

Marriage, by Dion Boucicault, 1877

Characters:

Mudgeon
Biddles
Archibald Meek
John Persimmons Esq.
Silas Auldjo
Walter
Mrs. Constant Tiffe
Mr. Constant Tiffe
Fanny
Mr. Tarbox
Mrs. Tarbox
Josephine
Bridesmaids
Miss Sniff
Miss Dexter
Mrs. Silsbee
Virginia Cudlem
Rosalie

ACT I

(SCENE—A lawyer’s office. Law Library and Engravings of Judges. Law Almanacs, etc., against the walls. On each side of door, shelves holding japanned tin cases, lettered:)

“John Persimmons, Esq.”

Captain Barnacle.

“Hagar Orphan Asylum”

Laborde Trust

“Mr. & Mrs. Constant Tiffe.”

Mr. Archibald Meek, Esq.

“Marriage Settlement.”

“Widows’ and Orphans’ Fund”

“Heirs of Jos. Buster.”

IN RE

“Ex’ors of Tarbox.”

“The Earl of Muldoon.”

Magdalen Refuge.

“The Cudlem Estate.”

(Mudgeon discovered seated on a high stool at the desk)

MUD: (*Writing*) There, that is done! (*He folds and endorses a deed*) Marriage settlement of John Persimmons—Silas Auldjo, trustee. That is another responsibility added to our burthen. (*Rises, speaking as he crosses with deed to back of table.*) John Persimmons, aged 52, marries Miss Virginia Cudlem, aged 44. This aged pair have been engaged for twenty-six years! —he settles on his mature bride a handsome income for her separate use, and the whole of his estate at his death. (*He takes up a deed from the table.*) Mr. Archibald Meek's settlement on Miss. Fanny Tarbox. This young couple met each other only two months ago! Marriage settlements should be made a year after the wedding instead of a few days before it. There is no equity in these contracts. (*Puts it down and goes down R. to front of table.*) A husband has a clear right at common law to object to a bargain where the article when delivered is found not up to the sample. Wives should be held like some estates—on lease, to be revalued from time to time. (*A gong bell is heard outside.*)

(*Enter Biddles.*)

BID: Please sir, here's two coves as wants the governor.

(*Enter Persimmons and Archibald D.L.F.*)

PERS: Is that the way you announce clients in this office? (*To Mudgeon pointing at Biddles.*) What is that?

MUD: That is our new boy, sir. He is one of Mr. Auldjo's specimens—ranked out of the gutter and sent to one of his Orphan Asylums, where they could not make a Christian of him, so they turned him out.

PERS: And Silas Auldjo took him in? Just like him! That old fool is the byeword of the town! He is an amateur in rogues, thieves and vagabonds, as another man takes to antiques or rare old china. Now, I will wager this whelp has been in prison.

BID: (*Crying*) It worn't no fault of mine.

PERS: Of course not—whose fault was it?

BID: Mother's.

PERS: You were brought to jail by the bad example of your parents, you mean?

BID: Please sir—it worn't her fault neither.

PERS: How did you get into jail then?

BID: I was born there!

ARCH: Poor boy!—Uncle John, where should we be now if our parents had given us such a start in life? I'll give him a sovereign.

PERS: *(To Biddles.)* Get out—there's a penny. *(Exit Biddles. To Archie)* Extravagant commiseration encourages the evil it is intended to console. *(Archie goes to recess and puts his hat on R table. Mudgeon gets back of table.)* When the cup of charity overflows it makes a mess. Are those deeds ready for signature? *(Persimmons puts his hat and stick on L table-in recess.)*

MUD: Here they are, sir! *(Handing one to Archibald and the other to Persimmons. Archibald goes to back of table R and sits to peruse the deed. Mudgeon returns to his desk. Persimmons crosses o fireplace.)*

ARCH: It is no use reading all this.

MUD: None whatever, sir! When you wish to set it aside, I believe you can do so.

PERS: On what plea?

MUD: If an old fool's will, made on his death bed while under influence, can be set aside on the plea of weakness of the testator's mind—

PERS: Well, sir, what then?

MUD: How much more just to set aside a marriage settlement, made by a young fool a few hours before her wedding, under the influence of—

PERS: Hold your cynical tongue, you quill-driving Diogenes! I wonder your employer has not got rid of you twenty years ago! Poor old Silas; what a life he leads, shut up in this dingy kennel! He must be rich enough. Why don't he retire from business?

MUD: *(Turning on stool)* Look round you! Don't you find fifty reasons? Each of those tin boxes contains the hopes and cares of a family. He is trustee to one, executor to another, guardian of a third. He is the husband of a dozen widows—the father of a score of orphans. He has grown to love their troubles and to share their joys and sorrows. It ain't the pleasures we love the most in life, sir, but the cares and pains that habit makes dear to us! I do believe if I was to go a winter through without my lumbago, I'd feel I had lost an old friend!

PERS: Thus you think a nuisance may at last become indispensable.

MUD: Yes.

PERS: Possibly that is the reason your master retains your services.

ARCH: (*Who has been reading the deed, rises*) I hate this legal apparatus! Why cannot I give Fanny a fortune between two kisses, as I give her a set of diamonds? These provisions for dissension and death chill the young blood of love. (*Coming down C.*)

PERS: (*Coming down R.*) Happy boy, that has young blood to chill! You are three-and-twenty; your bride, my niece, Fanny Tarbox, is nineteen; you will begin life together tomorrow; your future is before you! To-morrow I, aged 52, will marry my Virginia, aged—no matter; our future is behind us! (*To R.*)

ARCH: Is not your past a grateful compensation? You will always have the reflection that you left a young and loving girl twenty-five years ago, and when you returned here last month you found her faithful.

PERS: I went abroad to make an independence, promising myself to return and share it with her. Years passed by, and while hoarding a fortune I forgot I was squandering her youth and my own. I returned to find her the same in heart, but changed in form; she had grown fat on fidelity. (*Archie moves to L.C. Persimmons following.*) Ha, you recollect the unhappy dog that gave up the shadow for the substance; but my affection survived the shock. She was my first and only—I should say early—love. And she had adored me—only *me*—for twenty-five years! Think of that! Think of the incense of those twenty-five years offered up to *me*! Regard twenty-five years of youth burning steadily away in front of my image! Contemplate a vestal virgin growing middle-aged at my feet, on her knees, hugging my promise to her heart—faith on her brow and hope in her heart! I raised her in my arms, where she found, at last, the reward of virtue.

MUD: (*Aside.*) Poor Virtue! (*Aloud. Turning on stool.*) But perhaps, sir, she found you equally changed. (*Crosses to back of table busies himself at it.*)

PERS: (*C.*) Not a bit. I asked her; she assured me I had not grown a day older.

ARCH: (*LC*) You are a happy man! She is a fine woman still! She has not lost her figure--

PERS: No one can accuse her of that!

ARCH: A little round---

PERS: A long way round—

ARCH: Oh, come, She has a waist!

PERS: The only waist about her is the waste of her years.

ARCH: John Persimmons, don't provoke me to tell you she is only too good for you.

PERS: Eh! What? What?

ARCH: She is a splendid, lovable creature, and if I were not about to become your nephew I would cut you out, if I could, and become my own uncle! No; I mean—

PERS: Don't explain; don't! Embrace me! Your indignation is so consoling! I did but arouse your defense that I might listen to her praise. I know I am too old to marry, but so sensitive to ridicule that my vanity prompts me to be the first to say what I most dread to hear.

MUD: Cheer up, sir! A man is never old when he is young enough to be a fool about a woman. (*Back of table.*)

ARCH: So all your youth is to come!

PERS: Do you think so? Eh! Really? (*Mudgeon coming down R.*)

ARCH: What is waiting? You feel as capable of loving her as you did twenty years ago?

PERS: More so, more so!

MUD: Your heart is still as full of trust and faith?

PERS: Fuller! Much Fuller!

ARCH: You enjoy all the illusions of boyhood?

PERS: Every one of them! I've stored up my wild oats.

MUD: These are signs of a green old age, sir, a very green old age! (*Archie goes up C, enjoying Mudgeon's speech and round to fireplace.*) You have saved up a vigorous youth to pass it at the other end of your life.

PERS: Mudgeon, your hand! I have betrayed myself to you both. Stay. (*To Mudgeon*) There's a wedding present for you. (*Gives him a ring.*) 'Tis a diamond. I've worn it for many years.

MUD: Oh, sir, this is too rich a present to so poor a man as I am. (*Crosses to L.*)

PERS: Take it you old rogue! 'Tis a token given to me many years ago by--ha,ha!--a lovely creature who adored me! I ought not to keep it when now this hand is pledged to another. Not a word! I may trust you. (*Up and sits L of table. Gong bell sounds twice.*)

MUD: There's Mr. Auldjo. (*Up to desk.*)

(*Enter Silas D.L.F.*)

SILAS: (*L.C.*) Where is he? Where is that—Eh! Mr. Persimmons, I ask your pardon; Mr. Meek, yours. Forgive me gentlemen, but I hoped to find that rascal son of mine at his

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desk. I hope to find him while I am in this temper. I can talk to him now, but if I cool down I shall not be able to use the language he deserves.

ARCH: What is the matter?

SILAS: Read that letter just arrived; it comes from a highly respectable solicitor. (*Hands a letter to Persimmons. Persimmons rises and crosses to L.*) A pretty record! You will find here of how our firm has been behaving itself when it went abroad to conduct a valuable lawsuit. (*Sits L of table.*)

PERS: (*Reads*) “Dear Sirs.—The enclosed account has been transmitted to us for collection. The goods, as we are instructed, were furnished to your order. (*Reads enclosed bill.*) Madame Laferriere & Co., Paris Court Milliners. To M. Walter Auldje. One rich gray silk polonaise, trimmed chenille fringe, (*pauses and looks at Silas.*) 2 black satin corsets, (*pauses and looks at Silas.*) 30 yards of Brussels lace, 3 dozen handkerchiefs embroidered “Rosalie”, six dozen pairs of gloves, 8 buttons, number 5 $\frac{3}{4}$.” What is all this about, eh? “The above invoice was delivered to M’lle Rosalie. A cheque at your convenience will oblige.” (*Turns and looks at Silas.*)

SILAS: A year ago I took my son Walter into partnership, and the first piece of business confided to his care was the estate of a ward in Chancery—a young lady, who resided where she had been educated, in a French convent. He went to France to escort her to this country, as the Vice Chancellor decreed the orphan heiress should be brought within the jurisdiction of the courts. Walter, representing our firm, was ten months over this business—and there is how our funds were employed.

MUD: (*At desk*) Don’t be unjust to the boy! You know the young lady eloped from the convent—and our Walter was pursuing her over all Europe. The money he drew was required to pay the police who assisted him.

PERS: Did the police require black satin corsets, and were six dozen pairs of gloves with eight buttons necessary to the pursuit?

ARCH: (*Coming down R.*) Oh--I understand it! This is part of an order Walter kindly undertook to—to buy on my account. Please give it to me—this is my affair. (*Advances to Persimmons.*)

MUD: (*Aside*) Heavens bless him!—he lies like an angel.

SILAS: Did you order these things? (*Coming down R. of Archie.*)

ARCH: (*C.*) Yes—it was a bridal present, intended for Fanny—a--I wished to give her—a—a surprise.

SILAS: Oh! My dear friend, how you relieve my heart. (*A gong bell heard.*) Here he is. (*Goes behind table by R. and sits.*)

ARCH: (*Aside.*) Oh! I hope he won't betray me. (*Going up C. to R. Persimmons crosses over to R.*)

(*Enter Walter D. L. F. hangs up his hat pegs L.*)

WALT: Ha—Mr. Persimmons—good day. What! Archie too! (*Shaking hands.*) Oh, I suppose you have come to sign your settlements.

ARCH: Congratulate me. (*He takes Walter apart and explains in dumb show about the account. Up C.L.*)

SILAS: (*Aside to Persimmons.*) Don't tell Walter I suspected him.

PERS: Not a word. (*Silas busies himself at the table.*) Hum!—I wonder if Fanny's number is 5 ³/₄. Hum!—two pair of black satin corsets—I think it would surprise Fanny to receive such a present from her intended, especially if they fitted—and who is Rosalie? Archibald Meek is lying, I saw it on his face. (*Looks back and sees Walter laugh and shake Meek's hand.*) And now I see it on Walter's face.

SILAS: The deeds are ready! Walter, you can serve as one of the attesting witnesses. (*Walter moves to fireplace, behind.*)

ARCH: I feel as if I were making my will. (*Sitting on table.*)

MUD: (*Crossing to Archie and giving him pen.*) Worse, sir—a will is the end of a man's troubles, a marriage certificate is the beginning of them.

SILAS: Now, Mr. Persimmons. (*Persimmons sits R. of table.*)

(*They are about to sign *gong bell heard**)

PERS: Interrupted at such a moment!—is that a warning bell?

(*Mudgeon goes to door and looks out.*)

Silas: Let that client wait in the outer office.

MUD: Impossible, sir—'tis Mrs. Constant Tiffe.

PERS: My niece!

ARCH: My Fanny's sister.

MUD: She is in mourning. (*Goes to desk.*)

PERS: (*Down to R.*) Oh, Lord! She has quarreled with her husband again! They quarrel once a month. Then she goes under her marriage settlement like a tigress and demands a separation. We always know her condition, for she puts on mourning to provoke enquiry. Then, after a week of mortification she creeps out like a spaniel, and whines for a caress.

(*Enter Mrs. Constant Tiffe D. L. F. All bow*)

MRS. C: (*With suppressed passion.*) Good morning, Mr. Auldjo. Oh Uncle John, you are here! So much the better. Good day, Walter. Mr. Meek, you are going to marry my sister Fanny—I cordially wish her a happier fate than mine.

PERS: Has Tiffe been at it again, my dear? (*Advancing.*)

MRS. C: What do you mean by “at it again?” (*He starts back.*) —what do you mean by that expression? The ridiculous shape of your enquiry, sir, is an insult to the gravity of my wrongs.

PERS: Of course I could not know how serious the matter might be, my dear—I thought it might blow over. (*Advancing.*)

MRS. C: Blow over! (*He starts back.*)

PERS: I beg pardon for indulging in the hope. (*To R. corner.*)

MRS. C: (*Going up to L. table. Archie starts up—retires behind his chair.*) Mr. Auldjo, my husband and I are perfectly agreed that our present disagreement is to be the last—and I wish, we both wish—a deed of separation to be prepared at once. (*To L.C.*)

SILAS: Certainly—it will take a week to--

MRS. C: A week! But, sir—I want it ready for signature to-morrow!

PERS: To-morrow!

WALT: (*To Archie.*) On your wedding day!

ARCH: My dear Mrs. Tiffe— (*Coming down C.*)

MRS. C: (*L.C.*) Sophia! If you please—I hate the name of Tiffe! Please don’t remind me of my misfortune more than may be necessary.

ARCH: Then Sophia—dear Sophia—don’t you think we might postpone the melancholy event—

MRS. C: Do you refer to your marriage, sir?

ARCH: Good Heavens! No—I mean your divorce.

MRS. C: That, sir, will be the happiest day of my life. (*Crossing to C.*) Ah! You do not know what is before you! Marriage! Ha! Ha! (*Up to L.C.*)

PERS: This is a pleasant look out for a pair of bridegrooms.

MRS. C: (*Down to L. of table.*) You are right, Uncle; I have no right to destroy your illusions. Mr. Auldjo—will you take my instructions for your deed of separation?

SILAS: (*Mudgeon goes up L. to boxes*) I think I have a draft of such a one you gave me instructions for on a former occasion.

MUD: We have nine drafts—on nine former occasions! (*At deed-boxes.*)

PERS: Nine drafts—no wonder they all blew over.

(*A gong bell heard*)

MUD: (*Looking out.*) Oh! Here is Mr. Constant Tiffe.

MRS. C: My husband! (*Up to L. of door.*)

MUD: (*Aside.*) he appears excited! (*Archie down L.*)

(*Enter Tiffe D.L.F. Does not see Mrs. Tiffe. Walter sits arm chair R.*)

TIFFE: Mr. Auldjo—Ah! Uncle, you are here—so much the better. How are you, Walter? Ah! Archibald! I am not sorry to find a family party assembled here, as my business is— (*Sees Mrs. C. T.*) Oh!—a—I beg pardon; I perceive you are engaged—sorry I intruded. I'll call in to-morrow.

MRS. C: Pray, don't let my presence drive you away—I will leave you.

TIFFE: I beg you will finish your business with your legal adviser madam. (*They face at door.*)

MRS. C: Perhaps you will allow me to pass you, that is, if your ever allow anything.

TIFFE: A great deal of allowance is to be made for a person of your temper, madam.

MRS. C: Oh! Sir. (*Retires—Exit Tiffe*) There, that is what I am subject to—you see how impossible it is to get on with that man. (*She pauses.*) He shall see I'm not going to be put down in this way. (*Follows him out rapidly.*)

(*Mudgeon looks out of the window.*)

PERS: That furnishes a cheerful omen for this occasion!

ARCH: Poor Sophie! She is so jealous of Tiffe! She leads him the life of a lap dog. (*Sits L. of table.*)

(*They sign.*)

PERS: (*Stating R. of table.*) If Virginia should torment herself in that manner on my account, I shall bear the persecution with affectionate good humor.

WAL: Ay, because jealousy is a compliment to an old fellow, but 'tis a bore to a young one.

PERS: A man's age, sir, like his fortune, is not to be measured by what he has spent in the world, but rather by what amount remains unsquandered! Many young fellows of 52 possess more funds of life than your decrepit spendthrifts of 26. (*Walter rises and goes up to R.*)

MUD: There are Mr. and Mrs. Constant Tiffe on the sidewalk having it out, while that imp Biddles is looking on from the stoop and cheering the performance.

SILAS: My goodness, let us separate them; they will collect a crowd in the street.

(*Exeunt Silas and Persimmons getting their hats & c. & o.*)

ARCH: (*Down C.*) Your mention of his age hurt his feelings.

WAL: (*R.*) I hit him in the almanac--but I owed him one for his attacks on Mudgeon. The old crab, he was suckled on a lemon!

MUD: (*L.*) Bless your dear heart! But I have not recovered from the fright I fell into when your father arrived with that milliner's bill. Mr. Meek took it all upon himself. (*Going up to boxes L.—puts away papers then slowly to back of table R.*)

WAL: (*L.*) He is used to it! When we were at school together he always suffered for my misdeeds, and his back seemed to enjoy the penalty he took from mine. Archie, you are an unconscious hero!

ARCH: (*R.*) You are always doing me a service. How can I forget that you obtained Fanny for me?

WAL: After you had won her! But you would not see it.

ARCH: How did you discover it?

WAL: I made love to her on my own account.

ARCH: You courted my Fanny?

WAL: How otherwise could I have obtained her confession that she loved another? I left her no alternative. That other she avowed was you; she bound me to secrecy.

ARCH: And you came direct to tell me!

WAL: She relied on that.

ARCH: Oh, Walter! If she had accepted you, what should I have done!

WAL: No, but what should I have done? For the truth is—I am married already!

MUD: Married? (*Coming down R.*)

ARCH: You married!

MUD: Where? When! To whom?

WAL: When? (*Crosses to C.*)—A year ago. Where?—In Paris. To whom?—To Rosalie Laborde.

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MUD: To our ward in Chancery? Oh, Mr. Walter! What have you done? The girl was a sacred trust committed to our charge. This act must bring the old man to ruin, and the firm that stands so high to bankruptcy and disgrace. (*Drops in armchair R.*) She is rich. We were entrusted with her fortune.

WALT: I won't touch a penny of it!

ARCH: Stop! I do not understand all this! I thought that young lady had eloped from her convent?

WAL: So she did—with me!

MUD: (*Rises*) Then you did not employ the French police to pursue her all over Europe?

WAL: Yes, I did. And we followed them in their search. (*Up and down R.*) Two years ago our firm were concerned for a Company working an iron mine in Scotland. It was discovered that the richest part of the vein ran under a small neighboring estate belonging to a young orphan girl, residing in France. The Board of Directors proposed to buy this property before its mineral value was disclosed to the owner. My father resisted this conspiracy to defraud the absent child, and appealed to the Court of Chancery to protect her interests.

ARCH: Just like him. (*Mudgeon down R.*)

WAL: This appeal was successful. Our firm were appointed Guardians of the girl and Trustees of the property. (*Up and sits on table.*)

MUD: (*R.*) Thereby losing the business of the Company by making a girl he never saw a millionaire!

ARCH: Bless him for it. I think--that is I hope--I should have done the same had I been in his place. Oh, Walter, how proud you must be of such a father!

MUD: Thank you, sir! Thank you! (*Shaking hands with Archie and crossing to desk.*)

WAL: I was dispatched to Bordeaux to bring our ward to his country, so that she might reside within the jurisdiction of the Court. I found her in a Convent. During our first interview, I forgot I was a lawyer and a guardian, and a trustee; I forgot the Scotch mine, for I found in that peaceful retreat one of heaven's own bonanzas—a human mine that gives dividends every minute. Then by right of discovery I staked out my claim. (*Down R.*)

MUD: Oh, sir, did you reflect before you took this step? (*Down L.*)

WAL: (*R.*) Who does reflect when the world and all that is in it is flung to the stars, and the only sky above is the smiling face of a loving woman, the horizon her arms and the earth her breast. Yes, we both reflected that if conducted to this city, my father's honor would place her beyond my reach. That reflection drove us to despair, and despair drove us to church.

MUD: And while the French police were pursuing the fugitive, where were you both that they could not find you?

WAL: We were in heaven! The police never dreamed of going here. (*To R. then up.*)

ARCH: (*C.*) Mudgeon is right! If this girl was confided to your father by the Court you have taken advantage of his position to violate the trust.

MUD: (*L.*) You are liable to be sent to prison and endure the awful consequences of abducting a ward in chancery! How will you defend yourself?

WAL: (*At back of table.*) I shall produce her in court. There is an amount of provocation that palliates murder, and her beauty will justify my temporary insanity. (*Coming down C. R.*) But we have one chance to escape all danger. Rosalie has reason to believe her father still lives.

MUD: Her father alive! If that be so, his authority supersedes that of the court. What proof have you of this?

WAL: We can find no proof of his death, no trace even of his name, for the one she bore, Laborde, was her mother's maiden name. Here is the only relic she seems to have preserved of him. This was discovered amongst her papers and effects after her death.
(Crosses to R. Archie crosses to L.)

(Hands a photograph to Meek)

ARCH: This is a portion of a photograph; it has been partially burned; only half the face remains!

WAL: Look at the back.

ARCH: *(Reads)* "My husband, 1857." Twenty years ago. *(Shows it to Mudgeon.)*

WAL: The year before Rosalie was born.

MUD: You have only discovered one-half of her father.

ARCH: How do you propose to find the other half?

WAL: Do you see the name of the photographer?

ARCH: *(Reads)* "John Watkins, Dover" *(Hands it to Mudgeon.)*

WAL: I went to Dover—followed up that Watkins—traced him to Hull—thence to Bristol—lost him—found him again in Plymouth—lost him again—till yesterday, when I nailed him in Melbourne, Australia.

MUD: But you do not expect he can remember a man who sat for a likeness 20 years ago. *(Crossing to Walter—returns him photo.)*

WAL: Observe the official number on the photograph, "3827," and the note attached, "Negatives preserved; the copies may be obtained by sending to us the above number." *(Crosses to Archie.)* This morning I cabled John Watkins, Photographer, Collins street, Melbourne: "Send me ten copies of photograph number 3827, taken by you at Dover, for

which draw on me at sight for ten pounds; if you can trace by your books the name of the sitter, cable me that name and draw on me for a hundred." I am waiting for his reply.

ARCH: Do you think he has kept any such record or negatives for all this time?

WAL: The hope is slender, I confess. It is like cutting into the pack of life and trying to turn up a father.

MUD: Every child ought to be tattooed with its parents name and address. (*Crossing behind to desk. Walter goes to R. of table.*)

ARCH: I wish I could help you in your difficulty.

WAL: You can. I am in expectation of the arrival of my wife from Switzerland, where I left her six weeks ago, and I have no home to offer her. I dare not take her to a hotel. Lend me your rooms, you are going to be married to-morrow, so you will never need them again.

ARCH: (*Up to L. table.*) My dear Walter! I am so obliged to you for the proposition. Here are the keys. You know where everything is to be found.

WAL: From a bottle of champagne to a bootjack.

ARCH: Make her at home. (*Moving to L.*)

WAL: Stop! I forgot—there is a little difficulty—perhaps you might object to this. (*Hands him a telegram.*)

ARCH: What is this? (*Crosses to R.*)

WAL: A telegram I received from Switzerland a month ago.

ARCH: (*Reading*) "It's a boy." It! (*Mudgeon turns on stool.*)

WAL: Yes, you see it was an it for some time before it was established to be a he.

MUD: You don't mean to say the—the firm is a grandfather! (*Coming down L.*)

ARCH: Gracious! Walter, isn't it awful! What is to be done?

WAL: You cannot take that on your shoulders. (*Down C.*)

ARCH: Don't make a joke of such a subject.

WAL: I have named this youngster after you! Mr. Archibald Meek Auldjo.

ARCH: I'll put him into my will at once.

WAL: Don't forget as you love me, the danger I run. You will swear to keep my secret?
(*Mudgeon up to desk.*)

ARCH: Do you think I could betray your confidence? Your secret is locked in my heart.

WALT: Yes but Fanny keeps the key. When a fellow marries he is so deuced weak for the first month or two.

ARCH: Even Fanny could not induce me to forfeit my pledged word.

(*Knock at door. Biddles appears*)

BID: Please, sir, here's a p'liceman says there's a lady in a cab outside as wants somebody here, and she can't speak plain. (*Archie to R.*)

MUD: (*At window.*) There's a cab at the door, with a pile of trunks on the roof; there's a lady inside, and—oh!—there's a baby!

(*Exit Biddles.*)

WAL: What! (*Rushes to the window and pushes Mudgeon aside.*) 'Tis Rosalie! 'Tis my wife! And my—my baby. Oh, Lord!

ARCH: Where? Let me see. (*Rushes to window to upper end of desk close to chair.*)

WAL: Get out of the way! (*Knocks him aside; he falls in a chair. Knocking it over*)

(*Exit Walter D.L.F.*)

ARCH: Don't mind me—hurrah! (*Striving to get up.*)

MUD: His wife! Our child—arrived! There they are. Oh! I must speak to her—and I must kiss that baby. (*Rushes out, stumbling over Archibald's legs.*)

ARCH: Dear old chap! How delighted he is, to be sure! (*Goes to window.*) He jumps into the cab—he takes her in his arms, baby and all! Little Archie! Only fancy my being a godfather, without knowing I had a son of that kind! But oh! Surely something has happened! Here comes Mudgeon back again and Walter also. They look scared.

(*Re-enter Mudgeon D.L.F.*)

MUD: Oh, Lord! Oh, dear!

ARCH: What has happened?

MUD: Here are Mr. Persimmons and Mr. Auldjo coming back; (*Returning to corner end of desk.*) they are walking up the street.

(*Re-enter Walter.*)

WAL: They did not see me.

ARCH: What an escape! (*Up C.*)

MUD: Has the cab and the lady gone away?

WAL: No. I hadn't time to give directions to (*Running to window.*) the driver. (*Mudgeon looks out of the window.*)

MUD: There they are. Your father is stopping to speak to a client.

WAL: Archie! You can save me! (*Up to him.*)

ARCH: How? I'll do anything. (*Going up for coat-puts it on him.*)

WAL: Go down quickly, jump into the cab and take my wife to your rooms! (*Mudgeon goes up and brings down hat; they put them on him rapidly.*) I will follow you in a few minutes.

ARCH: With pleasure, old fellow! Of course I will. Where's my hat?

MUD: Take mine, and there's my overcoat.

WAL: Don't waste a moment.

ARCH: I am so delighted to do anything I can.

WAL: All right. Off with you! (*Mudgeon's felt hat covers his face. His overcoat too large enwraps his figure.*) There he goes! Surely they will never recognize him.

(*Exit Archibald D. L. F.*)

MUD: (*At the window below Walter.*) Here comes your father and Persimmons.

WAL: (*At stool—desk—window.*) Will he escape their notice? (*Looks out.*) There he goes. Ha! Ha! What a scarecrow he looks, so. The horse shies at him. No wonder. He speaks a word to the driver.

MUD: See, Persimmons is looking that way.

WAL: Archie takes a header into the cab. Bravo! They are off. (*They turn around sharply and all together say.*) Oh!

MUD: I heard a woman scream.

WAL: 'Twas Rosalie! The introduction was too sudden. She was unprepared for the sensation. (*Crosses to R.C.*)

MUD: No matter; he can explain it.

WAL: No, He can't. She does not speak three words of English, and he possesses a like amount of French. Ha! Ha! Ha! I can realize the group where the baby has the best of it.

(A gong bell sounds.)

MUD: Here comes your father! *(Sits at desk)*

WAL: Stand to your arms! *(gets back of table—sits.)*

MUD: Oh, dear, neither arms nor legs will stand to me, for I am trembling all over. How shall I look him in the face with all this on my conscience? Spectacle Business

(Walter sits at table. Mudgeon at desk. Enter Silas to L. of table—sits, and Persimmons, followed by Biddles D. L. F.)

PERS: *(Remains up.)* I thought I could not be mistaken. They boy confirms my impression.

MUD: *(Aside)* Oh, Lord.

(Exit Biddles D. L. F.)

PERS: I was sure it was he! *(Going down R.)* I heard him give his address to the driver!

WAL: *(Rising slowly. Looking inquiringly at each of them.)* A lady—a baby. What does it all mean? *(Sits.)*

PERS: *(Up to table.)* It means that your friend, whom you introduced to my niece and to our family, is a libertine! That a gentleman on the eve of his marriage does not provide polonaises and fringes, and eight button gloves, et cetera, for—ahem!—well—not to put too fine a frill upon it—for episodic females like Mademoiselle Rosalie. Yes, sir, we know all about that young person who arrived here bag, baggage and baby, invited by your friend and expected by him, evidently. He met her at this very door.

SILAS: I did not think him capable of making use of our place of business for such a rendezvous!

PERS: The day before his wedding with my niece!

SILAS: He was in disguise. I am obliged to him that he exhibited so far some respect for the firm.

PERS: What respect does he show for his bride? (*Down to R. corner.*)

SILAS: (*Rises down C.*) My dear friend, let us not forget that what transpires here within these offices is sacred. He is my client. I regret to say so. No matter. Family secrets are inviolable. Walter is my partner. Mudgeon is my confidential assistant. This awful business must go no further.

WAL: I shall be the last to speak of it, sir.

SILAS: Mudgeon will take it to his grave.

MUD: (*Aside.*) At this rate I shall soon be there.

PERS: Oh, my poor Fanny! You little dream of what a wolf you are going to discover under this sheep's clothing.

SILAS: (*Up to L. of table.*) My Walter possesses unbound influence over this misguided young man. He will exert it in defense of your niece.

WAL: (*Rises.*) It is a sacred enterprise to which I devote my noblest energies.

PERS: (*Up to R. of table.*) Do you think you can induce him to put an end to this licentious affair?

WAL: I shall make it a personal matter with him; having been instrumental to his marriage—

PERS: So you were! You are entitled to protest.

WAL: I feel so. I have the best right in the world to intervene in this case. I'll go at once.
(*To L. for hat.*)

PERS: The sooner the better.

MUD: *(Aside.)* He is walking on a tight rope. He'll be over in a minute.

SILAS: I would not have believed it of Archibald Meek!

WAL: I don't believe it yet. *(Down C.)*

PERS: Noble fellow! How he sticks by his friend!

WAL: I won't believe it! I do not pretend that he is a saint! In fact, I do not profess to be perfect myself.

SILAS: You are! You are!

PERS: Your defense of him is one proof of it.

SILAS: And the mission you undertake is another.

WAL: *(To Silas.)* You will have no objection, sir, that Mr. Archibald should occupy my rooms in your house to-night.

SILAS: He will be doubly welcome! Do you really think you will succeed in separating them so promptly? *(Silas sits back of table.)*

WAL: When I undertake anything, I do it thoroughly. I will stand no trifling.

PERS: But the lady and child?

WAL: I shall not lose sight of them. *(Exit door.)*

MUD: *(Aside.)* I'm all over a cold perspiration.

SILAS: Noble boy! *(Rises. Gets L. of table.)*

PERS: I wish I may have such a son. *(Ring. They go out D. L. F.)*

(Mudgeon opens his desk, takes out a bottle and glass and tremblingly takes a bottle of brandy.)

ACT II

SCENE- A drawing room in the house of Mrs. Tarbox. A rich toilette R.H. Bay window, richly curtained L.H. Fire place in similar recess R.H. Mrs. Tarbox seated L.H., Fanny and bridesmaids stand about toilette; Josephine, on her knees, is sewing on a bouquet of flowers to Fanny's bridal dress)

MRS. TARBOX: *(Affected to tears.)* My poor lamb—the crisis of your life is at hand! You are about to perform the supreme sacrifice in which you appear at once as the votary and the victim! How do you feel?

FANNY: *(Who has been raising her elbow.)* A little tight under the arms--this satin body stifles me.

JOSEPH: *(Looking up.)* Oh, miss! You said you had plenty of room when you tried on the dress last week.

FANNY: Yes, but you did not allow for the excitement, and I have a great big lump here, that stops my breath. Oh! I am so faint, let me sit down!

MRS. TAR: *(Starting up as the bridesmaid R. of toilette offers a chair to Fanny. Then goes to looking glass and looks in it. When Fanny returns to toilette, the bridesmaid sits in the chair R. of it.)* On no account, my dear! You would ruin the folds of your dress. Bear up my child—control your feelings. Be graceful and let me do the emotion.

(When Fanny leaves toilette, the three other bridesmaids crowd around it to look at themselves in glass.)

FANNY: How shall I ever get through it? I'm sure I shall break down, or cry.

MRS. TAR: A few tears would be seasonable.

FANNY: But whenever I cry I always want to blow my nose.

MRS. TAR: Then they must not be thought of. Keep your mind steadily fixed on the programme we rehearsed. Where is that description I prepared for to-morrow's

newspapers? (*Fanny returns to toilette.*) Here it is! I wrote it myself! Those reporters indulge in pert remarks and vulgar jokes upon these solemn occasions. (*Reads a paper she has taken from her pocket.*) “The bride entered the sacred edifice leaning gracefully upon the arm of her brother-in-law, Constant Tiffe, Esq., followed by the bridesmaids and then came Mrs. Tarbox, supported by Lord Bubblemere and accompanied by her two affectionate friends, Miss Dexter and Mrs. Silsbee, vainly endeavoring to console the bereaved mother.” Now my dear, let us try that once again. Miss Sniff, will you— my love, give me your arm—you will do for the lord.

MISS. S: Oh, please, don’t include me! I’m nobody! He! He! He! I’m a super—I’ll sit in the gallery among the crowd. He! He! He! (*Sniffs*)

MRS. T: Very well. Now Fanny, take your place, and try to look as much like bridesmaids as you can—no giggling, if you please! So—carry your head a little lower, my darling—modest oppression. Where’s my handkerchief? Now, imagine we are entering the church door and parading down the centre aisle. Soft music from the organ. Now, all together. (*Down to L. N. then to C.*)

(*The procession formed up R. Fanny and Josephine. Then four bridesmaids. Then Mrs. Tarbox, then Mrs. Silsbee and Miss Dexter. They advance. As they move*)

MRS. T: Oh! Hoo! Hoo! (*She weeps.*) Head a little on one side. Oh! Hoo! That’s better. Hoo! Hoo! Don’t tread on my train, Miss Dexter! Spread! Don’t muddle the procession!

FANNY: When am I to raise my face, mamma?

MRS. T: Never, my dear, until the ceremony is concluded. (*Stopping C.*)

FANNY: But the people will see only the nape of my neck. I shall hide Archie’s beautiful new locket under my chin.

MRS. T: Reserve your face for the last moment (*Slowly up to R. C.*)—when you turn from the altar to fall into my arms and receive the congratulations of your friends. Stand there, girls. Now, Fanny (*Pointing to dressing table.*) let us consider that toilette is the altar.

MISS SN: Very appropriate, indeed, my dear Mrs. Tarbox. Young ladies make so many sacrifices there to the god of marriage.

MRS. T: What a pity yours were never accepted, my love. (*Up C. R.*)

MISS. SN: He! He! (*Sniffs*)

MRS. T: Now, my dear, attention! The blessing has been pronounced. How graceful that back appears! Now, your unhappy mother is sensible of her loss—she utters a heartbroken sob, at hearing which you turn. Hoo! That's the cue! (*Fanny turns.*) My child! (*Embraces her.*) Throw your arms over me with graceful sympathy. So. Turn up your eyes to heaven. Girls, does the locket stand out?

(*Jos., Mrs. Silsbee, Miss Dexter and the bridesmaids, in one accord*) Oh! Beautiful! Bravo!

(*Enter Persimmons and Virginia D. L. F.*)

PERS: What tomfoolery is that sister of mine after now.

MRS. T: Brother John, you have the manners of a bear. (*To R.*)

PERS: I'm a bull, Betsy. I've not been a bear these three years, worse luck! But, as armies during battle agree to truce while they bury their dead, let you and I, during this day, forbear to exchange hostilities. (*Turning to Fanny*) Fanny, my dear, we have come to ask your pardon for a trick we have played upon you this morning.

FANNY: What do you mean?

PERS: (*Taking Virginia's arm.*) We are married! I engaged your parson to attend at the church at 8 o'clock A.M.—

VIRG: When we knew there would be nobody there but ourselves—

PERS: Except the sexton who gave her away—

FANNY: (*Running to Virginia.*) Oh! My dear Virgy, how I congratulate you!—and you too, Uncle John. Kiss me!

(*The bridesmaids surround Virginia and congratulate her.*)

MISS. SN: If I were married in this early manner, at 8 in the morning, I should feel as if the ceremony resembled an execution! He! He! (*Sniffs*)

PERS: Your husband might.

MISS. SN: He! (*Sniffs*)

PERS: Yes, here we are, man and wife, for the small sum of one pound seventeen and sixpence, including the fly. Cheap, wasn't it?

MRS. T: I hope you will find it so, I'm sure!

FANNY: I expected we should go to the altar together—hand in hand.

MISS. SN: My dear, perhaps your aunt desired to avoid disparaging comparisons. He! He! (*Sniffs*)

VIRG: No, indeed! But John made the excuse he desired to give you away—an offer he could not fulfill—

MRS. T: If he was giving himself away at the same time!

FANNY: (*Crosses to him.*) So, Uncle John, you are going to be my parent on this occasion. I wish my poor papa were alive to replace you.

PERS: Don't—he is better off, wherever he is.

VIRG: Here is a bridal present I have brought you. (*Handing her a case.*) May your happiness be as bright, pure and without flaw as these brilliants.

FANNY: Oh! How beautiful! Dear Virginia, whenever I wear them I shall think of you.
(Miss. Sniffe moves behind to Fanny--the bridesmaids around her. All admiring the present.)

MRS. T: *(R. C.)* My dear sister-in-law, such acts as these produce a graceful effect at your entry in our family. Josephine, take them down to the dining room and place them amongst the bridal offerings of our generous friends and beg the policeman to keep his particular eye on these gems *(Exit Josephine D. L. F. To Persimmons.)* Did you see the tributes of affection that overflow our board! The table groans under the display.

PERS: *(R.C.)* The generous friends did the groaning! The show looked like the plate after a charity sermon.

MRS. T: They are precious tokens offered by golden hearts.

PERS: Golden humbug! Amongst the wedding gifts I recognized the gold watch that belonged to your father.

MRS. T: Ah! *(Virginia comes down L. of Persimmons trying to stop him.)*

PERS: And the silver ice jug that played the same part at your own wedding six and twenty years ago! Nest eggs! To encourage generous friends to lay! *(To R.)*

MRS. T: *(To Mrs. Silbee and the bridesmaids.)* I hope, my dears, you don't believe a word of this. *(Crosses to L.)*

(Fanny up C. Virginia sits sofa R.)

PERS: *(R.)* Well, I suppose I am expected to come down handsome! Although I see in nature no reason why the marriage pill should be gilt. Here, my love, is my wedding gift. *(Crosses to her. Hands Fanny a parchment deed.)* It is a mortgage deed on a sound bit of property tied up securely to yourself.

MISS. SN: *(L.C.)* Very considerate indeed. It will give you a nice little income, darling, when, bye-and-bye, you separate from your husband. He! He! *(Sniffs)*

PERS: Can't you let me butter the girl without turning my butter rancid? (*Speaking to her behind Fanny and going up C. Then down R. to Virginia. Sniff remains up L.*)

(*Re-enter Josephine D. L. F.*)

JOS: Lord Bubblemere and the Honorable Miss Fungus are come, ma'am.

(*Josephine arranges Fanny's train.*)

MRS. T: (*L.*) Ah! Thoughtless creature, to blurt out the news in that fashion.

(*Embracing Fanny*) Oh, my poor lamb! Has the time come when we must part! She is going to the sacrifice!

FANNY: (*C.*) Nonsense, mamma, I'm not a lamb at all; if there's a lamb in the case 'tis Archibald; and there is no sacrifice, at least on my part, for I feel he is too good for me, and if I cannot be the happiest wife in the world it will be my own fault.

MRS. T: My dear child, these are dangerous sentiments in a young married woman. For Heaven's sake keep them to yourself! Don't let your husband hear 'em. Your happiness depends upon securing the upper hand. During the first week or two of marriage all men are weak; he will be submissive, keep him so. Once you get him down keep him down. Let him once get up and you will never get him down again! Married life is a game of bluff. The player that can frighten the other into laying down the cards, takes up the stakes. Keep the upper hand, my love. (*Goes up L.*)

FANNY: Poor, dear Archie, good as gold and true as steel! (*To R. C.*) I had rather be his slave than Queen of the rest of his sex.

(*Enter Biddles dressed as a page D.L.F.*)

BID: (*Announcing*) 'Yers Captain Yawley Fribbles and Miss Simperly has been an come.

PERS: (*Down R.*) Who invited that boy here?

MRS. T: I borrowed him of Silas Auldjo for the day. (*Up L.*)

PERS: Look out for your spoons.

MRS. T: Well, since the fatal hour has arrived. Brother John, you will give your arm to the bride.

(Exit with Miss Silsbee and Dexter. Miss Sniff and bridesmaids follow.)

JOS: *(Aside to Fanny, R of her. Giving her a card)* Hist! Miss—read it quick—'tis from Mr. Archibald.

(Exeunt all but Fanny, Josephine, Virginia and Persimmons D. L. F.)

FANNY: *(Reads apart)* "I am in the pantry—do let me see you for one minute" Poor boy! *(Aloud.)* Uncle John, read that! *(Up C. to Josephine.)*

PERS: *(Reading the card.)* So! It is from bridegroom. *(Passes it to Virginia.)*

FANNY: Josephine can smuggle him up the back stair case. *(With Josephine—up stage.)*

VIRG: If your mother suspected his presence in the house, she would be scandalized.

FANNY: You can make some excuse for my delay. I won't let him stop 5 minutes.

(She speaks aside to Josephine. Exit Josephine R.H. at back. Fanny up looking out.)

PERS: *(Aside to Virginia.)* I have reason to believe that he wishes to confide to her, before their marriage, a secret with which his conscience is oppressed. *(Bringing her to C.)*

VIRG: A secret!—

PERS: Hush! An old love affair which has rather—ahem!—embarrassing results. Archibald desires, no doubt, to make a clean breast of it before taking in a new tenant. *(Turning to go up C.)*

(Re-enter Josephine R.H. at back. Fanny coming down L.)

JOS: *(After looking around.)* All right, sir.

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(Enter Archibald. Exit Josephine R.)

ARCH: Dear Fanny! Oh! *(Seeing Pers. And Vir. He stops.)*

FANNY: Don't be afraid; 'tis only Uncle John and Aunt Virgy. I showed them your message.

PERS: *(C. back to audience Virginia on his arms.)* And I approve of your purpose. I applaud the honorable compunction you entertain to forming new ties until you have "plucked from the heart a rooted sorrow."

ARCH: *(Bewildered)* I have not got any sorrow with roots.

PERS: *(Points to a rose in his button-hole)* But you may have a rose that has, eh? Roots that reach to your heart. I say "a rose". You see, I understand.

ARCH: Then I won't detain you to explain.

PERS: Archibald, you are doing the right thing. *(Shaking his hand.)*

(Exit with Virginia D.L.F. Fanny crosses slowly to R.)

FANNY: What does he mean?

ARCH: *(Looking after them.)* The intoxication of the moment has been too much for a man of his years. *(Turns.)* No wonder. It is too much for me! *(Down to C.)*

FANNY: How you tremble!

ARCH: Yes; I am full of it! I am one big pulse all over. It is not fright exactly, only it stops my breath and makes me feel quite faint.

FANNY: *(Placing chair.)* Would you like to take something?

ARCH: Yes. *(Sits.)* What have you to give me?

FANNY: Oh, dear! What shall I do? *(Passing behind chair to his L.)* There is nothing here—but—Archie, dear—*(Kisses him.)*

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ARCH: Ah! (*Rising. Catches her in his arms. Drops in chair—she on her knees.*)

FANNY: (*With her head on his breast.*) Oh! This is very wrong! Are you better?

ARCH: Don't despise me for this! You don't think me a fool, do you?

FANNY: If I should spend the rest of my life in telling you what I think, I could not express half the pride and joy I shall feel in belonging to you.

ARCH: That is what I fear! You will find out what I am when it is too late.

FANNY: Find what? (*Withdraws.*) Have you been guilty of something? Is there a skeleton in your cupboard?

ARCH: A skeleton?

FANNY: I mean some undivulged enormity you want me to share.

ARCH: Oh, Fanny of what do you suspect me?

FANNY: Nothing. (*Putting her hand on his shoulder.*) I was in hopes! You only lack one heroic demerit to be sublime.

ARCH: What charm can such a girl as you are find in me? I know I am full of imperfections.

FANNY: Those first attracted me! The weakness of your heart overcame mine, for I could not love a man who had no redeeming faults. You do not know how good you are. You want a more selfish self to combine with your nature, as they say quicksilver combines with gold in the ore and serves to extract the more precious metal. I'll be your quicksilver. Do you understand?

ARCH: No; but it is sweet! Go on!

FANNY: (*Toying with the lapel of his coat.*) Other young men appeared to me so full of themselves, there was no room for another idol in their selfish hearts. Their loves, like

their buttonholes, seemed worn as an ornament—stuck on with a pin and changed daily. But you never had a love till you had mine, had you?

ARCH: Nothing like this! (*Puts arm around her.*)

FANNY: And if I had not made love to you as I am making it now, you would never have had the courage to make me happy.

ARCH: Other fellows do it before marriage; perhaps I shall do better afterwards. (*She releases herself.*) And you, Fanny, have you never had a lover?

FANNY: Yes, dear, fifty—buttonholes, every one of them.

ARCH: But none of them reached as high as your heart?

FANNY: They never reached higher than my waist, nor lasted longer than a round dance.

ARCH: Oh, sweet assurance! (*Rising and raising her.*) Why cannot such mutual pledges suffice to bind our lives together? Why must we parade out oaths, pouring into the worlds ears what we scarcely dare to whisper in our own? Offering to the grimace of the crowd our tenderest emotions. This marriage ceremony feels more like a pillory than a sacrament; I fear and loathe the ordeal, don't you?

FANNY: No, dear. I am only a woman, and so long as I am by your side, I don't care for all the rest.

(*Re-enter Josephine. Josephine takes bridal veil from toilette and puts it on Fanny.*)

JOS: Your mother is calling for you, Miss.

FANNY: Good-bye, Archie. (*Taking his hand.*) Why, you look as if this was the most miserable instead of the happiest day of your life! In half an hour we meet, never to part again. Take courage. (*She holds up her face to him*)

ARCH: I will. (*Kisses her*)

(Josephine L. of Fanny on her knees.)

(Enter Constant Tiffe D. L. F.)

C. T: Ho!

FANNY: Oh! *(She runs out D. R.)*

(Archie to R.)

C.T: *(L.)* What's this? Were they rehearsing the performance?

JOS: *(C. T.)* Yes, sir.

C.T: Then you had no business on the stage. *(Catches her round the waist.)* What part were you playing?

JOS: Propriety *(Disengaging herself and putting chair up.)*, if you please, sir. Come, Mr. Archibald. *(Her muslin apron remains in his hand; she runs out, followed by Archibald D. R.)*

C.T: *(Going up into inner room and looking off.)* What a provoking eye the witch has! And a trim figure, too! With a little fitting out, a fellow might pass her off for a lady—at a distance.

(Enter Mrs. Constant Tiffe D. L. F.)

MRS. C.T: *(Down C.)* My mourning is the remark of everybody. I knew it would make a sensation! They all notice I avoid Tiffe. My indifference makes him furious; but I am too proud to make the slightest move towards an explanation. Oh! There he is. I thought I should find him here. *(Tiffe thrusts the apron into his breast. Comes down R. C.)*

C.T: Do you think, Madame, you display a decent feeling towards your sister, or good taste towards our acquaintance by appearing at her wedding in that dress, and thereby parading our private affairs, to invite remarks?

MRS. C.T: What remarks?

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C.T: You desire to intrude our quarrel on public notice.

MRS. C.T: I am not ashamed of my part in it.

C.T: That is not the question. The part you are playing now in your mother's house is an outrage on your own family.

MRS. C.T: I cannot wear a face or a dress that does not fit me, out of respect to anyone, there is nothing false about *me*. (*Crosses to R.*)

C.T: You deceive yourself; you are false at this moment. That dress is put on for effect. Your temper is a mask, under which you conceal the remorse you suffer while you commit the outrage you defend.

MRS. C.T: Oh, I know, in your eyes, I am full of imperfections. 'Tis only another man's wife who can be gentle, or good, or lovely—(*Begins to cry.*)

C.T: Now you are talking nonsense. You know I never looked at another woman. I am incapable of it.

MRS. C.T: Then why did you tell me that you spent last Tuesday night at your club, when you never went near the place?

C.T: Why did you so far forget yourself, as to parade the street opposite my club all night, to play detective on your husband!

MRS. C.T: You did not come home until one in the morning; respectable people don't keep such hours, Where were you all that time?

C.T: I told you where I had been.

MRS. C.T: I have only your word for that.

C.T: You did not come home until two in the morning; where were you all that time?

MRS. C.T: Looking for you.

C.T: I have only one word for that.

MRS. C.T: Oh! He dares to suspect his wife! *(To R.)*

C.T: Oh! She pretends to suspect her husband! *(To L.)*

MRS. C.T: Pretends!

C.T: Yes, madam. These fits of suspicion, which were periodic, are becoming constitutional. Self-torment is now your normal state, suffering your only enjoyment, until, I do believe, you would be gratified to discover proofs of my infidelity.

MRS. C.T. There is no love without jealousy. *(Crosses to L.)*

C.T: There is no comfort without warmth. But that is no reason you should set my house afire.

MRS. C.T: Oh, I can't argue with you; you are a lawyer; you are too subtle for me. But I have a woman's instinct, Tiffe. Oh! And I feel—

C.T: Oh, Lord! That is enough!

MRS. C.T: Yes, sir, I feel—

C.T: You feel for yourself. I wish you would feel for me a little. *(Up to toilette.)*

MRS. C.T: Oh, Constant! *(He turns.)* What sympathy did you show for me when you saw me so miserable?

C.T: I was afraid of encouraging your malady—sympathy is so provocative.

MRS. C.T: *(Coming down.)* You knew I—I wanted only one kind word to bring me down, but you were glad of an excuse to quarrel.

C.T: Now, Sophie, you know I love you. *(Puts arm around her.)*

MRS. C.T: Oh, oh, I have been so unhappy. *(Weeping.)*

C.T: So have I.

MRS. C.T. I have not closed my eyes for the last two nights. (*Sobbing. Lays head on his shoulders.*)

C.T: No more have I.

MRS. C.T: (*Smiling.*) Then you snored to deceive me?

C.T: Eh? Oh yes, so I did.

MRS. C.T: Oh, ho, ho! What fools we are!

C.T: (*Drying her tears with Josephine's apron, discovers his error.*) Oh, we are, we are! (*Embraces her while he puts the apron into his coat pocket.*) Sophie, will you promise me never to be jealous again?

MRS. C.T: Never, dear, never.

C.T: Then I forgive you.

MRS. C.T: I never thought we should make it up, Constant (*Going up to door, he to R.*) I'll run up stairs and change my dress.

C.T: Shall I send home for the one you had made for the wedding?

MRS. C.T: (*Turning at the door.*) I—I brought it with me.

(*Exit D. L. F.*)

C.T: What an amiable confession! She is a simple child of nature, perverted by her love for me. (*Going up to toilette.*) She idolizes me. Any man who has been made an idol of, knows what a wooden thing it makes of a fellow to be stuck up and worshipped. Poor thing! (*Stops at the toilette glass as he passes it, twists his moustache and settles his hair.*) He! He! Ha! Poor thing! (*Exit D. L. F.*)

(*Enter Josephine R. at back, Biddles.*)

JOS: *(To Biddles.)* Come in; we can see them from this window. *(They go to window at side.)* There they go! There's Miss Fanny and old Persimmons. Don't my young lady look beautiful?

BID: Oh, lovely! She is a picture!

JOS: She is a picture, and I made it? She is going to have the marriage knot tied.

BID: But I thought there was agoin' to be two of 'em bounced! Where's t'other one?

JOS: She was married this morning to Mr. Persimmons.

BID: The early worm cotched the worm, didn't she?

JOS: Being a bride, it ain't etiquette for her to attend another wedding the same day.

BID: Had enough of it?

JOS: I am going along with them on their bridal tour. There will be Mr. and Mrs. Persimmons of the party. I shall see it all.

BID: Oh, how nice!

JOS: Miss Fanny could not get on without me. *(Advancing a little to C., servants following.)* Oh, only to think that just at this very minute maybe she's on the wery verge of bein' somebody else. Miss Fanny is meltin' into Mrs. Archibald Meek. She is put into a church door Miss Fanny, and in five minutes she comes out another person. It's like conjuring. Only to think, as none of us know what we are going to be. Ain't it awful suspense?

BID: *(L.)* I'd like to get it over.

JOS: If Mr. Meek don't make her happy, hanging will be too good for him.

BID: *(C.)* Oh, he ain't like them Tiffes. I know he ain't. 'Cos I seen him with that French gal—how sweet he was to her.

JOS: Seen Mr. Meek with a French gal? (*Up to him.*)

BID: Weren't I there last night at his rooms, after the French girl got settled down? A real splendid lady she is. She can't speak a word of English. She arrived yesterday at our office, but Mr. Archibald he hurried her away to his place.

ALL: Oh, my gracious!

BID: And didn't I stop there over arf an hour, nussin' the baby—

JOS: A baby!!

BID: What's the squeal? One would think I'd been nussin' a torpedo. (*Little to R.*)

JOS: You miserable little viper! You Spitz dog! (*Seizing him and backing him to R.*) Say it ain't true—say it ain't true!

(*Enter Rosalie D. L. F.*)

BID: I say it is true!—and there—(*Points to Rosalie.*) why there—there she is.

(*Josephine turns, discovers Rosalie and recoils.*)

ROSA: *Pardon Mesdemoiselles.* (*Sees Biddles*) *Ah, c'est le petit Beedles.*

BID: There! You see she knows me. (*Crossing up to Rosalie.*) Good day, ma'am.

(*Josephine joins girls.*)

ROSA: *Plus de doute, mon mari est ici.*

(*Josephine moves round stage to R. up. The girls following her and all keeping their eyes fixed on Rosalie.*)

(*Speaks aside with Biddles, they cross to window.*)

JOS: What business has that woman in this house? I'm afraid something awful is going to happen.

BID: There's Mudgeon at the door in a cab, with the baby. He beckons to me. (*To Rosalie.*) Ah! I see what you mean. I am to go down and take care of little Archie? Nussee Kiddee.

ROSA: *Oui.*

BID: All right, ma'am. (*Going D. L. F.*)

JOS: (*Up to him.*) Stop, what did you say is the name of that lady's infant?

BID: Archie! (*Exit Biddles D. L. F.*)

JOS: Oh! (*They look at Biddles as he goes out in consternation.*) Her business here is plain enough now: she is going to face the bride and spoil the wedding! (*Advancing a little—girls the same.*) Ah! You wicked, wicked creature! These French are so artful.

ROSA: *Qu'est-ce que c'est que weeket, weeket?*

JOS: Go away—do—nobody will believe you.

(*All back R. to R. C. Enter Mudgeon D. L. F.*)

MUD: Thank Heaven! The house is empty—not a soul here except Josephine. (*To Josephine and the rest.*) Leave us.

JOS: Oh! Mr. Mudgeon, ain't it awful!

MUD: Get out, I tell you! And hold your tongues, if that is possible.

(*Exeunt Josephine R. at back.*)

ROSA: *Qu'est-ce qu'elles ont? Mon Dieu! Cet anneau. (Showing him the ring Persimmons gave him) Comment cet anneau est-il trouvé a votre doigt?*

MUD: (*R. wringing his hands in helpless despair.*) Talk English—do try. She can't. (*Rosalie goes up, looks about—then down to window.*) What has come to her I cannot imagine! Mr. Walter left me with her while he was at the wedding. I gave the child that

ring to play with—the ring Mr. Persimmons presented to me yesterday. No sooner did the young mother set eyes upon it than she turned pale and had a fit. When she recovered, all trembling and sobbing, she produced from her desk another ring—the counterpart of mine. I could not understand a word of her French gabble. So, she started out to find someone here in this house she calls Mary.

ROSA: *Oui, mon mari!*

MUD: There she goes again. There's no Mary here!

ROSA: *Cet anneau, je l'ai recu de ma mère.*

MUD: What has a mare to do with it? That is my ring—ring! Comprenez?

ROSA: Ring—deux ring! *(Holds up two rings)*

MUD: Two rings—

ROSA: *Dis a ma mère.*

MUD: She's on that mare again!

ROSA: *Dat autre—*

MUD: That other. We are getting on, now.

ROSA: *Appartenait—was.*

MUD: Was a partner—you mean it is just like it. So it is!

ROSA: *To mon père.*

MUD: Of course, two are a pair.

ROSA: *(Aside) Il est bon, mais est-il bête! (To L.)*

MUD: Poor thing! Her education has been sadly neglected. They never taught the girl a word of English. *(To R.)*

ROSA: (*Seeing writing materials at table L. H.*) Ah! Voila! Je m'en vais ecrire. (*Sits and writes hastily.*)

MUD: If I am found here with her, how shall I explain her away? What will the people think? I dare not tell the truth. What is she at now? To whom is she addressing that letter? (*Reads over her shoulder.*) Mr. Auldjo.

ROSA: (*Looking up and pointing to the name.*) My mari.

MUD: Your Mary! Oh! Your husband.

ROS: *Oui*, husband!

MUD: What sort of country is it where a husband is called a Mary! (*Taking the letter.*) He shall have it.

(*Re-enter Josephine R. at back.*)

MUD: It is too late! There they are! Is there no room in the house to which you can take her until I can have a word with Mr. Walter?

ROS: Ah, *oui* Walter. Gautier—

JOS: I can take her to mine. This way; come.

ROS: He is dere?

MUD: Yes, your Mary wee—bon. (*Putting her to R.*) All right; lock her in.

ROSA: Ah, *enfin!* (*Exit with Josephine R. at back.*)

MUD: Now to find Mr. Walter. I suppose this letter will explain about this ring. It is very strange—(*Music outside. Cheers.*) What is going on now? (*Runs to window.*) The bridal party is returning from church. They must not find me here. (*Exit at back—off R.*)

(*Enter Persimmons D. L. F.*)

PERS: So that is over! Fanny is all self-possession, and poor Archibald seemed to be covered with confusion and with blushes. Who would have thought that timid bridegroom was such a practiced Don Juan under the rose!

The following was struck from the original prose.

MUD: Mr. Persimmons, you gave me a ring.

PERS: So I did.

MUD: There is a history attached to the ring.

PERS: Hush, you rogue, hush!

MUD: But there is no hush, sir! Are you aware that another ring, its counterpart, exists and has been discovered? I am called on to explain how I came by the one you gave me.

PERS: Im—impossible! Who claims the right to call you to account?

MUD: A lady named Laborde.

PERS: (*Staggering back*) Laborde! Are you mad? She—she is dead!

MUD: She lives! She has the twin ring in her possession, and—for mercy sake, sir, what's the matter? Don't faint!

PERS: I--I won't, if I can help it. You are sure of what you say?

MUD: She is here in London, with her child.

PERS: Here! I—I heard she died giving birth to it, and both mother and child—

MUD: Are flourishing, I assure you. But why should that news affect you?

PERS: Why—as you remark—ha! ha! Hush!

(Enter Josephine)

JOS: (*Aside to Mudgeon*) She is safe under lock and key. Go down and release Biddles, take the cab round the corner to the next street; leave the rest to me!

(*Exit Mudgeon, followed by Josephine*)

PERS: Rosalie Laborde alive! Alive! But in that case, what have I done this morning? I have married Virginia, while that terrible French woman, to whom I was united in a moment of infatuation twenty years ago, lives! Lives to convict me! That's what she has lived for! Lived for twenty years anonymously, watching with feline patience, biding her infernal time to pounce upon me, and the time has come! What can I do? The carriage is waiting at the door to convey Virginia and me on our bridal tour; our trunks are packed upon it, and a file of servants and friends stand on guard below us to see us off. There is no escape! If I confess at once the horrible truth, it will publish her shame, my crime, and break her faithful heart! If I don't, she will become the victim of the situation.

(*Enter Virginia.*)

VIRG: Now, John, dear, I am quite ready.

PERS: (*Aside*) Oh, Tantalus, your torment was refreshing compared with mine!

VIRG: How pale you are, dear! Are you ill?

PERS: Yes—very—no—that is—not at all!

VIRG: I know you are ill! My darling, what is the matter? (*Goes to embrace him*)

PERS: (*Avoiding her*) Nothing. (*Aside*) None of that! Fortitude has its limits. Give the devil an inch, and he will take an ell.

VIRG: You cannot deceive me.

PERS: (*Aside*) Can't I?

VIRG: You confessed you had taken no breakfast—it is mid-day—and with all you have gone through you must be nearly dead.

PERS: *(Aside)* That is the only remedy for my case—and yours.

VIRG: The wedding breakfast is ready. Come—or we can have a quiet chop together in my room.

PERS: No! I prefer a—public—I mean--

(Enter bridesmaids, Constant and Mrs. Tiffe, Archie and Fanny, Mrs. Tarbox and Mrs. Silsbee, Dexter, and Miss. Sniffe)

MRS. TAR: I am gratified to pronounce the whole affair a perfect success, although Mr. Meek's confusion disconcerted the gravity of the minister. How could you be so foolish? What were you thinking of?

ARCH: I was thinking, madam, that any man who was receiving the solemn assurance of your daughter's love, could not be making a fool of himself.

MRS. C. T: *(Crosses to him.)* Archibald, you may kiss me for that. *(Kisses him)*

FANNY: *(Aside)* I do declare, he is able to take care of himself.

MISS. SN: Upon my word! The fashions of the period are amazing. Young girls kiss young men under their husband's noses. He, he. *(Sniffs)*

MRS. C. T: Perhaps, in your period, they kissed them when their husband's backs were turned. Our morals, like our dresses, are tightfitting, and show the make—

MISS. SNIFF: With the help of padding, my dear, moral as well as physical.

C.T: My dear, Miss Sniff, will you allow me to take you down to breakfast?

MISS SNIFF: Of course—thank you! I am expected to make myself useful. He, he. What am I to do?

C.T: Mix the salad.

MISS SNIFF: He, he. *(Sniffs. Go up to L.)*

(Music outside.)

MRS. TAR: John, will you take the foot of the table? Constant will propose the bride's health; Mr. Meek will respond. *(Exit D. L. F., Mrs. Silsbee and Dexter following.)*

ARCH: Oh, Lord! I forgot all about that.

MRS. C.T: Confusion will be your best eloquence.

FANNY: Say you are speechless with joy.

PERS: Yes; the sooner we are off the better, the train will start in an hour. *(Going up to C.)*

MRS. C.T: *(Coming down L. of her.)* Constant and I have invited ourselves to join the party.

PERS: The more the merrier. *(Exits D. L. F.)*

MRS. C.T: We are going to have a honeymoon on our own account.

C.T: We shall arrive at the lovely seaside village of Shellbeach just in time for dinner. *(Exit Mr. and Mrs. C.T.)*

FANNY: Now, Archie, is the moment to give the bridesmaids your presents.

ARCH: Wouldn't it come better from you?

FANNY: Nonsense.

ARCH: I am so nervous—do help me.

FANNY: *(To the bridesmaids.)* My dears, we are so much obliged to you for your kind assistance. *(Goes to toilette and gets ring case.)*

ARCH: Kind assistance—awfully kind—very—so much.

FANNY: Mr. Meek hopes you will accept these rings in memory of the occasion. (*She opens a large case in which the rings appear. Gives case to 1st bridesmaid.*)

ALL THE BRIDESMAIDS: Oh! Mr. Meek, how beautiful!

ARCH: Not at all—don't mention it—I hope—

FANNY: He hopes—

ARCH: They will fit.

FANNY: (*Laughing aside.*) Goose! (*Aloud.*) And will serve as wedding rings to you all, before the year is out.

ARCH: Yes; they will serve you all out before—I am indeed—

FANNY: (*Aside to him.*) Now, my love, they are waiting.

ARCH: What for? (*Slowly crosses her to C.*)

FANNY: You must put the rings on.

ARCH: Put them on?

FANNY: Certainly, and then you will give each of them a kiss.

ARCH: What! Kiss them all round?

FANNY: They expect it.

ARCH: Of course, if it is the right thing to do, but I was not prepared. (*He stands regarding the file of girls.*)

FANNY: (*Laughing to herself.*) Bless him, what a darling he is.

ARCH: (*Approaching first girl.*) I—I beg your pardon. (*Places a ring on her finger and kisses her. Same business with 2d.*) So good of you. (*Same with 4th*) Awfully obliged. (*Stops at Miss Sniff, hesitates as Archie puts on the rings the case is passed from one bridesmaid to another—Archie takes the case from 4th bridesmaid Sniffe looks in it—he then returns it to bridesmaid-when she exits she leaves it on the toilette.*)

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MISS SNIFF: Oh, of course, there are no more rings in the case.

ARCH: Accept this. (*Draws one from his hand.*) It may not bring you a husband, but it will remind you, you are not friendless. (*Kisses her, crosses to Fanny and says, aside to her.*) Poor, old thing, she receives so little attention.

FANNY: Now, girls, I must change my dress. You must all come with me. Archie, you will await me here.

(*Exit Fanny and Bridesmaids R. D.*)

MISS SNIFF: Mr. Meek, you will not believe me when I assure you, no man has ever kissed me until this day.

ARCH: I do believe it. (*Taking her hand.*)

MISS SNIFF: (*L. crossing to him.*) Thank you. (*Sniffs*) (*Exit D. L. F.*)

ARCH: It feels like a dream. Is it possible she is mine, all mine, and I am going to take her away. I am glad Persimmons and Tiffe, and Virginia, and Sophia will be there. Because, just at first it will help me along.

(*Enter Walter D. L. F.*)

WAL: My dear Archie, I have received an answer from Australia.

ARCH: Have they cabled you the name?

WAL: No, here is the message. (*Reads telegram*) "Negative of the portrait exists ticketed with the name of sitter, in possession of Samuel Wilkins, photographer, Shellbeach."

ARCH: The very place to which we are going this afternoon.

WALT: I have scarcely time to run home, pack my valise and reach the train.

ARCH: I congratulate you heartily.

WALT: I shall meet you all at the station. Huzza, old chap! Bless you, Archie! Tol-de-rol!
(Dances and embraces Archie.) Ha! Ha! Fol-de-rol! La! La! La! La! *(Waltzes Archie around and sings.)*

(Enter Josephine R. at back.)

JOS: Please, sir, Miss Fanny is ready and—Oh! *(Walter, slipping from Archie, catches her and Waltzes her round and sings.)* Oh, sir, please, Mr. Walter.

WALT: *(Singing)* Tr-la-la-fol-de-rol. *(As they dance up to door the 2nd time, enter Silas and Mrs. Tarbox.)* Tra! La la! My dear Mrs. Tarbox, a discovery of great importance, which I cannot explain, must excuse my effervescence.

MRS. T: Champagne and the occasion are your best eloquence. Josephine, you leave my service this day.

JOS: Yes ma'am, but you forget, I've been in Mr. Archibald Meek's for the last half an hour. *(To Archie.)* Please, sir, my mistress sent me to say she is ready to start. Will you come to her room? *(Exit R. at back.)*

MRS. C.T: Impertinent minx! *(Crosses to R.)*

WAL: *(Aside to Silas.)* I am obliged to leave town, sir, at once, upon business. *(Dancing up to him.)*

SILAS: *(L. C.)* What business can take you away?

WAL: Private family affairs. I cannot say more at present.

SILAS: What can the boy mean.

WAL: I am in search of—tol, derol, la, la,--another father.

SILAS: Anoth—

WAL: Yes, you see—*(Embracing him.)*—you have been so cruel to me,--tra, la, la,--I have so small a share of your heart.

SILAS: Walter, my boy!

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WAL: You have been so ungenerous, denied me so many things. Tol, derol tol!

SILAS: Do you hear him?

WAL: Good bye, Mrs. Tarbox. Archie, we shall meet at Phillipi. Good bye, Dad. (*Exit dancing*)

SILAS: Am I in my senses?

MRS. T: No, you never were or you had not spoiled that boy as you have done. I have no patience with such extravagance of feeling. Mr. Meek! (*Mrs. T. exit with Archibald R. D.*)

SILAS: He said he was in search of another father. Another father! Can he have discovered the secret of his birth? Oh, I must see Virginia at once. She must be warned of this impending danger. I have noticed something strange and constrained in Walter's manner towards me of late. Here is the explanation. He has discovered my imposture; he knows he is not my son—(*Enter Virginia*) Madam, for mercy's sake! Grant me a few minutes.

VIRG: Impossible. John is at the door. (*She takes her shawl and hat.*)

SILAS: The secret you confided to me, that has lain unknown for so many years, I fear has been discovered.

VIRG: Discovered! Have you betrayed me?

SILAS: The suspicion, madam, is an offence to honor of the firm.

VIRG: Discovered! Oh what will become of me!

SILAS: (*Receiving her in his arms.*) Don't faint, please don't Virginia! Mrs. Persimmons only reflect--if anyone should see you thus--control yourself for my sake. (*Enter Persimmons D. L. F.*) For your own for Heaven's sake. (*Sees Persimmons.*) Oh! (*Putting her on sofa R.*)

PERS: I feared it would come to this at last. She has been repressing her emotion all day taking it too easy. *(Crosses to her.)* Virginia, Virgy dear, come you must not give way. She is only now beginning to realize the extent of her happiness. I am too much for her. There, there recover yourself. These devoted hearts are strong against despair but are vanquished by success. Come! That's well. *(Gets smelling salts from toilette.)*

SILAS: *(Aside.)* What will become of us both when he learns the truth. How will it all end? This emotional business is not in our line at all. Why did I ever undertake it?

PERS: You feel relieved?

VIRG: Oh John. Forgive me—will you forgive me?

SILAS: Oh dear *(Aside)* She is going to confess, what shall I do! *(Enter Mr. and Mrs. C. Tiffie)* Thank Heaven! Here is a reprieve. *(Crosses to R. C.)*

C.T: The carriages are waiting to convey us to the station. *(Enter Fanny, Mrs. Tarbox, Archie and Bridesmaids, Miss Sniff and female servants from back R. Male servants appear at door L. flat. Josephine from back R. The bridesmaids present themselves for a moment at the breakfast.)* We have no time for long speeches.

ARCH: What a relief!

MRS. T: Oh, my lamb! Must we part?

FANNY: Oh, there mamma, please don't make a scene! Good-bye! *(Kisses her)* *(To Silas.)* Good bye, dear friend. *(To Miss Sniffe.)* Good bye, you old dear!

SILAS: Bless you both.

SERVANTS: Good-bye, Miss Fanny! God bless you!

ARCH: Farewell, Mr. Tarbox!

MRS. T.: Oh, go away, do! *(As Fanny and Archie go up and out, the crowd at the door cheer. They are followed by Virginia and Persimmons. Mrs. Tarbox supported by Miss Sniffe and Mrs. Silsbee. All exeunt but Mr. and Mrs. C.T. and Silas. Exeunt Fanny and*

Archie, Persimmons and Virginia, Bridesmaids, Mrs.T. and 2 friends, Jos. and servants.)

MRS. C.T: Constant, I don't think any couples will be more happy than we.

C.T: My angel! The loveliest in Heaven's sphere is missing there when you are here.

MRS. C.T: Squeeze my hand! *(Exeunt D. L. F.)*

(Enter Josephine D. L. F.)

JOS: Oh, dear! Oh, dear!

SILAS: What is the matter?

JOS: Mrs. Tarbox, sir, overheard something Biddles said to me and she has got him in the pantry, squeezing the truth out of him.

SILAS: What truth?

JOS: About Mr. Archie's French lady.

SILAS: Oh, Lord! *(Crosses to L.)*

(Enter Mrs. Tarbox, dragging in Biddles.)

BID: Oh, please, ma'am, please don't!

MRS. T: There is your master! Now tell the truth! You say this French lady came here to this house.

BID: And she ain't gone yet.

MRS. T: Josephine, conduct that lady here to my presence.

JOS: Yes, ma'am. *(Shouts below. Exit Josephine)*

MRS. T: My dear, Mr. Auldjo, your hair will stand on end when you hear this boy's story.

BOD: Oh, he knows all about it.

MRS. T: What! He! Mr. Auldjo knows all about it?

SILAS: Gracious ma'am! Do consider the moment.

(Enter the crowd of bridesmaids, Miss Sniff. They run to the window. Mrs. Tar goes up C.—comes down at end of L. waits.)

ALL: There they go! There's Fanny! *(Cheers outside.)*

SILAS: Recollect he is your son-in-law now.

MRS. T: Did he recollect that yesterday? And it appears you knew of his turpitude; you knew it. Answer, has this boy lied?

SILAS: No; he has told the truth. *(Enter Celia)*

ALL: There's Virginia. *(Shouts.)* And they are cheering the brides. Good bye, Fanny. *(They throw bouquets and flowers out of the window, wave their handkerchiefs.)*

(Enter Josephine and Rosalie R. back.)

MRS. T: Are you aware ma'am, that your presence here is an insult to my house. Whom did you come to see?

ROSA: *Mon mari.*

MRS. T: *(L. C.)* Your husband! You dare to call him so.

ROSA: *Oui, madame. Ah! Dieu est-ce qu'elle croit que...Regardez donc. (Crosses to L.C. Points to her wedding ring.) Osez donc dire que je n'ai pas le droit de le porter.*

(Mrs. Tarbox looks at ring.)

MRS. T: *(R. C.)* His wife--she says she has the right to wear that wedding ring; that she is his lawful wife! And he has married my child! The wolf is bearing my lamb to his den. *(Sits on sofa R.)*

(Miss Sniffe, Mrs. Dexter and Mrs. Silsbee cross rapidly to Mr. Tarbox.)

ALL: They are off! They are off! (*Shouts outside. The bridesmaids and girls throw their shoes out of the window.*)

MRS. T: Oh! Oh! Ho! Ho! Ho! (*She falls into hysterics on sofa.*)

(*Enter Mudgeon D. L. F. Rosalie runs to him*)

SILAS: (*To Mudgeon*) Take her away, quick! (*Getting R. C.*)

MISS. SNIFFE: Oh dear! What's the matter? (*Mudgeon getting Rosalie to D. F.*)

(*Josephine and Miss Sniffe attend on Mrs. Tarbox. Shouts and Music outside. An act drop falls*)

ACT III

The garden attached to the Shell Beach Hotel. A villa R.H. The hotel is seen through the trees on L. Enter from one side, L. opening, a porter carrying luggage. Josephine from the other enters from the villa R.)

JOS: That is no out luggage! We have received ours, excepting one bonnet box. Ah, here it is! (*Takes a bonnet box from the porter.*) The rest belongs to Mrs. Persimmons, the lady who occupies parlor and bedroom number 16, in the hotel yonder. (*Exit porter L. up, she follows him, speaking*) Please tell the lady that Miss Fanny—I mean Mrs. Meek—is dressing and will be pleased to see her here. (*Returns*) What a sweet turtle-dove cot, and how good of Mr. Meek to have sent a forehand to secure it. (*Put chair forward. Sits R. C.*) Oh, dear. This is just the kind bower I should like to be took to by the young man of my 'art. (*Takes out hat and begins to arrange it*) Miss Fanny don't consider what my sentiments will be a standing by and watching their billing and cooing. (*Enter Tiffe U. E. L.*) I shall feel like a super in a play or a chorus singer in the opera; while the principals, in the foreground, are having it all to themselves, I, in the background, look on and encourage the scene, singing, "How—he—loves her—how—she—loves—him—Oh, yes—her, him—she, he—they love, oh, how—they love!" Ain't it aggravating? Ain't it—

C.T: Too much for human nature. (*Kisses her*)

JOS: Mr. Tiffe! What are you a doing of?

C.T: I am taking a part in the chorus!

JOS: The bass part?

C.T: Josephine, you are an angel. “The loveliest in Heaven’s sphere is missing there when you are here.”

JOS: On 27 pounds a year, and every Sunday out!

C.T: I have something here (*Touches his breast*) to confide to you. Can you keep a secret? (*Bringing her down a little.*)

JOS: No, sir. There is only one thing I can keep—

C.T: What is that?

JOS: My distance. (*Starting to R.*) Excuse my plain speaking, Mr. Tiffe; you have a lady that makes very little of herself by making too much of you. Her love leads her to believe that every girl you look at is took with her complaint, so she encourages you to try if her foolscap won’t fit all our sex.

C.T: Then, it is my wife’s fault, if she puts such thoughts in my head.

JOS: If there was not plenty of room there, sir, her faults would not be your excuse.

C.T: (*Taking hold of her.*) Ah! That is a pinch! You owe me a kiss for that! I must—(*As she interposes the bonnet box to defend herself. Enter Mrs. Constant Tiffe*)—I positively—(*He takes out the hat and continues*)—I positively did see this very same hat at Madame Chaumont’s window marked three guineas. I—(*Turns to Mrs. C.T.*)—oh, my love, what do you think this hat cost? Five pounds! I was saying I admired the very same in Bond street last week, and thought how charming you would look in it! Nay, I must try it on you—allow me.

JOS: (*R. Aside*) He is trying it on.

MRS. C.T: (*C. Resisting*) Nay, Constant, what a fool you are.

JOS: There's a pair of 'em.

C.T: (*R. C.*) Well, I will not insist; you cannot look more bewitching. There, my good girl.
(*Hands the hat back to Josephine*)

(*Exit Josephine into villa*)

MRS. C.T: Constant, I confess, with shame, that as I caught sight of you and that girl together, I—I—oh, how shall I avow my weakness?—don't look at me—can't you guess?—it was only momentary. I felt a pang of my old complaint.

C.T: You don't mean to tell me you condescended to suspect. Oh! Oh! (*Sits.*)

MRS. C.T: Only for one minute! Indeed, indeed, the thought was but a spasm, a flash that blinded me; but let my confession absolve me—say you forgive me—you are not angry.

C.T: I feel hurt, Sophia, not angry.

MRS. C.T: I own I did you wrong.

C.T: Because you did yourself injustice! When you suspected me of preferring such a—person, as a—a waiting maid to the most bewitching of wives—you depreciate my treasure! (*Hand in breast.*)

MRS. C.T: I am not a treasure! I am unworthy to possess you exclusively. Of course I know every woman envies me. *You* can't help that! I often wish that you were deformed—disfigured—

C.T: Oh!

MRS. C.T: I would be glad if you were over sixty years of age and bald as a sixpence—

C.T: Oh! Oh!

MRS. C.T: Anything to protect you from invasion by my abominable sex.

C.T: Poor things!—you are too hard on them.

MRS. C.T: I stood up for women before I was married, but now I know better! I would not trust one of them where you are concerned, and you cannot pretend I am wrong.

C.T: Well, when you say that no girl can resist me—

MRS. C.T: If you gave her encouragement—

C.T: Oh, that is another question.

MRS. C.T: You know they are too willing to mistake courtesy for devotion.

C.T: As a rule, it may be true! Yes, I am (some people are) fatally afflicted with attraction.

MRS. C.T: Euh! (*Sighs.*)

C.T: Like magnets we cannot help out inviting natures! But still there are some women—few I admit—who are not susceptible to my influence—

MRS. C.T: I should like you to name one!

C.T: Well, your sister Fanny—

MRS. C.T: Ho! Ho! Do you think she would have taken Meek if she could have had you?

(*She takes C.T.'s arm.*)

(*Enter Archie.*)

C.T: Hush! Here he is! (*To Archie.*) Where have you been?

ARCH: I have been—taking a walk.

MRS. C.T: All alone?

ARCH: Yes—

C.T: But where is your wife?

ARCH: I think she is in her room, and I was waiting until she got a little settled. I did not like to intrude.

MRS. C.T: Intrude!

ARCH: Would you mind going up to her and saying—

MRS. C.T: I think your presence would be more welcome.

C.T: We are going for a stroll in the woods. (*Going up C. arm in arm and circling to R.*)

ARCH: Delightful!—wait. (*Going towards house.*) We can go with you.

MRS. C.T: (*Aside.*) I do believe he is afraid of finding himself alone with her.

ARCH: I know she would like it.

C.T: I don't think she would. (*They nod at Archie and smile.*)

MRS. C.T: You must have so many things to say to each other. (*Circling to L.*)

ARCH: Nothing whatever, I assure you.

MRS. C.T: Come into the drawing room dear. You shall sit beside me while I play you the melodies you used to be so fond of.

C.T: (*Aside.*) Oh Lord!

MRS. C.T: And you shall make love to me, and I'll play so loud nobody can hear what you say—just as we used to do—oh! Won't it be sweet.

C.T: Delicious.

MRS. C.T: (*As they go out.*) Constant! I am the happiest woman in the world.

C.T: Angel! "The loveliest in Heaven's sphere is missing there when you are here."

MRS. C.T: Darling, squeeze my hand.

(*Exeunt L. U. E.*)

ARCH: *(Standing at the L. corner of Cottage looking after them.)* I wonder if all men on their wedding day feel as I do. My happiness has reached a dizzy height where I cannot breathe—and a delicious fear appalls me when I contemplate my fortune! *(Sits R. C.)* She is mine, there is no doubt now. Then why am I troubled? I am so used to the pleasure of hope and to caress a future that I tremble to find my hopes turned into realities and I dare not embrace the present. As we came down here I could not speak to my bride—a foolish sob stuck in my throat and when we arrived I—I stole away to the woods and I had out like a baby. I hope no one will suspect me of such weakness.

(Enter Fanny Cottage R. She creeps behind him and places her hand over his eyes)

FAN: Truant, are you deserting me already? Why what is this? *(Looks at her hands.)* Tears, oh! *(She falls kneeling beside him R. and looks up in his downcast face.)* Archie, you have been suffering—your eyes are quite red! What has happened?

ARCH: Nothing—do not ask me!

FAN: Why should I! For if I knew, I would not know how to console you. I have never had a trouble in my life, except a tight shoe; nor a care that lasted longer than a cotillion. Somehow I seem to walk always on the sunny side of the way.

ARCH: Because you made your own sunshine wherever you trod.

FAN: I hope you do not think that is all I am good for. Life is not all child's play, and I want to feel I am not a doll. I want to suffer something for your sake—to make a sacrifice—I want to deserve my happiness by earning it.

ARCH: My darling, I hope you are not a heroine!

FAN: Sometimes I feel wicked enough for anything! Archie, you remember Jack Wilder, he was the most thoughtless, brightest, giddiest good-for-nothing fellow in our set—just like me! Well, one day a dishonest agency brought ruin on him, and his mother and sisters; the proudest family in the city, were beggared. The good-for-nothing fellow took off his coat at once and set to work. He never lost his good humor, but went in for business with the same happy spirit that he used to go in for mischief. Fortune admired

him as I did, and followed at his heel. His family is now more proud of the thousands he has won, than they were of the million they lost. Archie, my heart looks up to that man. If Jack is a hero—I am afraid I am another, for—I feel—*(Rising)* I think—I am made of the same stuff.

ARCH: So do I—and as my heart looks up to you, it says you are the more manly of the two.

FAN: If you speak slightly of my husband, we shall quarrel.

(Cottage R. Enter Josephine. A butler and two waiters appear from L. opening.)

JOS: If you please, miss—ma'am, I mean—at what hour will you please to dine?

(Archie crosses to R.)

FAN: *(Aside to Arch.)* I never thought of that—did you? Are you hungry?

ARCH: No!—Hunger is the last thing that would occur to me.

FAN: I suppose we must dine! They expect it! But it will be a nuisance!

JOS: Will you order the dinner, ma'am?

FAN: *(Aside)* Oh dear! What an awful responsibility!—I never did such a thing. Here's one of the troubles I pleaded for. *(Aloud.)* Ahem, Mr. Meek—what shall it be?

ARCH: Please yourself, my dear. Order something light.

FAN: Let us have—strawberries—and—a—some fresh cream—and—some shrimps—with watercress—and some rice croquettes, flavored with lemon—I know you like that, Mr. Meek—and—oh! I forgot—a—potato salad. *(Looks at Archie.)* No, onions, please.

(Butler whispers to Josephine.)

JOS: The butler wishes to know what you will drink.

FAN: We shall—take—ahem—tea—black tea. Mr. Meek likes it strong. That will do. (*Exit Butler and Waiters L. opening.*) There! I think for a first attempt I got through that pretty well.—It will be a seaside kind of dinner—nice and picknicky.

ARCH: Fanny, I thought those servants smiled significantly. I—I hope the people here do not know we were married this morning.

FAN: I tried to look as married as I could. Josephine—I hope they do not suspect us.

JOS: Oh no, miss—I mean—ma'am.

ARCH: (*Crosses to C.*) Because we don't want to be stared at (*Taking Fanny's arm.*)—or mistaken for lovers. Say we are old married folks.

JOS: Very good, sir!

FAN: Josephine, give me my parasol. (*Josephine goes into Cottage for it, Archie moves to L.*) What shall we do until dinner time?

ARCH: What would you like best?

FAN: No—I want you to choose.

ARCH: I asked you first.

FAN: No! You didn't—now don't be disagreeable! I insist on doing what you like. I ordered the dinner. It's your turn now.

(*Josephine hands her a parasol and retires R.*)

ARCH: Is there room for me under your parasol?

FAN: Come! (*She looks at Josephine, turns away.*) What a good girl she is!

(*He places his arm around her as they go out R. I. E.*)

ARCH: There is no one in the wood!

FAN: Ah! You feel better now?

ARCH: Yes. (*Exeunt R. I. E.*)

JOS: (*Looking after them.*) If they desire to pass for old married folks, they must change that style of playing their parts. (*Going into cottage.*)

(*Silas looks on L. opening.*)

SILAS: Hist!

JOS: Mr. Auldjo!

SILAS: Hush! (*He enters.*) Don't breathe my name here. You have a kind and honest face and you will help me.

JOS: That I will, sir.

SILAS: Go to the hotel and bring Mrs. Persimmons here. I must see her privately.

JOS: Here she comes.

SILAS: Blessed Chance! (*Exit Josephine house R.*) The terrible emotion of this day overwhelms me. The frantic mother-in-law is raging behind me, coming down by the next train to rescue her lamb. Our Walter is ahead of me, exploring my dreadful past. What will become of us all? The firm never passed through such a crisis! (*Enter Mrs. Persimmons L. opening.*) My dear lady, I have followed you. I engaged an express train—never spent twenty pounds so recklessly in all my life—but suspense was killing me. If I had not come I should have slept to-night in a lunatic asylum. Have you confessed the truth to your husband?

VIR: Not yet.

SILAS: You must do so.

VIR: I had not the courage.

SILAS: My dear friend, we have led a life of imposture and we must suffer the penalty. You may lose a husband. I shall inevitable lose a son. (*Virginia goes up to him.*) My

heart may break, but I will not cheat his any longer. He says he has made a discovery. Well, whatever it may be, I will meet it by an avowal.

VIR: You will tell him that I am his mother!

SILAS: No, that is your secret. I may not betray it, but I can confess that—I am not—his father; that I am a—a fraud; have swindled him through life; made fools of his affections, and have played the part of—of a—I beg your pardon. (*Turns up the sage to hide his tears.*)

VIR: Oh, What shall I do? What shall I do? (*Up L.*)

SILAS: Do justice to yourself. You promised me to make a clean breast of it to your husband before your marriage.

VIR: I tried, but I could not indeed I did! See, here is a full confession (*Produces a letter.*), written a week ago, but I could not give it to John, his faith in me was so infinite.

SILAS: I wish I could take all the blame and sorrow on myself.

VIR: Will you take this letter to him, you can plead for me?

SILAS: What have you urged in your own defense?

VIR: Nothing. Except that, being without excuse, I am defenseless. (*Sits dejectedly tree L.*)

SILAS: (*Down R. C. Reads letter*) “My dear John.—I have deceived you, and will not accept your faithful heart under false pretenses. Many years ago, while on a visit in America, I was married. My husband left me a widow after six months of misery, and when I found my folly was unknown in England, shame for my inconstancy induced me to conceal the fatal result.” (She means Walter.) “I confided my secret to our oldest friend, Silas Auldjo, who, out of pity, consented to pass my child for his own.” (It was the first babe I ever held in my arms, and when its little fingers closed round mine I felt my heart open and enfold that rosy life. It is there not—it is there now!) (*Reads*) “He married his housekeeper to make a home for my boy.” (Of course, I had to provide him

with a mother, and she, poor soul, was the only woman I could safely trust with the business. She kept the secret and took it with her to Heaven, good soul—honest woman and faithful—God bless her!) (*Reads*) “I never knew how much I loved you until I tried to love another, but I will not attempt to excuse the falsehood which gives you the right to disbelieve me.” This is a pleasant notice to serve a man with in his wedding day!
(*Goes up.*)

VIR: (*Sobbing*) I—I thought, perhaps, the moment might—might soften his heart and—

SILAS: And coat the pill with the sugar of love. (*To R. C.*)

(*Enter Walter L. opening.*)

WAL: My father!

SILAS: (*Aside.*) There’s the fatal result!

WAL: (*Aside.*) Has he discovered my marriage?

SILAS: Walter, (*Walter advances slowly to C. Virginia down L. H.*) circumstances must be brought to light that I fear may change our relations.

WAL: (*Aside*) So! ‘Tis coming now!

SILAS: A great fraud has been committed—

WAL: Yes, sir—(*Down to Virginia.*) I am sensible of the false position in which I stand and how you are compromised.

SILAS: I allude to the secret marriage—

WAL: Of course—

SILAS: And the child—

WAL: I understand— (*Getting to C.*)

VIR: He knows all!

WAL: Of course I do!

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VIR: (*Overcome*) And you forgive me? (*Going to him. He retreats a little.*) Yes? Oh! Dear--dear boy--how often I have longed to take you to my heart and confess my love--my darling Walter! At last I can hold you in my arms. (*Embraces him.*)

WAL: Stop! There must be some mistake. (*To R.*)

SILAS: Eh! I hope so--if there could be. (*Aside*) If after all he could be my son--somehow--by mistake.

VIR: There can be none!--Walter, I am your mother!

WAL: My mother! What! (*Looks at Silas*) Is this true?

SILAS: Alas! It is too true. (*Perceiving the error in Walter's mind.*) No! Oh, no! no! Good gracious! No, I'm not--don't imagine me capable of--oh, dear--

WAL: Then will you explain, sir?

SILAS: (*R.*) I thought you knew all about it! I--I--this case is so foreign to the legitimate business of the firm--that I get confused in it--(*Up and down R.*) and I don't know whether I am for plaintiff or defendant.

WAL: But, sir, are you not my father!

SILAS: That is it. It may be when you learn what I am, you--you may cease to regard me--that is to--to love me as of old.

WAL: You are the best, gentlest, and truest of men.

SILAS: But I--I am not--I am a lie--I am a hypocrite! My whole life has been one fraud.

WAL: I would not hear your enemy say so!--You jest.

SILAS: (*To Virginia.*) Tell him the whole truth, I cannot.

VIR: Come with me--Walter. (*She takes him apart.*)

SILAS: Go--go with her! (*Watching them; apart.*) Now he must learn that he has bestowed his affections on an imposter. (*Walter and Mrs. Persimmons go off speaking*)

L. opening.) If—if—I could tell by his face (*to C. looking after them.*)—what he feels—of course, his love will now go from me—to her—‘tis natural. My eyes are too full of tears to see them. I—I must restore to her his affections, the—(*To chair R. C.*) the goods I obtained under false pretenses. Then I shall be left alone—(*Sits, drops in chair.*) alone in the world without my boy. Oh! What will become of my life! He was my future—(*Re-enter Walter L. opening. Virginia slowly after him. She remains L. watching the scene.*) There he is—I dare not look at him—I have not a word to say for myself.

WAL: I never knew you until now. (*Advancing to L. of chair.*)

SILAS: Oh dear! ‘tis coming.

WAL: When I think of my past—how can I look you in the face after all I have heard.

SILAS: Forgive me!

WAL: Father! (*hand on his shoulder.*)

SILAS: No—don’t reproach me with that name—forget it, if you can.

WAL: You have taught my heart the word and every pulse will rebel when I attempt to call you by any other.

SILAS: And you—you don’t love me less?—now you know all?

WAL: I love you a thousand times more! You ask me to forget the name you taught me to lisp—when I had no claim upon your affection, no title to your heart. Yet, you watched with a mother’s tenderness over my childhood. What? Forget the boy lying sick in his little cot—and two old men disputing in whispers lovingly over him which should sit up all night beside the sufferer? Forget the faces that beamed with pride on the wanton schoolboy? Forget my youth—my manhood—my happy home? May Heaven forget me, when I do! (*Kneels.*)

SILAS: (*Embracing him.*) Don’t!—don’t!—no!—no! Oh!—I—wish Mudgeon was here. I do feel as if I were cheating him of his share.

WAL: Don’t tremble so—dear father!

SILAS: I—I can't help it.

WAL: Alas! These are not the first tears I have made you shed! *(He wipes them away with Silas' handkerchief.)*

SILAS: But always like these—grateful, happy ones! Other people—laugh for joy—it is diff—fif—ferent with me. I—I *(He falls on Walter's neck. Virginia exits.)* My boy!

(Enter Mudgeon L. opening.)

MUD: Mr. Walter.

SILAS: Mudgeon! *(Rises to C.)* My conscience is relieved! Our boy knows all about himself. The weight of years is off my mind and I feel so happy.

(Walter up R. C.)

MUD: But we must not deprive the mother of her natural yearnings to embrace her offspring—to—*(Enter Persimmons L. Op. S.)* Bless me, how d'ye do, how, ha, ho! Excuse me. *(Goes up to Walter.)*

PERS: Why, what brought you down here?

SILAS: *(Confused. Crosses to L behind.)* A little business, nothing important. I am so elated, I mean, I will see you later, when I am more compo—posed, excuse me. *(Exit L. Op. S.)*

PERS: Is the old man drunk? *(Looks after him.)*

WAL: *(Aside to Mudgeon.)* Rosalie? Here? *(Up R. C.)*

MUD: *(Aside.)* She would come, I left her in the hotel, do go to her.

WAL: *(Aside looking at Persimmons and crosses behind him to L.)* If he only suspected, what a narrow escape I had of being his son.

PERS: *(Turns and sees him regarding him. Working himself to C.)* With what a strange expression of face he regards me.

WAL: I cannot blame my mother! No! Excuse me. (*Exit Op. S.*)

PERS: Is the young man mad?

MUD: (*Aside.*) Now to discover what mystery underlies that ring.

PERS: Very odd! (*Turns and meets Mudgeon's R. gaze fixed on him.*) What is the matter with you?

MUD: (*R.*) Mr. Persimmons you gave me a ring.

PERS: So I did.

MUD: There is a history attached to that ring.

PERS: Hush, you rogue, hush.

MUD: But there is no hush sir, are you aware that another ring, its counterpart exists, and has been discovered, I am called upon to explain how I came by the one you gave me.

PERS: Im—possible, anoth—ther ring, who claims the right to—to call any one to account.

MUD: A lady named Laborde.

PERS: (*Staggering behind Mudgeon to chair.*) Laborde! Are you mad! She—she is dead.

MUD: She lives, sir. She has the twin ring in her possession and—for mercy sake, sir, what is the matter? Don't faint.

PERS: I—I won't if I can help it. You are sure of what you say?

MUD: She is come to England with her child.

PERS: I—I heard she died in giving birth to it and both mother and infant—

MUD: Are flourishing, I assure you but why should this news affect you!

(The stage begins to dark as the evening changes to night)

PERS: Very true, as you remark, excuse me.

MUD: *(Aside)* What can he know of our Rosalie? *(Aloud)* Can I get you anything?

PERS: Yes, get out, leave me. *(Exit Mudgeon)* Laborde—Rosalie Laborde alive? *(Rises.)* Alive! But in that case, what have I done this morning? I have married Virginia, while that terrible French woman, to whom I was united in a moment of infatuation, twenty years ago—lives—lives to convict me. That is what she has been living for. Living anonymously for twenty years, under false pretenses, watching with feline patience, biding her time to pounce upon me, and that time has come. What can I do with my bride? There is no escape from the cruel alternative. If I confess the horrible truth it will publish her shame, my crime and break her faithful heart. If I delay she will become the victim of the situation. *(Turns to R.)*

(Enter Virginia L. Op. S.)

VIR: *(Aside)* There he is, how shall I accept his caress with this falsehood in my heart.

PERS: *(Aside)* My wife, that is—I beg her pardon—I mean my innocent victim. What shall I do if she is affectionate.

VIR: John, dear. *(Slowly advancing.)*

PERS: *(Aside)* Oh, Tantalus, your torments were refreshing compared to mine.

VIR: The shades of night seem to invite us to exchange our mutual confidences, do they not?

PERS: *(Aside)* No, they don't! *(Aloud)* They are rather damp, my dear. Suppose we return to the hotel.

VIR: John, dearest John. *(Embracing him.)*

PERS: *(Aside)* This is what I fear.

VIR: My darling, you know how devotedly, how truly I love you *(Embracing him.)*

PERS: Certainly. The conviction is harrowing. I mean somebody may see us. (*Removing her arms. Aside*) None of that! Fortitude has its limits. Give the devil an inch and he will take an ell.

VIR: What is the matter, dear? You seem to shrink from me. (*Aside.*) Surely, Silas has not spoken to him. (*Aloud.*) You--you have not received any--any bad news? Nothing has happened to cross you? (*She starts back to L.*)

PERS: That is it! Yes, something has happened--something terrible.

VIR: Oh!

PERS: Virginia, if events of vital importance obliged me--to--to--

VIR: To do what?

PERS: To return to town at once--to-night--

VIR: Yes, I understand--

PERS: You would not blame me?

VIR: No! I should go with you! (*Going to him and dropping her head on his breast.*)

(*Josephine enters the room in cottage R. with lamps. Night. Enter butler and servants R. with dinner, which they serve in cottage*)

PERS: (*Aside*) No escape in that direction!

VIR: Dinner is served in our room!

PERS: (*Aside*) I will not be left in her society without a witness. (*Aloud*) I invited Mr. Auldjo to join us.

VIR: Dear old Silas! I regard him as one of the family.

PERS: (*Aside*) I will confide my secret to him, and then leave him with her to explain why I abscond. (*Crosses to L.*)

VIR: (*Aside.*) I will leave them together after dinner so Silas will explain in my absence.

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(Persimmons gives him arm and Exeunt)

JOS: That will do—I can wait on my master and mistress. *(Exeunt butler and servants cottage R. Looking out)* I hope they have not forgotten all about it. No—here they come. *(She re-enters cottage, and presently reappears in room above the lights. She draws curtains)*

(Enter Archie and Fanny She speaks when R. C.)

FAN: *(Crosses to tree L.)* What a soft air whispers in the foliage! I wonder if trees go to sleep?

ARCH: You enjoyed the walk to-night?

FAN: So much! I could prolong it till daylight. *(She sits under the tree L.)* It is lovely!—Like a dream!—I cannot quite believe in my own happiness. I feel like somebody else—and fear to away and discover my delusion. How do you feel?

ARCH: I feel as if I ought to say all those things to you. But they occur to me after you have said them.

FAN: Because your heart is mine, and I translate its feelings to you. *(She pats the seat beside her. He sits L.)* Do I hurt your arm?

ARCH: No!—oh no! *(She rests her head on his breast.)* Are you comfortable?

FAN: Very! Go on—you were repeating some beautiful lines—by whom were they written?

ARCH: Byron.

FAN: Mamma would not allow me to read Byron. She said it was not proper for young ladies—and I wondered how she knew that—she must have read him some time or another.

ARCH: After she was a married woman—dear.

FAN: Then a married woman can do improper things with impunity.

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ARCH: No, my darling. Only—a girl—you understand—is obliged so—that is—she should be different—before marriage—I mean—when she becomes a wife—she is supposed to—to—

FAN: I see. But—Archie—I'm afraid I shall never be different—nothing can change me. I shall always be the same girl—after marriage—as before—Byron to the contrary notwithstanding! It's dreadful, isn't it? To be incorrigible—oh dear! Well, go on!

(She nestles her head on his shoulder. Back of his head touches tree.)

ARCH: *(Repeats)* Juan and Haidee gazed upon each other

With swimming looks of speechless tenderness,
Which mixed all feelings, friend, child, lover, brother.

FAN: How nice a mixture.

ARCH: All that the best can mingle and express,
When two pure hearts are poured in one another
And love too much—

FAN: Oh no!

ARCH: --And yet cannot love less!
But almost sanctify the sweet excess,
By the immortal wish and power to bless.

FAN: *(Sleepy)* Just—how—I—feel.

ARCH: Now pillowed cheek to cheek in loving sleep
A gentle slumber—but—it was not—deep
--A wordless music—

(He repeats slowly as he goes to sleep, with her head on his breast.)

--and her face so fair,

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FAN: (*Sleeping*) Friend—child—lover.

ARCH: (*Falling off to sleep*) Stirred with a dream—as rose leaves with the air.

FAN: (*Together with Archie.*) Pillowed in—loving sleep—sleep—sleep—

ARCH: In—gentle slumber—but it—was not deep—deep—

(*Falls to sleep.*)

JOS: Where are they? Fast asleep, I do declare!

END OF ACT

ACT IV

Scene I--*The same as last act. Morning. Breakfast table laid under the trees. Enter Mrs. Tarbox, L. I. E., and Miss Sniffe in traveling dress and carrying satchels and wraps. Mrs. Tarbox crosses to chair L. of table and sits.*

MRS. TAR: (*Very faint.*) Are you sure this is the place?

MISS SN: (*Sympathetic*) Yonder is the hotel. I have sent a servant with my card to Mr. Tiffe. Compose yourself, dear friend.

MRS. TAR: Was ever a mother placed in such a position? I have spent a night of torture. How I have lived through it is a miracle. Are there any more of those drops remaining? I must have some support.

MISS. SN: My dear soul, I fear to administer more. The apothecary made them up too strong. (*She takes a large phial from her satchel. Mrs. Tarbox takes it from her and drinks*) Do be careful; you may do yourself a mischief.

MRS. T: What matters mischief now, since I come too late to save my lamb? Too late, too late!

(Enter Tiffe, with a card L. U. E.)

TIFFE: My Mother-in-law! *(Down L.*

MRS. T: My child—where is she? My victim child!

TIFFE: Sophia? I left her in her room.

MRS. T: Sophia! No; I mean Fanny—Fanny!

TIFFE: Sophia always poses as a victim, so I presumed you alluded to her. I have not seen Fanny or Archie this morning.

MRS. T: Oh, oh!

TIFFE: What has happened?

MRS. T: Happened? Look at me! Ruin and disgrace—

MISS SN: *(C.)* Now, my dear, you must not expose the affair in this violent manner.

MRS. T: Oh, oh!

MISS. SN: She has been in this hysterical state all night.

MRS. T: If it had not been for—for—you—*(Sobbing)*—what should I have done?

MISS SN: It gratifies the tender part of my nature to nurse the sorrows of my friends.

C. T.: *(L.)* What sorrows?

MRS. T: Tell him; I cannot.

MISS SN: *(C.)* Mr. Meek is a monster! Blue Beard is an angel beside him! A French woman, who declares herself to be his wife, arrived lately from abroad. She has been living at his rooms with her infant.

C.T: His wife! Oh, I cannot believe it. Who dares to accuse him?

MRS. T: *(Rises.)* The woman herself. Mr. Auldjo does not deny it.

C.T: (*To C.*) There must be some mistake! Oh!! Stay! A young foreign lady arrived here last night—and there was an infant with her. It could not be—(*Crosses to R.*)

MRS. T: (*C.*) The same—the same. Was she not dressed in grey and cherry colors?

C.T: (*R.*) Yes, that is the description; yet I cannot realize it! It is too awful.

MISS. SN: (*L.*) I am glad I never trusted myself to one of your sex. (*Sniffs*) It might have happened to me!

C.T: But how—when did you discover all this?

MRS. T: Yesterday afternoon—just after the wedding!

C.T: Then why did you not hasten down here after them at once by the first train?

MRS. T: I did. The first train left the station in town at seven o'clock last night. In our agitation we entered the wrong carriage. We never discovered the mistake. An extra dose of anodyne drops sent me to sleep—

MISS. SN: Worn out with sympathy, I joined her. In that oblivious condition we passed the junction for Shell Beach—

MRS. T: And awoke to find ourselves in Exeter—

MISS. SN: At two in the morning. We had taken the Southern express.

C.T: (*Crosses to C.*) And you spent the rest of the night coming back.

MRS. T: Too late.

C.T: You say that Mr. Auldjo confirmed the claim of this lady. What did he say?

MRS. T: When I faced him with the evidence he acknowledged I had learned the truth—and actually suggested we should make the best of it!

C.T: (*Putting Mrs. Tarbox, cross to L.*) I can scarcely believe Meek capable of so dastardly an outrage! Mrs. Tarbox, you must leave this matter to me—you will take Fanny back to town—and as Mr. Persimmons and I are the only male representatives of

this family, we will take Mr. Meek in hand. Go to the hotel—keep quiet—don't show yourself—go to bed—take some rest.

MRS. T: Rest! Shall I ever rest again? (*Going. C. T.—musing—goes to R.*)

MRS. SN: (*Going out with her*) And to think you laid yourself out to catch this monster for your child! This comes of being a mother. Ha! I'm well out of that. (*Sniffs. (Exeunt)*)

C.T: I must see Mr. Auldjo—and Mr. Persimmons—and take counsel what to do. How fortunate they are here. Poor Fanny! What a fate! (*Josephine opens blinds and withdraws curtain of the room in cottage.*) So—there is Josephine! I would like to know if this villain has betrayed by his manner any sense of his infamy—(*Enter Josephine house R.*) Josephine—I wish to speak to you—are you alone?

JOS: My mistress will hear all you say—she is up stairs.

C.T: Hush! (*Enters the room*)

(*Enter Mrs. Constant Tiffe L. opening; she has in her hand the apron Tiffe pocketed in second act*)

MRS. C.T: I found this in his pocket—I always search his pockets in hope of discovering something. But he is so artful—I never pounced on anything until now. An apron!—a woman's apron—in his pocket—that is pretty strong—that brings it home! Oh! The firm satisfaction of convicting him! This pays for all I have suffered. And to think, that last night, we reposed in the moonlight under the verandah, and he poured poetry in my ear—he was sitting on that! (*Examines the apron*) It is such a lady's maid would wear. Oh! He is not above it—What's here?—A name!—yes—(*Reads*)—“Josephine Biggs”—my sisters maid! I caught them together yesterday—and—ha! ha! I apologized for my suspicion—ho! ho!—he—he actually made me think—oh! fool!—fool!—to mistrust my woman's instinct. Hush!—why, I hear his voice—he is in there—and—and (*Looks into cottage*) she is with him—oh! *gup to side of table.*)

C.T: (*Entering.*) You are a good girl—and if you ever leave the Meek's—my wife will give you a place.

MRS. C.T: (*Aside.*) Yes, a warm one.

C.T: There is a sovereign to buy yourself another apron—I owe you one.

JOS: Thank you, sir. (*Takes money and disappears*)

C.T: (*Entering down R.*) I did not get what I expected from her.

MRS. C.T: (*Aside*) And you will get what you don't expect from me.

C.T: Now to—(*Turns*) Ah! My angel! What has brought you abroad so early!

MRS. C.T: I wanted to know—what is that. (*Thrusts the apron under his nose*)

C.T: The devil! (*Aloud*) That? My dear, I have no idea.

MRS. C.T: I have! Look again! Don't you recognize it?

C.T: It looks something like an ante makassar.

MRS. C.T: It is a woman's apron.

C.T: What? Really? One of those things that—I did not know you wore them.

MRS. C.T: Do you know where I found it?

C.T: How should I?

MRS. C.T: I found it in your pocket—the tail pocket of the coat you wore at the wedding yesterday.

C.T: In my pocket! How came it there?

MRS. C.T: Precisely! That is what I want to know.

C.T: One of my handkerchiefs must have been changed at the wash—and that thing sent back by mistake—and—a—in the hurry of dressing yesterday—I—did not perceive—a—what I took from my drawer—and so—don't you see—

MRS. C.T: Yes—perfectly—I see the lie written in largehand across your face. I see that you are a false villain—and I see that I have been—a confiding fool.

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C.T: Mrs. Tiffe, that is enough! Allow me to indulge in the delusion that I have married a lady? (*Crosses to L.*) You have descended to the meanness of searching my pockets. I knew you were capable of it, and you have found exactly what I feared you would discover.

MRS. C.T: You confess it, then. (*Turning upon him.*)

C.T: Moderate your tone—I beg. Yes, Madame, I confess I had so little faith in your repentance—I placed so little trust in your assurance of regret for your past conduct—that I resolved to try if your protestations were sincere. I put that apron where you found it—I baited my coat tail with that female appendage—and you have fallen into the snare. Good morning. (*Exit L. Op. S.*)

MRS. C.T: His brazen assurance takes my breath away! Now, this is the end of everything! I'll have no more of it! I have been weak—but now—I am resolved—never again will I enter the same room with him—never sleep under the same roof—never breathe the same air—never—nev—Oh! Oh! (*Cries as she goes out—is going to wipe her eyes with apron—revolts from it—tears it into pieces and stamps upon it*) Oh! Oh! Oh! (*Exit L. Op. S.*)

(*Enter Persimmons at back L.*)

PERS: I am the victim of irresistible circumstances! Virginia suspects that something is weighing on my spirits. Her manner towards me has been so melancholy—so devoted. Once last night Silas led the conversation vaguely to deal with the question gnawing at my heart. He contended that married people have no claim on the past lives of each other before wedding! I dared not trust myself to speak. Virginia perceived my emotion. Sharing my pain, sensitive soul! She threw herself on my breast and burst into tears. Has she known that truth that lay here quaking in my heart within three inches of hers! (*He wipes away a tear*) Fidelity, Your name is Virginia! Oh! Virginia, will you forgive me when you realize your position?

(*Enter Virginia L. Op. S.*)

VIR: John!

PERS: (*Aside*) It is too late now to indulge in remorse! Let me squander my ill-gotten profits of crime—while they last. (*Aloud*) Virginia! I—I never saw you looking more charming. (*Embraces her*)

VIR: I feared you might repent out marriage already.

PERS: I do repent that I did not marry you twenty years ago!—That's all!

VIR: So do I.

PERS: How much misery would have been spared—when I think of how those wasted years were employed.

VIR: Oh, if I could forget—

PERS: Do forget it—don't allude to it—blot it out—bury it—cover it up under your love—sit upon it—and teach me oblivion.

VIR: Oh! Generous man!

(*Enter Archie from the house with Fanny R.*)

ARCH: Good morning! I wish you many happy returns of the day! My dear Mrs. Persimmons—(*crossing to her.*)—you are too lovely for me to call you aunt, you must wait ten years to fit yourself for the title.

PERS: My dear child—I wish I could make your honeymoon to remain always full and beaming.

FAN: We ordered the breakfast to be spread under the trees—I thought it would be so lovely to sit with the birds twittering all round us—and the speckled light embroidering our cloth with gold. (*Fanny up to table. Persimmons down R.*)

PERS: Ah! You were always happy.

FAN: Never, until now! Archie says he will buy this cottage if I like and live here forever. Oh! Here comes the breakfast—(*Enter servants with breakfast and Josephine from cottage R. Josephine goes 'round to upper end of table.*) I hope you all feel as hungry as

I do. Virgey, dear! Let us take a turn in the garden and steal some flowers for the table.
(Turning to Archie) You stop here sir! We don't want you.

(Exit Fanny and Virginia, Josephine embracing each other. (L. Op. S.) Archie and Persimmons look after them then, turning, look at each other, Shake their heads.)

ARCH: We don't deserve it.

PERS: No, we are imposters—all men are so at this crisis of their lives. These sweet creatures have no idea what those lives have been—and fondly imagine we can present as pure and fair a record as their own.

ARCH: I don't think there is anything in mine I dare not present to Fanny.

PERS: *(Taking his arm and bringing him down.)* Have you presented her with those black satin corsets and the handkerchiefs marked "Rosalie?"

ARCH: Oh! I had clean forgotten that affair.

PERS: Happy man! There are affairs that won't be forgotten—I suppose you have induced her to France.

ARCH: I was unaware that you knew—

PERS: Oh her presence in your rooms? How Walter stepped in and taught you the respect you owed to my niece. Come, Mr. Meek! Your mask is useless—so do not counterfeit surprise. Mum! —I'm dumb.—*(Aside)* It soothes my pain to find a fellow sufferer. *(To R.)*

ARCH: I am unable to defend myself—but I cannot allow your suspicion to assail that lady's honor. I give you mine that she is entitled to your respect.

PERS: A gentleman could say no less. *(Shaking hands and up C.)*

ARCH: And I have pledged my word to say no more. *(To R.)*

(Re-enter Virginia and Fanny.)

FAN: I have brought you a rosebud. *(Runs to Archie.)* There—see—the flower is just unfolding itself. You have the first sweetness of its heart.

ARCH: As I have yours! *(She pins the rose on his coat. Archie kisses a lock of her hair.)*

VIR: *(Placing a full-blown rose on Persimmons' breast.)* There's one more blown.

FAN: *(Still arranging the flower.)* That is not my hair you are kissing. It is a switch. Here, this is mine. *(Raises her finger to her head. He kisses it.)* How different that feels!

VIR: Ah!! *(Throws away the rose.)*

PERS: What's the matter?

VIR: There—was—a worm in it!

PERS: *(Aside.)* Like me!

FAN: Come, the breakfast is waiting now; I feel ravenous. *(They sit, Josephine waits)*

ARCH: This is lovely! I feel full of sunshine.

JOS: *(To Virginia)* Tea or coffee, ma'am? *(Goes down to R. of Virginia.)*

PERS: *(Breaking an egg)* Fresh, delicate and fragrant. I always thought a sheep's heart on a skewer was a poor emblem of love. Here is one more suggestive. A new laid egg! It is graceful in form and full of sustenance.

FAN: What is the good of emblems?

(Enter Tiffe, Mrs. Tarbox, Miss. Sniffe. They advance slowly, with their eyes fixed on the party seated round the table arm in arm.)

VIR: Mrs. Tarbox! *(Rise.)*

FAN: Mamma! How pale you look! *(Rise.)*

(Persimmons down to L. Archie down to R.)

TIFFE: Mrs. Persimmons, will you be kind enough to retire with Fanny? Our business will not admit of discussion in your presence.

PERS:(*Aside*) The avalanche is about to fall.

VIR: They are going to divulge—my secret.

PERS: I think, my dear, you had better withdraw.

FAN: Mamma! What is all this about?

MRS. T: Unhappy child! Go away.

FAN: My place is here (*To Archie's side.*)—and only one person in the world has the privilege to direct me.

ARCH: And his privilege also is to guard you from trouble. (*He leads her out with Virginia. Josephine follows and goes off. Virginia and Fanny enter cottage and remain in sight.*)

FAN: Now, sir, I am ready to listen to what you have to say.

TIFFE: A French lady named Rosalie Laborde arrived in his hotel last night.

PERS: (*Aside.*) And I was sleeping next door to a torpedo!

TIFFE: Were you aware of her presence here?

PERS: No.

TIFFE: I did not address you—I spoke to Mr. Meek.

ARCH: I had no idea the lady had left my rooms.

PERS: What! You don't mean to tell me the anonymous lady of the black satin polonaise and eight-button corsets was—

TIFFE: Rosalie Laborde—yes, sir! We have precise information of all that has occurred—how this lady arrived from France two days ago, and was secreted at Mr. Meek's rooms, where he visited her the evening before his wedding.

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MISS SN: Does it occur to anyone that there is an unmarried girl present. (*Sniffs*)

MRS. T: My dear—that young person is not to blame; she is the monster's wife.

PERS: His wife!

MRS. T: His lawful wife!—so she declared herself to be, in the presence of Mr. Auldjo, who did not deny her claim!

PERS:(*Aside*) He is married to my wife! Is it possible that she has balanced my account!

ARCH: My dear Mrs. Tarbox, I feel you are entitled to some explanation—my position is most awkward.

MRS. T: This young person is evidently a victim, not an accomplice!

PERS: Young! She must be five and forty!

MRS. T: (*Rises*) What can you know about it? She is a mere girl!

PERS: Why, her child must be nineteen!

MRS. T: Nineteen! Nonsense! It is a baby, in arms.

PERS: (*Aside*) I have been fooled by a similarity of names! There are two Rosalie Labordes! Oh, what a reprieve! I resume my innocence! (*Aloud*) Awkward!—Egad, sir!—It is awful, sir. I appreciate the predicament.

ARCH: However I may seem to be involved in this affair, I assure you I am the victim of appearances.

TIFFE: (*Crosses to him.*) Are you not prepared to afford some further explanation?

ARCH: I have given you my word.

TIFFE: You cannot understand the gravity of the charge against you.

ARCH: I do understand it, painfully, but I prefer to be falsely accused than forfeit my honor to preserve my character. (*Fanny in house kneels to Virginia.*)

TIFFE: And you ask your bride's family to rest content with this vague assurance! What do you offer us?

MRS. T: Your bare word!

MISS SN: How indelicate!

TIFFE: Your word! Is that all?

ARCH: (*Going slowly up to him.*) I can understand how little faith *you* place in such a pledge.

TIFFE: (*Near him, and under his breath*) You make me regret that we live in times when modern prejudice forbids me to chastise this outrage in the only manner it deserves.

ARCH: (*Quietly, and under his breath*) I have no prejudice, when the lie is flung in my face, that forbids me vindicating my honor with my life.

TIFFE: I understand you, sir. (*Turns away up to L. of Mrs. Tarbox.*)

ARCH: I am glad to explain myself clearly on one subject. Madam, I shall ask your daughter to place herself under your protection for a time. That proceeding is due to you under the circumstances. Mr. Silas Auldjo will conduct her to your rooms in the hotel, if you will do me the favor to await her there.

MISS SN: (*Aside.*) He orders us about as if we were his lacqueys. (*Takes Tiffe's arm.*)

ARCH: When you become aware of your injustice towards me, I shall expect to receive her again with your acknowledgements (*Turning to Tiffe*) and your apology. Good morning. (*Exeunt Mr. Tarbox, Tiffe and Miss. Sniffe, arm in arm L., and enter Virginia and Fanny. To Virginia*) Will you leave us together? (*Virginia crosses to Persimmons.*)

PERS:(*Aside to Virginia*) I can't make him out! Either he is as mad as Don Quixote or as impudent as a newspaper reporter at an interview!

(*Exeunt Persimmons and Virginia L. Op. S.*)

ARCH: You heard what passed?

FAN: Yes.

ARCH: I confess, your mother was entitled to demand an explanation, which I was bound in honor not to give.

FAN: But you can give it to me!

ARCH: No, I cannot. Fanny, you must trust me, if you can—blindly—unreservedly.

FAN: (*Hesitating*) Only tell me it is not true. That lady was not in your rooms.

ARCH: It is true! All they said was true—she was there—I deny nothing, except one thing—she is not my wife.

FAN: Who, what is she then?

ARCH: I cannot tell you more. I see you doubt me. (*To L. C.*)

FAN: As I listened there, I could not but recall your strange repugnance to the ceremony of our marriage. I suspected something was on your mind all day—(*slowly up to him.*) you seemed to suffer—I asked you if you had a skeleton in your cupboard.

ARCH: Yes, and you hoped I had.

FAN: (*Sobbing*) But not a female one. Oh! Archie, (*Arms 'round his neck.*) I don't love you less, because I doubt. I don't care what you have been—you are mine now—perhaps it is wrong to feel so and still cling to you—but I cannot help it—(*Enter Silas L. Op. S.*) Don't send me away—I have taken you for better or for worse—whichever you are, it is too late now to—to—mend. Oh, Archie—have pity on me, for I do love you so!

SILAS: (*Taking Fanny and working her to his L.*) Heaven forgive you if you have wronged this child, as they say you have done.

(*Enter Mrs. Constant Tiffe dressed in black U. E. L.*)

MRS. C.T: Fanny—what do I hear! (*Down R. of Silas.*)

FAN: Oh, Sophie—I am so miserable!

MISS. C.T: Look at me—I have left my husband forever.

FAN: He is sending me away.

(Each takes Silas' arm)

MRS. C.T: Then take example by me—never go back to him.

SILAS: *(Between them)* Don't cry—it will all come right—you are both deceived in your husbands—they are incapable of wronging you—*(Aside)* The Lord forgive me. *(Aloud)* Dry your bright eyes.

MRS. C.T: *(Sobbing)* But—I—I—discovered him—and I have—p—p—proofs—

SILAS: *(Circling round by R. to face L. as Walter enters L. Op. S.)* There's nothing so deceptive as proofs—I speak as a lawyer—the stronger they are—the more delusive—misplaced facts are the greatest liars.

FAN: But she was discov—vov—ered in his rooms.

SILAS: That's nothing! Why, I might have been discovered there—and—

(Enter Walter L. Op. S.)

WALT: Oh, Archie! Congratulate me father—I have at last discovered proof—

SILAS: Damn your discoveries, sir—*(Wlater looks down L.)* we have too many proofs.—'Tis enough to make a Vice-Chancellor swear.

WALT: What is the matter, sir?

SILAS: The matter, sir! Don't you see the press of business the firm has on its hands? As a junior, this is your department.

WALT: One moment, sir! I will follow you. *(Exit Silas with Fanny and Mrs. Constant Tiffe L. U. E.)* Archie, what has happened?

ARCH: They accused me of being the husband of your wife.

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WALT: Well, you denied it.

ARCH: How could I?

WALT: You don't mean to tell me you allowed Fanny to believe such a charge? I hope you told her the truth.

ARCH: I pledged you my word to keep your secret, and I have done so.

WALT: *(Turns up sharply to C. pauses then rapidly down. Embracing him)* Dear, simple-hearted, true old Archie! Thank Heaven! The necessity for secrecy is at an end. The original of the photograph has been discovered. The other half of Rosalie's father. I have seen the entry in the books of Watkins & Co., and the name to the culprit. There he is complete. *(Shows a photograph.)*

ARCH: Uncle John!

WALT: Persimmons *himself*.

ARCH: You take my breath away.

WALT: I shall take his breath away when I see him.

(Enter Rosalie and Mudgeon L. Op. S.)

ROSA: *Ah! Valter. Te voila. Oh! Je me meurs.*

WALT: What is the matter with her?

MUD: We passed Mr. Persimmons in the wood. I made her understand 'twas he gave her the ring. Then she took to shivering and crying, and wanted a pear.

ROSA: *"Mon pere. C'était lui. Je l'ai vu. (Walter shows her the photograph) Ah! Oui. C'est celá. (Kissing it passionately.)*

WALT: I lost a father yesterday, and she has found one to-day. That squares the family account. Come. Be a good girl. She must not have a fit of hysterics on the lawn. *(Leading her toward the cottage)*

ROSA: *Ah! Que je suis folle de joie! Monsieur Archie, vous me par—don—nez, n'est-ce pas? (They lead her into the cottage)*

(Enter Biddles, with the baby. He crosses and enters the cottage. Archie, seated at Rosalie's feet, takes the infant and presents it to her. Group of all in the Cottage window. Re-enter Silas between Mrs. C. Tiffe and Fannie)

SILAS: *Where is that boy? Where's Walter? (Advances to cottage, and leaving the two girls, he looks into the window) Why does he not join? (Sees the group) Oh! Dear, Oh! (He runs back, seizes Fanny and Mrs. C.T. and hurries them off)*

QUICK CURTAIN

ACT V

SCENE I--*A room in the Shellbeach Hotel looking out on the sea. Large windows at back. Doors R. and L. Miss Sniffe at table with lunch, she is eating heartily. Mrs. Tarbox on chair, Fannie at her feet, Persimmons R., Mrs. Constant Tiffe walking up and down at back, Silas seated on chair C. with his head in his hands, Virginia stands by him leaning over sofa)*

PERS: The question is: What are you going to do about it?

MRS. C.T: There is no question in my mind! Sue for divorce! The world should know what sort of man he is!

PERS: But if the fellow is really married to this French woman?

MRS. C.T: I was not thinking of Fannie's case. But of my own.

PERS: Oh, yours is easily settled.

MRS. C.T: What! Easily settled!

PERS: I mean it is not so serious.

MRS. C.T: Not serious! Oh, of course! *My* misfortunes are secondary affairs. Fannie was always the favorite of the family (*Up stage.*)—her troubles take precedence of mine. They always did! I forgot that. Help her first. Oh do, please!

FAN: (*Crying.*) I am sure you might have all the misery to yourself. I—I didn't want any!

PERS: This is the quick consequence of early marriages! They bring small profits and quick returns of repentance! If young people will eat the fruit of love while it is green, they must expect to find it painful of digestion. Look at Virginia and Me! (*Taking her hand.*) There's nothing green about us! We saved up our affections, stored 'em till they were ripe, and now we live on a sound investment. The interest may be small, but it is secure, and we can sleep on it with, abiding confidence.

(*Silas looks up at Virginia.*)

MRS. C.T: (*Coming down R of Mrs. Tarbox.*) We do not want to be reproached with your satisfaction.

MRS. T: My poor Fannie, what will become of you?

MRS. C.T: I consider her case enviable compared to mine! What satisfaction can I obtain? Separate maintenance! They will not give me divorce unless the monster adds cruelty or desertion to falsehood, and I never could provoke him to that extremity, so what can I do? I can only release him. But Fannie can put her wretch in prison, keep him there for years, and go every day and see him, in chains, alone, where no women are admitted. (*Goes up.*)

FAN: If he has wronged me I cannot help but forgive him. I cannot love and hate as you do in one breath. He bade me leave him and come to you, so I came! If he recalled me to him I should go back.

MRS. C.T: After all you know?

FAN: I know nothing but that I—I love him.

MRS. C.T: You are a fool!

PERS: What is to be done? (*Fanny rises.*)

MRS. TAR: Mr. Auldjo will help us with his advice, for I am too weak to think.

MISS SN: Poor dear! (*Eating*) This is the first morsel she has tasted these two days.

MRS. C.T: (*Down L. of him.*) Mr. Auldjo, do you hear, and will you take your head out of your hands and tell us what to do in our trouble?

SILAS: (*Looking up.*) My dear child, I am thinking how I shall behave under my own (*To Virginia. Rises.*) I cannot pursue this deception any longer. (*To Persimmons.*) My dear old friend, come with me, I have a painful matter to disclose to you in private. (*Takes out Virginia's letter.*) You should have known this long ago.

PERS: I'll have no more secrets, there are none but our own family present! I object to any concealment! Out with it, whatever it is! What letter is that?

SILAS: It is addressed to you.

PERS: Read it aloud.

SILAS: Read it?

PERS: Who is my correspondent?

VIR: I am. (*Drops on sofa, R. end.*)

PERS: You?

VIR: Yes, I wrote that letter a week ago, but I had not the courage to deliver it.

PERS: You saw me every day, why write, when you could speak?

VIR: Because I was a coward—and feared to confess I had deceived you basely—unpardonably.

PERS: Deceived me—in what?

SILAS: (*C.*) Virginia, I entreat. (*Crosses to him taking letter.*)

VIR: No, Silas; there should be no concealment. Our fault must be known sooner or later to all present.

PERS: Your fault?

VIR: I have not been the faithful, devoted woman you have imagined. I have not worshipped one idol for twenty-five years. Another image has for one moment (only one very brief moment) occupied your place. It was a passing infatuation that I experienced more than twenty years ago—when I had no hope of ever seeing you again. *(Kneels.)*

PERS: *(Rises.)* A passing infatuation! A flirtation, perhaps. Well—it is a speck on the fair page of my romance—but it is so long ago, no trace of it survives.

VIR: Yes—it does!—and it is 21 years old and cannot be called a speck—now.

PERS: What do you mean?

VIR: I mean Walter.

PERS: What of him? He could not have anything to do with it—over 20 years ago.

VIR: Alas! He had.

PERS: Walter Auldjo!

VIR: He is—my son!

(All rise.)

PERS: Your son!—your— *(Sits on sofa.)*

MRS. C.T: Virginia! Are you in your senses? *(Coming down L. C.)*

SILAS: She is!—She is!—let her go on. *(Mrs. Tarbox crosses to L.)*

PERS: Your son!!—Yours. Is this a ghastly joke? *(Crosses to Silas. Virginia down R.)*
Silas—is this true?

SILS: I confess it is too true! I have been her accomplice in keeping you in the dark. I feel it was wrong.

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PERS: Wrong! You call this infernal conspiracy wrong! So! This accounts for your desire to bring about my marriage! This accounts for your attitude yesterday when I found her in my arms. It was for this I confided to your friendship a sacred trust. How have you fulfilled it?

SILAS: I confess I shared in the deception.

PERS: Shared in it!—Of course you did—look at Walter! (*Goes to sofa.*)

SILAS: Good gracious! You do not suspect me of being the father of my son. (*Mrs. Tarbox and Fanny go up C. and Mrs. Tuffe—Silas to L.*) Mrs. Persimmons! Ma'am! Do you hear? The character of the firm was never impeached until now! I beg you to vindicate our virtue. (*Sits C.*)

VIR: Listen. (*Miss Sniffe comes down. She reads a letter*) “My dear John, I have deceived you and will not accept your faithful heart under false pretenses. Many years ago, while on a visit to America, I was married.”

PERS: Oh, Frailty! Thy name is Virginia.

VIR: (*Reads*) “My husband left me a widow after six months of misery.”

PERS: It is not a question of time.

VIR: (*Reads*) “And when I found my folly was unknown in England, shame for my inconsistency induced me to conceal the fatal result.”

PERS: You mean your husband's death?

VIR: No—my—Walter's birth!

(*Fanny goes to chair R. of table L.*)

PERS: Oh! (*Groans*)

VIR: (*Reads*) “I confided my secret to our oldest friend, Silas Auldjo, who, out of pity, consented to pass my child for his own.”

MRS. C.T: The universal father of all the unclaimed. (*Up stage.*)

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MRS. T: The man is a walking foundling hospital. (*Up stage.*)

VIR: (*Reads*) “He married his housekeeper to make a home for my boy.”

FAN: Heaven bless him. (*Crosses to him.*)

VIR: (*Reads*) “I never knew how much I loved you until I tried to love another.”

PERS: I cannot appreciate the experiment.

VIR: (*Reads*) “But I will not attempt to excuse the falsehood which gives you the right to disbelieve me.”

PERS: And this is your fidelity! This is the reward I find on returning to claim my first love! Oh, Virginia! The poetry has gone out of my life!

FAN: But, dear Uncle John, (*Crossing to him*) do consider—it was so very long ago—and Walter is such an angel.

PERS: I wish he had never been on earth.

FAN: Oh! You will forgive her—she loves you so! (*Goes up.*)

MRS. C.T: (*Coming down L. C. and crossing in front of Silas to Persimmons.*) This is the consequence of marriage late in life. If elderly people will leave the fruit of love on the tree until ‘tis over ripe, they must expect it to fall into other people’s mouths. (*Goes up.*)

MISS SN: Her only fault is being a widow, and that is next best to being a—like me. (*Sniffs. Goes up to L. of table.*)

PERS: What I cannot forgive in the duplicity! When I reflect how she played the vestal and approached the altar with this imposture on her breast, I don’t know how she could do it!

(*Enter Walter and Mudgeon L.*)

SILAS: Walter. (*Walter down L.*)

WAL: I have come, sir, to render you a faithful account of the business confided to me when I went to France to take charge of our reward in Chancery. I married her!

SILAS: You married her! In defiance of the Vice-Chancellor! It is high treason! It is contempt of Court! (*Rises.*) Ruin! Disgrace!

WAL: No, sir; for the husband of Rosalie Laborde's mother, the father of my young wife, lives.

PERS: (*Aside*) Oh, Lord, he cannot have discovered— (*Down to R.*)

WAL: Here is his portrait, taken 25 years ago. (*Hands it to Virginia*)

VIR: Why, John! This is your likeness!

PERS: Mine! Impossible. Who says I am a father?

WAL: The *Sun!* And if further evidence is required, do you recognize this ring?

MUD: You presented it to me the day before your wedding, saying it had been given to you long ago by a lovely creature who adored you. I discovered a legend engraved on the inside—R. L. to J. P., 1857.

WAL: Rosalie Laborde to John Persimmons, 1857.

VIR: The very year I was married.

MRS. T: Stop! (*Coming down L.*) I don't understand all this! You say the young French girl is your wife!

FANNY: (*Down C.*) But if so, then she cannot be Archie's wife as well.

WAL: (*L. C.*) I am glad to say that she cannot, and never was. The good fellow lent me his rooms, where my wife has resided with me, for the last two days, and he pledged his honor to keep our secret until my wife could claim her independence of the Court of Chancery by pleading a father.

MRS. T: Brother John! Is this a dream?

PER: I wish it was. *(Sits on sofa.)*

MRS. C.T: And this is your fidelity, Uncle John. Oh the poetry is gone out of her life. She cannot forgive such duplicity. When she reflects that you approached the altar with this imposture on your heart. I don't know how you would do it.

(Enter Archie and Rosalie L.)

FANNY: Archie.

ARCH: Fanny let me present to you a lady to whom you owe some apology for the trouble she has introduced into our family.

FANNY: I will ask her to plead to you for my pardon. Archie, dear; oh, if you will forgive me I will never doubt you again. *(Embraces her)* Mamma, have you nothing to say?

MRS. T: I ask your pardon for doubting your word. *(Up to R. of table.)*

(Enter Tiffe L.)

ARCH: I shall be glad to receive your excuses for your mistake.

TIFFE: Excuses! Now I have seen the lady, I should apologize in any case. Her charm would excuse any man.

ARCH: Hush! Don't you see your wife.

TIFFE: Oh! *(Turns up. Archie goes up and joins Fanny.)*

(Rosalie is conducted by Fanny on one side of Persimmons, while Virginia is led by Mrs. C. Tiffe on the other)

MRS. C.T: Uncle John—

FANNY: Uncle john—

ROSLI: *Mon père (Kneeling at his feet), tu ne veux pas m'embrasser?*

(Persimmons embraces her. Fanny up R. C.)

PERS: Virginia, we must forget and forgive. Human nature was too strong for us.

MRS. C.T: There were faults on both sides.

C.T: I am glad to hear you say so.

MRS. C.T: Oh! *(Goes up the stage R. Tiffe follows her. They meet upstage C. Bus-there)*

SILAS: Fate has reunited you both in your children. *(Crosses to Mrs. Tarbox.)*

(Enter Biddles with the baby. Crosses to Rosalie.)

ARCH: And here is another bond of union.

PERS: What is this? *(Taking infant.)*

ROSLI: *Mon enfant.*

PERS: Am I a grandfather?

MISS SN: I congratulate you; you have a ready-made family.

MRS. C.T: Mr. Auldjo! *(Down R. C.)* I wish to have a deed of separation drawn out immediately.

(Silas crosses to L.)

MUD: Here is one ready prepared. *(Draws out a deed, up stage L.)* I brought it with me in case of emergency.

MRS. C.T: Ready—prepared.

WALT: *(Drawing forward a table. Up stage R.)* We can settle this matter at once.

MRS. C.T: *(Throwing herself on her knees beside Mrs. Tarbox)* Oh, mamma, has it come to this?

C.T: *(To Mud)* You old fool, what are you about?

MUD: *(Aside to him.)* You young fool *(Aloud to Mrs. C. T.)* We are saving your life.

WALT: (*Aside to C. T.*) Now Mrs. Tiffe hold her to it; now's your time.

C.T: Sophia! Are we to part? (*Down R. of her.*)

MRS. C.T: Oh! Oh!

SILAS: Do you reflect on the fate you invoke?

VIR: Solitary confinement for life. Mrs. C.T., look at Sniffe?

MISS SN: Me?

PERS: You don't want to come to that?

MISS. SN: Don't, my dear; don't; I've tried it for thirty-two years.

MUD: Fifty-eight!

C.T: Come, Sophie, will it gratify you if I confess?

MRS. C.T: You won't? (*Turns to him.*)

C.T: I will.

MRS. C.T: Oh, Constant.

C.T: I'll confess anything.

ARCHIE: There, he can't say more than that. (*Crosses behind to Mrs. C. T.*)

PERS: You don't want particulars?

MRS. C.T: (*Embracing C.T*) It is not his fault. It is the fault of those abominable women that cannot leave him alone.

ARCH: (*To Mrs. C.T.*) Go and change your dress.

(*Mrs. C.T. goes up a step or two.*)

FANNY: (*Aside to C.T*) And change yours too. Leave off admiring other girls.

C.T: (*Aside to her*) 'Tis their fault. They should not be so lovely.

Edited and Transcribed by Brendan Driscoll

ARCH: (*Passes behind them.*) He is at it again.

(*C.T. goes up and joins Mrs. C.T.*)

C.T: My angel! “The loveliest in Heaven’s sphere”—

SILAS: (*L.*) This is the happiest day in my life, to see my clients all at peace—

ARCHIE: What a sentiment for a lawyer.

SILAS: (*L. C.*) My dear old friend, John Persimmons at the head of a family.

PERS: Oh, no! I am not the head.

SILAS: Who is, then.

PERS: This little tyrant! There’s the head of the household. His voice is omnipotent and his will despotic! There is the true head of the family. In his royal presence—the family became courtiers. The wife sinks into the position of Minister of the Interior—and the husband accepts office as Chancellor of the Exchequer. But his imperial highness King Baby is the Lord of the Ascendant.

SILAS: Sweet moderator of all our petty discords—souvenir of our youth and love!—Idol before whom we sacrifice all our selfish natures—aye, the house indeed is headless without a baby in it. (*To the audience*) Ladies—I hope I have you all for clients in this question—the most precious object in a man’s eyes should be—

ALL THE LADIES: Woman!

SILAS: And his first duty in this world is—

ALL: Marriage! (*All rise.*)