more shipshape.

Ruth. Now, here's a beautiful thing in a parlor set—this plush.

Hodge. No! Not that! He has just been sticking that under my nose. (*Starts for door.*)

Ruth. But wait! Please do look at it. (*Captain grouchyly bends to examine.*)

Bradford. (*Aside to Ruth.*) Better sell to *him* instead of to *me*.

Ruth. (*R.C.*) Will you help me?

Bradford. I'm not a salesman—but—

Ruth. But do help me to make my first sale.

Bradford. I'll do anything to protect myself.

Hodge. (*L.C., finishing examination.*) It ain't what I want.

Ruth. But Colonel Bradford and I were talking about this set the very moment you came in. You must admit that Colonel Bradford has fine taste.

Hodge. (*L.*) Oh, we all know the Colonel buys the best in the locker.

Ruth. Well, we were just about to close the sale on this set, weren't we, Colonel? (*Aside.*) Say "Yes."

Bradford. (*Seated on end of table R.C.*) Well—I — well — yes. But — — —

Ruth. But the Colonel decided that a little stronger color will suit his woodwork and carpets better. So he's going to have the same thing in a little greener yellow. (*Hodge sits on chair, trying it.*) Aren't we, Colonel? Say "Yes."

Bradford. Why — oh — yes! (*Aside.*) I don't want to lie to that man.

Ruth. (*Aside.*) If you don't help me to sell it, I'll have to work it off onto you.

Hodge. (*Examining chair after her remark about color.*) You don't call that color anyways up-to-date, do you?

Ruth. It's a new shade. Or rather an old shade coming back into style again. Isn't it, Colonel? (*Aside.*) Say "yes."

Bradford. Oh, yes—yes.

Hodge. It takes a woman, of course, to know styles—and I suppose *you* see the best in New York, Colonel, when you're up there. What's the figger on this set?

Ruth. (*Examines tag.*) One hundred and sixty-eight.

Hodge. What? (*Yells at her.*)

Ruth. But, really, that's cheap for solid stuff. And just think what goes with this chair, divan, rockers, tete-a-tete—that is, I'm quite sure there is—and oh, so many things—and I'll throw in a table lamp.

Hodge. We-ell, if it comes to a dicker— (*Looks over chair.*)

Ruth. And the Colonel didn't object to the price, did you, Colonel? (*Aside.*) Say "No."

Bradford. Oh, no. Not at all!

Ruth. And I'll tell you what I'll do, Captain. I'll make it even figures—One Hundred and Sixty dollars, since you are a friend of the Colonel's. Now I know you'll advise him to snap this up, Colonel. (*Aside.*) Say "Yes."

Bradford. Yes, yes, Captain, better grab it at that figure.

(Aside.) You're making me lie most infernally. *(Rise.)*

Ruth. Oh, that's only business.

Bradford. *(Grunts, scowls—then smiles at her.)*

Hodge. It's my nature to come into the wind quick on a trade.
Send it around to my house.

Ruth. What street? Ah, I have no pencil.

Bradford. *(At foot of table R.C.)* Everybody knows Captain Natham Hodge; he's chairman of our Board of Selectman. But, after all, you'd better write it. Here's a pencil. *(Ruth tried to write and gets close to the Colonel, who gazes down on her with much interest.)*

Hodge. S'pose you'll let me tell the Missus, Colonel, that you just the same as picked out this set.

Ruth. *(Aside.)* Say "yes."

Bradford. Yes.

Hodge. Much obliged. If she picks flaws, I'll refer her to you. *(Turns to go.)*

Pliny Bangs. *(Enters briskly.)* Good morning, gents. I hate to keep chasing you all the time on this Board of Trade matter, but come on, now—come across.

Bradford. *(R.)* Don't annoy me any more, Mr. Bangs.

Bangs. *(L.)* But here you are, the richest man in town.

Bradford. *(R.)* *Not one cent.*

Bangs. And here *you* are, Captain Hodge, first selectman.

Hodge. *(C.)* Don't believe in your Board of Trade—don't believe in outsiders coming in here and telling us our business.

Bangs. I know I'm a new man in town, but that helps me to see what the town needs. Advertise her—boom her—get the people in here summers—fill the town. We've got the best weather along this coast.

Hodge. Are you going to can our weather and ship it?

Bangs. No, sir—make 'em come here and enjoy it. Our new Board of Trade will —.

Hodge. There's no sense in your Board of Trade.

Ruth. *(Has been listening eagerly, trying to get the run of the conversation.)* Oh, there is sense in a Board of Trade.

Hodge. What does a girl know about it?

Ruth. We had lectures on municipal progress at the normal school in our commercial course. We had figures on what has been done by Boards of Trade.

Bradford. But, my dear young lady, this man has a wild scheme to advertising the town—getting more people in here—there might be a lot of undesirables come.

Bangs. Well, they might not all be Pilgrim Fathers—but it's about time to wake up and forget ancestors in this place—we need some live ones.

Ruth. It ought to flourish.

Bangs. It ought to be a city, Miss. It's got population enough already. I don't know who you are, but you're one of my kind. You've got some enterprise.

Bradford. This fellow has made himself a public nuisance.

Hodge. Yes, and as first selectman, I'm going to abate him.
(*Evander Hitchborn has entered.*)

Bangs. (L.) Hullo, Hitchborn. Glad to see an undertaker.

Hitchborn. (L.C.) Ain't anybody dead, is there?

Bangs. Yes, this town. Bury it.

Hodge. That undertaker smells a job and he'll get one in about two seconds.) (*Advances on Bangs from one side.*)

Bradford. (*Advances from other side.*) Get out of here or I'll boot you into the street.

Ruth. (*Between the Colonel and Captain, puts up her hands and restrains them.*) Gentlemen—gentlemen—oh, please. (*To Bangs.*) If we should advertise the town it would make lots of folk come in here, wouldn't it, Mr. Bangs?

Bangs. (*Enthusiastically.*) Sure.

Ruth. Mr. Hubbard would have more business—more customers.

Bangs. (L.C.) Of course, Your job would be worth twice as much.

Ruth. (C.) I'm not thinking about myself. I want Mr. Hubbard and his family to prosper.

Bangs. That's the spirit!

Ruth. Oh, Colonel Bradford, why haven't you boomed your town?

Bradford. (R.) The town's too full of old mossbacks.

Ruth. But we can prosper if we'll all work together! Captain Hodge, you must be interested as a town officer.

Hodge. (R.C.) He'll be sifting ashes in Tophet before he gets any money out of me.

Ruth. I wish I had money.

Bangs. Wish you did—you and me could do business.

Ruth. I'm so anxious to help Mr. Hubbard. Gentlemen, I'm sure it needs only a little boost to make this town prosperous. If we could advertise—tell folks about it! Oh, Colonel Bradford, with all your prominence, your big name, your ability, please do something to help Oldport.

Bradford. I take no stock in this man.

Ruth. But if you—the big man of the town should, the others would—I'm sure of it.

Bangs. I ain't getting this money for myself, gents. I'm giving time and effort free gratis. But if this town booms we all boom. (*Oscar has entered on above speech. Marches up to Colonel Bradford with much assurance. Waves money in his face.*)

Oscar. Glad to catch you at last, Colonel. Here's your rent.

Bradford. (*Intent on Ruth.*) Don't bother me now.

Ruth. Oscar! Oscar! We're very busy, Oscar. (*Oscar goes to desk, puts money in drawer; exits into back room.*)

Bangs. All I need is one solid citizen—one of the old residents to start this paper. The rest will follow him. Just let one man show confidence. (*Ruth looks first at Colonel and then at Captain. They show no responsiveness. Bangs gloomily begins to fold up subscription paper.*)

Ruth. (*Pushes Colonel and Captain away from Bangs. Runs to cash drawer. Colonel and Hodge go to C.*) I know what I'll do I'll have the dearest man in this town head that paper. (*Bangs X's to table.*) I'll sign his name for him. He wants lots of business—so we'll have it now. (*Returns with money, counting it on way; gives it to Bangs.*)

Bradford. But look here, my dear young lady! You have no right to do this.

Ruth. (*Seizing the paper and writing.*) I know what I'm doing, Colonel Bradford. There it is! I. P. Hubbard, per Ruth. He told me to act for him. That money will come back to him a thousand-fold if you'll do your part now, like Oldport's leading citizen should do. Are you going to allow one man to do it all?

Bradford. I was never accused of being a piker.

Ruth. Then I hope you have your check book with you.

Please! Dear Colonel Bradford—please!

Bradford. (Takes pen from Ruth. After pause, pulls book from pocket and writes.) What did you put Hubbard down for?

Ruth. Four hundred dollars.

Bradford. There you are, Miss—say, what is your name, anyway.

Ruth. Ruth Ambrose.

Bradford. There's a check for \$1,000.00, Bangs—not to be outdone by Miss Ruth Ambrose & Co. (*Hodge has started to leave.*) See here, Captain Hodge, come back here. You're first selectman, now what?

Hodge. (X'ing to C.) I can't afford anything.

Bradford. (Showing his temper, as if Hodge were bucking a pet scheme of the Colonel's.) Don't dare to bluff me! I know what you're worth. You've got a hundred thousand in vessel property paying ten per cent net. (*Hodge x'es to table.*) Hand Bangs a check for a thousand, or I'll advertise you so in this town that you'll never be elected as much as dog-catcher again. (*Hodge cowed, writes check, and then puts his name to the subscription.*) I am astonished Captain, that you have to be spurred up to do a little something for the old town that we all love. (*Hitchborn sneaks out.*) (*Colonel turns to look for Hitchborn.*) Where's that old guide-post to the graveyard gone? There he goes! Never mind, I'll get him yet. Now, Bangs, get out on the street and go for 'em! If they lag back, tell them I'll be after 'em myself.

Bangs. (*Exit with a rush.*) (*Calls back from door.*) It's dead open and shut from now on.

Bradford. Bangs, get that undertaker first. Now, Captain, remember that Mr. Hubbard left power of attorney with this young lady to start that paper.

Hodge. Well, there's no danger of my forgetting it. (*Exit.*)

Bradford. Young lady, what kind of witchcraft have you put over me? I'm lying to every leading citizen in this town.

Ruth. But, oh, Colonel, I do thank you so. You're such a masterful man—you control people so.

Bradford. I control? I'm only an amateur. (*X. to L. C.*)

Ruth. But isn't there something I can show you?

Bradford. Not a thing.

Ruth. You spoke of furniture.

Bradford. Not in this store. (*Starts as his eyes fall on vases.*)

But, see here—where did you find these vases ?

Ruth. (*X. to Colonel.*) In that chest—hidden away. It was too bad.

Bradford. (*At sideboard.*) What's the price ?

Ruth. Why—why—well, oh, yes—ten dollars.

Bradford (*Greatly amused.*) You must brush up on prices, my dear Miss Ambrose.

Ruth. Why, yes. Absurd ! I meant five dollars—a piece.

Bradford. (*More amused.*) They belong to the King dynasty. You may send them to my house—Gray Towers—and put two hundred dollars on the books against me. (*Starts to go.*)

Ruth. Two hundred dollars ! I hope I'll know more about the stock when you call in again, Colonel.

Bradford. Oh, you'll come along finely. The main point is you have taste. I wish you'd get catalogues and plan out tasty furnishings for a bungalow. (*Ruth X's to desk.*) I'll call in to-morrow and we'll talk furniture. Good morning.

Ruth. Good morning, sir. (*Enter Hubbard from side door. Rushes in, shows he has been listening.*)

Hubbard. Young woman, did I hear you selling those vases for two hundred dollars ?

Ruth. He said they were worth that—he must be a fine judge.

Hubbard. You letting customers put their own prices on my goods—that your notion of business ? (*X'ing down from door.*) What do you mean ?—slambanging into things you don't know anything about ?

Ruth. But you told me to act for you.

Hubbard. Well, I want you to *act* as if you had common sense. Ask questions. I'm *teaching* you the business—you don't *know* it all !

Ruth. I couldn't ask questions—you ran away.

Hubbard. (*Starts toward her.*) Wha-a-at ?

Ruth. I—I mean you were called away, sir. I did the best I could. I was all alone in the store.

Hubbard. (*Back to sideboard.*) Them was antiques. They're from the old Capt. Eastman estate. No knowing what a

collector *might* have paid—but we'll make it up on that furniture we sell him.

Ruth. Oh, Mr. Hubbard, I've sold that set that matches this chair.

Hubbard. Sold it—how much ?

Ruth. For price marked. (*Takes hold of tag.*)

Hubbard. (*Sets down vases and rushes to chair.*) There ain't any prices marked.

Ruth. Oh, yes—right here—one hundred and sixty-eight. I let it go for one hundred and sixty dollars.

Hubbard. (*Hurries to desk and paws at his book.*) One sixty-eight ain't the price. It's the stock number. Dang it all to blazes ! You've done it again.

Ruth. But Colonel Bradford said it was all right.

Hubbard. You must ask questions of me—not Colonel Bradford. I didn't tell you to shut your eyes and run things. One sixty-eight—but—oh—one sixty-eight cost mark—cost \$78. And you said you sold for one hundred and sixty ? (*Looks relieved.*) Oh, well, that isn't as bad as it might have been, that helps out on the vases. But mind your eye, Miss Ruth, after this. Don't jump at things. (*Exit upstairs.*)

(*Allan Hubbard appears outside at the store window. He enters, still staring about as a customer might gaze.*)

Ruth. (*Goes to meet him.*) Good morning, sir. Is there anything I can show you ?

Allan. (*Near door.*) But tell me—just who are you anyway ?

Ruth. I'm in charge here.

Allan. In charge—in charge ! (*Goes to door ; opens it and looks outside as if to make sure that he is in the right place and returns.*)

Ruth. (*C.*) Why, what on earth is the matter with you ?

Allan. (*L.*) Has the sheriff—are you a keeper ? What has happened ?

Ruth. My dear sir, I'm the store girl—the clerk. I work for Mr. Hubbard. If you're looking for furniture—we have a very large assortment of everything up-to-date.

Allan. Very large assortment, hey ?

Ruth. Oh, this is only a little of our stock. We have a big central store-house off—off in another part of the town.

Allan. Well, let's see—what was it I wanted? Er— (*Pats his pockets.*) I thought I had a memorandum. Oh, I know! Do you sell furniture on the installment plan?

Ruth. (*A bit puzzled.*) Installment plan—oh, yes.

Allan. But the terms?

Ruth. Why, say a parlor set; you come in to-day and get a chair—if you can pay for it—and take it away—and then the next day—if you have more money—you come and get another chair—and you take it away—and in the end, you own a nice set, see?

Allan. Yes. Do you do much business that way?

Ruth. Oh, yes, a very large business—it's my own idea.

Allan. (*Surveys store, goes L. of plush chair.*) It's a new one on me. Say this is all new! But—now—well—I—er—what lovely weather we're having.

Ruth. (*R. of plush chair.*) I'm glad you like our weather here. But now to business, you want—

Allan. (*Ruth gets note book ready.*) Excuse me. Now—um—oh, yes. I'm going to get married, and that installment plan—but what are you laughing at? Can't I get married if I want to?

Ruth. So far as I'm concerned, you may, sir.

Allan. Oh, I can see what you're thinking—you think I'm too young to get married. Well, then, I won't.

Ruth. (*Leaves chair, goes well R. C.*) Are you one of those so-called village humorists, my dear young sir? (*After a pause.*) As you remarked a little while ago, it's lovely weather we're having. (*Goes further to R.*)

Allan. (*Follows to R. C.*) Yes—but it looks like rain.

Ruth. (*At desk.*) The weather is very changeable in this locality. (*Allan goes L. C.*) (*Hubbard enters from side.*) Mr. Hubbard, here is a young man who wants to buy some furniture on the installment plan.

Allan. Hello, Dad.

Hubbard. How are you, son?

Ruth. (*Comes to foot of table.*) Your son—oh.

Hubbard. You thought he was a—say, that's a corncracker; that's a good one. Tryphosa! Come here, listen—

Mrs. Hubbard. (*R. of table R. C.*) (*From wings.*) What has happened now? (*Enters followed by Priscilla.*)

Hubbard. (C.) Miss Ambrose took Allan for a customer, and tried to sell him some furniture. Look out, mother, she'll tackle you next. (*In the midst of general laughter, Hubbard turns to his son.*) Well, sir, what can I show you?

Allan. (L. C.) Oh, furnishings for a lawyer's office.

Hubbard. I've got something right here.

Allan. No; I want some of that stylish stuff you've got in your central storehouse.

Hubbard. At my what?

Ruth. (*At table. Mrs. Hubbard by her.*) (*To Allen.*) I think it's wicked of you to —

Allan. (*Eyes on Ruth.*) This young lady spoke to me about a big central storehouse.

Hubbard. Do you hear that, Tryphosa? We're coming along since Miss Ambrose joined us?

Ruth. But I want customers to understand that we can do business.

Allan. And we *can*, too. And for my apartments—I'm going to be married. Oh, by the way, I've forgotten her name.

Hubbard. 'Tain't Annabelle.

Allan. We hadn't decided on the style of the fiancee, Miss Ambrose.

Hubbard. (R. C.) Is she stored in that central storehouse, too?

Mrs. Hubbard. (R.) Now, children, behave. Apologize to this dear girl, Allan.

Allan. Forgive me—please.

Hubbard. That's right! A joke is a joke—but it's gone far enough. (*Goes over and puts fatherly hand on Ruth's shoulder.*) Let me tell you that this is a mighty smart girl.

Ruth. Thank you, Mr. Hubbard.

Allan. (*Mrs. H. at head of table, R. C.*) Oh, by the way, folks, finding Miss Ambrose here knocked some news out of my head. Pliny Bangs has got his boom started; so they tell me on the street.

Hubbard. (R. C.) (*Disgustedly.*) That whiffle-head can't start *anything*.

Allan. Well, he has started something now. Ten thousand dollars subscribed for an advertising campaign. They tell me everybody woke up after Colonel Bradford led off.

Ruth. (At desk.) Colonel Bradford didn't lead off—your father did.

Hubbard. Led what?

Ruth. Colonel Bradford and the others were ashamed to hang back after what you did.

Hubbard. What I did! I did what?

Ruth. (R. of table.) Well, Mr. Hubbard, it's a grand good thing—everybody will be helped. We shall boom—you told me to act for you—so I acted.

Hubbard. (L. of table.) What in blazes have you done now?

Ruth. (Backs away and indicates desk drawer.) Why all the prominent men were standing around and Oscar came in with the money—it was so lucky—and I signed your name to the uplift paper and I gave Mr. Bangs the whole four hundred dollars.

CURTAIN.

ACT II.

ONE YEAR LATER

TIME. Early evening, a year later.

SCENE. Same interior as Act I., but remodelled and beautified.

DISCOVERED. *Oscar Dunn*. Is a typical floorwalker in dress and manner. Surveys himself in cheval glass, touches up buttonhole bouquet, and turns on lights.

(*Enter Pliny Bangs in great hurry from the street. He wears a silk hat with a cockade on it, and has a sash about his waist, a la marshal of parade.*)

Bangs. Where's Miss Ambrose ?

Oscar. Very busy.

Bangs. 'Course she's busy, always busy. Got to see her, though. (*Starts for stairs*).

Oscar. Hold on ! Got strict orders. What's it about ? (C)

Bangs. (R.C.) Two more concerns going to put floats in the parade to-morrow.

Oscar. Goin' to hector Miss Ambrose to get up designs, eh ? Some more, eh ?

Bangs. Sure pop !

Oscar. Ain't it about time for this town to stop piling everything onto her ?

Bangs. Town ? Say city, you mildewed page out of a back number. (*Evander Hitchborn enters*).

Hitchborn. (L) I've been chasing you all over town—

Bangs. (*Crosses to Hitchborn L.C.*). Say city, you belated obituary, you. What's the good of us being incorporated by special act, if you're going to say town—town ? Say city every chance you get—and holler it.

Oscar. (R.C.) We won't be a city till after we elect the mayor.

Bangs. (C.) (*Oscar crosses to R. of desk*). Say it ahead ! Get used to saying it ! Be progressive.

Oscar. What you wearing that uniform this evening for ? Parade ain't till to-morrow. (X. to L.C.)

Bangs. Being progressive—getting used to it.

(*To Hitchborn*) Now stop chasing me—you make me nervous.

Hitch. (Comes down L.) That parade ain't laid out right.

Bangs. (Coming down L. of desk R. *Hitch* X. to L.C.) Well, I ain't letting an undertaker lay it out. (*Hitch* protests) Now shut up, Oscar! I'm going to tip you off ahead to a little surprise we've planned for Miss Ambrose. Boys want to show her some honors. We're going to serenade her this evening with the silver cornet band. (*Sings, marking time: "There's only one girl in this world for me."*)

Oscar. I hope they play loud enough to drown your voice.

Bangs. There's the serenade tune. Keep her here in the store after closing. (X. to C.)

Oscar. (R. of desk.) She'll be here all right. (*Ruth* appears on stairway, papers in hand.) She always stays.

Bangs. Ah, good evening, Miss Ambrose—two more entries for the parade. Guess we'll show'em that Oldport is proud of her new city charter—what?

Ruth. (L. of desk.) I'm sure we shall—with Mr. Bangs as parade marshal for our city.

Bangs. (C.) There you have it—city! Try to crawl up-to-date, you two caterpillars.

Ruth. Have all our exhibits been sent down to the hall, Oscar?

Oscar. Yes, ma'am.

Ruth. Check the items off this list—and be sure—(*Gives Oscar paper. He sits at desk.*)

Hitch. (L.C.) Miss Ambrose—

Ruth. Just a minute, Mr. Hitchborn. (*Turns to Bangs.*) There's the order in which I want Hubbard-Bradford floats to move in the parade, Mr. Bangs. (*Gives Bangs paper.*)

Bangs. (*Glances at paper she has given to him.*) Yes'm. Six. (*To Hitchborn.*) That's the way to go into a thing—float for every department in this store.

Hitchborn. Miss Ambrose, I want you to give Bangs orders about me.

Ruth. Why, Mr. Hitchborn, I haven't any authority over Mr. Bangs.

Hitchborn. Oh, you can't fool me about who's head boss in this town. (*Catches gesture of Bangs.*) I mean city.

Bangs. Miss Ambrose, he wants to put that new hearse of his into the parade. (*Oscar protests, rises and starts pulling down shades.*)

Hitchborn. It cost six hundred dollars.

Bangs. I won't have that parade turned into a funeral procession.

Hitchborn. Miss Ambrose, I want to show you that I'm willing to do my part.

Ruth. I'm sure you are. Why not have a few pretty girls as nurses, and ride in your *ambulance*? That will be nice, I think.

Hitchborn. Just what I'll do, Miss Ambrose. You've got a head for things.

Bangs. Head? She's the whole ginger.

Oscar. Yes, and she don't take no credit for herself in nothing.

Ruth. Oscar! (*Oscar rises and pulls down one shade.*)

Bangs. Come along, Hitchborn. (*Hurries Hitch out.*) Don't stay here under foot. (*Pushes him ahead on way to door.*) Go hunt up your girls. That ought to be a pleasant job for a widower. (*Bangs and Hitchborn exeunt.*) You've helped me put the pop in the parade Miss Ruth. Why even those horses who'll pull the floats to-morrow will go down Main Street doing the tango. (*Exit.*)

Oscar. (*Rises and below desk to R.C.*) You don't get no credit for what you are in this town, Miss Ruth, why, even that subscription paper that started all the boom was—

Ruth. Mr. Hubbard's name and his money started our boom.

Oscar. (*L. of desk.*) I don't mean to make you mad, Miss Ruth, but I'm so proud of what you've done, I'd like to stand right in the middle of the Main Street and brag.

Ruth. Now, Oscar! Oscar, get to work. It's most closing time.

Oscar. (*Pulling down shades.*) Do you suppose Colonel Bradford would ever have put money in here—and built this whole block into a store—and gone into partnership with Mr. Hubbard—if it hadn't been for you?

Ruth. Oscar, what in the world is the matter with you—ranting on in this manner.

Oscar. (*At back of chair R.C.*) I guess something is the matter with me.

Ruth. I'm sure there is.

Oscar. I wish things were back—just as they was at first—me up there in my little garret—when both of us was working there—close together. In them days, it wa'n't so foolish of me !

Ruth. (*Goes to L. of desk.*) I'm the same girl, Oscar.

Oscar. Oh, your head will never get swelled like some folks. I kind of dreamed up in that little room. I didn't dare to tell you *then*. Now it's different.

Ruth. No one in all the world has ever been a better friend to me than you, Oscar.

Oscar. But now we're so far apart I can tell you. In them days—well, you know you was poor when you came along here—and so I thought—you know how a feller feels—

Ruth. (*Goes to him and interrupts his stammering.*) Oscar, can you kiss me as my dear, dear friend ?

Oscar. (*X. to L.*) Yes—that't it—that's how I reckoned it was. (*Turns from her.*) But you can't blame me for hating to wake up out of that dream, Miss Ruth. I'm awake. I'll never speak of it again. I'll go tell the watchman to close up. (*Starts out and exit upstairs.*) (*Enter Colonel Bradford.*)

Bradford. (*Xing to L. of desk and sits.*) Ah, good evening, Miss Ruth. Seems an age since I saw you.

Ruth. (*Xing to R. of desk.*) An age since this morning, Colonel ?

Col. Was it only this morning ? Well, it seems an age anyway. I must be considerably interested in you, eh ?

Ruth. I'm glad you are, Colonel.

Bradford. That smile is charming, Miss Ruth—but I swear I don't want to make you smile *that* way everytime I tell you I'm fond of you.

Ruth. But I ought to be pleased. When you say it you look so much like my father used to look.

Brad. (*Rise X. to C.*) There you go—my age !

Ruth. Colonel Bradford, I'd never be impertinent enough to mention your age, or even think of it. Why, everybody says you'll never grow old—with your horses and your parties in the little bungalow.

Brad. (*Sits on end of desk.*) Look here, Miss Ruth, stop your teasing. Israel Hubbard has been living in that bungalow

and handling my horses for a year, and you know it.
(*Oscar comes down stairs and exits up L.C.*)

Ruth. It was good of you, Colonel, to give him a chance outside of the store. You're so good to everybody.

Brad. Well, he's making my stock farm pay like the mischief—I've got to admit that.

Ruth. I always thought Mr. Hubbard had a great deal of ability—give him an opportunity.

Brad. Oh, that old Choctaw was simply born a horseman and has tumbled into the right job. But *you're* making this store pay by using brains.

Ruth. (*Rises.*) I? Why, it's your money that has put us on our feet.

Brad. Well, something has put me on my head. Think of it! Miles Standish Bradford selling furniture—and making a lot of money doing so—and letting Israel Hubbard handle my trotting horses! (*Goes to L. a bit.*)

Ruth. (*Coming around below desk.*) It does seem queer, doesn't it, Colonel?

Brad. Well, we've got to put an end to his thing. (*Takes tabourette to L. of desk and sits.*)

Ruth. Yes, I have felt for some time that the store is too confining for you.

Brad. The store?

Ruth. (*Sits on desk.*) I'll take on more responsibility for your sake—if you'd like some liberty.

Bradford. Don't you want me around here?

Ruth. Oh, that isn't it.

Bradford. Now, about my age. You said—you don't think of my age, you said—Well, Miss Ruth, what are you laughing at?

Ruth. Why, I'm not laughing, Colonel Bradford.

Bradford. Eh? I beg your pardon—I thought you were.

Ruth. (*Reproachfully.*) Colonel Bradford!

Bradford. However, I insist—an end must be put to this thing.

Ruth. (*Demurely with low bow.*) Very well, sir. (*Rise.*)

Bradford. (*Rise.*) Oh, you always put on a look that doesn't give a man—(*Ruth looks at him.*) I say, Miss Ruth, you listen to me.

Hubbard. (*Breaks on this speech—heard off stage.*) Don't talk to me! (*Ruth X. back to seat R. desk.*) What do you know about it? Bet as I told you to. Bet your head off on my horse. The rest of 'em are dead ones. (*Comes backing in, calling off stage.*) (*From L.*) They can't head me under the wire. (*Turns and sees Bradford and Ruth.*) Hello, Miles! How be you? Good evening, Miss Ruth. Say, Miles, the furniture fuddy-dud of an Oscar has been trying to tell *me* about that two fifteen class to-morrow. They can't beat me if they tow the rest of the field with aeroplanes.

Bradford. (*To Ruth.*) He can paralyze 'em by wearing that coat.

Hubbard. (*L.C.*) What's the matter with that coat? You don't know style when you see it.

Bradford. Put him on a float to-morrow, Miss Ruth, labelled "The Great American Sport."

Hubbard. (*Ready Phone.*) I propose to show 'em we ain't farmers here in Oldport.

Bradford. (*Sits on tabourette.*) *Show* is a good word, Israel.

Hubbard. Will you tend out on the race to-morrow, Miles?

(*Ruth goes to her desk.*) (*Enter Oscar, X. and exit upstairs.*)

Bradford. Oh, I can't fool with horse trotting any more, Israel.

Hubbard. But I wanted to show you something. I'm going to drive our Ezra B. myself, in that two fifteen class.

Bradford. Good Jericho! Have you lost your reason?

Hubbard. Now, Miles—

Bradford. Those clothes have struck in.

Hubbard. I've been working him out. I can push him faster than anybody else, even if I have to be derrick'd onto the sulky.

Bradford. Nice exhibition for a man who wants to be our first Mayor.

Hubbard. Miles, you ought to get out around more.

Bradford. Had, eh?

Hubbard. Sure! You'd understand slick politics better. I'll get an ovation when I show up in front of the grand stand.

Bradford. If you want your head smashed, go to it—'tis no business of mine. (*Bell rings.*) I'll answer. (*Starts towards city 'Phone.*)

Ruth. No, it's this one—the store telephone. (*She is near it and replies.*) Hello!

Hubbard. Why say, Miles, if they had iron reins to push that Percy V. with—

Bradford. S-s-h! Shut up. She's at the phone. (*Points to Ruth.*)

Ruth. (*At telephone.*) Oh, very well! I'll be right along. (*Hangs up receiver.*) It's a travelling man with silks. I arranged to have him come after the store rush was over. (*Starts for stairway.*)

Bradford. (*To Ruth.*) (*Follows her.*) Oh, silks—I love silks. I must go along, too.

Hubbard. But, see here, Miles—

Ruth. (*On bottom step.*) It really isn't necessary for you to see them, Colonel. And besides there may be something that abachelor wouldn't understand.

Hubbard. (*Appealingly. Gets in Colonel's way.*) Miles, I've got to see you on something mighty important.

Bradford. (*Xing to Hubbard R.C.*) Don't bother me! I've got something else to do besides talk horse and dress like a Peruvian cockatoo! I'll be back in a minute.

Hubbard. In a moment! But you've been promising for eight days to see me in a moment. (*Grabs Colonel's coat.*)

Brad. (*Impatiently.*) I'm up to my ears in this business, I tell you. Now let go of my coat and take off that one you've got on, if you're going to loaf around here. (*Starts for stairs.*)

Hubbard. That isn't horse talk. I know we're good friends, but I'm almost afraid to tell you.

Brad. What in the devil has happened? Hurry up with it. (*Enter Capt. Hodge, suddenly, from street.*)

Hodge. (*L.C.*) Hubbard, I couldn't overhaul you with a better witness of what I've got to say.

Brad. (*R.C.*) (*Pulling out watch.*) You'll have to excuse me, gentlemen. I've got an important business in my office. (*Starts for stairs.*)

Hodge. Hold on! Hold on! It's a mighty short cable, Colonel. I've been first selectman of this town for a long time. I want you to help me knock it into Hubbard that I'm the right and proper man to be first Mayor. (*Brad. comes back and sits on desk.*)

Hubbard. Whoa! Pull you your horses, Captain Hodge—pull 'em up right there. Who was the first man in this town to have the foresight to see what could be done here to make it a city? Israel Putnam Hubbard! (*Pats his breast.*) Who sat up nights planning a way to start our boom? Israel Putnam Hubbard! Who had the forethought to lead off the Uplift Paper? Israel Putnam Hubbard! And *you* had to be fairly kicked into doing it. (*Hodge starts to protest.*) Hold on there, they all followed me. And now they all want me to be Mayor. I've got the boys with me—I'm a live one.

Hodge. (*L.C.*) Say! If I'm driven to it, I can tell the public something.

Hubbard. (*C.*) Hold on! I'm the most popular man in his city to-day, Hodge, and you know it.

Hodge. Colonel Bradford, I call you as a witness that this store girl—

Bradford. (*Sitting on desk.*) Just a moment, Captain! Miss Ambrose acted as Mr. Hubbard's attorney! And I told you so at the time.

Hubbard. The money was right there in my cash drawer for just that purpose. Now, Captain Hodge, if you want fight you can have all you want. But, if you want to be real good, I'll personally, make you Mayor after me.

Hodge. When?

Hubbard. Oh, one year is all I can afford to fool away on a little position like that. Next year, I'm going to show the grand circuit a string of high-steppers that will make Pharaoh's nags look like rocking horses.

Bradford. You two go ahead and fight it out—you'll have to excuse me.

Hubbard. Miles! Come back here. My business with you is important, I say. Wait till I finish this little trifling affair. Now, Captain Hodge, what say?

Hodge. You'll turn your strength to me, next year?

Hubbard. I'll make you Mayor—I—myself.

Hodge. You're a witness, Colonel.

Brad. (*At foot of stairs.*) I hear.

Hodge. All right.

Hubbard. Do you take back that slur about my store girl running my business ?

Hodge. Yes, Israel.

Hubbard. Will you—will you—— (*Rolls up eyes trying to think of something else to say.*)

Hodge. Hubbard, remember that I've been a master mariner in my day. Don't try to make me wag my tail, roll over and sneeze.

Hubbard. Oh, I'm too broad-minded to aggravate a man when he's down. Run along (*Hodge starts*) Hodge, and be good and we'll make a Mayor of you.

Hodge. (*Starts for door.*) They tell us that war is hell, but I'll be cursed if politics ain't worse. (*Exits.*)

Hubbard. Back to the stables ! You see, Miles, I'm destined to be first Mayor of this city.

Brad. Well, what's that got to do with me ?

Hubbard. You see—I ain't to blame—

Brad. (*Shakes him.*) Out with it.

Hubbard. Your nephew has been hanging around the farm for the last six months and he and Priscilla have fallen in love.

Brad. Is that all the excuse you've got for fooling my time away ?

Hubbard. Of course, I've been kind of figurin' on Allan marryin' into the Burnham family. But for Priscilla to marry your heir—

Brad. Well, why not ?

Hubbard. You—you consent—just like that ? Elegant !

Brad. When folks are in love they ought to get married. (*Turns away.*) That's the idea, and I'm going to find out mighty quick for myself. (*Turns up R.C. a little.*)

Hubbard. (*On way to stairs.*) Miles, I'm almighty glad to have you look at it the way you do—however. (*Proudly.*) When a man is first Mayor of Oldport—(*Stops, pause, goes to elevator, rings bell*)—first Mayor of Oldport—Going up. (*Exit.*)

Brad. (*Following after Hubbard to meet Ruth at foot of stairs.*)

Mayor nothing! What does that amount to? I say, when folks are in love they ought to get married.

Ruth. (*Going to seat R. of desk.*) Ah, was the important business between partners a joint debate on love?

Bradford. (*L. of desk.*) Well, it *is* important business, Miss Ruth—but I'd rather discuss it with somebody else than Israel Hubbard. But here's some news. That nephew of mine has fallen in love with Priscilla Hubbard. Can you beat that?

Ruth. (*With mock seriousness.*) Why! That's the most extraordinary thing I ever heard of, Colonel.

Bradford. Then you think if two folks are together a lot, they'll—

Ruth. If they have nothing else to do.

Bradford. Oh, that's it—is it.

Ruth. I hope you'll marry them off.

Bradford. Sure! I believe in folks getting married when they're in love.

Ruth. Colonel, you're a dear! How can anyone help loving you? (*He starts toward her.*) Wouldn't a girl be lucky to have you for—for a father?

Bradford. (*Whirls, and starts off, manifesting ill temper.*) She would, eh? Well, I'll be—I didn't say it. Say, if anybody wants me, I'll be at the City Hall. (*Exit.*) (*Enter Hubbard.*)

Hubbard. Sh! Did he tell you about Priscilla?

Ruth. Yes, sir.

Hubbard. Ain't it great?

Ruth. I'm so glad.

Hubbard. Say, ain't the Hubbard family comin' up the social home-stretch at a two minute clip, hey?

Ruth. Mr. Hubbard, Colonel Bradford hurried away before I could ask him about our Anniversary Furniture Sale. Will you please—

Hubbard. Say—Miles swallowed that Priscilla like a cat lapping cream.

Ruth. He is always generous and good. And now about the furniture sale.

Hubbard. Don't bother me any more about furniture. I'm busy hitting the pace in politics and society. Head up and tail over the dasher.

Ruth. But I don't want to act without orders.

Hubbard. Tell it to Miles—tell it to Miles.

Ruth. And there's our white sale.

Hubbard. Tell it to Miles! Miles Bradford has always been splurging around in society and now its time he settled down to work. It's my turn now. I've got the word "go." I've picked my gait, and I'll show 'em I ain't so spavined or got the heaves.

Ruth. Then I'll wait and ask Colonel Bradford.

Hubbard. That's right, tell it to Miles. From now on I'll give society a run for its money.

Ruth. Yes, Mr. Hubbard.

Hubbard. You watch Mrs. Burnham come around on the canter now that Priscilla is placed in the Bradford family—probably you know that mother and I have plotted for years on Allan marrying Annabelle Burnham. You're a bright girl—you may see some way to help it along and I expect you to grab right in.

Ruth. Mr. Hubbard, you know how I feel about doing anything you ask.

Hubbard. We-ll, I'm glad you appreciate what I have done for you. Too many folks in this world are mighty ungrateful. (*Exit Hubbard.*) (*Enter Allan.*)

Allan. (*Gazes around store in surprise.*) Colonel Bradford isn't here, eh?

Ruth. No.

Allan. That's funny.

Ruth. Why? (*Rises and goes below desk.*) Oh, you men are all alike.

Allan. (*Crosses to her L. of desk.*) Well, he's most always here when I come in.

Ruth. He's the managing partner of the business, isn't he?

Allan. Yes, but I—I keep up a sort of thinking, Miss Ruth, about what made him buy in here.

Ruth. (*On end of desk.*) If some other folks stopped playing and settled down to work it would be better.

Allan. (*Sits on ottoman.*) I almost wish I hadn't gone in for law.

Ruth. Oh, take your exam, Allan Hubbard. Don't you realize how it will please your father ?

Allan. I suppose it would. But honestly, the really big men of the country are the business men. Why can't I come into the Hubbard-Bradford concern—be here all day—work—near you.

Ruth. (*Back of desk. Starts to ring punch bell for Oscar.*) Near me ? Now you'll have to run along. I must call Oscar, we have work.

Allan. There's no need of calling Oscar. I don't want him here. What is the work.

Ruth. It's something you couldn't do.

Allan. (*C.*) I'll bet dollars to beans I can be a business man.

Ruth. Perhaps so ; but you can't nail the border on this arm-chair that's been promised for morning.

Allan. What's that ? A Hubbard with three generations of upholsterers behind him can't nail on a chair border ? Well, I'll show you. (*Rushes to box where tacks and hammer are kept.*)

Ruth. (*X. to L.C. above table.*) Don't be silly.

Allan. You watch me ! A greenhorn would pick the tacks out of this box one by one.

Ruth. But what would a Hubbard do ?

Allan. He puts the tacks in his mouth, real upholsterer style. (*Slips in handful of tacks.*)

Ruth. Look here, Allan, you don't really mean to tack that border on ?

Allan. Don't I ? You watch. (*Begins to tack very loud.*)

Ruth. You only have to tack that on—you have nothing against the tacks.

Allan. See how it goes ! One—two—three ; why it's just as easy—wow ! (*Slaps hand about.*)

Ruth. Now you've hurt yourself.

Allan. That's simply because I had my coat on ; a real upholsterer always works in his shirt sleeves. Permit me, Miss Ruth. (*Jumps up and removes garment ; throws it on chair.*)

Ruth. (*Severely.*) I wish you'd go and attend to your own work, if you have any.

Allan. Sure, I've got work. That reminds me—Miss Ruth, we'll kill two birds with one stone.

Ruth. You will ruin a whole set of furniture with one hammer.

Allan. (*Spits tacks into hand.*) I've been plugging old Roman law out of that book there. This is a mighty good chance to show you how well posted I am. Open the book anywhere. When I get to going on this border, fire the questions at me.

Ruth. It's ridiculous! (*Takes book and sits by him on floor.*)

Allan. (*Puts tacks back into his mouth and sets to work.*) Not a bit of it. (*Mumbles words.*) Middle of book is a good place—about the contribernium.

Ruth. The what? (*Allan gets up, spits tacks into his hand, and opens book for her.*)

Allan. Right there! (*Ruth bends over and reads a paragraph to herself while Allan puts tacks back into his mouth and gets to work on chair again.*)

Ruth. Well, then, what is a contribernium?

Allan. Contribernium is a marriage between slaves—or between a free person and a slave.

Ruth. Well, what else?

Allan. That's all.

Ruth. No—it isn't all, either. (*Allan makes series of inarticulate sounds.*) What is the obligations of the wife?

Allan. (*Spits out tacks. Straightens up and looks at her tenderly.*) She had to be pretty.

Ruth. There's no such thing here.

Allan. (*Puts tacks in mouth. Works briskly.*) Why, it ought to be there. Well, in that form of marriage, the wife had to bring her trunk with her. It had to be a great old combination trunk in those days, too. (*Tacks between each clause.*) It could be unjointed into a folding bed, and then tip it up the other way and touch a spring and play ragtime and rock the baby to sleep. (*Puts tacks in mouth.*)

Ruth. What—in Rome?

Allan. Sure, in Rome. That's where the expression came from: Do as the Romans do. (*Scratches his head.*) I wonder—about—those—tacks.

Ruth. What tacks.

Allan. Those I had in my mouth.

Ruth. Allan! You can't have swallowed—not all of them!

Allan. I must have—I don't find them.

Ruth. (*Throws down book.*) Do you feel sick—?

Allan. Those leather heads—might make 'em slip easy.
(*Runs up to door.*) (*He grabs her in his arms to hold her.*)

Ruth. It's my fault. I shouldn't have let you do it. Oh,
Allan, I must 'phone for a doctor! (*Xing to 'phone.*)

Allan. Ruth!

Ruth. (*Xing him to R.C.*) Allan, I'll die if anything happens
to you. (*Begins to cry.*)

Allan. Dear little Ruth—I was joking. I used 'em all in the
border.

Ruth. (*Sinks in chair.*) Oh!

Allan. I didn't mean to scare you. But I'm not so awful sorry
—for you do care for me—you showed you did—oh,
Ruth—I love you—I love you. (*She tries to draw out of
his arms. Kisses her on lips.*) And you love me—you
love me.

Ruth. No—no! I don't love you! I won't love you! I
can't love you! Let me go.

Allan. I tell you, we're going to get married.

Ruth. Allan, it is impossible.

Allan. But you must—

Ruth. No, Allan, now listen. Your father is rich now. He
has other plans. He looks on me as only a store girl. (*Sits
R. of desk.*)

Allan. 'Twas you who made him rich. I'll go and reduce his
old swell head for him. I'll know how to talk to him. And
I'm going right this minute. (*Rushes for the door.*)

Ruth. Allan, listen to me—turn round here. I'll not marry
you. Can't you understand plain language? I'll not
marry you, anyway.

Allan. Then you must have some other reason. You have one
haven't you? Answer me. You don't love me, hey?
Is that it? Oh, I'm beginning to see.

Ruth. Be careful, Allan.

Allan. I'm a fool. He's hanging around here all the time.
What does he care about storekeeping? He'd rather be
sporting, but it's all clear.

Ruth. Oh, Allan—Allan!

Allan. (*L. of desk.*) I know I haven't any right to talk to you that way, Miss Ruth. I ought to buck up like a man. But oh, if you only knew how unhappy I am!

Ruth. (*Sits R. of desk.*) Don't! Don't! You break my heart. Believe me—believe me, Allan, I am taking the only sensible way—for both of us. I'm only a store girl—I am nothing else. (*Head in hands.*)

Allan. How dare you speak of yourself that way?

Ruth. But that is exactly the way your father and the world would look at the thing, Allan. A girl can see more clearly than a man. You must leave me alone. (*Rise.*) I am going to tell you something—a secret. I have chosen somebody—somebody I am free to marry without trouble coming from it. (*Comes from foot of desk.*)

Allan. Oh, I realize you must love somebody else.

Ruth. Perhaps it isn't exactly like some kinds of love—but it's more sensible kind.

Allan. Yes, you don't seem to lose your head, Miss Ruth, like some of the rest of us poor devils. Won't you tell me who he is? Please tell me.

Ruth. Yes, Allan. I'll tell you if you'll promise to keep it a secret!—will you promise?

Allan. I promise.

Ruth. (*Hesitates—evidently at a loss for a moment—then suddenly.*) It's Oscar.

Allan. Oscar who?

Ruth. Why, our own Oscar.

Allan. (*Shouts.*) Oscar!

Oscar. (*Oscar appears on stairway.*) Right here, Mr. Allan. What can I do for you?

Allan. Nothing, Mr. Dunn.

Oscar. Nothing, *Mister Dunn!* I ain't *done* nothin' to you! Miss Ruth, Mrs. Burnham and her daughter are in the carpet department and she says she has got to see you.

Ruth. (*In bad humor.*) But the store is closed, Oscar.

Oscar. I know it, but they squoze in while we was locking up. She's the darndest old catamaran I ever saw.

Ruth. Quick, Allan! Here she comes. (*Mrs. Burnham and Annabelle appear.*)

Mrs. Burnham. Our shop-keepers seem to be putting on airs, closing at this time.

Ruth. (At desk—Annabelle follows mother to C.) It's the rule of the store, Madam.

Mrs. Burnham. (X. to Allan.) (Pays no attention to Ruth.) Good evening, Allan, you must tell your father his store is going to rack and ruin when he isn't here.

Allan. I don't see any trouble here Mrs. Burnham.

Mrs. Burnham. Ah, what does a brilliant young lawyer know about store business? Annabelle talk to Allan. (Annabelle goes to Allan L.C. He turns from her. She turns to her mother.) Miss Ambush. (X. to Ruth.)

Ruth. (To L. lower end of desk.) Ambrose, Madam.

Mrs. Burnham. The name is immaterial—you may show us lace curtains.

Ruth. I'm sorry—but the store is closed.

Mrs. Burnham. We're inside, aren't we?

Allan. Now, Mrs. Burnham!

Mrs. Burnham. Young woman, I shall report your impertinence to Mr. Hubbard.

Ruth. (X. back to seat R. of desk.) I beg your pardon, madam.

Mrs. Burnham. Then Mr. Hubbard may ask his partner what kind of influence keeps a saucy clerk in his store.

Ruth. Oh!

Allan. Mrs. Burnham, I protest.

Mrs. Burnham. It may have something to do with the influence which keeps the managing partner here so closely. (X'ng to Allan. Ruth rises.)

Allan. If you think—

Mrs. Burnham. Ah, perhaps I only think what you (*Chair business Ruth*) yourself think, my dear Allan. A lawyer ought to be fairly acute.

Allan. Oh, this—this is—

Ruth. I will take you to the lace curtains, Madam. (*Steps in front and leads the way. Mrs. Burnham starts after her. Annabelle looks at Allan, then has to follow.*)

Mrs. Burnham. Come often to the house, Allan. We have always enjoyed you. It is so good to hear you and Annabelle chattering together. Annabelle, I'm so sorry to break up your chat. You can see Allan again. (*Annabelle has not spoken, ceases ogling Allan and precedes her mother, following Ruth. Allan walks about the room, his air*

expressing grief. At last faces Oscar, who enters. Oscar looks at big center door.)

Allan (C.) Allow me to congratulate you, Mr. Dunn.

Oscar (R.C.) Congratulate me, *Mister Dunn!* What is it—what ails you?

Allan. You have turned a neat trick, Oscar. So you and Miss Ambrose are going to get married.

Oscar. We're going to be what?

Allan (L.C.) I've just told you—going to be married—to Miss Ambrose.

Oscar (R.C.) (Indignant.) A joke is all right in its place, but I won't stand for Miss Ambrose's name being used—

Allan. There's no joke—it's what she says. (*Sits L. of table C.*)

Oscar. What she says? Oh, I suppose it might have struck her as mighty funny. But I was only making fun of it myself.

Allan. I don't see where you have any kick coming.

Oscar (C.) I ain't blaming her for passing it along. It didn't seem so funny when she first come here—but it's a good joke now, all right. I can laugh at it. (*Tries to laugh.*) But let me tell you,—girls don't always realize when a fellow never says much—they don't know how tough it is for him—or they'd be mighty sorry oftener than they are.

Allan. (Moodily.) Well, I can agree with you on that.

Oscar. Tell her I said it was a good joke.

Allan. A good joke! She loves you.

Oscar. Who says so?

Allan. She told me so.

Oscar. Say! Look-a-here! Do you believe any such slush-wuzzle as that?

Allan. (Rise.) (Indignant in his turn.) Oscar, don't you dare to refer to statements from Miss Ambrose in that manner. You may be going to marry her, but I'll see that she isn't insulted by you.

Oscar. I say, she's batty.

Allan. What!

Oscar. Yes, and so are you!

Allan. I'll punch your face for you!

Oscar (R.C.) Excuse me for talking to you like this—and after I get done you can do your punching, if you feel that way. It's you she loves—you—you ! I've got my eyes with me, all right. It's the way a girl looks at a fellow that tells the story. Why every time she says your name—it comes out of her mouth like a button covered with velvet. I know what's the matter. Miss Ruth heard your dad swell up over your prospects. I heard him tell her that you and Annabelle Burnham had been just the same as engaged ever since you went to school together.

Allan. I wouldn't marry *her*.

Oscar. But Ruth Ambrose will slice off her nose before she will start a fuss in the Hubbard family. She lied to you, Allan, to keep this from breaking out.

Allan. But it's going to break out, just the same.

Oscar. Go see your father, that's my advice. You've got to begin at that end.

Allan. He's so almighty puffed up lately.

Oscar. I take off my hat to Mr. Hubbard, always—he's been good to me ; but he ought to have a good wallop right about now, Allan. If I was you I'd go to him and give him that wallop. (*Hubbard appears behind him from stairs.*) (*Oscar strikes an attitude and shouts.*) Brace right up ! Say "Father, I'm in love with Ruth, and I want to marry her."

Hubbard. What's that you say ?

Oscar. (*Runs for exit.*) Gosh ! (*Exit.*)

Hubbard. What's that he was yapping ?

Allan. The truth, father, I love Ruth Ambrose and I want to marry her.

Hubbard. You want to what—marry one of my help ?

Allan. Father, you can't call her that.

Hubbard. What else is she ?

Allan. She is the one who has brought good fortune to us.

Hubbard. (*R.C. goes down R.*) Oh, balderdash ! What would she have amounted to if I hadn't taken her off the street and taught her the furniture business ?

Allan. (*X. to him.*) But see what she has done.

Hubbard. She has done it because I took pains with her from the start. (*X. to L.*)

Allan. But you must admit she has done wonders.

Hubbard. Oh, she has taken hold well enough—but that doesn't make her anything but a store girl.

Allan. Oh, father, what has come over you lately? (*Goes to R. of table C. and sits.*)

Hubbard. Don't you understand that I'm the big man of this city to-day? Going to be its first Mayor? A nice thing it would be to send out wedding cards saying that my son was going to marry a store girl.

Allan. (*Rise.*) Stop—don't make me ashamed of my own father.

Hubbard. Ashamed! We'll all be ashamed of *you*. Haven't you got any regard for your sister?

Allan. What has she got to do with it?

Hubbard. Do you suppose a Standish would let his nephew marry into a family with a store girl in it?

Allan. (*X'ng to R.C.*) But Colonel Bradford admires her.

Hubbard. (*Starts back at him.*) Oh, she's a sly one.

Allan. Hold on, there! I won't let you put that talk across.

Hubbard. Don't you dare to bristle up to me—(*Allan turns away angrily.*) You bob-tailed sand-peep.

Allan. (*At desk.*) (*Faces his father.*) I don't want to get into a row father, but this girl means more to me than anything else in the world—we can't afford to fight.

Hubbard. You mean *you* can't afford to. She's simply playing her cards for you.

Allan. You're wrong—I asked her to marry me and she refused.

Hubbard. Did, eh? That's sense.

Allan. She's afraid of you.

Hubbard. That's more sense.

Allan. She lied to me to put a bar between us—said she intended to marry Oscar.

Hubbard. That's the best sense of all.

Allan. But she doesn't want to marry him.

Hubbard. (*L.C.*) Poppycock! I've caught 'em spooning in corners.

Allan. (*R.C.*) But Oscar said there's nothing in it.

Hubbard. Oh, he lied. Everybody lies about this love business.

Allan. Father, would you lie to me?

Hubbard. Of course, not—I'm saving you from being fooled.

You let me find a wife for you.

Allan. I have found my own wife. (*Goes R.*)

Hubbard. (*Follows him.*) Dad blast ye, do you mean to tell me—

Allan. Yes, I do.

Hubbard. Descend to that girl?

Allan. No, climb up to her.

Hubbard. No regard for me—your mother—your sister?

Allan. (*X. to L.*) You'd better put that another way.

Hubbard. Well, I will put it another way. The only one you seem to have any regard for, you love-sick fool, is that store girl. (*Allan protests.*) Now don't you dare to break in on me. You know what she thinks of her position here, don't you?

Allan. (*Turns to him.*) She's—

Hubbard. You show her any more attentions and I'll discharge her in two seconds.

Allan. You wouldn't dare.

Hubbard. I'll fire her and tell her you were the cause of it.

Allan. Father!

Hubbard. It's up to you to make her or break her. Now get out of here. (*Colonel Bradford enters and Allan hurries away, upstairs, trying to conceal his emotion. Colonel fixes his eye-glasses and stares after Allan.*)

Bradford. Well, Israel, what's the matter in the family?

Hubbard. (*Ruth appears at head of stairs and descends two steps.*) Just told me he wants to marry that store-girl of ours—the Ambrose girl.

Bradford. He—he—what? Say, he's a damned fool.

Hubbard. I told him so, Miles. (*Ruth is cruelly hurt—staggers and clings to stair-rail, trying to get her strength to retreat.*)

Bradford. Mr. Hubbard, if he marries that girl, I'll smash this partnership in two seconds. (*Bradford and Hubbard down stage close together, noses almost touching.*)

Hubbard. He shan't marry her, Miles.

Bradford. Don't call me "Miles," Mister Hubbard. (*Bradford starts to turn and Hubbard grabs him by coat lapels.*) (*Ruth starts up the stairs.*)

Hubbard. Don't be so formal, Miles, it hurts.

Bradford. Well, you come along to the office, you old jackass.

(Ruth has worked her way out behind screen R.)

Hubbard. That's the way to talk to a friend, Miles.

Bradford. Shut up! Go along, you old hyena. *(Exit up stairs.)*

Oscar. *(On balcony.)* Miss Ambrose, Miss Ambrose, the serenaders are coming. Where is she—where is she—Miss Ambrose—

Voice of Pliny Bangs. Three cheers for Miss Ruth Ambrose. *(Cheers without.)* *(There is a growing uproar of voices without and feet tramping to tuck of drum. She rises, runs to switch and turns off lights. Staggers to her desk, buries her head in her arms on desk. Allan opens D.R. and flood of light strikes Ruth at desk. He advances leaning over her.)*

Allan. Ruth!

SLOW CURTAIN

ACT III.

The stage is set as a small parlor off main dining room of the Harborview Hotel. Diners at table.

Hubbard: (At head of table) There are a lot of men in this world whose heads get swelled with honors. I ain't one of that kind.

Pliny Bangs. (Lower side of table) You're all right, mayor.

Hubbard. Come to the mayor's office,—any time—and you'll always find me the same old Israel. I don't forget my friends.

Bangs. That's the talk.

Hubbard. I propose to show it right now. After I went ahead with my name and money to make this place a city, my friend Captain Hodge, here, came to me and he says—says he—"Hubbard, there's just one man to be our first mayor, that's you. You've got to take it. As First Selectman I insist." Hope I quote you right, Captain?

Hodge. (Upper side of table, sullenly) It's near enough.

Hubbard. I announce right here and now that I'm going to make Captain Hodge the next mayor of this city. That's the way I use my friends. *(Guests applaud.)* No one can ever accuse me of being ungrateful. If anybody helps me, I help him. And that's the way I'm going to run my city. Now let us all rise and drink to the city of Oldport. *(All rise and drink. Oscar comes from L. U. and turns on lights in parlor. All then come into parlor from dining room.)* Now, Miss Ruth, be spry and help Oscar serve the coffee.

Bradford. (To Ruth.) You'll do nothing of the sort.

Ruth. I beg your pardon, Colonel. *(Walks past him to coffee table.)*

Bradford. (To Hubbard.) Where are the waiters?

Hubbard. I'm making this quiet and social—my close friends—don't want any help in here. *(During this passage in aside Bradford and Hubbard—guests—dispose themselves on chairs.)*

Bradford. You're making her a servant.

Hubbard. She's working for wages, ain't she? (*Turns away and takes boxes of cigars from table.*) Here, boys, have a cigar—take two. Smoke in hotel office. (*X'es to R.C.*) (*Allan exits up L.*) And here, boys, I've got a something with a stick in it in room 15. Didn't want it in here—might cause gossip. You know this is a prohibition state. Got to keep the administration pure—see? Attention company—I order a flank movement—forward march. (*Men salute in military fashion and march off stage—their wives attempt to stop them—but men escape and leave the women—two citizens rescue one husband from his wife and take him along—then the women supers exeunt into ball room with show of indignation.*) (*Ruth crosses to Mrs. Burnham and Mrs. Hubbard.*)

Hubbard. (*Enters.*) In room 15 Miles,—great stuff.

Bradford. I want to see outside.

Hubbard. (*Pushes past.*) In a moment—a moment Miles. Run along—I'll see you when I have time. (*Hubbard starts across stage toward door of dining-room.*)

Mrs. Hubbard. Israel! (*Allan enters in up L.*)

Hubbard. Talk quick, this is my busy evening.

Mrs. Hubbard. How soon will the dancing begin?

Hubbard. I'm going to see about it now. There wouldn't be anything done in this city if I didn't attend to it myself. I can't do everything, even if I am mayor. (*On his way passes Allan, who has been standing at one side during scene.*) Why ain't you flying around helping me in society—standing there like a plume on Hitchborn's hearse! (*Exits.*)

Annabelle. (*To Priscilla.*) Allan seems to be very gay to-night.

Priscilla. I guess he's lovesick. It must be you. Mamma thinks so.

Ruth. More sugar, Mrs. Burnham?

Mrs. Burnham. One lump.

Mrs. Hubbard. Give me a little cream, Ruth.

Mrs. Burnham. (*To Annabelle, who is chattering with Priscilla.*) Listen, Annabelle, Priscilla is going to be married at Thanksgiving.

Mrs. Hubbard. Yes, Ruth, we are announcing the date to-night. I want you to know early so that you can arrange the dressmaking staff at the store.

Ruth. I'll do my best, Mrs. Hubbard.

Mrs. Burnham. Marriage seems to be in the air just now. We have even heard rumors in regard to you, Miss Ambrose.

Ruth. I have no time to think of marriage, madam.

Mrs. Hubbard. Oh yes, Ruth is so busy in the store. We have almost forgotten that she is a young girl.

Ruth. I have almost forgotten it myself. Will you take more coffee, Mrs. Burnham?

Mrs. Burnham. I advise you to get married, Miss Ambrose. Some worthy young man of your class. It will stop much of the gossip that's about town. You may go—nothing more. It's always so difficult to keep a shop girl in her place. Now she's going to gossip with Allan. (*Oscar gets cup from table C.*)

Mrs. Hubbard. Allan, you're very inattentive. Miss Annabelle hasn't had her coffee yet. (*Allan has crossed to intercept Ruth.*)

Ruth. (*Aside.*) Go on, take coffee to Miss Burnham.

Allan. I'd rather be horse-whipped.

Ruth. You ought to be ashamed—such a charming young lady.

Allan. Oh, you think she is, do you?

Ruth. I certainly do. And your mother thinks so, too.

Allan. (*Showing his irritation, pours out cup of coffee and carries it to Annabelle.*) Excuse me, Miss Burnham, I hadn't noticed that you were being slighted. You'll take coffee?

Annabelle. I suppose so.

Allan. Sugar? One or two?

Annabelle. It doesn't make any difference, thank you. (*Allan loads her cup with sugar.*)

Mrs. Burnham. Aren't they two dears—chattering away at each other.

Mrs. Hubbard. It's very plain what will happen in our families.

Allan. (*Gruffly*) Cream?

Annabelle. Do you like it?

Allan. No.

Annabelle. Nor I.

Allan. (*Abstractedly.*) All right—have some. (*Pours in cream.*)

Ruth. (*To Oscar.*) Please bring my cloak.

Oscar. You ain't going home, are you ?

Ruth. As soon as I can leave.

Oscar. Sick ?

Ruth. I'm so tired.

Oscar. I understand you, Miss Ruth. I don't blame you. Sticking their old noses—making you a hired girl here. You're too good for them.

Ruth. Hush ! Leave the cloak in the dress-room there. I'll slip out.

Oscar. I understand. (*Exit.*)

Allan. (*Leaves Annabelle, returns to Ruth.*) You're right about Miss Burnham—she is charming—that was a splendid chat we had.

Ruth. I'm sure of it.

Allan. Really, I didn't know she was so lively.

Ruth. She seems very brilliant.

Allan. Charming. And I see you are having a perfectly bully evening.

Ruth. It's delightful. (*Music of grand march heard off R.*)

Allan. You seemed to be having a great time with Colonel Bradford. And how you did got it with Oscar, just now ! He's a delightful talker, isn't he ?

Ruth. Who ?

Allan. Oscar.

Ruth. Oh, yes—delightful.

Allan. Well, they're getting ready to dance.

Ruth. Miss Burnham is waiting for you, Mr. Hubbard. Don't let me detain you. (*Speaks loud enough for Annabelle to hear, and Allan is forced to leave.*)

Allan. May I have your company for the grand march ? (*Offers arm to Annabelle.*)

Annabelle. Oh, I don't mind. (*Allan and Annabelle exeunt ; he drags her along.*)

Mrs. Hubbard. (*Rising.*) We must see the grand march start off. Where in the world is Israel ? Come, Priscilla.

Mrs. Burnham. I want to see him too, Tryphosa. I have heard that the young set are going to dance some of those terrible new dances. (*They walk away together.*) As President of the Woman's Moral Uplift League, I want Mayor Hubbard to stand behind me and put his foot

down hard if they undertake any turkey-trotting. (*Mrs. Hubbard, Mrs. Burnham, and Priscilla exeunt.*) (*Enter Bradford.*)

Bradford. (*Finds Ruth alone, arranging the coffee cups.*) Miss Ambrose, quit that. (*Takes tray from her and places it on small table at arch right.*) The idea of your making a servant of yourself. Don't you dance?

Ruth. No.

Bradford. But you can join me in the grand march. Please come.

Ruth. I wish you would excuse me, Colonel Bradford.

Bradford. Are you troubled about anything—worrying about anything?

Ruth. Why, no. But I'm only a store girl, after all. I only meet people in a business way. I feel alone at a party like this.

Bradford. (*Comes close to her.*) By the gods! You ought to be the belle of any ball in Oldport.

Ruth. There's no prospect of me being anything but a store girl, sir.

Bradford. Look here, Miss Ruth, there's something the matter with you. What is it?

Ruth. I'm tired—the fair made extra work.

Bradford. It's something else—it's something else.

Ruth. But I assure you, Colonel Bradford—

Bradford. What's the matter with me all of a sudden?

Ruth. Why, aren't you all right.

Bradford. No, not where you're concerned. You've been keeping away from me—you give me looks that I can't understand. Poor little girl, you may be tired—you do work too hard—but away down in your eyes is something else—I've seen it there for days—some infernal rascal has hurt you to the depths of your soul. I know. You can't fool me. Tell me—I'll—

Ruth. I have nothing to tell you, Colonel Bradford. (*Enter Pliny Bangs on the rush.*)

Bangs. Colonel Bradford, Mayor wants to see you.

Bradford. No, he doesn't—not if he knows what's best for him.

Bangs. Sure he does.

Bradford. Tell the mayor to go to the devil.

Bangs. All right, I will. But Colonel, this is important.

Ruth. Please go, Colonel. It must be something important.

Bradford. Where is the old Piute ?

Bangs. In room No. 15.

Bradford. You act as if you were one of those room fiteeners, too.

Bangs. See here, Miss Ruth, it's mighty hard to catch you alone—you're so busy—I'm so busy. It just came to me all of a sudden out there that I've got something to say to you. In I come—you're not alone, never can find you alone. Had to lie. Thank the Lord I got rid of him. (*Ruth tries to interrupt.*) Now don't break in. Only delays. I love you—love you like the fury—love you like the roses love the sunshine and the flowers love the dew—or—or words to that effect. I ain't used to poetry, that's the first I ever recited. You're so full of business. I love you. I want a business woman for my wife. I want you. Will you marry me ?

Ruth. I most certainly will not, Mr. Bangs.

Bangs. That's final ?

Ruth. Final.

Bangs. That's the way to talk. That's business. It saves me wasting my time. Only way you can find out in this world is to ask. No hard feelings. You're business, and you know what you want. Good night. (*Rushes out and collides with Colonel B. in doorway, then disappears.*)

Bradford. He lied to me. What was he howling to you ?

Ruth. He made a proposal of marriage.

Bradford. What ! That whiffle-head rush in here and do that in sixty seconds ?

Ruth. Mr. Bangs is rather abrupt.

Bradford. Abrupt ! He's an insulting fool.

Ruth. He is sincere—and honest—Colonel Bradford.

Bradford. But you wouldn't marry—

Ruth. Mr. Bangs and I parted with a perfect and friendly understanding.

Bradford. Oh, I've got a confounded Miles Standish tongue.

Ruth. Using short words and sharp ?

Bradford. No—no—I mean yes. Miles Standish couldn't talk to a maiden, but I'm going to.

Ruth. (*Hastily.*) Let us dance.

Bradford. Stay here.

Ruth. But you asked me to dance.

Bradford. You said you wouldn't.

Ruth. It's a girl's silliness—I've changed my mind, please.

Bradford. (*Offers his arm and they start.*) When you say please to me it's orders. (*Exeunt.*) (*Mayor Hubbard enters from up R. C. has much difficulty in getting in with a huge punch bowl that is nearly empty. Finally he backs in and sets bowl on side table. While he is about this business, Mrs. Burnham enters from R. door.*)

Mrs. Burnham. Oh, Mayor Hubbard, everybody is looking for you.

Hubbard. (*Pointing to punch.*) Do they know I got it. Everything's on my shoulders.

Mrs. Burnham. But they expect you to lead the grand march, Mr. Mayor.

Hubbard. I'm no hand at the fandango.

Mrs. Burnham. I should have been so proud if you had asked me to be your partner.

Hubbard. (*Crosses with two glasses of punch.*) Wish I had thought of that—but I've been dodging around backways with this—it's been in room 15 too long. (*Offers glass.*) Let's be partners in drinking to the new city.

Mrs. Burnham. Oh, I never indulge in stimulants, dear mayor.

Hubbard. This ain't stimulants,—it's a real ladies' drink. Those critters out there don't appreciate it. Just left Hodge and Hitchborn hugging each other and crying about their first wives.

Mrs. Burnham. (*Takes glass he forces into her hand.*) No—no!

Hubbard. What? You ain't going to obey mayor's orders and taste the best punch that was ever knocked together since old Nebuchadnezzar eat grass?

Mrs. Burnham. Is it—

Hubbard. It's clear quill. (*Knocks glass against hers.*) Never keep a good thing away from the ladies. Bless their hearts. To Oldport—I ain't elected mayor every day. (*They drink.*)

Hubbard. (*Smacks lips.*) Hah!

Mrs. Burnham. I must confess it's very nice.

Hubbard. (*Starts back to table with empty glasses.*) Makes ladies hearts lighter and their bryes eyter.

Mrs. Burnham. I hoped I might find you here alone. (*Hubbard at table looks over his shoulder at her.*) The young set are going to attempt some of those tango things. Will you stand behind the Woman's Moral Uplift League and put your foot down?

Hubbard. (*He turns with full glasses.*) Sure! Nothing goes in my administration but what is genteel and high-class. No spread-eagle kicking—no tango can go. And now, a drop more to old time sake, Dorcas.

Mrs. Burnham. I shouldn't—but it's really delicious.

Hubbard. (*Lifting his glass—sings.*)

There was an old turkey, and he strutted 'round the farm,
And another little drink won't do us any harm.

(*Fills own glass.*)

Mrs. Burnham. (*Holds out glass.*) Oh! Israel! (*Hubbard fills glass.*)

Hubbard. Dorcas, you were always a lively girl in the old days. John Burnham was a lucky chap when he got you away from the rest of us.

Mrs. Burnham. (*Languishing.*) Those dear old days! Israel, there is that same old roguish twinkle in your eyes.

Hubbard. Hoochi—koochie.

Mrs. Burnham. How well I remember.

Hubbard. It's hard forgetting the old days.

Mrs. Burnham. I can see you just as you looked at the dances, full of the old Harry.

Hubbard. Wasn't I the cut up?

Mrs. Burnham. Who would ever have thought that you'd grow up and be our mayor—?

Hubbard. That's right—you can't tell where mayors come from these days. John Burnham had the money those days—but now you're a widow.

Mrs. Burnham. And I can't help thinking now that you're the cause of my being a widow.

Hubbard. I what? Look here—look here—that's a pretty serious statement.

Mrs. Burnham. I feel serious, Israel. Most men are nobodies—women could vote and run things better. But you are a born leader.

Hubbard. But I never had anything to do with your being a widow.

Mrs. Burnham. Oh, yes.

Hubbard. How?

Mrs. Burnham. It's my secret—it has been so for a long time.

Hubbard. Say, don't you let anybody get hold of it.

Mrs. Burnham. You were always sort of timid, Israel, in the old days. John Burnham's money wasn't everything.

Hubbard. Good Lord, Dorcas—you don't mean to say—

Mrs. Burnham. If you had only understood me a little better—you would have been my husband—and I wouldn't be a widow now. I always thought you were so nice. (*Giggles and snaps her handkerchief at him.*)

Hubbard. I was dead gone on you—in those days.

Mrs. Burnham. I loved you, Israel better than I did anybody else—in those days.

Hubbard. Why didn't you say so?

Mrs. Burnham. I know it now. It was wrong not to tell you—but it's too late now—we have lost our dear youth.

Hubbard. It is too late! We've lost our dear youth—how careless. (*Starts to kiss her.*) (*Colonel Bradford appears upstage; Mrs. Burnham sees him enter, and utters a cry and escapes on the run.*) (*Hubbard surveys Bradford with stupid expression as Colonel comes down; then begins to laugh.*) Well, it's a —seems to be a—it's quite a success—

Bradford. What's the matter with you?

Hubbard. Didn't you see that?

Bradford. I didn't see anything.

Hubbard. S-s-s-sh! She loves me.

Bradford. Who loves you?

Hubbard. Dorcas—the widow Burnham. You could have knocked me down with a feather.

Bradford. Shut up! I'm not interested.

Hubbard. I tell you, you ought to have seen her. I said two words—and the next minute she was kissing me. What won't women do if you give 'em a chance.

Bradford. Israel, I wouldn't know you for the same man.

Hubbard. If I'm different you're to blame for it.

Bradford. What the devil do you mean?

Hubbard. I was running a nice quiet business and you took me out of the store and made me go messing in with sports—trotting horses.

Bradford. My hands itch to cuff your ears.

Hubbard. And now I'm in a high position—and get tempted by a woman like Solomon was tempted by the Queen of Sheby—and you—

Bradford. (*Grabs him and gives him a good shaking.*) Come along, you drunken old imbecile.

Hubbard. (*They start toward door.*) Yes Miles.

Bradford. You come along and get some fresh air where nobody can listen. I've got something to say to you. (*When they are near door Allan enters from ballroom. They pass him on the rush.*)

Hubbard. (*As he passes.*) Follow my example and rise, sonny! (*Bradford grabs Hubbard.*) Work, my boy. (*They exeunt.*) (*Ruth enters.*)

Ruth. What is it, Allan?

Allan. I am going to break my promise.

Ruth. Don't.

Allan. I can't help it—I'm desperate.

Ruth. Be generous.

Allan. I know I have seemed to you like a love sick boy. I don't know how to talk. I never said a word of love to anybody else in my life.

Ruth. Please, Allan.

Allan. Listen to me, now Ruth, and after this I'll keep my word. I shall be admitted to the bar next week. Judge Emerson has offered me a partnership.

Ruth. I'm so glad, Allan.

Allan. He was good enough to say he has never had any other student he would offer partnership to. You know why I tell you this, Ruth—it is not to boast.

Ruth. I know, Allan.

Allan. I can make a living now, will you marry me?

Ruth. No.

Allan. Why?

Ruth. I—I enjoy my work in the store.

Allan. Oh, Ruth—Ruth—don't talk to me as if I were a fool.

Ruth. But I'm selfish.

Allan. I don't believe it.

Ruth. Then I'm going to tell you something that you must believe. If we are married it means that your father will be ruined and your sister shamed in this town by a broken engagement.

Allan. But how can that be ?

Ruth. I know it, Allan.

Allan. You and I must sacrifice everything.

Ruth. We can't build our happiness on ruin—and hate, Allan.

Allan. I'll find out who is behind all this.

Ruth. That will do us no good, Allan. (*Goes to him and takes his hands.*) Listen to me, my dear friend—always my friend.

Allan. (*Tries to get his hands free.*) You—you love me.

Ruth. No—no, listen, I shall marry.

Allan. Without love ?

Ruth. I'd sooner do that than ruin a family. Your people have chosen somebody for you.

Allan. I know.

Ruth. Marry her.

Allan. You want to keep me away from you, that's it.

Ruth. Yes. She is pretty, is good—you will love her. I beg you to do it. Allan—help me—help me. I haven't another soul in the world to help me in this.

Allan. Oh, Ruth—Ruth—do you realize what you are asking ?

Ruth. Yes, I do realize, but tell your father—tell him to-night. Say that you will marry Annabelle Burnham—for my sake. (*Enter Bradford and Hubbard.*)

Hubbard. I'm all right—all right now.

Bradford. See that you stay that way.

Ruth. Were you ill, Mr. Hubbard.

Hubbard. Nothing—nothing—head in a whirl—a little palpitation here. (*Pats breast.*) Plum pudding, probably. (*To Allan.*) Why don't you dance ? You belong in there ? (*Points to ball-room.*) What are you doing here, after what I told you ?

Ruth. Mr. Hubbard, I believe Allan would prefer to stay here with you—he has something important to tell you—ask him what it is. (*Turns to Bradford.*) Colonel, I wish you'd invite me to have the next waltz with you.

Bradford. Well, well, we're coming on for a young lady who doesn't dance ! Waltz ! Hey ?

Ruth. Yes, I'm crazy to waltz.

Bradford. Here goes the best looking couple on the floor.
(*Allan crosses up over R. above table.*) (*Ruth and Bradford go out arm in arm. Allan stares after them.*)

Hubbard. Something important to tell me, sonny?

Allan. (*Staring in direction where couple have disappeared. Is moody.*) Father, I want to get married.

Hubbard. Look here! I told you that as for that store girl—

Allan. Oh, this is somebody else.

Hubbard. Say! You're having this thing like a run of the measles. Who now?

Allan. Annabelle Burnham.

Hubbard. Great idea! Fine! Perfect!

Allan. I'm glad you think so.

Hubbard. She's got money—looks—everything. Her mother's a fine woman—mighty fine woman. It's all right. Your mother will be tickled to death. I'll hunt her up and tell her.

Allan. Hold on! Not yet! I want you to promise me you won't say a word to anybody just yet.

Hubbard. Well, it's all settled, isn't it?

Allan. No—well—that is—I haven't as you might say, got a definite answer—but—

Hubbard. How in the devil are you doing your courting—on the 30 day option plan?

Allan. But it will be settled—and then you can tell mother. But don't do it now—promise.

Hubbard. I promise I won't tell.

Allan. Sure?

Hubbard. Say, it's a funny thing when his own son can't trust the mayor of this city with a secret. Say bub, shake! See how I have brought it around for you! I know how to manage everything—from a city to a yearling colt. Run on, now, and dance with Annabelle.

Allan. I'm glad you're happy.

Hubbard. And I can see how it is with you sonny. You're all swelling up with happiness. You're like me. When your mother told me she'd marry me I bawled like a bull calf. Scoot now. (*Exit Allan.*) (*Oscar comes in carrying Ruth's cloak.*) Hey, there, Oscar! This is some night for the Hubbard family, eh?

Oscar. Ye-ap, it is ! Getting elected first mayor.
Hubbard. Oh, that's all right—I couldn't dodge that. It's what has just happened that puts on the real snapper.
Oscar. My goodness, Mr. Hubbard—it must be something extra fine to beat the rest.
Hubbard. It is—but I can't tell you.
Oscar. (*Much disappointed.*) I'm no blabber.
Hubbard. Why, blast it, telling you isn't everybody. Allan is going to get married.
Oscar. Gosh darn it ! You don't say so ! Good !
Hubbard. He's going to marry Annabelle Burnham.
Oscar. (*Is shocked.*) Holy Scott ! Something is wrong.
Hubbard. Now don't you dare to tell a soul. It's a secret.
Oscar. 'Tain't so !
Hubbard. It ain't what ?
Oscar. 'Tain't right—don't figure out right. I don't believe it.
Hubbard. Say ! Look here, you ! If you wasn't my factotum I'd boot you around the block. I'll show you whether or not he's going to marry her. Where's my wife ?
Oscar. Just inside the door there.
Hubbard. Go get her. (*Shouts*) The idea of your disputing me about my son going to marry Annabelle Burnham. (*Oscar comes from door with Mrs. Hubbard, and exits into dancing room, carrying Ruth's cloak.*)
Mrs. Hubbard. What is it, Israel ?
Hubbard. Great news for you, Tryphona, Allan is going to get married.
Mrs. Hubbard. For mercy's sake, who—oh, I know—
Hubbard. You're right—Annabelle Burnham.
Mrs. Hubbard. I saw it coming—I told Dorcas—Oh, I must run !
Hubbard. Hi—there ! Where are you flopping to ?
Mrs. Hubbard. I'm going to run and kiss my own dear boy.
Hubbard. Not by a blame sight—this is a strict secret.
Mrs. Hubbard. But not between my darling boy and me.
Hubbard. I tell you, he made a special point of my not telling you.
Mrs. Hubbard. Israel Hubbard ! My boy not tell his own mother—
Hubbard. He knows what kind of a rattle trap you are with your mouth. You'd be blabbin' it all over the hotel.

Mrs. Hubbard. (*Begins to cry.*) Oh, to think that my boy doesn't trust his mother !

Hubbard. Quit that and go back into the ballroom. That's woman—woman all over. Can't hold anything secret. (*Mrs. Hubbard exits. Enter Bradford and Ruth.*)

Ruth. I thank you, Colonel, but please go back to the dance. It is nothing really. But I haven't danced for a long time before. My head is dizzy—that's all.

Bradford. I'll get you a glass of water. (*Exit.*)

Hubbard. I hope you don't feel sick, Ruth.

Ruth. Only a little dizziness, Mr. Hubbard.

Hubbard. Now that I think of it, Ruth, I want to tell you that most of the happiness that has come to the Hubbard family is of your doing.

Ruth. Oh, I thank you for saying that—it—it helps me—

Hubbard. Yes, yes, a little praise does help. You see, when business was so bad with us, you came in, turning the doorknob with your left hand, and that's what turned my luck. So I thank you for what you did.

Ruth. Oh !

Hubbard. Oh, yes, I went right along after that and made good. And now another thing—about Allan.

Ruth. Yes, sir.

Hubbard. You've been very nice in it. Had to take the stand I did. It may have hurt you a little—but a smart like that is soon over. He just told me he's going to marry Miss Burnham. (*Ruth sinks to sofa.*) (*Bradford enters C. with glass of water.*) But, say, see here ! Here, Miles, hurry with that water.

Bradford. Don't you feel any better ?

Hubbard. She's dizzy again—it's your fault, Miles. You ought to have known better than to yank her around the dance floor—

Bradford. Oh, go to the devil. Get out there among your guests where you belong.

Hubbard. But if I leave her here—

Bradford. I'll look after Miss Ambrose. Get out, I tell you. (*Hubbard exits.*) I hope this will help you. (*Gives her glass of water.*) Shall I get something else ?

Ruth. No, thank you, just the water. (*She drinks.*) Ah, that's cold and refreshing.

Bradford. Better own ?

Ruth. Much better now, it was the dancing.—(*Rises and Xes to L.*)

Bradford. But you seemed to be enjoying it so much in the hall,—your cheeks were so pink and your eyes were so bright ?

Ruth. Mrs. Hubbard said folks have forgotten I'm a girl. I wondered if I seemed old to—to other folks. Has it made me old because I have shut myself up in a store ? (*Looks at herself in mirror.*) Oh, I'm pale and ugly. But when I was dancing I saw myself in a mirror and I did not seem old, Colonel. I did not feel old.

Bradford. Old ! Look at the pink in these cheeks.

Ruth. Oh ! I'm blushing—I ought to blush for being silly. (*At mirror.*)

Bradford. It is not silly to be young, my dear, and glory in it. Haven't a lot of men told you you're pretty ?

Ruth. (*Sitting in chair.*) Sometimes a foolish customer has said so—and sometimes the traveling men men say so—the first time they show up—but they never say so a second time.

Bradford. I understand why they don't all right. You gave him one of those looks—I know what a look on your face can do. Don't work that look on me, Ruth, don't ! There's going to be no more Miss Ruth between you and me. Ruth, I don't want you to stay in that store any longer.

Ruth. You know I am happy where I am.

Bradford. Oh, don't bluff me. When you looked in that mirror a few moments ago and spoke of that jail of a store, your secret shone in your eyes. You want to be something else.

Ruth. But, Colonel——

Bradford. Don't try to shut me off this time. I've tried a hundred times to tell you, but that devilish Miles Standish tongue has balked.

Ruth. Colonel Bradford, I beg of you—don't go any further.

Bradford. Ruth, I love you. No matter how old I am, I love you. I feel like a boy in college, just now. I have the means to make you happy.

Ruth. Oh, Colonel Bradford, it isn't that—I don't care for money—I— (*Her voice breaks and she begins to cry softly.*)

Bradford. Don't cry, little girl. I know you don't care for money. Ruth, will you be my wife? (*He puts his hand on her shoulder—she does not lift her face.*) There must be some good reason why you will not marry me, Ruth. Do you love somebody else? (*He waits but she does not answer.*) You needn't love me very much, Ruth—I don't expect it. But can't you love me a little?

Ruth. I'm sorry all this has come into our friendship—the dearest friendship a girl could ever have. I understand you now. I was hurt at first, but now I understand—

Bradford. Understand what?

Ruth. I heard what you told Mr. Hubbard—in the store—about Allan.

Bradford. Oh! Oh! (*Greatly distressed.*)

Ruth. You have done me a great honor—but I want to go home.

Bradford. Oh, my little girl, I said that because I wanted you—because I was boiling with anger—because the thought of anyone else—but the answer to my question. (*Ruth bows her head, her face in her hands.*) Do you love someone else? I don't know as I have any right to ask you if you love somebody.

Ruth. It is all over—it is settled. Mr. Hubbard just told me.

Bradford. Did, eh? Settled, is it?

Ruth. Allan is going to marry Miss Burnham—it's better that way.

Bradford. It is, is it?

Ruth. Let me go home.

Bradford. (*Takes her by shoulders.*) Yes, Ruth, in a minute. I understand now what that love has been. If I'd ever had a daughter like you I'd have understood better, long ago.

Ruth. Please, Colonel!

Bradford. No, wait! I've got the blood of Captain Miles Standish of Plymouth in me, and I'm proud of it. After the example he set, if I stepped in between young folks, he'd look down out of his Puritan heaven and be ashamed of me.

Ruth. I wish I knew what to say, Colonel Bradford. (*Sits on S. chair.*)

Bradford. (Crossing to centre.) Say nothing. I know! The trouble is with me! I should have remembered the adage: "No man can gather cherries in Kent at the season of Christmas." (*Pauses and Ruth looks up at him, clasping her hands.*) So you see, the Standish family can't dodge fate! But they have always been good sports and know how to take their medicine! I'm going to beat you to that "I'll be your sister" business. (*Raises her face.*) Call me "Father," little girl.

Ruth. Oh, Colonel Bradford, I can't do that.

Bradford. Call me "Father"—just once.

Ruth.—(*Rises.*) Father—

Bradford. Now don't fib to your old dad. Do you love that boy?

Ruth. Yes. (*Enter Oscar.*)

Oscar. Did you find your cloak, Miss Ruth?

Bradford. Where is the Hubbard family?

Oscar. Just inside the ball room door.

Bradford. Call 'em in here—quick. (*Oscar hurries to the door.*) Little girl, don't cry any more. You'll see something to laugh at in about one second—and that's old Hubbard's face. (*Enter Hubbard, Mrs. Hubbard and Allan.*) Hubbard, if this little girl isn't married to that grasshopper son of yours inside a month I'll smash our partnership and break the agreement between my nephew and your daughter.

Hubbard. Jumping Jupiter!

Bradford. Announce their engagement to-night.

Hubbard. You said last week—

Bradford. You haven't got the memory of a quahaug.

Hubbard. My family—

Bradford. This little girl has just adopted me as her father—and I run things in my family whether you do in yours or not. Shut up—you old Mormon. Understand? Why don't you speak for yourself, John?—Speak—for yourself. (*Passes Allan over to Ruth.*)

CURTAIN.

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