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THREE HATS

A FARCICAL COMEDY
IN THREE ACTS

ADAPTED BY
ARTHUR SHIRLEY

FROM
LES TROIS CHAPEAUX
By HENNEQUIN

FITZGERALD PUBLISHING CORPORATION
SUCCESSOR TO
DICK & FITZGERALD

18 Vesey St.

New York

CHARACTERS.

SAM SELWYN, *with a night adventure.*
 FRED BELLAMY, *Selwyn's unwilling slave.*
 CAPT. KATSKILL, *of the Kilkenny Irregulars.*
 BOSCO BLITHERS, *Professor of Penmanship.*
 DIBBS, *a boy in buttons.*
 MRS. SELWYN, *Sam's Wife.*
 GRACE, *Sam's Daughter.*
 LOTTIE BLITHERS, *secretly married to Fred.*
 TILLY, *a parlor maid.*

COSTUMES.

SELWYN.—At first as described in the "Scene," afterwards in ordinary dress.
 BELLAMY.—Walking costume.
 KATSKILL.—Exaggerated military style.
 BLITHERS.—Eccentric old gentleman's costume.
 MRS. SELWYN and GRACE.—in ordinary home dress.
 LOTTIE.—Showily dressed in walking costume.
 TILLY and DIBBS.—In servants' dress.

PROPERTIES.

Feather-duster; felt hat; three tall hats of different sizes; sword; umbrella.

ACT I.

SCENE.—*Drawing-room; door, L., at back looking into hall; chimney piece R. centre; doors on R. side in second and third entrances; door on left second entrance; window left; small sofa and armchair towards front; escritoire front, L. Music to take up curtain, "We Won't Go Home Till Morning," played, piano. As curtain rises stage is unoccupied and in semi-darkness, SELWYN opens door at back, L., and quietly creeps across, the collar of his overcoat is up, and his hat is dripping with rain. He goes R. on tiptoe and off third entrance, then returns to fix a paper on door and exit same way. FRED BELLAMY then enters by door at back, L., and executes similar business, holding his muddy boots in his hand, exit, L., second entrance.*

Enter DIBBS door right second entrance, yawning and stretching himself, he carries feather brush in his hand.

DIBBS. Ooh! What a shame to have to turn out just when you begin to appreciate your pillow. (*Reading paper on door, R.*) "Call me at tea-time." (*Crossing to L. and reading paper on other door.*) "Don't call me until to-morrow." (*Looking at clock on chimney piece.*) Hullo! Only seven o'clock! I'm up too soon! I have cheated myself out of a clear hour in bed. Shall I go back again? No! The governor's left out his cigars and I know the best brands he keeps three sorts—these cost about sixpence each and he smokes 'em himself—these are worth perhaps twopence and are for the use of his friends—and these he gives to his father-in-law, warranted real cabbage, five shillings a hundred! I'm not his father-in-law, and I'm not his friend, so I'll have a dip in here. (*Taking some from first box.*) It's strange my tastes and the governor's should be so similar—we both like the best of everything! (*Lighting cigar.*) I'm not in a bad billet here, nothing to do and no end of leisure to do it in, especially when the missus is away; she's gone to her aunt's at Tunbridge Wells, so master and his friend, Mr. Fred Bellamy, are left to do as they like. (*Sits in easy chair, L.*)

TILLY (*entering, R. 2 E.*). Nobody's up yet and so I can go to the window and kiss my hand to the night policeman before he goes off his beat. (*Going to window.*) There he is, leaning against the lamp post like a "Polly bellvurdear" in blue. It's 'is whiskers as first won my heart! I always had a weakness for whiskers and I'm sure they are the finest in the force! Oh! what rapture to hear the clergyman say to those whiskers, "Wilt thou have this woman to be thy wedded wife," and to hear those whiskers

reply, "I will," and then to walk arm in arm with them down the church—(DIBBS *comes behind her and takes her by the waist; she screams.*) Ah!

DIBBS. Caught you, have I? Making signals to the bobby. I'll signal him! (*Puts finger to his nose at window.*)

TILLY. Oh! You impudent young rascal, how dare you insult a full-grown man; you without so much, as an 'air to your upper lip.

DIBBS. I'd rather have no mustarchers than a couple of blacking brushes under my ears! He's gone now! You'd better look on *me* with an eye of admiration.

TILLY. You! You bare-faced brat! Smoking, too! Won't you be ill, that's all.

DIBBS. Pooh! I've been a smoker ever since I was a boy! (MR. SELWYN'S *voice heard outside calling* DIBBS.) Hullo! the old rooster's up early! (*Voice, "DIBBS!"*)

TILLY. I shall be off, he's sure to be out of temper; masters and missuses are always grumpy when they first get up. (DIBBS *kisses* TILLY, *who slaps him. Exit, L. U. E.*)

SEL. (*heard off*). Dibbs, are you coming?

DIBBS. Yessir! (*He endeavors to extinguish lighted cigar by blowing on it, then opens window and fans the air with feather brush to get rid of smoke.*)

Enter SELWYN, looking very seedy, R. 3 E., in dressing-gown and carrying a tall hat in his hand which he holds behind him. He has an "up-all-night" appearance.

SEL. What the deuce are you doing?

DIBBS. Dusting, sir! (*He hides cigar in trousers' pocket.*)

SEL. Do you generally dust *the air*?

DIBBS. Dust everything, sir. (*Aside.*) Dash that cigar! It ain't out! (*He pulls it secretly from trousers' pocket and again endeavors to extinguish it.*)

SEL. Is Mr. Bellamy about yet?

DIBBS. Not yet, sir.

SEL. Go and call him; say I want to speak to him at once.

DIBBS. Yessir! (*Returning.*) As a rule he ain't partial to being called before eleven, sir!

SEL. Rubbish! I always encourage early rising! *When I am up first myself!*

DIBBS (*aside*). The boss is in a bad temper, perhaps he's had the nightmare! (DIBBS *knocks at door, L. 2 E. Sleepy voice replies, "What the devil do you want?"*)

(Exit DIBBS, L. 2 E. entrance.

SEL. Not a moment is to be lost! My wife will be home by the first train and if she catches sight of this infernal tile she'll ask questions. That's the worst of wives, they will be so inquisitive! Damocles had a sword hanging over his head, I have a hat! (*Putting hat on secretaire.*) Now to write to its owner. (*Sitting at table.*) "Sir, pardon my hastiness last evening"—

DIBBS (*entering, L.*). Mr. Bellamy's coming, sir.

SEL. (*irritably*). Coming! Why don't he come! He's always putting things off!

DIBBS. He's not putting 'em *off* this time, sir, he's putting 'em *on*! (*Pantomimes getting into trousers.*)

SEL. (*finishing letter*). That will do! A frank but dignified apology. (*Addressing envelope.*)—"Tompkins, Esq." Nobody called this morning inquiring for me, I suppose, Dibbs?

DIBBS. No, sir! (*Looking hard at SELWYN.*) Lord, sir, how "squiffy" you do look this morning.

SEL. (*sternly*). "Squiffy," Dibbs?

DIBBS. Yessir—off color!

SEL. (*more sternly*). "Off color," Dibbs?

DIBBS. Yessir! Dotty about the eye-ball. For all the world as though you'd been out on the razzle-dazzle last night, sir.

SEL. Dibbs, I request that you will not indulge in slang out of your proper sphere—the kitchen. (*Aside.*) He's right! I *am* "squiffy"—in fact, I never was "squiffier." Fetch my smoking cap! (*Exit DIBBS, R.*) It would be rash of me to assert that I was not "off color" and as to being prepared to take my oath that I did not feel "dotty about the eye-ball" I couldn't do it!

DIBBS (*re-entering from R.*). Your smoking cap, sir! (*He grins at SELWYN.*)

SEL. What are you grinning at?

DIBBS. Nothing, sir—except your bed ain't a bit tumbled!

SEL. What of that? I suffered from the toothache and had to walk about all night!

DIBBS. Then the roof must want mending, for the rain comes into your room, sir—your clothes are all sopping wet! Oh, sir, *if* I didn't know you, sir, I should say you had taken advantage of the missus' absence to go out on the kick!

SEL. Dibbs, would you dare!—

DIBBS. I say, sir *if* I did not know you!

SEL. (*aside*). This boy knows too much for me! (*Aloud; showing coin.*) See nothing, say nothing!

DIBBS. Oh, sir! Don't force it on me! (*Takes money and puts it in his pocket.*) It shall be a secret between *man and man*. Mum's the word to the missus!

SEL. (*aside*). I wish I dared kick him!

DIBBS. Here comes Mr. Bellamy, sir!

Enter FRED, L. 2 E., without his coat.

SEL. At last, my dear Fred, at last! I want you to do me a favor!

FRED (*aside*). I suppose so! (*Aloud.*) I certainly do not consider it doing *me* a favor when I am awake at unearthly hours.

SEL. First let me explain—(*noticing DIBBS is listening.*) Thank you, Dibbs, I shall not want you any more!

DIBBS (*aside*). As usual! Always turned out when the interest begins! Never mind, I've got a very good ear and the door's got a very good key-hole; and by putting this (*touching ear*) and that (*pointing to key-hole*) together, I may hear of something to my advantage as the advertisements say.

(Exit DIBBS, R. 2 E.

SEL. Sit down, my dear boy.

FRED (*yawning*). If he is going to spin me one of his long yarns I shall never keep awake! (*Sits in arm chair.*)

SEL. Fred, we are brothers! (*Taking chair over to L.*)

FRED. Not exactly—

SEL. Yes, we are! You saved my life, and from that day became my brother. As a proof of my regard I am about to reveal to you what I would not confide to any other man or woman in the world.

FRED. Not even to your wife?

SEL. *Not to my wife above all* others. Fred, I have been off the line!

FRED. A railway accident?

SEL. No! The matrimonial line. Listen! I dined at Dobbinson's last night. I ate a good deal and I drank more, in fact, I think I was just a leetle—a very leetle bit—(*Gesture.*)

FRED. "On?"

SEL. I was going to say "off" but it's a detail. I walked home and I *think* I whistled. I

generally whistle when I'm—

FRED. "Off?"

SEL. I was going to say "on," but it's a detail. I remember that about the Marble Arch I saw a Vision of Loveliness approach me. The vision evidently desired me to do her a favor—

FRED. Had you ever saved *her* life then?

SEL. No! The timid creature only wanted to be directed to Ludgate Hill; while endeavoring to explain a short cut we walked as far as Piccadilly together. I believe I offered to escort her.

FRED. And she accepted?

SEL. After *much* hesitation! We chatted and got quite good friends and at last passed by the "Geranium," a highly respectable establishment, where, you know they admit ladies as well as gentlemen.

FRED. A cock and hen club!

SEL. Yes—but that's a detail—suddenly the thought struck me to ask her if she had supped and if she would accept—(*Gesture.*) She replied, no!

FRED. She refused?

SEL. No. She said, "No, I have *not* supped!"

FRED. She accepted then.

SEL. After *much* hesitation—

FRED (*digging him in the ribs*). Ah! Sly dog!

SEL. Not at all! She got quite confidential and told me her history—how her father had been a curate and got killed at the battle of—no, that was her brother—at any rate, the time passed most pleasantly, when all of a sudden she asked me my name; I stammered a little—then—(*Gesture.*)

FRED. You didn't give it?

SEL. No, I gave *yours*!

FRED (*starting up indignantly*). What! Give *my* name to a girl you picked up promiscuously—(*SELWYN forces him back into his seat.*)

SEL. She was a perfect lady, dear boy. Besides, what was the use of *you* saving *my* life if I could not use your name?

FRED (*pettishly*). Well? Go on.

SEL. Then a faintness came over her—she wasn't used to late hours!

FRED. Of course not! They never are!

SEL. (*talking glibly*). I rushed out to fetch a doctor, missed my footing on the top step, and fell headlong amongst a group of gentlemen on the pavement. "Drunken booby," said one of them, giving me a push that sent me reeling. Off went my hat into the gutter, *I* went after it, and at last covered with indignation and mud, I flew at the fellow and knocked *his* hat off, too!

FRED. This is getting exciting!

SEL. We tussled furiously, I think I must have hurt his fist, for my eye is precious painful (*putting his hand to his face*), and then somebody shouted "police," and for a wonder an active and intelligent officer at once appeared on the scene.

FRED. And locked *you* up?

SEL. No! I hastily snatched the hat from the pavement and ran like an antelope, but imagine my horror when I discovered I had taken my antagonist's hat instead of *my own*!

FRED. That didn't matter if it was as good, or better!

SEL. It *did* matter very much, for since I have had two stolen I have always stuck my card on the inside and consequently I expect to be shortly called upon, and called out

by the gentleman I insulted. It is not that I fear for my own sake, but if it gets to my wife's ears I shall never hear the last of it.

FRED. What are you going to do?

SEL. Simply be beforehand with my antagonist and disarm his resentment by profuse apologies—his name is Tompkins I have found that out.

FRED. Where does he live?

SEL. There's the rub, for it does not give his *address* inside his hat, only his *name*! Now comes my need of *your* help. Go and buy the *London Directory*, and with this hat in one hand and that apology in the other call on all the Tompkins's in the town!

FRED (*protestingly*). Oh! I say, you know—(*Rises and goes, L.*)

SEL. (*rises and goes, R.*). What! Would you refuse? Oh, that I ever should have allowed a man to save my life who would afterward deny me such a simple favor as this!

FRED. Look here, can't you send a servant?

SEL. What? Entrust my secret to a mercenary? Frederick Bellamy, *did* you save my life, or did you not?

FRED (*sulkily*). I did!

SEL. Did I *ask* you to do so?

FRED. No, considering you were at the bottom of a pond at the time you couldn't!

SEL. You should have left me there if you only dived in to drag me on shore to witness your ingratitude.

FRED. Oh, bother! I suppose I must; where's the infernal stovepipe?

SEL. (*joyfully*). I *knew* you would assist me and in return I'll tell you something (*whispering*)—look out for a surprise! (*Aside.*) Poor fellow, I know he adores my daughter and thinks to let concealment like a thingamy in the bud feed on his damask cheek! (*Effusively.*) Bless you, my boy!

FRED (*aside*). I wish he wouldn't look so confoundedly affectionate.

SEL. Now you understand? Here's the letter and there's the hat. (*Putting them into his hands.*) I'm off to dress while *you* go and buy a directory!

FRED. Buy a directory! I don't want to buy a directory! I *hate* directories!

SEL. You should have thought of that before you saved my life.

(*Exit SELWYN, R. U. E.*)

FRED. I have had three months of this sort of thing. I came to London for pleasure and I have suffered slavery ever since. I hadn't been in town two days when looking over the Serpentine Bridge I beheld a man struggling in the water. I was weak enough to rescue him, and he immediately proved so oppressively grateful that I have never been able to escape from his clutches from that day to this. I would have gone back to Bristol long ago, but there's my dear little Lottie Blithers to whom I am secretly married and whom I would not desert for untold gold. She keeps a glove shop in Bond street and I pass most of my time in purchasing her stock in trade. This sort of thing can't go on much longer!

SEL. (*re-entering, R. U. E.*). What! Not gone yet? Suppose my wife were to return or that Tompkins should turn up.

FRED (*protesting*). That's all very well, but—?

SEL. There's no time for "butting" now!

FRED. Damn it! You don't want me to go without a coat, do you? (*He places on the escritoire the hat that SELWYN had given him and goes off into his room, L. 2 E.*)

SEL. (*speaking to him off*). Do make haste, there's a good fellow! (*Aside.*) I *knew* he wouldn't be ungrateful. I knew that he wouldn't forget that I had saved his life, no, I mean that *he* had saved *mine*! (*Calling off, L.*) Ain't you ready? (*Aside.*) He shall be repaid for this! One of these days. I shall be able to grasp him by the hand and say—(*calling off.*) What the devil are you doing?

FRED. Don't shout! Here I am!

SEL. At last!

Enter DIBBS, quickly, R. 2 E.

DIBBS. There's a cab just driven up to the door, sir. I think it's the missus!

SEL. (*to FRED*). Off you go! You have the letter? (*Going, L.*) Not that way, you will meet her! Remember the directory, and above all don't forget the name "Tompkins." It's engraven in letters of enormous size on my heart. Get the same done on yours!

(Exit FRED, door at back.)

SEL. Now to hoodwink the wife! (*Sitting down and taking newspaper*). I must meet her eye without flinching. (*Enter MRS. SELWYN and GRACE, at door in flat.*) Ah, my dear, so glad to see you back! (*He kisses wife and daughter.*)

MRS. S. Have you been dull, Sam dear!

SEL. (*most emphatically*). Dull! *Miserable!* Regularly downright, positively wretched.

MRS. S. I didn't expect to find you up so soon as this.

SEL. No! I shouldn't have been only—only—(*Searching for an excuse.*)

DIBBS (*chiming in, R.*). Only the master went to bed so early last night!

SEL. (*aside to DIBBS*). Shut up!

DIBBS (*aside to SELWYN*). Leave it to me, governor. I'll pull you through!

MRS. S. For all that, you look anything but well, you are quite pale and haggard—it's a most extraordinary thing that whenever I go to aunt's for a day or two I always find you looking bad when I return.

SEL. (*forcing smile*). Yes! it's the—the—

DIBBS (*striking in*). It's the toothache!

GRACE (*sympathetically*). Oh! papa dear, have you had the toothache?

SEL. Yes, my dear. (*Aside; vexed.*) He's given me the toothache now! I'll give *him* something presently! (*Aloud.*) Ah, and how is your aunt, dear aunt Betty? Is the gout in her foot better?

MRS. S. Gout! You mean her asthma!

SEL. Gout—asthma! Asthma—gout, just the same, it's only a detail! All through my indigestion; it affects my memory. Had it awful!

MRS. S. Oh! I am *so* sorry, dear! You *are* looking queer! Can we do anything, for you?

SEL. Yes, no, it's the weather—so hot, you know.

MRS. S. Hot! I thought it chilly!

SEL. Ah! It may have been chilly where you were, it's been warm *here*. In fact, yesterday was the warmest day I remember!

GRACE (*aside to MRS. SELWYN*). Don't forget to tell him all about Corney!

MRS. S. (*aside to GRACE*). Presently, child.

GRACE. He may be here at any moment, you know! (*GRACE up c. at window.*)

MRS. S. (*close behind SELWYN*). Sam, do *you* know a Mr. Tompkins?

SEL. (*paralyzed by the suddenness of the question*). Tom—Tom Tompkins! (*Aside.*) Has she found me out?

MRS. S. (*quietly*). No, dear, not Tom Tompkins—Horace Tompkins.

SEL. I never saw, heard of, or spoke to a person of that name in all my life!

MRS. S. He's the new society poet and author of *Midnight Moans*. I hear they've

made quite a noise!

SEL. No doubt, but I'm not partial to moans.

MRS. S. The book was only lent me for an hour, and I am so interested that I want Frederick to go out and buy a copy.

GRACE (*aside, c., rather vexed*). I think ma might speak to pa about Captain Katskill instead of her stupid poetry!

SEL. Fred! Oh! He'll soon get it for you! Stop, though, I forgot, he's gone out!

MRS. S. So early?

SEL. Yes. (*To MRS. SELWYN, L.*)

MRS. S. Ah! here he is back again!

Enter FRED quickly, at back, out of breath and with large Directory under his arm. He puts down Directory.

SEL. (*Aside*). He surely cannot have tracked that Tompkins to his lair already?

FRED. Good morning, Mrs. Selwyn, hope you have enjoyed your trip. (*To SELWYN, aside*). I say, old fellow, I forgot it after all!

SEL. (*aside to FRED*). Forgot what?

FRED (*aside*). The hat!

SEL. Horror, where did you leave it?

FRED (*aside*). Here! (*Points to hat just as MRS. SELWYN casually picks it up.*)

MRS. S. Who's is this? (*Looking inside.*) Tompkins!

SEL. (*aside to FRED*). Claim it!

FRED (*to MRS. SELWYN*). It's mine!

SEL. (*excitedly*). Yes, it's Fred's. (*He snatches it and claps it on FRED's head, being too large it "bonnets" him.*)

MRS. S. (*in astonishment*). Surely, it cannot be!

DIBBS (*coming between MR. SELWYN and MRS. SELWYN, aside*). I must pull them through again, or they'll make a mess of it! (*Aloud.*) No, sir, *this* is the hat you brought from the club last night! I know it well, ma'am, name of Tompkins inside—the master left his own behind and brought this one home instead! Mr. Bellamy was only taking of it back. (*Winks at MR. SELWYN; aside.*)

SEL. (*relieved; aside*). This boy's a lovely liar! (*Aloud.*) Yes!

FRED. Yes!

MRS. S. Why not have said so at first, dear?

SEL. Oh, I was going to, but Dibbs put me out! (*Aside to DIBBS.*) You shall have a sovereign for that taradiddle!

DIBBS (*aside to SELWYN*). It was *the truth*!

SEL. So it was! I withdraw my generous offer.

MRS. S. (*rapturously gazing at hat*). And to think that hat has probably covered the head of the author of "Midnight Moans."

FRED (*aside to SELWYN*). Do you know how many Tompkins's there are in the directory? Two hundred and eighty-nine!

SEL. (*taken aback*). Two hundred and eighty-nine?

MRS. S. Where does the poet Tompkins live!

SEL. (*repeating mechanically*). Two hundred and eighty-nine!

MRS. S. Two hundred and eighty-nine—in what street?

SEL. Street—what street?

MRS. S. Why the street where Mr. Tompkins lives!

FRED. Well, I don't know exactly.

MRS. S. You don't know! Then how could you be going to take it back?

FRED (*aside to SELWYN*). What shall I say?

DIBBS (*aside*). They want *me* again! (*Aloud.*) Oh! ma'am, Mr. Bellamy was going to take it to the club—Mr. Tompkins's address is sure to be known there!

(*Exit, R. U. E.*)

MRS. S. I see! If at the same time, Mr. Bellamy, you could inquire if it was the talented Tompkins who wrote the "Frozen Tear," I should be obliged.

SEL. (*impatiently*). Yes! yes, but we must not keep Frederick! Remember the gentleman is hatless all this while. *Do* be off, Bellamy, my boy!

FRED (*aside*). I suppose I must, but if ever I save anybody's life again, may I be—

SEL. Don't dawdle, dear boy—don't dawdle!

(*Exit FRED, hurried off by SELWYN, door in flat.*)

GRACE. *Now*, ma, I hope you will speak—

MRS. S. Yes, my child—yes!

SEL. At last he has gone, the ill-omened hat has left my house I hope never to return!

FRED (*rushing in again*). Forgotten the directory!

SEL. Oh!

MRS. S. What directory?

SEL. Here it is! (*Throwing it at FRED, who catches it.*)

MRS. S. What does Fred want that for?

SEL. Amusement, mere amusement, to pass the time in the cab—*you* read, my dear, when *you* travel!

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MRS. S. But *I* read poetry!

SEL. What does it signify—poetry or directory, a mere matter of detail—tastes differ—he likes directory! (*Aside to FRED.*) Get out or I shall have a fit!

FRED. But you know I have not had my breakfast yet!

SEL. Breakfast! And he can think of feeding at a moment like this! Oh! buy a biscuit as you go along, or you can eat the directory if you like when you have found the owner of the hat! This delay is maddening. (*SELWYN hustles FRED off again.*)

MRS. S. There is something the matter with Samuel, his manner's so strange this morning!

SEL. Once more relieved!

MRS. S. Samuel!

SEL. Bella!

MRS. S. I want to speak to you about Gracie. She's nearly nineteen, and we ought to be thinking about seeing her settled.

SEL. There's no hurry—she's too young!

MRS. S. She's older than I was when we were married; I was only seventeen.

SEL. It's a most extraordinary fact that every woman with a tall daughter was married at seventeen, or says she was!

MRS. S. Sam, in *my* case you *know* it's true; besides, there are good reasons why we should talk about Gracie.

SEL. (*aside*). Fred has been dropping hints on the subject, evidently.

MRS. S. Speaking in her name I think I may tell you she has seen some one she can care about.

SEL. (*assuming authority*). Um! What! without consulting me?

GRACE (*aside to MRS. SELWYN*). Oh, ma! suppose he says “no!”

MRS. S. Hush!

SEL. And who might the gentleman be? (*Aside.*) It is as well to pretend to be blind! (*Aloud.*) Who is he? What is he?

Enter DIBBS, R. 2 E.

DIBBS. Your barber, sir!

SEL. My barber!

DIBBS. Yes, sir, waiting in your dressing-room—and please, ma’am, there’s your dressmaker waiting in your’s!

SEL. I mustn’t keep him waiting! If he got tired he’d lose his temper and I should probably lose a bit of my chin.

(Exit, R. U. E.)

GRACE. Interrupted again! It *is* vexing!

MRS. S. I can’t keep Mrs. Frillet, or she’d never let me know the latest fashions before anyone else! Dibbs, go to the Circulating Library and ask for the “*Frozen Tear*.”

DIBBS. Yes, ma’am! Shall I wait while it’s put in ice, ma’am.

MRS. S. Stupid boy! The “*Frozen Tear*” is by Horace Tompkins, it’s his latest and most fiery production. Go!

(Exit MRS. SELWYN, L. U. E.)

DIBBS. First she says it’s frozen, then it’s fiery! She may call it poetry, I call it bosh! (*GRACE sits, L.*)

SEL. (*putting head in at door, R., and beckoning DIBBS*). Remember, Dibbs, I am at home to no one!

DIBBS (*low that GRACE may not hear*). Right, sir! Now to fetch the “red hot icicle” or whatever it is!

(Exit, door at back.)

GRACE. Ten o’clock and pa not yet told that I am engaged! It’s too bad, Corney will be here in half an hour!

TILLY (*entering, L. U. E.*). A gentleman, miss, says he wants to see Mr Selwyn.

GRACE. It must be Captain Katskill! Ask him to come in! (*Exit TILLY, L. U. E.*) How my heart beats! (*Re-enter TILLY with BLITHERS.*) It’s *not* Corney! (*BLITHERS is a doddering old gentleman of bland manners, reddish sandy hair, very short and standing up all over his head; also big whiskers; in his hand he carries a fashionable hat, evidently not his own. He speaks throughout in the blindest tones; he wears enormous boots built expressly to suit a sufferer from bunions.*)

BLITH. Oh! I beg pardon, miss, but I believe Mr.—(*looking inside hat*)—Selwyn lives here?

GRACE. My father, sir. If you will take a seat I will call him. (*BLITHERS bows grotesquely and sits, L. Exit GRACE, R. U. E.*)

BLITH. A nice little girl! (*A card falls from his pocket as he pulls out handkerchief.*) Bother it! I have forgotten my wife’s instructions again! “Always give your card to the servant when you make a call,” says Susan, “it’s etiquette and it’s likely to bring business.” She always sees I have plenty of cards in my pocket, but I mostly forget to give them. (*Looking at card.*) Bosco Blithers, professor of penmanship and author of “*Pot-hooks and Hangers*.” I had better drop a few about. (*He places cards on table, mantelpiece, etc., etc., then comes down and sits on edge of chair.*) This Mr. Selwyn

must be pretty well off to judge by his place here and his hat. He left it at Mr. Dobbinson's while I was giving the juvenile Dobbinson's their writing lesson, and so I was forced to put on his or return bareheaded. (*Puts on hat which is too small for him, and looks in glass, c.*)

Enter DIBBS quickly.

DIBBS. Couldn't get missus's "*Iced Weep*" at any price. I daresay they won't keep in this hot weather. Who's the venerable party?

BLITH. (*noting DIBBS and taking off hat*). Oh, I beg pardon!

DIBBS. Waiting for the governor, mister?

BLITH. Yes, Mr. (*looks in hat*)—Mr. Selwyn!

DIBBS (*aside*). Whew! Suppose this should be that Tompkins, the owner of the hat! The parlor-maid opened the door to you, eh, sir?

BLITH. Yes, I presume so. She said I should find Mr. (*looking in hat*)—Selwyn in this room.

DIBBS. That's where she's wrong! The governor has gone out!

BLITH. I'm sorry!

DIBBS. He may not be back for some time; if you were to drop in again, in a week or two perhaps?

BLITH. Pardon me, young man, but Mr. Selwyn's daughter just told me her father *was* at home!

DIBBS (*aside*). The devil she did? That's a doubler-up for master! (*He strikes forehead and paces up and down.*)

BLITH. (*watching DIBBS*). A somewhat eccentric domestic!

DIBBS (*aside*). I've got it! Hurrah! I'll frighten the old bird! (*Rings bell. Enter TILLY, L. U. E.*) Where are master's pistols, and did they send the new swords that were ordered yesterday? (*Aside.*) Say, yes.

TILLY (*puzzled*). Ye-es!

DIBBS. Then put them in the armory with the other deadly weapons? Have the forty score of ball cartridges come? (*Aside.*) Say, yes!

TILLY. Yes-es.

DIBBS. Put them in the ammunition room handy, for Mr. Selwyn will want them all this week.

TILLY. Poor boy! Love turns his brain, I ought not to have been so cruel to him!

(Exit, L. U. E.)

BLITH. (*puzzled*). Mr. Selwyn seems to be fond of firearms!

DIBBS. Fond of 'em! He always has something dangerous about him, reckons himself the best shot in these parts; he's obliged to be for he *never* apologises; if anybody calls for satisfaction (*pointing at BLITHERS, who is alarmed*) bang! he drops 'em!

BLITH. (*aside*). A nice amiable employer! (*Aloud*). I don't see what all this has to do with me!

DIBBS (*aside*). He's a determined old dog!

Enter SELWYN, R. U. E.

SEL. (*up stage*). Dibbs! (*Seeing BLITHERS.*) A visitor?

DIBBS (*aside to SELWYN*). It's the hat man!

SEL. (*nervously*). I told you not to admit anyone!

DIBBS (*aside to SELWYN*). It was Tilly did it! Be careful, sir, he's not to be trifled with! Beware, sir, beware!

(Exit DIBBS, L. U. E.)

SEL. (*aside*). I would give a wagon load of gold watches to be somebody else this minute!

BLITH. (*ceremoniously*). I have the honor to address Mr. Selwyn?

SEL. Yes—es! (*Aside*.) I don't like his eye!

BLITH. I have merely called for a little explanation—

SEL. (*aside and looking off*). If my wife comes now I'm done for!

BLITH. (*aside*). He seems to take no notice! (*Louder*.) Sir, I have called for the purpose—

SEL. Hush! Not so loud!

BLITH. I beg pardon. (*Aside*.) Somebody ill, I suppose. (*Aloud*.) There has been a little misunderstanding about a hat—

SEL. (*looking off*). My wife! It's all over! (*He collapses*.)

Enter MRS. SELWYN, L. U. E.

MRS. S. Oh! I beg pardon! I thought you were alone.

SEL. (*confused*). So I am—no, I mean—I wish I were!

MRS. S. Do I disturb you?

BLITH. Not at all, ma'am, its only about—

SEL. (*anxiously interrupting*). Somebody is calling you, dear!

MRS. S. I don't think so! (*To BLITHERS*.) What were you saying, sir?

BLITH. It's merely a mistake about a hat.

SEL. (*aside*). Would it were down his throat!

BLITH. I want my own in exchange!

MRS. S. Of course, my husband explained all about it, in fact, he was going to send it back!

SEL. (*anxious to get rid of him*). Oh, yes! You may rely on having it sent back, so if you will—(*points to door, BLITHERS is about to go*.)

MRS. S. No! The gentleman had better wait now. Pray sit down, sir, Mr. Bellamy will return soon with your hat.

BLITH. Oh, thank you, ma'am! (*Crosses R., to table*.)

MRS. S. He does not *look* like a poet, but who can judge by outward appearances?

BLITH. (*aside*). Why does she examine me so minutely? This is a funny family!

MRS. S. I presume you belong to the same club as my husband, since you exchanged hats.

BLITH. Oh, no! I don't belong—

SEL. (*aside to BLITHERS*). Don't deny it unless you would ruin me.

BLITH. (*aside*). I see! He doesn't want it known that he dined out at the Dobbinson's last night!

MRS. S. (*sentimentally to BLITHERS*). I wish ladies were allowed to frequent clubs. I would give the world to mix amongst authors, painters and poets. (*Pointedly*.) Oh, how I have longed to know a real live poet!

BLITH. I dare say, ma'am!

MRS. S. (*aside*). He seemed to start at the word! I will draw him out! (*Aloud*.) I have read your last book, and oh! it is delightful!

BLITH. (*aside*). She means my "Treatise on Penmanship." (*Aloud*.) I have had many testimonials from former pupils!

MRS. S. (*aside*). A poet take pupils! (*Aloud.*) Do you really mean to say you can teach people to write as beautifully as you do?

BLITH. (*proudly*). Much better! My hand is not so steady as it was twenty years ago!

MRS. S. I am indeed glad to have met you, I once saw the top of Alfred Tennyson's head from a balcony, and Swinburne's boots outside his door at a Parisian hotel, but I never actually *spoke* to a great writer before!

BLITH. Oh, ma'am, you make me blush!

MRS. S. Do I? (*Rapturously.*) Blush on, oh! blush on, genius of the goosequill!

BLITH. I never use them! Give me a good "Falcon" pen.

MRS. S. Would it be too much to ask you to spare me one of your old pens—one with which you had dashed off some sweet sonnet!

BLITH. (*aside, uneasily*). There's lunacy in the family!

MRS. S. I have known many Tompkins's, but all were common creatures.

BLITH. (*aside*). What does she mean? (*Aloud.*) No doubt, mum, so have I!

MRS. S. Would you, I tremble to ask it, but, oh!—would you mind writing something in my poor little album?

BLITH. (*hesitating*). Well, mum—

MRS. S. I know it's asking too much—but just one line—one little line!

BLITH. Well, while I was about it, I might as well dash off a page or two!—you know I have several styles. (*Flourishing hand as if holding pen.*)

MRS. S. I know! I know! Liquid lava runs from your pen as fluently as icy sarcasm. Excuse me one moment. (*Aside.*) I will fetch my album and get him to compose an impromptu while he is in the mood.

(*Exit* MRS. SELWYN, R. 2 E.)

SEL. (*gratefully*). Thanks for your generous silence! Had my wife an inkling about the events of yesterday my future would be blasted. Where do you live, sir?

BLITH. Oh! In Bond street—same place where you have sent my hat.

SEL. (*anxiously*). Time is short now, but to-morrow I will call and make every reparation in my power, if an apology will be accepted.

BLITH. Apology! (*Aside.*) How very polite! (*Aloud.*) No! no apology! (*SELWYN attempts to follow him.*) No. I'll not hear of it! (*Very blandly.*) Good morning!

(*Exit, door at back.*)

SEL. (*sinking into chair, R.*) No apology! I see he's bent on blood! How I hate these deliberate duelists that never show the passion that sways their innermost souls! (*Starting up.*) What shall I do?

Enter MRS. SELWYN *with book, R.*

MRS. S. Here's the album, Mr. Tom—(*Looking round.*) Oh! Sam, why did you let him go? He may never call again!

SEL. I hope not!

MRS. S. (*piqued*). If *you* don't care for poetry *I* do! (*Going to where BLITHERS sat.*) This chair shall not be used by unappreciative persons—I will have the seat taken out and framed!

Enter TILLY, *at back.*

TILLY. Please, sir, there's a young gentleman in the hall wants to speak to you; this is his card!

(*Exit* TILLY.)

Enter GRACE, R. 2 E.)

SEL. (*taking card*). "Captain Cornelius Katskill." I am not at home, I never shall be at

home again; what does he want?

MRS. S. (*aside to SELWYN*). Oh, Sam, I forgot to tell you after all. It's the young Irish officer we met at the Claremonts' and who was so attentive to Grace, in fact, I fully expect he has called to ask permission to consider himself formally engaged to her.

SEL. Grace engaged! What nonsense; she *is* engaged, isn't she?

GRACE (*indignantly*). No, papa!

SEL. Yes, you are! Or you are going to be, which is just the same, to my friend Fred Bellamy. I must repay him for saving my life!

GRACE. "Pay," papa! You talk of me as though I were a cheque instead of a child! I don't *love* Mr. Bellamy!

SEL. Not love him! He saved your father's life, and you dare to say you don't love him; this is the gratitude of girls! (*Crosses to L.*)

GRACE. I can't—I can't; for I love somebody else.

SEL. Somebody else! You mustn't, can't, won't, don't, or shan't love somebody else!

GRACE. Yes, I do!

MRS. S. Yes, she does, and you wouldn't be brute enough to coerce her young affections, would you?

SEL. (*savagely*). Yes, I would! Young affections! Young fiddlesticks! (*Crosses, R.*)

MRS. S. (*going L., consoling GRACE*). Never mind, my child, your father is without poetry! and consequently without feeling! Ugh! you brute.

(*Exeunt GRACE and MRS. SELWYN, L. U. E.*)

SEL. I will never sacrifice my Frederick! Never! Never! (*Calling.*) Dibbs!

Enter DIBBS, L. U. E.

DIBBS. Yessir!

SEL. Give the gentleman his card back, tell him to call again next year, say that we have got the sweeps or the measles in the house, at any rate get him to go! Where's my felt hat?

DIBBS. Billycock, sir? Yessir!

(*Exit DIBBS, R. U. E.*)

SEL. (*aside*). Let me see, I must call on this bloodthirsty poet to begin with—Dibbs! Where's that felt hat?

Enter DIBBS with felt hat and umbrella.

DIBBS. Here you are, sir! and here's a letter, sir, just brought by a commissionaire—marked important, he says it's from a young lady.

SEL. Give it to me! (*Reading envelope.*) "Fred Bellamy, Esq." perhaps it's from the girl to whom I gave his name last night! Shall I open it? Yes! He saved my life, and from that moment he gave me the right to—(*Reading.*) Great Scott! "Bond street. Darling, Come to me at once! I have told father all about it; he is not so angry as I expected! Remember what you said last night! Come—straight to him as you promised and explain all.—Your loving LOTTIE. P. S.—If you don't come, I shall call on you, as of course there will be no occasion for secrecy *now*, so you won't want me to keep away!" This is a nice state of things! I must go to her. Where does she live? (*Looking at letter.*) Bond street! It's an elongated thoroughfare, but never mind, I *must* find her or her appearance here would cause me to contemplate suicide! (*He puts down letter on table; springs up and down as if looking for something; he unconsciously puts on hat.*) First, I must go to Bond street, and apologize to this "Lottie," then I must call on the passionate poet and explain—no, I'm mixing them up. It's the poet I have to apologize to and the girl I have got to keep quiet! Dibbs, where is my hat? (*Looks all over room.*)

DIBBS. I gave it to you, sir—why, you have got it on!

SEL. So I have! (*While they have been looking for hat, MRS. SELWYN has come in L. U. E. and carelessly taken up open letter SELWYN put down; as she reads her expression*)

changes from indifference to anger. SELWYN turns and sees her, then stands aghast. Music piano until end of act; then forte.)

MRS. S. (*severely*). Whose is this? (*Holding up letter, c.*)

SEL. Mine! I mean—yours! (*DIBBS laughs; SELWYN pelts him.*)

MRS. S. (*sobbing*). You men are all alike, I'll have a divorce!

SEL. (*at his wits end*). Allow me to explain!

DIBBS (*aside*). Leave it to me! (*Crosses to c. aloud.*) Please, mum, *it's mine!*

MRS. S. (*drying her tears*). I believe neither of you!

SEL. (*indignantly*). Dibbs, how dare you tell your mistress such a villainous falsehood! You will end your days in an editor's office if you go on like this. My dear, I will tell you the *truth*—it's *not* mine, but Fred's!

MRS. S. Prove it!

SEL. Look at the envelope! (*Picking up envelope from floor, where he has previously thrown it.*) Same hand, see! (*Aside.*) Poor Fred! I have had to throw you overboard to save the ship!

MRS. S. (*examining envelope and letter*). Yes, it is the same writing. The reprobate! Now, I suppose you don't want Grace to marry him! (*Bitterly.*)

SEL. Yes, I do!

MRS. S. (*firmly*). Mr. Bellamy leaves this house to-morrow!

SEL. He shan't!

MRS. S. He shall! (*Quarrel worked up between them until MRS. SELWYN in great passion seizes an umbrella to strike at SELWYN; he avoids the blow, and BLITHERS entering c., quickly at moment, still with tall hat in hand, receives it full on top of his head. BLITHERS turns and flies in dismay at his reception. MRS. SELWYN faints. DIBBS dances with joy at everybody's discomfiture.*)

QUICK ACT DROP.

ACT II.

SCENE:—*The same; MRS. SELWYN is discovered seated at secretaire writing; GRACE looking over her shoulder.*

MRS. S. That will do, I think! (*Strikes bell.*)

Enter DIBBS.

DIBBS. Yes'm!

MRS. S. Dibbs, I have a somewhat confidential errand to send you upon. You know the young gentleman who sent in his card this morning?

DIBBS. Yes, ma'am—good looking gent—touch of the brogue about him!

MRS. S. That's right! Take this letter to the address upon it, and give it into his own hands—remember, *his own hands.*

DIBBS. Suttingly, mum! (*Going towards door.*)

MRS. S. And, Dibbs,—ahem—you need not mention your errand to my husband.

DIBBS. Not for the world, ma'am. (*Aside.*) Another secret! If this don't get me a rise at the end of the month nothing will!

(Exit at back.

GRACE. It *is* good of you, mamma, to help us at a time when papa seems so unreasonable—I will never have Mr. Bellamy, never!

MRS. S. You never shall, my darling, but hush, here comes one of the enemy. (*They*

sit, one on R., the other on L.)

Enter FRED still with Directory and hat in his hands; he falls exhausted in arm chair.

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FRED. Pouf! A nice time I have had of it! (*Seeing ladies and coming c.*) Oh! I beg pardon, Mrs. Selwyn and Miss Grace! (*They take no notice of him.*) They don't hear me apparently! (*Aloud.*) It's very cool to-day, don't you think so? (*They turn their backs on him and give him the cut direct; MRS. SELWYN, R., GRACE, L.*) This is strange! May I ask if Mr. Selwyn has gone out? (*They remain silent.*) Is this a joke or a new parlor game? (*Speaking loudly.*) I beg pardon, but is Mr. Selwyn at home?

MRS. S. (*turning towards him with icy coldness*). Were you addressing us, Mr. Bellamy?

FRED. Yes! that was my intention!

MRS. S. I am surprised you should dare to show your face here!

GRACE. Even if you *did* save papa's life you have no right to make *me* miserable!

MRS. S. No *gentleman* would attempt to force his affections where they are not wanted!

FRED. Excuse me!

MRS. S. Especially after such deceit which has luckily been discovered in time; of course we cannot argue with you if your own sense of honor does not prompt you to do what is right.

FRED (*puzzled*). Really, Mrs. Selwyn, you must be more explicit!

MRS. S. We have said all that need be said to anyone with a spark of proper feeling. Good day, Mr. Bellamy!

GRACE (*imitating her mother*). Good day, sir! (*They courtesy very formally and go out, L. U. E.*)

FRED (*following them he has door slammed in his face, then putting down hat and Directory*). What *does* this mean? I'm sent on a wild goose chase after a confounded Tompkins and on my return I am coolly snubbed by the wife and daughter of the man for whom I am slaving! I won't put up with it! No! Thirty-seven Tompkinses have I tracked to their several and respective abodes. Most of them lived at the top of the houses, too! (*Noting card left by BLITHERS.*) What's this, "Bosco Blithers!" What does it mean? He's my Lottie's father-in-law—what can *he* want here? Pshaw! He can't have called here at all, I must have dropped the card myself! (*Sitting down again, L.*)

SEL. (*entering exhausted, c.*). I'm done up! They ought not to be allowed to make such long streets. (*He sits.*) Hullo! Do you know where that Dibbs is?

FRED. Not the least idea!

SEL. (*wiping his forehead*). I want to know if a young—a female has been here for me—have you seen one?

FRED. How the deuce can I tell? Haven't I just returned from my Tompkins's hunting?

SEL. I thought I saw her in a cab and ran a mile before I could get a peep inside. Oh, Fred! old man, if you knew how my heart was aching, and my corns were shooting, you would pity me!

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FRED. Look here, Mr. Selwyn, I can't stay here to hound down the entire Tompkins's tribe. I shall leave town to-night!

SEL. What? Desert me in the moment of danger?

FRED. I'm no welcome guest in this house—the ladies don't like me!

SEL. Not like you! They *must* like you, they shall dote on the very ground you walk on!

FRED. I don't expect that, but I object to being openly snubbed.

SEL. Oh, it will soon blow over—don't take any notice—it's their way—mere whim—women are so whimmy!

FRED. But you know when it comes to—

SEL. (*rising and crossing to him*). I apologize! There! I don't know *what* they did, but whatever it was I profess the utmost regret that it should have occurred—this is no time for us to part, we are each seated on a volcano—(*Whispering.*) *She's written to me!*

FRED. Who?

SEL. *The girl I met last night!* She said she wanted to see me at once—but forgot to put her number in Bond street in her letter, so I have been trotting up and down for three hours inquiring for her by her Christian name, as I know no other. I want to buy her silence! That's volcano number one!

FRED. What's the other Vesuvius?

SEL. "*Tompkins*" has been here! You know Tompkins, the duelist.

FRED. No!

SEL. I offered to apologize to him, too, but he was one of those bland but bloodthirsty fellows who thirst for human gore—he wouldn't hear of it—I got his address, I flew to humiliate myself on his doorstep, but he had given me a false one.

FRED. A false doorstep!

SEL. No, a false address—but we must find the real one—go on, dear boy, go on with your search. (*Handing Directory and hat.*) Take your implements! Stanley discovered Livingstone, why shouldn't Bellamy discover Tompkins?

FRED. It's as bad as the treadmill—they all live in lodgings and just under the tiles, these beastly Tompkinses!

SEL. How many of the infernal family have you found already?

FRED. Thirty-seven!

SEL. Did you question them?

FRED. Minutely! Three of them acknowledged to having had a fight last night.

SEL. Ah!

FRED. One with a sweep, one with a dog, and one with his wife!

SEL. There are two hundred and fifty-two left to cross-examine. I have heard more about him since you left—he's a poet! Author of the *Frost-bitten Nose*, or something that sends a shiver down your back and makes your spine jingle like a Christy minstrel's bones!

FRED (*aside*). If he thinks I'm going for ever on this Tompkins's hunting, he's much mistaken! I shall go straight to my Lottie and stop there! (*Crosses to R.*) That's what I shall do!

SEL. That's right! Once more into the breach, dear boy! If you are tired take a cab—I'll go halves in it with you! (*Exit FRED, C.*) What devotion! Can I refuse to let this man marry my daughter? No!

DIBBS (*entering, L. U. E.*). Mr. Bellamy not here, sir?

SEL. Just gone out! What do you want?

DIBBS. It's another messenger with another letter "from the same lady as before" he said! (*SELWYN seizes and tears it open nervously aside.*) Now, I'll just go and tell Captain Katskill the governor's alone. Missus told me to watch for an opportunity.

(*Exit DIBBS, L. U. E.*)

SEL. She says she knows I must be ill or I would come to her—she will be here in an hour! Horror upon horror's head! No address again! Oh, why won't women complete their letters? (*Re-enter DIBBS, L. U. E.*) Dibbs, where's the messenger?

DIBBS. Gone, sir!

SEL. Perhaps I could catch him—I'll do a bit of sprinting! (*Rushes off, C.*)

DIBBS. Hi! sir, I never told you which way he went! (*Rushes after him, C.*)

Enter BLITHERS, L. U. E., with hat as before.

BLITH. Thank you! Thank you, my good girl, don't trouble, I know the way! Sir, I—nobody here! Well, I must wait. (*Puts hat down on chair in front of secretaire and seats himself on sofa.*) This time I will *not leave* without my own hat. I can't attend at Dr. Swishby's in this! The boys would pelt me! I have already missed two private lessons and my wife has been blowing me up as high as a kite. (*Puts hat on chair L. of table R.*)

Enter CAPTAIN KATSKILL, L. U. E.

CAPT. K. (*he speaks with slight Irish accent*). There he is! Now for it! Charge!

BLITH. (*seeing* CAPTAIN KATSKILL). Hullo! an arrival!

CAPT. K. Sir, I salute you!

BLITH. (*most politely*). Sir, I do ditto! (*They bow.*)

CAPT. K. A quare collection of fatures to have on one face. What of that? It's the daughter I want, not the father.

BLITH. (*aside*). This must be Mr. Selwyn's son, I presume!

CAPT. K. Excuse me want of boldness—

BLITH. Not at all! Fine day?

CAPT. K. Sor, it is within your power to make it the finest day of all me life!

BLITH. Eh? (*Aside.*) An excitable young man! (*Aloud.*) How's your father?

CAPT. K. When we last heard from Ballybog—that was two weeks ago—

BLITH. Two weeks!

CAPT. K. You know he was over there, did you not?

BLITH. I cannot say I did! (*Aside.*) It isn't Selwyn's son at all! (*Aloud.*) Might I inquire your name, sir?

CAPT. K. Didn't ye know it? Captain Katskill, of the 55th—the fighting 55th!

BLITH. (*as if he recognized him*). Oh! indeed, I am delighted to hear it! (*Aside.*) Who is he?

CAPT. K. You can, of course, guess the object of my visit?

BLITH. Well, yes—and on the other hand *no!* (*Aside.*) He evidently knows *me.* (*Aloud.*) Of course, I should be in a better position to answer if—

CAPT. K. Sir, excuse egotism, but in such a position as mine it is necessary to talk of one's self! I am an only son.

BLITH. Fortunate privilege!

CAPT. K. My father was a soldier like myself and an honorable man—

BLITH. I do not doubt it!

CAPT. K. My grandfather was in the army, too, and known in the Peninsula as "Devil-may-care Katskill."

BLITH. I congratulate you on your connections! (*Aside.*) What does he want to be so communicative for?

CAPT. K. Your next question naturally is, "What is your fortune? What are your prospects?"

BLITH. Sir! I would not take so great a liberty!

CAPT. K. From an uncle on my mother's side I shall come into five hundred a year.

BLITH. Not to be sneezed at, certainly!

CAPT. K. At present I have only my pay, and about two hundred a year from my father; but the Kilkenny Katskills were never rich, and always better hands at drawing a sword than a cheque. Is this an answer to your inquiries?

BLITH. (*bowing*). Sir, you are very polite! (*Aside.*) It seems the thing in society to

make known your exact financial position! I will return the compliment. (*Aloud.*) Sir, I am the fifteenth child of a score of pledges Heaven sent to bless my parents' declining years—my early days were passed—

CAPT. K. (*attempting to stop him*). Oh! Don't mention it!

BLITH. (*insisting*). Passed at the village of Slopton-on-the-Slushy.

CAPT. K. Do not give me a description of your past life! (*With passion.*) I love your charming child!

BLITH. (*astounded*). What!

CAPT. K. To obtain her hand is my ardent aspiration!

BLITH. (*aside*). What a match for my girl. (*Aloud.*) Pray sit down, sir. (*Noticing that CAPTAIN KATSKILL is about to sit down on chair by secretary where hat is placed.*) But *not* on my hat!

CAPT. K. A thousand pardons! (*Politely handing it to BLITHERS, he reads name inside.*) "Selwyn," his card is at the bottom.

BLITH. May I ask how you came to know I was here?

CAPT. K. It was your excellent wife who sent me to you.

BLITH. You have seen her? She knows about your pretensions?

CAPT. K. She honors me by her preference—as does your jewel of a daughter.

BLITH. It's as good as settled then?

CAPT. K. I now only await *your* consent. (*Rising.*)

BLITH. You have it, my boy! Bless you! (*With emotion.*)

CAPT. K. Oh! How can I testify my gratitude?

BLITH. By being good to the girl—for I love her as if she were my own.

CAPT. K. As *if* she were—Is she *not* your own?

BLITH. I am her step father only!

CAPT. K. But she bears your name?

BLITH. (*explaining on fingers*). Yes, I married my cousin's widow, so our names are the same. When do you propose to be married? (*Putting back chair.*)

CAPT. K. (*ardently*). As soon as possible!—Sooner if not before!

BLITH. You are a Hibernian, and therefore impetuous.

CAPT. K. Yet I was afraid to meet you! For I thought you favored a certain Mr. Bellamy.

BLITH. No! Although I have heard he has been making up to my girl—and has bought a good many pairs of new gloves! Ha! Ha!

CAPT. K. Ha Ha! (*Aside.*) I don't know what he's laughing at—but I suppose it's all right. (*Aloud.*) Allow me to take my leave. (*Bowing.*)

BLITH. Don't mention it! (*Both bowing. Exit CAPTAIN KATSKILL, L. U. E.*)

BLITH. We shall be a polite family when we get this young man amongst us! Now about this hat—I seem to be forgotten altogether. Hulloo!

Enter FRED, C., much agitated and still with Directory and hat.

FRED. At last I have caught you!

BLITH. (*aside*). This is the young man commissioned to restore my beaver.

FRED. You know all!

BLITH. (*puzzled*). That's rather a *lot* to know—but still—

FRED. Hush! For two hours I have been following in your footsteps—(*Restraining*

BLITHERS, *who wishes to speak.*) She tells me she has written twice—but what has become of her letters? When I arrived at the little shop I learnt all! They told me you were here, and so I rushed back to catch you!

BLITH. To catch me? What for?

FRED. Oh! sir, *I* am young—*she* is young—*you* were young—once!

BLITH. Yes, but—

FRED. Sir, *she* is lovely—I am considered fairly good-looking—*you* may have been good-looking yourself!

BLITH. No! I—

FRED. Yes—I insist on giving you the benefit of the doubt! Sir, we loved! That is our excuse!

BLITH. *You* loved? *Who* loved?

FRED. I am of good family—my grandfather—

BLITH. Was “Devil-may-care-Kilkenny!”—No! (*Aside.*) That was the other fellow’s grandfather!

FRED. No! He was a druggist—and my father—

BLITH. Stop! I have had enough pedigree for one day.

FRED. You have a right to be wrathful! I know I should have told you all this before—but, sir, you are not inhuman, and remember I loved her so!

BLITH. (*aside.*) He must be mad like the servant! Perhaps this is an asylum! (*Aloud, uneasily.*) Come! Come! My good young man! Be calm! Are you often like this?

FRED. Always! And always shall be until you forgive me! Oh! sir, we will take a pretty country cottage, and you shall live with us—we will watch over your declining years! And our babes unborn will circle round your bedside—and close your venerable eyelids when you leave us!

BLITH. (*irritated.*) No, thank you! You will please request your babes to let my eyelids alone!

FRED. It can’t be! Say—Oh! say you forgive me and open your withered arms to embrace the most repentant of sons-in-law.

BLITH. Sons-in-law!

FRED. Don’t be angry with poor little Lottie!

BLITH. Angry with my daughter? What for?

FRED. Why—for what she’s done! Don’t you know all about it?

BLITH. No!

FRED. They told me you *did*!

BLITH. Look here, young man—to prevent more mixing we had better begin at the beginning—I am Bosco Blithers—Who the deuce are you?

FRED. Whom should I be but Frederick Bellamy?

BLITH. (*aside.*) Lottie’s best glove customer. (*Aloud.*) Well, what do you want?

FRED. Your consent, it is too late to ask—but your forgiveness you cannot refuse—

BLITH. I can—and I do! Lottie is engaged to Captain Cornelius Katskill.

FRED. Engaged! She *can’t* be!

BLITH. I tell you she is! For she loves him to distraction! He confessed it!

FRED (*in passion*). If he said that he is a—

BLITH. (*stopping him*). Hush!

FRED. So he *is*, if he dared say that! He shall withdraw his words or I will kill him.

(*Crossing*, L.)

BLITH. Kill my future son-in-law! I forbid you!

FRED. What! Do *you* defend him?

Enter SELWYN, R. 2 E.

SEL. What's this? Fred confabulating with the duellist!

FRED (*to BLITHERS*). It's no use! I will fight! Return to your Irishman, and tell him so! (*Business*. BLITHERS *endeavoring to pacify* FRED.)

SEL. What's all this about?

BLITH. (*who has given up restraining FRED, in despair*. FRED *down* L., *in chair*). About? About as near to raving madness as ever was seen! Go and buy a straight-jacket, sir, he's a lunatic. While you are at the straight waistcoat shop you may as well purchase half a dozen, for he's not the only madman on the premises.

(*Exit* BLITHERS, L. U. E.)

SEL. I see it all! He would save my life a second time, by challenging this deliberate desperado!

Enter MRS. SELWYN, L. U. E.

MRS. S. What *is* the matter, Sam?

SEL. I don't know—I'll ask Fred! Fred! my dear boy, what is the matter? (FRED *has sunk down with his face in his hands*, L.) On what are you meditating, Fred?

FRED. I am meditating why I did not let you stop at the bottom of the lake. I mean to leave this wretched London, where all is perfidy and deceit!

Enter GRACE, L. U. E.

FRED (*going up to* GRACE). Good-bye, Miss Selwyn, and good-bye, Mrs. Selwyn, good-bye, Sam. If I met the wretch who has supplanted me in her affections I should slay him. Tell her that I return to my native village to avoid having to kill her Cornelius.

MRS. S.]
GRACE.] (*horror stricken*). Kill Cornelius! (*Going* R.)

FRED. Yes! I will spare the man she loves—but we must not meet, or I will not be answerable for my acts.

SEL. Oh! bosh! What are you talking about? Who is this Cornelius? Cheer up, Fred, and she shall marry *you*—and not *him*!

MRS. S.]
GRACE.] Never!

FRED. Too late! I know she prefers my rival! It's all settled.

SEL. Settled! It's *not* settled! It *can't* be settled without my consent!

MRS. S. (*crosses to c.*). Consent! You know you have given that! He said he'd seen you just now and you had blessed him!

SEL. Seen *me*!

GRACE. Yes. Now don't change your mind *again*, pa!

SEL. I shall lose my temper presently. (*To* FRED.) I say you *shall* have her!

GRACE (*throwing herself into her mother's arms*). Oh, ma, it's broken off again!

FRED. Thanks for your good intentions. But how can *you* interfere? *You* are not her father.

(*Exit* FRED, L. 2 E. *quickly*.)

SEL. Not her father! What? Here I say! (*He rushes after* FRED, *who slams his door*.)

Enter DIBBS, *hurriedly*, C.

DIBBS. Sir, sir! (MR. SELWYN *sits*, L.)

SEL. What is it now?

DIBBS (*aside, taking him down*, R.). A lady downstairs—says she must see Mr. Fred Bellamy—her name's Lottie—and she says she's been deceived—

SEL. Great Goodness! 'Tis she! (*Aside to DIBBS.*) Hush, not a word! I'll be there in an instant.

(*Exit DIBBS*, C.)

CAPT. K. (*entering*, L. U. E.). Me darling!

SEL. (*stopping*). Who's this familiar fellow?

GRACE. Oh! Corney! Papa's changed his mind *again*, and withdrawn his consent!

CAPT. K. Would he give you to this Bellamy? (*GRACE nods, "Yes."*)

SEL. Is that Captain Katskill?

CAPT. K. Never while I am alive.

SEL. Excuse me, sir—(*advancing*).

CAPT. K. (*only half turning to him*). Sir, I did not address meself to you! (*Continuing conversation to ladies.*) I do not yet despair me darling!

SEL. Darling! How dare you call my—

CAPT. K. (*sharply*). Sir, I am not talking to you!

SEL. (*piqued at his abruptness*). You are a vagabond!

CAPT. K. Sir, for the third and last time I say I am not speaking to you. (*Continuing.*) After all Mr. Selwyn is not really the father of my Gracie.

SEL. Now *he's* at it!

CAPT. K. She's the child of his cousin's widow—he told me so himself.

MRS. S. (*aside*). What does he mean?

SEL. (*furious*). My cousin's—what?

Enter FRED, with his luggage in hand, L. 2 E.

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SEL. Look here, Captain Killarney—

CAPT. K. Katskill of Kilkenny, sir!

FRED (*dropping his luggage with a bang*). Katskill!

SEL. You want to marry my daughter, and yet you dare to insult me!

FRED. *He* wants to marry Grace! Just now he wanted to marry Lottie!

ALL. Lottie!

FRED. Yes! Lottie Blithers! Dare you deny it, you Hibernia Don Juan! Her own father told me all about it.

MRS. S. Can this be true?

SEL. He wants *two* wives! (*Music till end of act.*)

Enter DIBBS suddenly, C.)

DIBBS. No, *three*!

ALL. Wha-a-t?

DIBBS. A Mormonite!

CAPT. K. (*threatening DIBBS*). Ah! Ye young divil!

DIBBS (*dodging behind bureau*). Who's afraid? You know you're after Miss Tompkins!

I listened at the keyhole and heard you ask the old man!

GRACE.]
FRED.] Miss Tompkins?

SEL. Any *more*? (*Vehemently.*)

MRS. S. (*to CAPTAIN KATSKILL indignantly.*) Leave this house, sir!

CAPT. K. Ladies! I swear—Grace—

GRACE (*very angry.*) Don't Grace me, sir! Adieu for ever!

CAPT. K. Oh! (*To FRED.*) It is *you*, sir, I have to thank for this!

FRED (*defiantly.*) Well?

CAPT. K. I shall call you out!

SEL. Hullo! Baulked in his bigamy, he thirsts for blood!

CAPT. K. Name your weapons!

FRED. What you like.

CAPT. K. Place?

FRED. Where you like.

CAPT. K. Time?

FRED. When you like!

CAPT. K. You shall never marry her! I am one of the fighting Katskills of Kilkenny; we never leave off while there's a bit of us left!

SEL. (*rushing to FRED.*) Kill my preserver? (*Business of restraining CAPTAIN KATSKILL and FRED, who are held back on L. and R. by the others throwing themselves between them.*)

ACT DROP QUICK.

ACT III.

29

SAME SCENE:—DIBBS *discovered by secretaire, large sword in hand, and polishing it with emery cloth, L.*

DIBBS. "If I fall," says Mr. Bellamy to me—"If I fall, Dibbs, tell everybody I know that my last thought was of them—whoever they may be—those I *don't* know tell them that my last thought *would* have been of them had I lived to have the opportunity of an introduction!" Poor young man! I shall miss him, for he often gave me tips. (*Wipes eyes with emery cloth.*)

Enter FRED, L. U. E.

FRED. Why do you weep, my boy?

DIBBS. I was a thinking, sir, that this very sword I now hold in my hand might be run through your *internals* before I had time—Oh! It would break my heart! (*Weeping again.*)

FRED (*much affected.*) Be brave, my lad, be brave!

DIBBS (*boo-hoo-ing very loudly.*) Before I had time to get a good polish on it!

FRED. Those ancient implements won't do. I shall have to borrow better ones somewhere. Leave off polishing them.

Enter SELWYN disguised in blue spectacles, slouch hat, etc. R. 2 E.

DIBBS. Oh! the governor's got on gig-lamps!

SEL. (*hastily removing spectacles.*) Yes! My eyes are weak. (*Aside.*) Disguise is

necessary—or one of the vampires might have recognized me.

FRED. Selwyn, when I'm challenged by this Irish tiger where shall I find seconds?

SEL. I don't mind being one.

FRED. Two will be wanted.

DIBBS. Well, sir, if there's any difficulty at the last minute, and sooner than spoil the sport, you can count on *me* as No. 2.

FRED. You! You impertinent imp. Get out! Now, to borrow these swords—where's my hat? I shall only be gone about ten minutes—I'll take Selwyn's. (*Exit FRED, L. U. E., with SELWYN'S hat, unseen by him.*)

SEL. I have been thinking how strange it was that both Fred and the Irish captain declared I wasn't Grace's father! I had indulged myself in that belief for many years at any rate! Can there be anything in it?

Enter BLITHERS, C.

BLITH. Where is he?

DIBBS. It's Tompkins!

SEL. Tompkins, the duellist!

BLITH. Excuse my third visit, but I beg to remind you that I have not got it yet.

SEL. The hat? I forgot all about it, in my many troubles! (*Aloud.*) Sir, permit me to apologize; it is my fault alone! (*To DIBBS.*) Where's his hat?

DIBBS. I'll go and look for it, sir. The old cough-drop don't mean to go without his *kady*! (*Exit DIBBS to FRED'S room, L. 2 E.*)

BLITH. (*aside*). Poor young man, I treated him too harshly! But it was all a misunderstanding! (*To SELWYN.*) You quite comprehend, don't you? The gentleman *said* he was already engaged to my girl; that's why I consented. You are *sure* you understand?

SEL. (*aside*). I can't say I do—but that's a detail.

BLITH. So I have come back to see him—besides, I want my hat.

SEL. (*aside*). He seems very fond of his old headgear.

DIBBS (*entering*). Not there, sir!

BLITH. Dear! Dear! How unfortunate! My girl made me promise not to come back this time until I could bring her some good news.

SEL. (*to DIBBS*). Look in the other rooms.

DIBBS. Yes, sir.

(Exit DIBBS, R.)

SEL. Do you set much value on your loss?

BLITH. My daughter's happiness is at stake!

SEL. (*aside*). His daughter's happiness concerned in the recovery of his old hat! (*Aloud.*) Ah! Been in the family a long time? I suppose a kind of heirloom?

BLITH. I never knew a man termed an heirloom before!

SEL. I am speaking of your hat.

BLITH. Oh! I was referring to Fred.

SEL. Fred!

BLITH. The poor child has opened her heart to me—and says she has written to him, asking him to seek me out, but he seems to deny all knowledge of the letters.

SEL. The letters? (*A suspicion crossing his mind.*)

BLITH. The messenger says he gave them to a servant here. (*Goes, L.*)

SEL. (*aside*). Messenger! Letters! It is getting worse and worse! This Tompkins must be the father of the girl Lottie who wrote to me!

DIBBS (*re-entering, c.*). No signs, sir!

BLITH. (*to DIBBS*). Oh! Do you know anything, young man, of any letters left here to-day? (*DIBBS looks across at SELWYN, who is making signs to him.*)

BLITH. Why don't you listen?

DIBBS. The master was making signs—

SEL. (*angrily*). Making signs! I? (*Makes more signs.*) Bosh!

BLITH. The letters were addressed to Mr. Frederick Bellamy and came from a young lady—

SEL. (*aside*). More proof! This *must* be my incognita's parent!

DIBBS. Oh! Yes! I took them in right enough! (*To SELWYN, who continues to gesticulate.*) What's the matter, sir? Is it *fits* coming on?

SEL. (*aside*). I should like to strangle him!

BLITH. (*to DIBBS*). What did you do with them?

DIBBS (*pointing to SELWYN*). I gave them to the governor!

SEL. To me!! (*Aside.*) Get out, or I will discharge you!

DIBBS (*aside*). More of it! This is a good-tempered family! (*Exit, L. U. E.*)

BLITH. (*to SELWYN*). Then *you* must have opened them?

SEL. Not exactly—but of course—(*embarrassed.*)

BLITH. Not that it will matter now the wedding is so soon to come off!

SEL. (*aside*). He thinks I can marry his daughter!

BLITH. I shall be glad to see her settled!

SEL. (*aside*). He will see me settled soon! (*Aloud.*) Would you mind stepping into the library?—we can continue our explanation there. (*Aside.*) Anything to prevent his meeting my wife!

BLITH. Certainly! (*Exeunt SELWYN and BLITHERS, R. 2 E.*)

Enter FRED, with pistol case; he puts hat on table, L.

FRED. I couldn't get any good swords, but my friend Dawkins has lent me a couple of capital pistols. As I was the challenged party I have the choice of weapons. By Jove! I will do a little practicing before the glass to see if my hand's steady.

(Exit FRED into his room, L. 2 E.

Enter MRS. SELWYN, L. U. E.

MRS. S. From an upper window I just observed Sam cross the road and come sneaking into his own house with blue spectacles on! Why? There's a mystery in the air that I mean to fathom—for the wife who would allow her husband to have a secret all to himself does not deserve to have a mother to instruct her in the wicked ways of the male sex in general, and married men in particular! (*Sits, R.*)

Enter GRACE, L. U. E.

GRACE. Oh! mamma, something dreadful is going to happen through that awful quarrel! Dibbs is polishing up two swords and whistling the "Dead March in Saul" in a way that makes my blood run cold! (*Sits on sofa.*)

MRS. S. *He's* in it, too! Only let a man make up his mind to deceive his wife—and everything masculine from a boy in buttons to a Judge on the bench will lend him a hand! They are *all* in the swim, and they know it! My child, it would be far better for you to give up this idea of wedded bliss!

GRACE. I know, mamma, everybody knows—marriage is a lottery.

MRS. S. For the men—yes! but for the women—no! You can't call a thing a lottery when there are *no* prizes at all; it then becomes a mere swindle!

GRACE. Oh, mamma! You always go on like this when papa grumbles at your bonnet bill.

Enter DIBBS quickly, with card, L. U. E.

DIBBS. Oh, sir, here's the young lady!—(*putting card behind him and giving little whistle.*) Whew!—the missus!

MRS. S. What? (*To GRACE.*) Go to your room, Grace; I want to talk to Dibbs.

(Exit GRACE, R. 2 E.)

MRS. S. Now, Dibbs, what is that in your hand?

DIBBS. Nothing, mum. (*Producing hand from behind back, empty.*)

MRS. S. The other one?

DIBBS (*passing card from hand to hand behind him*). Same, mum!

MRS. S. Both together! (*Business, etc.*) Ah! I thought so! (*Taking card from him.*) You may go—stop—(*reading card.*) Show the lady up, and not a word of warning to her that she will meet *me* instead of your master. If you breathe a syllable to her you shall be discharged. Keep whistling all the while go that I may know you are not telling her. (*DIBBS whistles Dead March and goes off slowly; he is heard in the distance as if he went downstairs. The sound becomes louder as he returns with lady.*)

Enter DIBBS, followed by MISS LOTTIE BLITHERS; she is a showily-dressed young lady of prepossessing appearance.

MRS. S. (*to DIBBS, who continues to whistle.*) That will do!

(Exit DIBBS.)

MISS B. Pardon my intrusion, madam, but I have called respecting a gentleman residing here.

MRS. S. Indeed!

MISS B. I have written to him more than once, but received no answer.

MRS. S. Recently?

MISS B. To-day.

MRS. S. (*recollecting the letter of Act I.*) Written here—was your letter signed "Lottie"?

MISS B. Yes. It's my name. I have placed myself in a false position, and I want my husband at once to release me from it.

MRS. S. Have you brought him with you?

MISS B. No—I am here to find him!

MRS. S. To find him! (*Aside.*) That letter was *not* for Fred, but for Sam, after all. (*Aloud.*) When did you last see him?

MISS B. Last night.

MRS. S. (*aside*). So he took advantage of my short absence! (*Aloud.*) Madam, I am loath to hurt your feelings, but I fear that you have been imposed upon by a *married man!*

MISS B. Married! Oh! I see now why he pretended our union must be kept secret from the world! I am a wretched woman! (*Sobbing, sits L.*)

MRS. S. I, too, have been blinded, but we will unmask the traitor between us. Step in here!

MISS B. Oh! I could tear his eyes out!

MRS. S. That I could never allow you to do. I want to do it myself!

MRS. S. (*locking door*). Now to confront the double-dyed deceiver! He shall not know I have learnt all his perfidies! I know I have him firmly on the hook—and I will play with him in order to watch his struggles! He comes, the wretch!

Enter SELWYN, R. 2 E., looking very anxious; seeing his wife he assumes a sickly sort of smile.

SEL. So glad you are here, dearest!

MRS. S. (*confronting him, severely*). You told me Lottie's letter was *not* for you.

SEL. Lot—Lottie! (*Nervously*).

MRS. S. I speak plainly, do I not? Lottie—you know Lottie?

SEL. Yes! I know—or I did know—a lot of Lotties—but all at a respectful distance—and a very long while ago.

MRS. S. I refer to last night only!

SEL. (*aside*). Done for! She's found me out! (*Aloud*.) Last night? Let me see—where was I last night?

MRS. S. No doubt where you have often been before.

SEL. (*aside*). She means the "Geranium." Yes, my dear, I *have* been there before—but alone! always alone!

MRS. S. Samuel! Elaborate lies are useless—She's here now! Yes, she came for *you* and saw *me*!

SEL. (*feebly*). Appearances *may* be against me, but—

MRS. S. No excuses! If you don't make a full confession of everything you did last night, never hope to be forgiven. I have only to open that door, and *she* will give me a full account herself, but I prefer to hear it from *your* guilty lips! Go on!

SEL. (*with an effort*). Well, Bella! Last night, feeling lonely, I wandered down Knightsbridge way, and dropped in on Dobbinson—and that's all! (*Pulling up suddenly*.)

MRS. S. That's *not* all! Shall I open the door?

SEL. (*anxiously*). No! no! Well, after dinner, feeling unwell, the salmon had disagreed with me, I think—I started to walk home—and—and—that's all!

MRS. S. (*sternly*). Go on, sir!

SEL. (*piteously*). I was near the Marble Arch when I heard footsteps behind me—female footsteps—I turned and beheld a lady—so—I—I—hastily fled—and that's all!

MRS. S. Sir! It is *not* all!

SEL. Isn't it? If you know so much about it, why ask me?

MRS. S. I mean to make you feel ashamed of yourself! Go on!

SEL. She asked me the way to Ludgate Hill—and that *is* all!

MRS. S. (*sternly*). Go on!

SEL. Nearly all! I directed her—and I won't deny (for I scorn evasion!) that I even accompanied her as far as Piccadilly! And there I left her, and if that isn't all may I be—

MRS. S. You *will* be—no doubt! I have heard enough of your miserable confession. (*Giving key*.) Now open the door, and let the creature go about her business! You will never be left alone again! Never so long as I live! (*Going, R.*)

SEL. (*taking key, crossing L., and with great hesitation opening door*). This is torture! Step this way, please Miss!

FRED *appears at open door, L.*

SEL. Fred!

MRS. S. Fred! Oh! I have locked the hussy in with *him*! Where is the young woman?

FRED. Oh! *She's* all right! Had a cry at first, but I soon consoled her! Don't look astonished—it's all correct—we have been alone together before!

MRS. S. (to SELWYN). You hear! A nice character you have picked up!

Enter BLITHERS, C., still with hat.

MRS. S. Mr. Tompkins!—I cannot stay here to be degraded in the presence of a poet!
(*Exit MRS. SELWYN, R. 2 E.*)

BLITH. (to FRED). Welcome, son-in-law! Welcome! Come to my arms!

FRED. Oh! Father-in-law!

SEL. (*aside*). They have made it up!

BLITH. My girl has confessed that she loves you—and you alone—she never cared for that Captain Katskill.

FRED. I knew she didn't!

SEL. (*aside*). Oh! So Fred knew Lottie all this while!

BLITH. When will you be married?

FRED. Oh, we've arranged all that!

SEL. Fred's going to marry her!—oh!

BLITH. We had better make haste back to her—for she was rather impatient.

FRED. No occasion—she's here!

SEL. (*aside*). He saved my life!—In common justice I ought to tell him. (*Taking him aside.*) Pause before you link yourself with this man's daughter. *She* is the girl I had supper with last night.

FRED (*leaping upon SELWYN and pinning him on chair*). Calumniator!

BLITH. Hullo! This *is* a sudden out-break!

SEL. (*half choked*). Let—go—my—throat!

FRED. Confess you have slandered her!

BLITH. Slandered whom? (*Dodging round them.*)

SEL. Yes! Yes! Anything you like! (FRED *releases SELWYN, who then produces letters.*) But look at those proofs.

FRED. Lottie's letters (*kisses them*) to me.

SEL. To *you*? Who is Lottie, then?

BLITH. My daughter! Of course!

SEL. Your daughter? Then who the devil is in *that* room? (*Going to door meets LOTTIE BLITHERS.*) *This* is not the young woman *I* met—this is not *my* Lottie! (LOTTIE *crosses to FRED.*)

FRED. No! She's *mine*. It's all serene, don't worry yourself! (*Putting arm round her waist.*)

SEL. But I *do* worry myself—and it is *not* all serene—for I *have just confessed to my wife!*

FRED. Well?

SEL. Well! And I shouldn't have done so if I hadn't thought the *real* girl I met was in that room—I have given myself away, that's what I have done!

Enter DIBBS—to FRED.

DIBBS. Please, sir, here's Captain Katskill called for you!

FRED. I had forgotten my duel!

BLITH. *You* in a duel!

SEL. Oh! It can be arranged now! (*BLITHERS crosses to c.*)

DIBBS. Come in, Captain Catstail!

Enter CAPTAIN KATSKILL.

CAPT. K. Oh! I thought *you* were alone! (*Going towards* BLITHERS.) Mr. Selwyn, allow me to explain.

SEL. Selwyn! No, you mean Tompkins.

FRED. Tompkins? No—you mean Blithers!

CAPT. K. (*to* BLITHERS). Are *you* not Mr. Selwyn?

BLITH. Certainly not!

SEL. How many more times? *I* am Mr. Selwyn. (*Turning to* BLITHERS.) Are you not Tompkins?

BLITH. No!

CAPT. K. By the piper who refused to play before Moses, I see it all!

SEL. And I see nothing but a fearful fog? (*Taking hat which* FRED *has placed upon table, L.*) Since you turn out *not* to be Tompkins!

DIBBS. Oh! So the old cuckoo ain't Tompkins at all!

SEL. (*hat in hand*). Isn't this yours? (*Crosses to* BLITHERS.)

BLITH. Emphatically—No!

SEL. Then it wasn't *you* I—(*making gesture of fighting*) last night?

BLITH. No!

SEL. (*threateningly*). Then what the devil do you mean by allowing me to apologize.

BLITH. How could I help it?

SEL. *You* have got *my* hat, though!

BLITH. I've been here with it three or four times. I'm glad to get rid of it! (*SELWYN snatches it, and goes up leaving other hat in his hand.*)

CAPT. K. (*to* BLITHERS). Sir, I made a formal request of you, this morning.

BLITH. Stop! *That's* my hat! (*Taking hat quickly from* CAPT. KATSKILL'S *hand.*)

CAPT. K. Your's? Then it was *you* who gave me the "oner?"

BLITH. Not that I am aware of, my good young man!

SEL. (*aside*). Last night seems to have been very pugilistic.

CAPT. K. I was standing outside my club, after giving a farewell supper to some bachelor friends, when my hat was rudely knocked off!

BLITH. Not by *me*, sir, I assure you.

DIBBS (*aside*). The mixture as before! They want *me* to help 'em again! (*Taking hat that* SELWYN *gave to* BLITHERS.) This is *your* hat, I think, Captain?

CAPT. K. Yes, how did you get it, you spalpeen?

DIBBS. Well, sir, to tell the truth it wasn't this gent (*pointing to* BLITHERS) who boxed you, but *this* one! (*Pointing to* SELWYN.)

SEL. (*aside*). Oh! That damned boy will be the death of me!

DIBBS (*aside to* SELWYN). All right, sir. The milingtary gent's in love with Miss Grace, so you are safe!

SEL. Is he? Then my life may be spared!

CAPT. K. (*threateningly*). So, sir, it was you!

SEL. Yes! But we will not resume our fistic encounter—remember, I am your future father-in-law! (*Aside.*) He may as well have Grace now that's Fred's got another flame!

CAPT. K. The Katskills of Kilkenny *never* bear malice!—Your hand!

SEL. Don't mention it! (*They go up, c.*)

DIBBS (*down, l.*). I knew I could get things straight!

Enter MRS. SELWYN and GRACE.

MRS. S. Painful as it is to go into these family matters before *you*, Mr. Tompkins. (*Addressing BLITHERS.*)

BLITH. I beg your pardon—*Blithers!*

SEL. (*coming down c. to MRS. SELWYN*). Yes, dear—Blithers—you are mixing things up!

MRS. S. Well, Blithers, if you wish—my husband's conduct last night with this Miss—I do not know her name—

FRED. (*Bringing LOTTIE forward*). Mrs. Bellamy!

MRS. S. (*astonished*). Mrs. Bellamy!

SEL. (*to MRS. SELWYN*). I told you, dear, you were mixing things up!

MRS. S. (*to SELWYN*). But, Samuel, you confessed to me you met this lady—

SEL. I never saw her in all my life!

FRED. Certainly not *last* night, for *I* was with her the whole evening!

BLITH. I can testify to the truth of that!

MRS. S. Are you conspiring to deceive me?

SEL. No, my dear. The fact is, I may have *appeared* to have been rather in a hobble, but it was all assumed—all put on, my dear. Every bit of it, and if *you* don't understand it, I do, and so don't make yourself ridiculous before visitors—but give your consent to the Captain having our little Gracie!

GRACE. Oh! dear papa!

CAPT. K. (*to GRACE*). Me jewel!

MRS. S. I certainly *don't* understand it, but I suppose it's all right?

SEL. Perfectly, my dear! It was that stupid Dibbs who was at the bottom of it all to begin with.

DIBBS (*indignantly*). Me! (*Down, l.*)

SEL. (*winks*). Yes! I thought at first of discharging him, but I have decided to give him another chance, and a rise in his wages. (*Bringing BLITHERS and CAPTAIN KATSKILL down c., and aside to BLITHERS.*) How did *you* become possessed of my head-gear?

BLITH. Well, as you took mine from Mr. Dobbinson's hat-stand what was I to do?

SEL. (*to CAPTAIN KATSKILL*). How did the name of Tompkins get into *your* chimney-pot, Captain?

CAPT. K. It's my *hatter's* name—not mine!

SEL. (*to MRS. SELWYN*). There, my dear, *now* I hope that you are satisfied?

MRS. S. Partly! But there still seem one or two things not quite clear. How was it that *you* said—

SEL. (*appealing to all*). Now she's mixing it again! *You* explain, my friends! (*Group c., all speak at once to MRS. SELWYN.*)

FRED. | I fell in love with Lottie—

LOTTIE. | We were married on the sly, so—

CAPT. K.] Explain, is it? Listen a while, Madam—

MRS. S. Stop! I understand!

SEL. Bella understands, (*coming c.*) so that's all right. (*Aside.*) It's more than I do. (*Aloud.*) The question is (*to audience*) do *you* understand? Of course you do, you understand everything, especially that all we have done to-night has been to amuse without offending, in the hope of being rewarded with the generous coinage of your approval paid (*indicating applause*) by note of hand.

CURTAIN.

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PEREGRINATIONS OF POLLY

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One plain Interior scene. Polly and Margaret, bachelor maids, being invited to attend a musicale, determine to exchange escorts. The result may not have been such as was intended, but certainly was one to have been expected. The dialogue throughout is brilliant and snappy, the action quick, thus ensuring a success for this bright sketch. Plays forty-five minutes.

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