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MN 2000 MISC-1915



Bulletin of
The University of Minnesota
AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION DIVISION

KINDLING THE HEARTH FIRE

A RURAL DRAMA

BY

ESTELLE COOK

Keep a clean hearth and a clear fire for me.

—Tennyson, "Enoch Arden."



GENERAL SERIES, No. 36. NOVEMBER 1915

Entered at the Post Office
in Minneapolis as second-class matter
Minneapolis, Minn.

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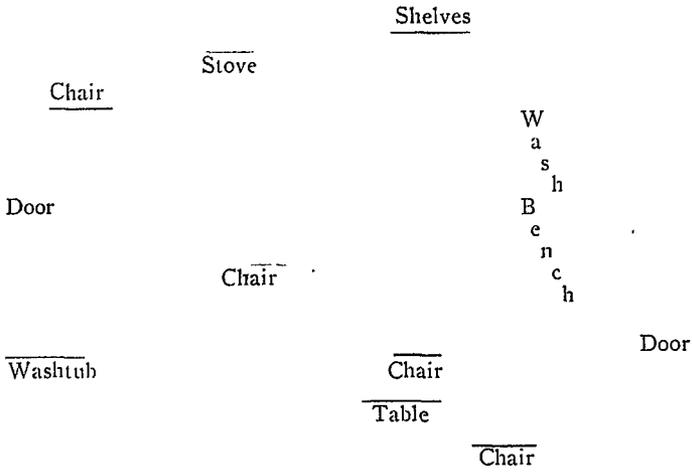
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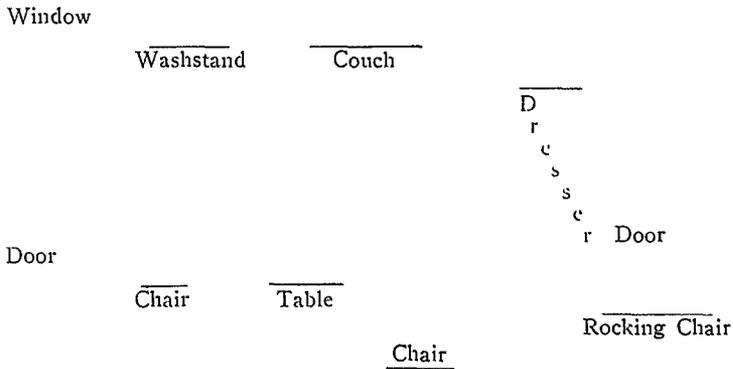
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PLAN OF STAGE

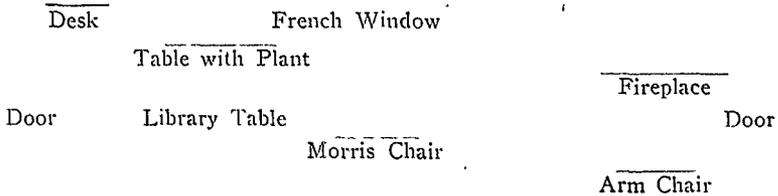
ACT I



ACT II



ACT III



CAST OF CHARACTERS

MRS. FIELD, An overworked, farmer's wife
NED, Her young son
DORIS, Her daughter
MRS. STRINGER, A borrowing neighbor
MR. HARTWELL, A graduate of the Agricultural College
MR. FIELD, A prosperous farmer
DAVE DALTON, A neighbor, who "owns his own farm"
IDA JOHNSON, Clerk in a department store
MRS. RYAN, The manager of a lodging house
MR. BOND, A man with money
MISS BROOKS, Visiting housekeeper for the Welfare League
PETE, OLAF, Hired men

ACT I

The kitchen in the Field home

ACT II

A room in a cheap lodging house

ACT III

The living room in the Field home

COSTUMES

MRS. FIELD—

- Act I. Dark wrapper with gingham apron
- Act III. Neat house dress, white apron, black hat, dust coat

DORIS—

- Act I. Dark blue house dress with gingham apron
- Act II. Suit with white waist; a becoming hat
- Act III. Large apron and dusting cap; pretty summer dress

NED—

- Act I. Overalls and old shirt; short trousers
- Act III. Short trousers and light shirt

MR. HARTWELL—

- Act I. Light gray suit; straw hat
- Act III. Dark suit, motor coat and cap

MRS. STRINGER—

- Act I. Old waist and skirt fastened with safety pin; sunbonnet
- Act III. Same, only more untidy

MR. FIELD—

- Act I. Dark shirt, overalls
- Act III. Light shirt, dark suit

MISS BROOKS—

- Act II. Suit skirt and silk waist
- Act III. Pretty light dress, motor coat, hat, and veil

IDA JOHNSON—

- Elaborate suit with heavily trimmed waist; hat loaded with flowers;
ear-rings

MRS. RYAN—

- Act II. Red plaid gingham waist with dark skirt
- Act III. Neat, dark house dress, gingham apron

HIRED MEN—

- Dark shirts, overalls

PROPERTIES

ACT I

Washtub and washboard	Cups and plates
Soiled overalls and shirts	Coffee and coffee pot
Soap	Salt and tea
Candy	Pie
Salt pork and knife	Doughnuts
Bandage	Cookies
Snuffbox	Cake
Bulletin	Rolls and butter
Ball	Letter

ACT II

Bananas	Waist
Rolls	Dishes
Oil or alcohol stove	Letter
Toilet articles	Photograph
Washbowl and pitcher	Large box of candy

ACT III

Flowers	Vacuum cleaner
Vases	Cream whip
Lemonade	Dish drainer
Tray and glasses	Fruit press
Telephone	Photograph
Hand bag with postcard and pen	Bank book

KINDLING THE HEARTH FIRE

ACT I

Scene, an untidy farm kitchen. In the center of the stage, at the back, is an old stove, at the left of this, a cupboard, and at the left of the cupboard a dry sink with wash basin, slop pail, and roller towel. At the right center are two old chairs holding a washtub. At the left center a kitchen table spread with dark oilcloth. On the floor near the tub is a pile of dirty shirts and overalls. Mrs. Field is discovered washing at the tub. Ned is playing with a ball. C.

MRS. FIELD. Put that ball away, and go and pile the kindlings I split in the woodshed while they're dry.

NED. Gee whiz! Has a kid got to work all the time?

MRS. FIELD. You hain't killed yourself yet.

NED. Say, ma, ain't you goin' to let me play ball this afternoon? District 26 is goin' to wipe the earth with the guys from District 2.

MRS. FIELD. No, you can't go. Your father needs you to drive the hayfork when he comes in with the hay. It saves a man's work. Now, go do what I tell you. (*Ned crosses to R.*) Come here. Let me look at you. Them overalls is dirty an' they've got to be washed.

NED. No, ma, they're all right. They're clean enough.

MRS. FIELD. No, they ain't. Take 'em off an' let me wash 'em.

NED. Gee! ma, can't a feller go dirty if he wants to?

MRS. FIELD. Stop your noise, an' take 'em off. It's hard enough to wash your old clothes without havin' a fight to get 'em off your body.

NED (*taking off overalls*). Gosh! can't a kid ever do what he wants to? (*Throws overalls.*)

(Exit Ned, R.)

(Enter Doris, L., with a pail in one hand and an armful of wood.

She puts the wood by the stove and the pail by the sink.)

MRS. FIELD. Did you dig the potatoes for dinner?

DORIS. Yes, mother, they are out here in the basket.

MRS. FIELD (*in a complaining voice*). Now, you'd better hurry up with that lunch. The men will be in here to eat before you have it ready for 'em. I've got to get this washing out of the way before dinner time. Seems as if the washing gets bigger and bigger all the time.

DORIS. Let me rub for awhile, mother, and rest you.

MRS. FIELD. No, I've got my hands in it and I might as well keep at it. You get the lunch set out.

DORIS. What shall I give them?

MRS. FIELD. As if you didn't know as well as I do what's in the house. There are those fresh buns and pieplant pie and ginger cookies and doughnuts. Yes, and fruit cake, don't forget that. You can butter the buns, it will save butter, and make a pot of coffee, good and strong. They need something to brace 'em up so as they can get the hay in that's

cut. Give 'em some of the doughnuts, too, they like 'em with their coffee.

DORIS (*setting out the lunch*). It seems to me, mother, that this isn't a very good lunch for hard-working men.

MRS. FIELD. What more would you want? That's plenty good enough. Now, hurry and get it on the table, and don't stand there all day talking about it.

DORIS. Don't be so cross, mother.

MRS. FIELD. You'd be cross, too, if you had all these dirty, sweaty shirts to wash. Men do get their clothes so filthy dirty in hayin' time.



Mrs. Field: Men do get their clothes so filthy dirty in hayin' time.

If you've got the coffee on, go down to the well and get a pail of water for them to wash in.

DORIS. Mother, why don't you let the men wash outside like Mrs. Smith does?

MRS. FIELD. I'm not so partic'lar as Mrs. Smith. She's afraid of gettin' a spot of water on her kitchen floor. I don't want to carry my soap and towels outdoors for the men to throw around. Now go and get that water, I say. Why is it you stand and oppose everything I ask you to do? (*Doris goes out with pail, L. Enter Ned, R., crying.*) Land sakes! What's the matter now?

NED. Father sent me out to drive the cattle back where they broke out of the pasture, and there by the old fence I stepped on a nail and it hurts awful. (*Sobs.*)

MRS. FIELD (*wiping her hands on her apron.*) Let's see your foot. Was it a rusty nail?

NED (*crying*). I don't know. I guess so. (*Sits C.*)

MRS. FIELD. Well, stop your crying. I'll tie some salt pork on it. That will draw out the poison.

NED. It'll make it smart. I don't want any salt pork on it. (*Whines.*)

MRS. FIELD. Well, you've got to have it, so you might as well keep still. (*Goes out L. Ned tries to sneak out R. Enter Mrs. Field, L., with pork and bandage.*) Here, come back.

NED. Frank Smith's mother puts something out of a bottle on him when he gets hurt, and it makes it feel awful good. Oh! Oh! I hate salt pork. (*Ned sits, C., and cries vigorously.*)

MRS. FIELD. Stop your noise and hold still. I guess I know as much about what's good for you as Mrs. Smith. My mother put on salt pork and her mother before her and we haven't any of us died with the lockjaw either. (*Binds on pork with bandage.*)

(*Enter Doris, R.*)

DORIS. What's the matter, Ned, what are you crying about?

MRS. FIELD. Oh, he's gone and hurt himself on a rusty nail. Seems as if everything is comin' to hinder me today when I want to get my washin' out.

DORIS. Poor Ned, I'm sorry it hurts you. Now, if you'll be brave and stop crying, what do you think I'll do?

NED (*wiping his eyes*). I dunno. What?

DORIS. I'll give you some of the candy I got last night.

NED. I'll stop right away. Did Dave bring you another box, honest?

DORIS. You just wait and see. (*Goes to cupboard and brings out bag.*)

NED. Say, Sis, Dave's your beau, ain't he? (*Grabs a handful of candy.*)

MRS. FIELD. Look out for that coffee. It's going to boil over. Ned, take your candy and get out of here. Sister's got to get lunch ready for the men. Get out, I say! (*Ned goes out, R.*) You two are enough to drive a woman distracted. Him talkin' about you havin' a beau.

DORIS. It does sound foolish, doesn't it, mother? When Dave is just a friend. Now we're on the subject, I want to ask you if I can go to an alumni picnic this afternoon at Bass Lake. The bunch I went with when I was in high school are all going, and they're planning such a lovely time. David has asked me to go with him.

MRS. FIELD. Go to a picnic this afternoon! Have you gone stark crazy? A picnic on wash day and in hayin' time! *No, indeed!* There is something more important for you to do here at home than to be running around the country to picnics.

DORIS. But, mother, David is going to take me in his new automobile. I want to go awfully—

MRS. FIELD. Well, that settles it.

DORIS. It's a fine new Ford.

MRS. FIELD. A Ford! An automobile! I won't have you chasing around the country in an automobile with Dave Dalton, or anybody else. He'll run you into a tree, as like as not, and knock your brains out. Now, you get that idea out of your head. An' I'll tell Dave what I think of him, too, when I see him.

DORIS. Mother, please don't be so unreasonable! Dave knows perfectly well how to run it. There isn't the slightest danger. (*Crosses to door, L.*)

MRS. FIELD (*slapping her clothes down on the washboard*). You heard what I said—

DORIS (*crossing to C.*) Hush, mother, here comes Mrs. Stringer.

MRS. FIELD. Well, for pity's sake! Sarah Ann Stringer comin' here! Now I never will get my washin' out. Go to the door and let her in.

(*Enter Mrs. Stringer, L.*)

MRS. STRINGER. Good mornin', Doris. How do you do, Molly? Land sakes! Are you a washin' in the kitchen this hot day? Why don't you wash outside? or have a shed to wash in, like I do? It's bad enough to have the smell and clutter in the house in the winter-time when we have to. When summer comes I'm mighty glad to get it outside.

DORIS. That's what I tell mother.

MRS. FIELD. Now look lere, Sarah Ann Stringer, I guess I know what I'm a doing as well as any one can tell me. My work is here in this kitchen. I can't be runnin' out and in doors every time I want to put a stick of wood in the stove. I'll tell you, with all the work there is to do around this house my time is valuable. (*Washes vigorously.*)

MRS. STRINGER. Mrs. Smith has what she calls a laundry-room built onto her kitchen, an' she's got one of them new-fangled washin' machines run by 'lectricity. I'd be scared to death to use one for fear I'd get a current through me an' die like I was struck by lightnin'.

DORIS (*bringing a chair to stage center*). Won't you have a chair, Mrs. Stringer?

MRS. STRINGER. Well, I will set a few minutes if I ain't botherin' nobody. (*Sits.*)

(*Knock at door, R.*)

MRS. FIELD. Come in.

(Enter Mr. Hartwell)

MR. HARTWELL. Good morning. (*Takes off cap.*) My name is Hartwell. This is Mrs. Field, I suppose. Mr. Field said I would find you here.

MRS. FIELD. Yes, that's my name. This is Mrs. Stringer, an' that's my daughter, Doris.

MR. HARTWELL. I'm very glad to know you, ladies. I am introducing a new and valuable work into the farm homes of the community. (*Displays book.*)

MRS. FIELD. I hain't got time to look at no books today.

MR. HARTWELL. It will take but a minute to show it. It is called the "Farm Home." (*Opens book.*) This is published, as you see, by some of the leading agricultural men of the state, and deals with all the problems that are of interest to the farmer and his family. I would be very glad to show it to you. I know you are busy—

MRS. FIELD. Yes, I'm always busy.

MR. HARTWELL. It will take but a moment to look it through. The first chapter deals with the home. The women should be considered first, you know. (*Laughs.*) Here is the model farm house. (*Mrs. Field gets interested*), kitchen (*turns over a leaf*), basement (*turns over another leaf*), sleeping rooms, and so on. The second takes up the subject of domestic science—

MRS. STRINGER (*interrupting*). Domesticated science, huh! So that's what you're selling. (*Hartwell crosses to C.*) Well, you might as well go back to the company as sent you out, an' save your breath.

MR. HARTWELL (*interrupting*). Why, Mrs. Stringer—

MRS. STRINGER. We know how to run our kitchens in this part of the country as well as them folks as write books about it. (*Mr. Hartwell gets a chair and sits by Mrs. Stringer.*)

MR. HARTWELL. Surely, Mrs. Stringer—

MRS. STRINGER (*interrupting*). I tell you we know what we're doing as well as you can tell us. Some young chit of a girl goes off to college for a few weeks when she ought to be stayin' to home an' helpin' her mother—

MR. HARTWELL (*interrupting*). Mrs. Stringer, I think—

MRS. STRINGER (*interrupting*). Then she sets down an' writes a book tellin' us old housekeepers what to do. As if we didn't know all about it before she was born.

MR. HARTWELL. But, my dear madam, this was written by—

MRS. STRINGER (*interrupting*). I don't care who this was written by. I know what I'm talkin' about.

MR. HARTWELL (*continuing speech*). Part II of the book takes up the farmer's side of the problem. Breeding, testing milk—

MRS. STRINGER. The farmers 'round here ain't interested in sich nonsense.

MR. HARTWELL (*interrupting*). You don't—

MRS. STRINGER (*interrupting*). If you want to talk stock-breeding

go to Mr. Smith. He wanted Jake, my husband, to pay one hundred dollars for a pure-bred calf. One hundred dollars for a little calf! The very idea! I said "No", an' I said it so loud he never came back again. You're just wastin' your time tryin' to sell sich a book 'round here, yes, indeed.

MR. HARTWELL. Then I can't interest you?

MRS. STRINGER. No, an' it looks as if Molly is too busy to be bothered, so you'd better be movin' on.

MRS. FIELD. Yes, I've got to get my washin' out some time today. (*Mr. Hartwell stands.*) Good morning!

MR. HARTWELL. Well, I'm sorry that you can't take the time—

MRS. STRINGER (*interrupting*). Farmers' folks' time is valuable. We farmers' wives have a lot of things to do. I said to Mrs. Fink, I said, sez I— (*Book agent goes out.*) There, I got rid of him. If you give them agents half a show, they'll hang around and pester the life out of you all day.

DORIS. That book seemed to me to be very helpful.

MRS. FIELD. If you have the coffee made, just go out an' see if the old yeller hen has left her chickens again. She—

(*Exit Doris, R.*)

MRS. STRINGER (*interrupting*). Land sakes! Molly, you don't tell me that you lynch your men. That comes from havin' these foreigners around here. I've heard tell that in the ol' country they eat five times a day. Now they come over here an' expect us to feed 'em more times than's good for 'em. I told Mrs. Dixon the other day, I sez to her, sez I—

(*Enter Doris, R.*)

DORIS. The men are coming in from the field, mother.

MRS. STRINGER. Land sakes! Here I've talked all this time and I haven't yet told you what I come for. I want to borrow a few drawin's of tea, if you have it to spare, and a cup of salt. I said to Jake last night, I sez, "Jake," sez I—

DORIS. Here is the tea, Mrs. Stringer, I'll get your salt in a minute.

MRS. STRINGER. This is black tea (*examining it*), ain't it? You always have sich good tea. I send to Montgomery Ward for mine. I save 2 cents a pound on it, cheaper than I can get it down at the store. I get most of my groceries there when I have ready money to send for 'em. Williams don't like it any too well, either, but I said to him, sez I, —

DORIS. Here is the cup of salt. Can I do anything more for you?

MRS. STRINGER. No, I guess this is all for this time. I'm expectin' the box from Montgomery Ward's most any time now, as I was sayin'— Now, what, was I sayin'?

DORIS. I don't remember just what you were saying, Mrs. Stringer, but won't you sit down and have some coffee before the men come in?

MRS. STRINGER. Well, now, this is invitin', your coffee is always so good. (*Sits at end of table.*)

(*Enter Mr. Field, Olaf, Pete, and Ned, L. Each takes a drink of water. Mr. Field washes his hands.*)

MR. FIELD. How do you do, Mrs. Stringer. Pretty good hayin' weather, I call it.

MRS. STRINGER. Yes, indeed, the weather is all right. I was sayin' to Jake just yesterday, sez I, "Jake, we ain't had sich hayin' weather since the year of the big freshet." That was the year Jake cut twenty tons of good hay off his bottom land. He—

(One of the men has been playing with Ned.)

NED *(interrupting)*. Here, you stop that, you hurt my sore foot. *(Pete picks him up and holds him in the air.)* Ma, make him quit.

PETE. Cry baby, cry baby. What's the matter with your foot?

DORIS. He stepped on a rusty nail. Sit down, your lunch is ready. There, Ned, don't cry any more.

NED. Say, Sis, will you give me some more candy if I stop? *(The men seat themselves at the table.)*

DORIS. Yes, dear, wait until the men have gone out.

PETE. This stepping on a nail is pretty dangerous business. I knew a feller once who stepped on a nail and blood pizen set in, an' he had to have his foot took square off. He ain't got no foot left.

OLAF. Ya, dis been bad pizness all right. Ay stuck a nail in my hand von time ven I was fixing de fence. My hand he svelled up yust so big as von fence post. Ay couldn't do no vork all summer.

NED *(crying again)*. Ma, my foot's hurtin' awful bad.

MRS. FIELD. Oh, stop your noise! It'll be all right soon. That salt pork'll take the poison out.

MRS. STRINGER. Salt pork is good an' so is golden ile made of roots and yarbs. Mis' Stone has some. If it gets any worse, you can borry some off her. That's what I do. Well, I must be goin'. *(Starts toward door.)* Say, have you heard about Ida Johnson? You know she went to town to work in a department store. Her mother read me a letter what she got from her yesterday, an' she says she likes it so well she never wants to come back to the farm to stay any more. She says she never has to even soil her hands, mind you that, she sez, sez she, "I never have to soil my hands an' I can do just as I please Sundays and evenin's." I suppose all the girls around here will be runnin' to town to work in department stores. Well, I must be goin'. Thank you, Molly, for the tea and the salt. I'll bring 'em back as soon as we get the box. Come over and set with me when you get time. Good-bye.

MRS. FIELD. Good-bye, Mrs. Stringer. Never mind about bringing back the things. You're welcome to them.

(Exit Mrs. Stringer, L.)

PETE. Whee! that woman would talk an arm off a wooden image in front of a cigar store. Can you beat it?

OLAF. She ban good talker, all right. *(All laugh.)*

NED. Say, pa, can I join the boys' corn club?

MR. FIELD. What for?

NED. To raise corn.

MR. FIELD. Sure, raise all the corn you can.

NED. But you have to rent me an acre of your land. Next fall I will select my seed, I test it in the spring and plant it. See, this bulletin (*Exhibits bulletin.*) tells all about it.

MR. FIELD. What nonsense will they be up to next? This comes of putting agriculture in the school. No you can't join any corn club. Tell 'em I said so, too. (*Ned grabs a piece of pie and a doughnut.*)

(*Exit Ned, L.*)

PETE (*laughing*). They'll soon make the kids believe they know how to run the farm better than the old men do.

OLAF. Ja, dey tink dat now. (*All laugh.*)

PETE. What you goin' to do with your hay?

MR. FIELD. Feed it, I s'pose. I may sell some.

PETE. Did you hear that Dick Johnson is buildin' a silo? He calculates to cut up his fodder corn an' put it into it to make feed for his cattle.

MR. FIELD. He is, is he? There's a lot of talk about them silos, but I tell you what, it's just humbug. Some of these city fellers want to get hold of the farmers' money. (*Picks teeth.*) They're always workin' some scheme or other to get it. I know what I'll do with mine. I'll salt it down in the bank at three and a half per cent interest, an' when I want it I'll know where to find it.

PETE. Smith's makin' a lot of improvements around his place. I was over there last week an' he's got his house all tore up puttin' in a heatin' plant an' a bathtub, just like the city folks have.

OLAF. Dar ban one farmer over by my plas, whose house ban yust like city house. Dar ban faucets in de kitchen where you can get hot water. It ban yust fine, I tall you.

MR. FIELD. Wall, us farmers can't afford to tear our houses to pieces an' fix 'em up like them folks what live in town. We have other ways to use our hard-earned money. We've got to buy new machinery an' more stock. The men in town don't have no other way to spend their money than by tearing their houses up and buyin' automobiles. Believe me, I have as good a well as there is in the state, an' I ain't goin' to spend my money puttin' fancy fixin's in the kitchen. (*Rises from table.*) It's all dum foolishness.

PETE (*rising*). It makes it fine for the women folks, all right. (*Olaf puts all that is left on the table into his pocket, rises and gets hat.*)

MR. FIELD (*picking up hat*). I propose to keep my well where it's most needed, an' that's where the cattle can get at it.

(*Exit Mr. Field and Olaf, L.*)

(*Enter Ned, L.*)

PETE (*hitting Ned on head with hat*). You want to be careful of that foot, kid, you may get hydrophia in it, like Doc. Perkins' little dog.

(*Exit Pete, L., laughing.*)

DORIS. Don't pay any attention to him, brother, he's just teasing you. Run out to the box, dear, and get the mail. I see the postman has left a letter. (*Ned goes out; L.*) I am expecting one from Ida Johnson. She seems to like the city.

MRS. FIELD. Well, city folks don't have it as hard as we do. We have to slave from morning till night. I'm glad she has it easy. Pick up the dishes while I hang out these clothes.

(Exit Mrs. Field, R., with basket of clothes.)

(Enter Ned, L., with letter.)

DORIS. Is it for me?

NED. You bet.

DORIS. Give it to me.

NED. No, I won't, 'til you give me the candy you promised me. Look what Pete gave me. *(Exhibits cigarette.)*

DORIS. Give that to me. I'll tell mother on you. *(Takes it.)*

NED. Tattle-tale. Some day I'm going to get one and smoke it, too.

DORIS. Here's your candy. Now give me my letter.

NED. Here it is. *(She opens letter and reads. Ned puts a piece of candy in each pocket and one in his mouth.)* Say, Sis, Dave's your beau, ain't he? I just saw him comin' over the hill in his auto? When are you goin' to have him give me a ride in his new auto? Sis—say, Sis, you seem to be awfully interested in that letter.

DORIS. It's from Ida Johnson.

NED. I s'pose she's tellin' you all about livin' in the city where she don't have to soil her hands.

DORIS *(reading.)* Yes, dear.

NED *(looking out of window.)* Oh, Sis, Dave's turnin' into our gate. Maybe he's comin' now to give me a ride. I'll go out and see.

(Exit Ned, L.)

(Doris folds letter thoughtfully and then hurries to clear off table.)

(Enter Dave and Ned, L.)

DORIS. How do you do, Dave? You look as if you enjoyed your new auto.

DAVE. You bet I do. I am getting so I can run it fine. It's dandy, great!

NED. Say, Dave, when are you going to take me for a ride?

DAVE. 'Most any time.

NED. Will you take me today?

DAVE. I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll take you today if you'll go out and sit in the machine until I get there. Mind you don't touch anything, and if you get out before I come, I won't take you.

NED. I'll wait for you. Gee! I'm going to have a ride before Sis does.

(Exit Ned, L.)

DAVE. Can't you let the dishes go for a few minutes. I want to talk to you.

DORIS. Won't you have a doughnut or a piece of pie?

DAVE. You bet, if you made them. *(Takes a doughnut.)* I came to tell you about this afternoon. I thought it would be a good stunt to start early, say three o'clock, and ride around by Weston before we joined the crowd at the lake. The roads are dandy that way.

DORIS. Dave, I'm afraid I'll have to disappoint you. Mother says I can't go.

DAVID. Why not? Is she afraid of the auto? I'll take the team.

DORIS. No, that wouldn't make any difference.

DAVID. What is it, then? Does she object to you're going with me?

DORIS. Oh, no, that isn't the reason, either.

DAVID. What is it, then? Can't you tell me?

DORIS. It's this way. Mother is washing today and that always makes her cross and unreasonable. I suppose it is because she is tired out. Father is putting in hay and we have extra men to cook for. She doesn't feel that she can get along without me.

DAVE (*sitting down.*) Pshaw, I'm awfully disappointed.

DORIS. So am I.

DAVE. Can't you manage it some way?

DORIS. No. You'll have to take some other girl.

DAVID (*standing*). I don't want to take another girl. I want you.

DORIS. Well, I can't go, so that settles it. (*Dave takes up cap and starts to go.*) Dave, wait a minute, I have something to tell you. I have just had a letter from Ida Johnson. You know she is clerking in a department store. She says they are taking on a lot of new girls the first of September and she wants me to come, says she can get a place for me.

DAVE. You go to the city and clerk in a department store?

DORIS. Yes, that's what she writes. (*Opens letter.*) She says that I can live with her, and we can get our meals together and save expenses. She's ever so anxious to have me come.

DAVE. But you're not thinking of going, are you?

DORIS. Yes, Dave, I am. I'm getting pretty tired of living on a farm. It's just work, work, all the time without any chance for good times. Here I can't even go to a picnic because it's wash day and father is haying.

DAVE. Your mother should let you go.

DORIS. Now, if I were working for myself, I could be independent. If I wanted to go to a party I could go without asking any one.

DAVE. How could your mother get along without your help? Have you thought of that?

DORIS. Yes, I have. It's easy enough to get help if one pays for it. Here's father with two extra men helping him. If I wasn't here, he'd have to get someone to help mother. Then she wouldn't have to do the washing and the other heavy work.

DAVID. But, Doris, I don't want you to go.

DORIS. Why should I stay around here? I'm twenty-one years old, old enough to get out and see the world. "Try my wings," as they say.

DAVID. A good many birds fly out of the nest who wish they hadn't. There are all kinds of temptations for girls who go to the city.

DORIS. I'm not a bit afraid. I can take care of myself.

DAVID. Doris, there is another good reason why you shouldn't go away. I've had it on my tongue to tell you a thousand times. I love you, Doris, have loved you, I guess, ever since we were kids and went to district

school together, you know, and traded lunches. I have always known that some day I would ask you to be my wife.

DORIS. Oh, David, please don't!

DAVID. Yes, I will, and you must listen to me. I have a fine farm now in my own name and some good stock. Cut out that talk about going to the city and come and live with me, be my wife, won't you?

DORIS. No, Dave, I hate the farm. I never, never could think of being a farmer's wife. The very thought of it makes me sick. I guess I've had too much of it. I'm going away where I can have a little freedom. (*David drops dejectedly into chair.*)

(*Enter Mrs. Field, R.*)

MRS. FIELD. How do you do, David? Haven't you got them dishes washed yet, Doris? I wanted you to go out and pick some gooseberries for pies for lunch tomorrow and clean the lamps. (*Looks from one to the other.*) What's the matter, David? You don't look well.

DAVID. I'm not well, Mrs. Field. Doris has just told me some news that's sort o' knocked me out.

MRS. FIELD. What you been tellin' Dave?

DORIS. I've just had a letter from Ida Johnson. She wants me to come to the city and work with her in the store.

DAVID (*standing*). I've tried my best to talk her out of going.

DORIS. But I won't be persuaded.

MRS. FIELD. What do you mean?

DORIS. I mean that I won't be persuaded. I've made up my mind. I'm tired and sick of the farm and I'm going to the city.

(*Mrs. Field sinks into chair with apron to eyes.*)

(*Enter Ned*)

NED. Aren't you ever coming to give me that ride?

(*Curtain*)

ACT II

Scene, a room in a cheap lodging house. In the center of the stage, at the back, is a cot bed, at the left of this, an old dresser. At the right of the bed is a washstand with bowl and pitcher. At the right center is a small table and two chairs. An old rocking chair is at the left center. Ida Johnson discovered combing out switch at the dresser. She is singing a popular song,

IDA (*breaking off song suddenly*). Gosh! How does that go? (*Turns.*) You're late tonight, Do. Did anything exciting happen?

DORIS. No, not especially. Why? (*Takes off hat and coat.*)

IDA (*arranging hair*). I thought maybe you'd run away with "His Nibs," that floor-walker who is so crazy about you; or that the new swell guy I saw hanging out at your counter had taken you out for a joy ride.

DORIS. Nothing half so thrilling. I saw a box of little chickens in one of the downtown windows as I came home. The poor little motherless things were trying to crawl under each other and go to sleep. I just wanted to sit down on the walk and have a good cry for them and for myself. They somehow made me think of home. I watched them until the shades were pulled down for the night.

IDA (*turning around*). There you go again, harping about home. Makes me feel like thirty cents having sent for you. Forget it and have a good time like I do. (*Crosses to table.*) What did you bring for eats?

DORIS (*arranging table*). Not much. I wasn't hungry tonight so I just bought six buns and half a dozen bananas, they were only ten cents a dozen at the Greek's. (*Puts fruit and buns on plates.*)

IDA (*going back to dresser*). That's cheap. We can save on our supper tonight. I won't eat much, for Bill always sets up a feed after the movies. Are you going out tonight?

DORIS (*healing water over gas jet or alcohol stove*). I don't know. I partly promised that I would go. It's been such a hot, disagreeable day, you know. There was a bargain sale on in neckwear and the whole city turned out. I thought I would drop in my tracks before the six o'clock gong sounded.

IDA. Yep, it was a beastly day.

DORIS. When Mr. Bond, the man you saw at the counter, asked me to go out for an auto ride and a dance after, at some road house, I thought I would like to go and said so. Automobiles always seem to be my weakness.

IDA. Gee! So the old guy has come across. You'll have a peachy time. Wish I was going.

DORIS. Come and have your supper, and tell me what a road house is.

IDA (*crossing to table*). I don't know exactly 'cause I've never seen one. But the girls say they are kind of club houses, out in the country,

where the swells stop for eats. (*Girls seat themselves.*) Say, but this is what I call a slim meal. I wonder what they'd say at home if they could see us now. (*Girls eat supper.*) Please pass the fried chicken. Try some of the strawberry shortcake. Will you have it plain or with whipped cream? Have some of the watermelon pickles.

DORIS. Hush, Ida, you make me ravenous. I'll have to go and buy the town out.

IDA. Charge it to yourself if you do. I'm economizing. There is a perfect dream of a white willow plume that I have my eye on. (*Pantomimes plume on hat.*) I just got to have it for my winter lid. If I can save a dollar a week for ten weeks, the dream is mine. (*Harsh voice singing Tipperary, outside.*) Good heavens, here comes Mrs. Ryan! What on earth will we do with the grub? She'll fire us sure if she sees us eating here again. (*The girls jump up and hide supper in drawers of washstand and dresser. Voice heard retreating.*)

DORIS. She isn't coming here, after all. She's gone back downstairs.

IDA. Saved again. (*They put food back on table.*) What was I talking about?

DORIS. Your dream of a plume. Look out, that it doesn't turn out to be a nightmare. Do you realize you are getting too extravagant?

IDA. Well, ain't I trailing with that kind of people? Now, the guy I'm going out with tonight wouldn't be seen with a girl if she didn't look swell.

DORIS. I haven't been here very long but I can't for the life of me see how we're going to live and keep well dressed on the money we make.

IDA. It ain't no landslide. I saw a big crowd around your counter today; how much did you make?

DORIS. If it keeps up, I'll have over eight dollars for the week.

IDA. Gee, that's great for a new girl. I saw that guy trailing around and making eyes at you. So he has a car. He'll show you a swell time, all right. I wish an auto would come my way. (*Rises.*) I must go, I promised Bill to meet him at the first performance. (*Puts on hat.*)

DORIS. Ida, do you know I'm a little suspicious of these "rich guys," as you call them, who scrape an acquaintance with the girls in the store. What do you know about them?

IDA. Believe me, they have the dough and know how to show a girl a peachy time if we're smart enough to land them. Take my advice and go while the going's good.

DORIS. Do they ever marry the girls from the store?

IDA. I should say not! They just rush a girl till they get tired of her and then pick up another. Gee! I wish I was going to a dance. I'll try to make Bill take me to Dreamland after the show. I'm crazy about the grapevine. (*Dances grapevine step.*)

DORIS (*rising and stacking dishes*). Ida, do you know you've changed a lot since you came to the city.

IDA. I hope so, everyone ought to. (*Powders face.*)

DORIS. I don't believe I'll go tonight after all. Aren't you putting on too much powder?

IDA (*turning*). What, miss a good time like that? You certainly are some simp. Are you still moping around about that Dave Dalton who used to take you home from church on Sunday nights? Believe me, those were thrilling times, all right.



Ida Johnson: Take my advice and go while the going's good.

DORIS. It doesn't seem to me that the men who pick up with the girls in the store can have much respect for them. They're just amusing themselves. If we go out with them can we keep our self-respect? Will they—

IDA. Go-od night! would you mind cutting out that Sunday school dope? What's the dif. as long as they show us a good time? Even your staid and steady farmers are fickle. I got a letter from mother today. (*Hunts in bag.*) She says— Where is that letter?

DORIS (*crossing to C.*) Did she say anything about—about the folks?

IDA. She wrote something about Dave, if he's the folks. I can't find the letter, but she said Dave had rented his farm and gone west and they say he's sweet on a school teacher out there. (*Puts on hat.*) Does my hat look all right?

DORIS (*returning to table*). Yes, but wipe some of the powder off. It shows.

IDA. Where are my gloves? (*Turns contents of dresser drawer over.*) Why, here is the letter now, I'll let you read it.

DORIS. Thanks. There are the gloves on the chair.

IDA. You'd better get your hair combed. Do it up in that becoming way. The men like to take out girls who are good lookers. My! I must hurry, good-bye (*at door*). Have a good time while you're young, for when you're old you won't—good-bye.

(*Exit Ida, L.*)

Doris sits and reads letter, puts head on table, knocking off cup and spilling water on rug.

(*Enter Mrs. Ryan, L.*)

MRS. RYAN. For the love of Mike! What are ye up to next?

DORIS (*wiping up water with handkerchief*). I just spilled a little water on the rug. I don't think it will hurt it any.

MRS. RYAN. Here ye are messing around the room again. Didn't I tell ye I wouldn't have it? Ye're not to do any more cooking in this room, I say. I won't have it. Gettin' me rugs all covered with grase and dirt.

DORIS. But, Mrs. Ryan, you're mistaken. Listen. I just made a little tea to drink with our supper.

MRS. RYAN. Well, I can't have you aitin' your meals here, I tell you. This hain't no restaurant nor café nayther. (*Crosses to R.*) For the love of Mike, what next? (*Fishes waist out of wash basin.*) Will ye be after making this room into a stame laundry, too? (*Doris crosses to L.*)

DORIS. I can't see, Mrs. Ryan, that it is hurting your room any for us to wash out a few waists and handkerchiefs. If you object we will have to move, that's all. We can't afford, on eight dollars a week, to send our waists to the laundry, or take all of our meals at the restaurant.

MRS. RYAN (*cooling down*). Well, now, listen to that, will ye? No one expects ye to, nayther do they expect ye to live on eight dollars a week.

DORIS. Well, that is all I can make at the store, even when sales are good.

MRS. RYAN. How long is it now since ye were after workin' in the city?

DORIS. I came the first of September.

MRS. RYAN. Ah, ye're a grane one. Ye haven't caught on to the ways yet.

DORIS. What ways?

MRS. RYAN. Well, dear, ye're a good-looking girl, if I must say it. The thing for ye to do is to get a gentleman friend to take ye out. No one expects ye to live here on eight dollars a week. Faith, an' it can't be done.

DORIS. Then I'll have to move to a cheaper place. I'm going to live on eight dollars a week until I can earn more. *(Bell rings.)*

MRS. RYAN. That pesky bell! There it goes again. *(Goes out singing "It's a long way to Tipperary." Doris hurriedly clears table.)*

(Enter Mrs. Ryan and Mr. Bond, L.)

MRS. RYAN. Some one to see ye, Miss. Ye must excuse the appearance of the room, sor. The girls were just after indulgin' in a little spread, like.

MR. BOND. I understand. How do you do, Miss Field. *(Crosses to C.)* Are you ready for the ride I promised you?

MRS. RYAN *(at L.)*. She'll be ready in a jiffy, sor, just has to tidy her hair and slip on her hat and gloves. I always tell Miss Field she looks just like she had stepped out of a bandbox.

DORIS *(at table, R.)*. You are very kind, Mr. Bond, but I have changed my mind, and decided that I had better not go.

MR. BOND. Oh, pshaw! It's a perfect evening. We'll go to the dance for a little while and then have supper. I'll bring you home early.

MRS. RYAN. That'll be grand, now.

DORIS. I'm sorry that I said I would go.

MR. BOND. Well, a promise is a promise, you know, and I'm sure that you're not the girl to break hers, to go back on your word.

DORIS. I'm very tired and have a headache. *(Rubs forehead.)*

MR. BOND. The ride will rest you, and I'm sure that fresh air is the best cure for a headache.

MRS. RYAN. Such a grand supper, too, darlin'.

DORIS. Really, Mr. Bond, you must excuse me. You can find plenty of girls who will be delighted to go.

MR. BOND. Yes, but I planned to take you. See?

MRS. RYAN. If I must say it, ye're a fool, Miss Field.

MR. BOND *(turning to Mrs. Ryan)*. Mrs.—

MRS. RYAN. Ryan's me name, sor. *(Bows.)*

MR. BOND. I will manage this. Perhaps it would be better for you to leave us.

MRS. RYAN. Very well, sor. *(At door to Doris.)* Now, don't be after making a fool of yourself. It's a foine chance.

MR. BOND *(emphatically)*. Good evening, Mrs. Ryan. *(Mrs. Ryan goes out, L.)* I don't wonder the old lady made you sore, she's altogether too aggressive. Now, I'm going around to the garage to have the chains put on the car. They say the roads are slippery and I don't want to run any risks when I have such a charming passenger. *(Smiles.)* I'll be back in a few minutes.

DORIS *(crossing to him)*. Oh, please don't come back. I really mustn't go.

MR. BOND (*patting her on shoulder*). Oh, yes, you must. You owe it to yourself and to me. Put on your things. I'll be right back. We'll have a glorious evening.

(*Exit Mr. Bond, L.*)



Mrs. Ryan: Ryan's me name, sor.

(*Doris takes up letter, reads it, crosses to dresser, takes photo from drawer, looks at it, kisses it, and puts it back. Picks up hat and stands holding it. Knock at door.*)

DORIS. Come in.

(Enter Miss Brooks, L.)

MISS BROOKS. Excuse me if I am intruding.

DORIS. Oh, no, come right in.

MISS BROOKS. I'm your neighbor on the floor below. My name is Miss Brooks.

DORIS (shaking hands). I'm very glad to meet you. Mine is Doris Field.

MISS BROOKS. I've been wanting to come up and get acquainted ever since I heard that you were rooming here, but if you're going out—

DORIS (interrupting). I— (Hesitates, puts hat on dresser.) I'm glad you came. Won't you take the rocking chair? (Offers chair.)

MISS BROOKS. No, indeed! You have it. You look dead tired. (Crosses to couch.) I'll curl up on the couch. (Sits.) I'm afraid I haven't been very neighborly. Oh! you're just washing your dishes. Don't let me interrupt (going to table). Let me help you. (Picks up cup cloth. Doris gets small pan and filling it with water from the pitcher begins washing dishes.)

DORIS. Perhaps you aren't used to doing dishes.

MISS BROOKS. Yes, indeed. Housework is my profession.

DORIS. I don't see how housekeeping can be a profession.

MISS BROOKS. More important than any other, for everyone suffers if the housekeeping is poorly done.

DORIS. How do you do your work? I mean, how do you make it a profession?

MISS BROOKS. It's rather a long story. To begin with, I always liked housework better than any other kind of work, so when I had an opportunity to go to college I naturally chose the course in Home Economics, or Domestic Science, as it is sometimes called. I can't tell you how much I enjoyed it. Every department of the work opened up new lines of interest for me.

DORIS. I didn't suppose they taught people to keep house in college. What did you study?

MISS BROOKS. We had classes in foods and cookery, nutrition, garment-making, household decoration, home nursing—all the things that relate to the home.

DORIS. Do they teach such things?

MISS BROOKS. Yes, indeed. When we had finished, most of the girls went out to teach in high schools, but I found a greater opportunity for service than in the school room.

DORIS. Go on, I'm awfully interested.

MISS BROOKS. Through the Welfare League I was engaged as visiting housekeeper in this city. Let's put the things away and then I will tell you about my work, if you wish me to.

DORIS (putting dishes in washstand). I never heard of that kind of a position. Sit down and tell me all about it. (Doris sits L. of table, Miss Brooks, R.)

MISS BROOKS. Do you know the old legend of the hearth fire being

the center of the home? Well, my work is to kindle the fire in the homes where it has gone out.

MRS. RYAN (*outside, singing*). "It's a long way to Tipperary."
(*Knocks.*)

DORIS (*rising*). Oh, dear! There comes Mrs. Ryan. Come in.

(*Enter Mrs. Ryan.*)

MRS. RYAN. I was after hearin' ye up here and just come up to inquire about Mrs. Murphy's baby. (*Doris sits.*)

MISS BROOKS. It's all right since I had them put it in the day nursery. All it needed was good, nourishing food.

MRS. RYAN. Look at that, now! An' how is Mrs. Burns makin' it?

MISS BROOKS. Splendidly. I showed her how to make out a budget of her household expenses, and now she is always able to pay her rent. Mrs. Ryan (*rising*), there's one thing I've wanted to talk over with you. Do you still rent out your parlor?

MRS. RYAN (*growing excited*). Sure, an I'm after lettin' the man go as soon as his month is out. I'm goin' to have the basement cleaned, too, as soon as Mike comes along. But I must be goin', I left the gas burnin' in the oven.

(*Exit Mrs. Ryan, L.*)

MISS BROOKS (*sitting*). This is the kind of work I am doing. It is a little here and a little there. But I am helping work out the household problem for over fifty wives and mothers. Don't you think that makes life very much worth while?

DORIS. Do you know, that is why I left home. The household problem became too big for me and so I came away.

MISS BROOKS. Where is your home, if I may ask?

DORIS. My people live on a farm near Kingston.

MISS BROOKS. The same old story. You have left a home in God's beautiful country, for this.

DORIS. It wasn't an attractive home. There was the continual grind, the washing and ironing, the farm help to cook for, the carrying in of wood and water, blistering in the hot kitchen all day with no let-up. I just couldn't stand it another day. (*Wipes eyes with handkerchief.*)

MISS BROOKS. Well, are you happy here?

DORIS. No. I've made up my mind that it's a mighty hard world for women. (*Breaks down and puts head on table.*)

MISS BROOKS (*going over to Doris*). Nonsense. It's a very happy and beautiful world for women, and the country is the most beautiful place in it, if one only knows how to make it so. Listen, don't cry, and I'll tell you a little secret. (*Smooths Doris' hair.*) Some day I'm going to live in the country. My hero (I met him when at college; he was studying agriculture) is laying the sticks wisely and carefully for our hearth fire. He has to get some of them by selling books to farmers, good books telling them how to be better farmers. Sometimes those who need them most won't listen to him.

DORIS (*raising head and wiping eyes*). I know how that is.

MISS BROOKS (*standing back of chair, R.*). I am so anxious I can hardly wait for the time to come when I can lay my kindling on the hearth and see our little home glow with its light—the home of my dreams—the farm home.

DORIS. You'll find it different from what you think. I don't like to discourage you, but a woman's work on the farm without any conveniences and with no help, is anything but pleasant. It isn't so hard for the men, they can always get help and machinery to work with, but it isn't that way in the house. I know all about it.

MISS BROOKS (*sitting*). How large a farm do you have?

DORIS. Two hundred acres.

MISS BROOKS. Is your father out of debt?

DORIS (*proudly*). Yes, he has money in the bank.

MISS BROOKS. I imagine from what you say, that you do not have the modern conveniences, like running water, in the kitchen.

DORIS. No, father thinks that is just nonsense.

MISS BROOKS. Well, dear, your father needs a lesson. Perhaps your mother does, too. I'm not so sure but you need one, as well. Next summer when you go home for your vacation I wish that you would invite me to go with you. I would like nothing better than to show those dear people how to spend a few hundred dollars in making an attractive home for their daughter.

DORIS. How to kindle our hearth fire. That is such a pretty idea. I'll be only too glad to have you go.

MISS BROOKS. In the meantime, be very careful about your associates here. Do you think that you should stay in this house?

DORIS. If it isn't a good place, why do you room here?

MISS BROOKS. The Welfare League asked me to stay for a little while. I do more than one kind of work for them. You will be surprised to know that the policeman down here and I work together. (*Looks at watch.*) I must run along. I had no idea it was so late. (*Stands.*) I am going to tell some poor women how to feed and care for their babies. (*Doris rises.*) If you ever feel the need of a friend come straight to me. (*Takes Doris' hands.*)

DORIS. You will never know how good a friend you have already been. Life looks more hopeful now.

MISS BROOKS. I am glad if I have helped. Good-bye.

(*Exit Miss Brooks, L.*)

MRS. RYAN (*outside*). "It's a long way to Tipperary."

DORIS. (*Puts coat in closet. Makes room tidy. Knock at door.*)
Come in.

(*Enter Mrs. Ryan, L.*)

MRS. RYAN. I'm just after bringin' ye some clane towels. So ye've been receivin' a call from the first-floor-front lady. Was she after tellin' ye anything about herself, at all? She has queer ways, she has.

DORIS. I thought her real nice and kind, Mrs. Ryan.

MRS. RYAN. Oh, yes, she's all that. But don't be after lettin' her put any strange notions into your head, now. She had the nerve to tell

me that I ought to be after usin' disinfectants in me house and a vacuum cleaner on me rugs instead of me broom. The auld broom is good enough for me, ony time. Yes, and to turn the roomer out of me parlor so the girls could use it to entertain their friends. But I mustn't be after stoppin' to talk. I'm goin' to take me sister's childern to see the movies.

DORIS. Everyone seems to like the movies.

MRS. RYAN. They're puttin' on a corkin' show tonight. The name of it is "Why Women Sin."

DORIS. Have all the people in the house gone out?

MRS. RYAN. Sure, ye wouldn't be after expectin' them to stay in, would ye? An' you're goin' out, too. I was after hearin' the swell feller with the big car say he would be back for ye. Now, take my advice, darlin', and don't disapp'int him.

DORIS. You don't always sing when you come upstairs.

MRS. RYAN (*interrupting*). It ain't every girl who earns her bread and butter sellin' goods behind a counter can pick up the likes of him. (*Bell rings.*) There he is now. I'll send him up.

(*Exit Mrs. Ryan, L.*)

(*Enter Mr. Bond, L.*)

MR. BOND. Not ready yet? I was afraid I would keep you waiting. I had to put in some more gasoline and fix the carburetors. I brought you this as a treaty of peace. (*Hands her a two-pound box of candy.*)

DORIS. Thank you, you are very kind, but you know I told you I didn't feel like going.

MR. BOND. Yes, but you didn't mean it. Girls like to be coaxed.

DORIS. I did mean it. I'm sorry you came.

MR. BOND. Pshaw! It's a grand night. We'll drive along the lake boulevard to the Lodge, dance a few numbers, have supper, and be back by midnight, or one o'clock at the very latest.

DORIS. You must excuse me, Mr. Bond, I have made up my mind not to go.

MR. BOND. A woman can always change her mind. (*Looks around.*) Here's your hat. I'll put it on for you. My, but your cheeks are rosy tonight.

DORIS (*taking hat from him*). Let me have the hat, please.

MR. BOND. Yes, now, where's your coat? (*Opens closet door.*) Here it is. Now put it on.

DORIS (*going to C.*) This is going too far, Mr. Bond.

MR. BOND (*following her with coat*). No, we're going a lot farther tonight; fifty miles if we have good luck. (*Laughs. Stops and looks at her an instant.*) Gee! but you're great when your eyes flash like that. (*Tries to put coat on her. Gets one arm in the sleeve. Takes her in his arms. She struggles, breaks away from him, throws coat on floor and runs up stage, R, to window.*) Come now, don't be so flighty, I won't hurt you.

DORIS. Will you please leave this room?

MR. BOND. Not without you. I'll have you yet. (*Starts toward her.*)

DORIS (*opening window*) Stop! (*Bond stops, C.*) One minute, please. There's a policeman down there on the corner. If you don't leave the room in five seconds, I'll call for his protection. (*Points finger at him.*) Now, go!

(*Bond looks at her, cowers, and goes out, L.*)

(*Curtain*)

ACT III

Scene, An attractive living room. At the back is an open French window showing a stretch of country. On the left is a fireplace; on the right, a desk with telephone. A Morris chair stands by the library table, R. C. A fireside chair is at L. C. Mrs. Field discovered sitting by library table, reading.

(Enter Mr. Field, L., with coat. Puts it on chair, L.)

MR. FIELD. Well, mother, work all done?

MRS. FIELD. Yes, all but the dustin' and Doris is goin' to do that. With my new power washin' machine I had my clothes all on the line by ten o'clock.

MR. FIELD. I tell you, machinery saves labor in the house just as much as it does out in the field. Trouble is, women can't see it that way. Where is Daughter? *(Sits, L.)*

MRS. FIELD. She went out to pick some flowers. You know her friend, Miss Brooks that was, is comin' here today.

MR. FIELD. Yes, she told me something about it. *(Crosses legs.)* Let's see. Ain't it about two years since she came home with Doris that summer? We were powerful glad to have her persuade Daughter to quit the store.

MRS. FIELD. Yes, it was a great relief to me to have her home again. Do you remember what a time I had to get help?

MR. FIELD. I remember payin' that red-headed woman six dollars a week and she didn't do anything to speak of.

MRS. FIELD. And Mary, the one that burnt everything she cooked and then threw it out behind the barn! She'd have ruined us soon.

MR. FIELD. 'Twas expensive business, all right. It didn't take Miss Brooks long to find out what the house needed to save work.

MRS. FIELD *(laughing)*. I'll never forget how she lit into you about not havin' runnin' water in the kitchen. Was it ninety-two miles she said I was walkin' every year up hill with a pail of water in my hand?

MR. FIELD *(rising)*. Seems to me, if I remember rightly, you didn't take to the notion any too quick of havin' the kitchen divided so as to make a wash room, and the water piped in a kitchen sink.

MRS. FIELD. I thought it was goin' to cost such a lot of money, pa.

MR. FIELD. Well, it didn't. What I paid for a new binder that I use only a week or so in the year, covered the whole expense. *(Takes collar and tie out of coat pocket.)*

MRS. FIELD. Yes, and now we'll have this to use every day as long as we live. It makes the work a sight easier to have the improvements in and the "labor savin' devices" as Miss Brooks calls 'em. We have a good deal to be grateful to her for.

MR. FIELD. I, for one, will be mighty glad to see her again.

MRS. FIELD. But she ain't Miss Brooks no longer. She was married last Wednesday. She an' her husband are on their way to his farm, an'

they're goin' to stop over for a day with Doris. They're takin' their weddin' trip in an automobile.

MR. FIELD (*putting on collar*). I'm goin' over to Kingstown in the new runabout to look at some fence posts. Don't you want to put on your bonnet an' go 'long? Jones has a new bread-mixin' machine he wants to show you.

MRS. FIELD (*rising and going to desk*). Yes, I've been waitin' to go to the bank to deposit my chicken an' egg money. (*Takes out bank book.*) I'm quite proud of my bank account.

MR. FIELD. Let's see. Isn't this the first of the month? I'll get the cream check today. Half of that goes to you, you know. (*Drops collar button and gets down on knees to look for it.*)

MRS. FIELD. How foolish we were to churn butter all this time when it is so much easier an' better to sell the cream right out of the milk!

MR. FIELD. Where in tarnation is that button? I haven't my glasses.

MRS. FIELD (*getting down*). Let me help you, pa. (*Looks for it.*) Here it is. (*Picks it up and gives it to him.*)

MR. FIELD (*standing*). The trouble with women is, they don't know how to plan their work so as to make it easy, like us men. I don't wonder Doris got discontented and went off like she did.

MRS. FIELD (*helping Mr. F. with his collar*). Do you know, pa, I'm worried about Doris.

MR. FIELD. I don't see why. Doris is all right, a fine girl.

MRS. FIELD (*tying Mr. Field's tie*). She isn't happy an' contented even in the "new home," as she calls it.

MR. FIELD. I hope she ain't wantin' to go back to the city.

MRS. FIELD. No, it isn't that. But she seems to be hankerin' for somethin'.

MR. FIELD. Hain't you just borryin' trouble, ma? I ain't noticed it.

MRS. FIELD. Men don't see with mother's eyes. I'm afraid it's Dave she's missin'. She leaves the room when his name is mentioned, Ned will tease her in spite of me. Last night I found her cryin' after she'd gone to bed. Hearin' about her friend's marriage has made her worse lately.

MR. FIELD (*going to desk and taking out some papers*). Where is Dave now?

MRS. FIELD. He rented his farm and went west soon after him and Doris broke off. I always thought maybe it was because they had trouble she went away. Least she said she was goin' away the last time he was at our house.

MR. FIELD. You've always stuck to it that there was somethin' between 'em. But I don't believe it. They weren't old enough yet.

MRS. FIELD. Why, pa, we were married before we were as old as they were. Don't you remember? Doris is pretty set when she once makes up her mind? But I hear that Dave is goin' to marry a school teacher out where he is, so she'll have to get him out of her head.

MR. FIELD. We'll do all we can to make her happy here, mother. Now we must get started.

MRS. FIELD. Hush! Here comes Doris. Don't let her see that we've been talkin' about her.

(Enter Doris loaded with flowers.)

DORIS. Aren't these beautiful, mother? I'm going to make this into a bridal bower for the sweetest, dearest bride in the whole world.

MRS. FIELD *(smelling flowers)*. Yes, the flowers are lovely. I'm glad we have time to enjoy them.

MR. FIELD. Your mother and me are goin' into town in the runabout. Don't you think she's lookin' pretty pert, today? You'll have to look out or she'll be better lookin' than you. *(Pats Mrs. Field on back.)*

MRS. FIELD. Pshaw! We ain't on our honeymoon trip, pa.

(Exit Mr. and Mrs. Field, L.)

(Doris arranges flowers in vases.)

(Enter Ned, R.)

NED. What you doing, Sis?

DORIS. Decorating for the bride. Bring me in the dust-mop and I will tell you all about it.

(Exit Ned, L.)

(Enter Ned with dust-mop.)

NED. Here's your mop. What bride? You? Are you goin' to be married?

DORIS. No, silly, Miss Brooks. She was married last—

NED *(interrupting and waving mop in the air)*. She's comin' here? Hurrah! Wasn't she a good scout, though? Do you remember how she made the old man make a tennis court?

DORIS. You mustn't call father "the old man."

NED. She made him come across, I tell you.

DORIS. Where do you pick up so much slang?

NED. Then she fixed my base-ball suit and persuaded ma to let me play with the nine. Gee, I'll be tickled to death to see her. Is she bringing a husband? I don't think I'll like him. *(Throws mop on floor.)*

DORIS. Don't be jealous, brother. You'll like him, too. He has made a most wonderful home for her, near a big lake. If you treat him properly maybe he'll let you come and go fishing with him.

NED. Gee! That would be swell. *(Picks up mop and begins dusting floor.)*

DORIS. I'll have to find some more vases.

(Exit Doris, R.)

(Mrs. Ryan appears at C. entrance.)

NED. Why, hello, Mrs. Ryan. Just in time. *(Waves mop.)*

MRS. RYAN. Good mornin', Ned. Where is Miss Doris?

NED. She went to get some more vases.

MRS. RYAN *(entering)*. I'm goin' to telephone over to the store and have your mother bring me out some bakin' powder. I'm after makin' some biscuits.

NED *(looking out of window)*. What's Olaf comin' in for?

MRS. RYAN. How should I know, now? *(Picks up receiver.)*

NED. I'll go out and see.

(Exit Ned, C.)

MRS. RYAN (telephoning). Hello, Central. Give me Center 4-2. No, I mane 4-2, not Center. I'm always after forgettin' these pesky numbers. Is this the grocery? I mane, is this the store where they sell groceries? Well, this is Mrs. Ryan, at the Field farm. Yes . . . If Mrs. Field comes in the store, will you be after tellin' her to bring me some bakin' powder? . . . Yes, bakin' powder . . . That's all. (Hangs up receiver.)

(During the above conversation Olaf appears at C. entrance and grins at Mrs. Ryan.)

OLAF. Hello, sweetheart!

MRS. RYAN (turning and seeing him). Don't ye come another step with them dirty fate. Nor don't ye be after callin' me any of your swate names, nayther.

OLAF. Ain't you my best girl?

MRS. RYAN. Not that I knows anything about. What do ye want, anyhow?

OLAF. I just come to ask you if you tank you marry me some day.

MRS. RYAN. Get out, now! Wasn't I after tellin' ye I'd never marry a Swade?

OLAF. You tank you marry Pete, den? He ban von Norvegan.

MRS. RYAN. No, I tell yous, I won't marry any of ye. I'm goin' back to town where I can go to the movies every night.

OLAF. I tank I buy von Ford car, ya.

MRS. RYAN (interested). What's that ye're sayin'?

OLAF. I'm goin' to buy von Ford, sure t'ing.

MRS. RYAN. Listen to this now. When you can drive up to the gate in your own Ford car, then I'll know ye mane business.

OLAF. Den you tank you marry me, huh?

MRS. RYAN. Yes, I will; for we can take it to town an' make our fortunes runnin' a jutney-bus. Now go. (Ned appears at window. Olaf puts his arm around Mrs. Ryan and kisses her on the ear. Mrs. Ryan slaps him.) Get out, I say!

(Exit Olaf, L.)

(Enter Ned, C.)

NED. Ah, Mrs. Ryan, I saw Olaf kiss you, I did.

MRS. RYAN (shaking fist at him). Ye pesky little devil, ye're always spyin' round.

(Exit Mrs. Ryan, C.)

(Enter Doris, R., with vases filled with flowers.)

DORIS. I suppose you have the dusting all done. (Ned dusts vigorously. Auto horn is heard, R.) Here they are now. (Rushes out, R.) (Ned takes out pocket mirror and comb and arranges hair and tie.)

(Enter Mr. and Mrs. Hartwell with Doris, R.)

MRS. HARTWELL. This is little brother. (Shakes hands.) My, Ned, how you've grown! I believe you're as tall as I am. You'll soon have to put on long trousers.

NED. Say, will you make ma buy 'em for me?

MRS. HARTWELL. We'll see. Now, Ned, I want you to know Mr. Hartwell, our new playfellow. I hope that you will be as good to him as you've been to me.

NED (*shaking hands*). How do you do? Miss Brooks and I used to go fishin'.

MR. HARTWELL. So you like to fish, do you?

NED. You bet! I caught— (*They go up stage talking.*)

MRS. HARTWELL. How beautiful the flowers are. Confess they are in my honor. Thank you, dear. (*Puts arm around her.*)

DORIS. I am hoping that we may keep you with us for a few days.

MRS. HARTWELL. Thank you, not this time. I'll come back again if you will invite me. But now I can hardly wait, I am so anxious to see my new home.



Mrs. Hartwell: My, Ned, how you've grown.

DORIS. And to kindle the hearth fire.

MRS. HARTWELL. That's it. I am glad that you still remember the old legend. It has meant much to me. Now, if you will excuse me for a few minutes, I'll write a card to mother. I remember it is about time for the postman.

DORIS. I haven't forgotten how you used to watch for him and the daily letter (*laughing*). Do you want to go to your room?

MRS. HARTWELL. Oh, no. I'll write here on the table. (*Takes cards and pen out of bag. Sits at table.*)

DORIS. I'll run out and dispose of this apron and dusting cap. (*Crosses to R.*)

MRS. HARTWELL. Oh, don't, they're so becoming. Do you have many hired men to cook for this summer?

DORIS. Didn't I write you the good news? I sent for Mrs. Ryan and she is keeping house for the men. She is very different from what she was before she came under your influence.

MRS. HARTWELL. Your influence, you mean, dear. How I shall enjoy seeing her again. *(Begins writing.)*

(Exit Doris, R.)

NED *(coming to C.)* Dad rented me some land and I've joined the corn club. I'm going in for the State Industrial Contest. If I win one of the prizes, I'm going to the fair this fall.

MR. HARTWELL. That's great! I'll do all I can to help you, Ned.

NED *(looking out of window)*. Gee whiz! Here comes Mrs. Stringer. Here's where I duck.

MR. HARTWELL *(catching at him)*. What, leave me to face the music? That isn't playing fair.

(Enter Mrs. Stringer, C. Ned ducks under her arm. She slips on the rug and sits down on the floor.)

MRS. STRINGER. Why don't people learn their kids better manners?

MRS. HARTWELL *(running to her)*. Are you hurt?

MR. HARTWELL *(running to her)*. Let me help you.

MRS. STRINGER. No, I ain't hurt, just shook-up, like. *(They help her up.)* It's them pesky, slippery floors. Doris was set on havin' 'em, even if they do break a person's back. As if a good rag or ingrain carpet wa'n't good enough for anybody. I sez to her mother, sez I, "Molly," I sez, "You might as well live on a roller skatin' rink an' be done with it." Yes, indeed. *(Sits, C.)*

MRS. HARTWELL *(sitting L. of table)*. I'm glad it didn't hurt you. You're Mrs. Stringer, I believe? *(Mr. Hartwell sits, R.)*

MRS. STRINGER. I remember you now. You're the young woman what come him with Doris from the city when she was clerkin' in a store and talked her father into tearin' the house all to pieces an' puttin' in a bathroom, an' all sich nonsense. I sez to Molly, sez I, "I should think the house you an' your man have lived in ever since you were married ought to be good enough for Doris, even if she is tryin' to ape after city folks."

MRS. HARTWELL. Don't you think that they have been happier and more comfortable since they rebuilt the house?

MRS. STRINGER. I s'pose the new heatin' stove in the cellar what heats the rooms all over the house alike, bedrooms an' all, does make 'em more comfortable in winter. But I sez to Jake, I sez, sez I, "It seems like it must take a powerful lot of wood to keep it goin'."

MR. HARTWELL. I don't think that they burn wood.

MRS. STRINGER. Likely not. As I was sayin', they may be more comfortable, but I can tell you one thing, Doris ain't overly happy with all her new fixin's round.

MRS. HARTWELL. What makes you think so?

MRS. STRINGER. I know a thing or two. She won't be happy as long as her beau is gallivantin' round the country and fallin' in love with other women. I've been around this house off an' on a good deal an' I ain't no

fool even if I look it. I sez to Mrs. Blake, sez I, "I can smell a rat as far as anyone."

MRS. HARTWELL. What do you mean? Doris never told me that she had a lover.

MRS. STRINGER. No, Doris is pretty close-mouthed. She ain't sayin' anything. But young Dave Dalton used to be mighty sweet on her. Then all of a sudden they broke off short like. Folks 'round here say they had a quarrel. She went to the city an' he rented his farm an' went west. Everybody's tellin' how he's goin' to marry a school teacher. That's the way men is. But Doris, here, she won't look at nobody. Turns 'em all down, like.

MRS. HARTWELL (*rising and crossing to Mr. Hartwell*). Dave Dalton! Isn't that the young man you used to write about when you were here selling books?

MR. HARTWELL. Yes, Dave and I were together a lot. He got interested in my book and took me around in his Ford to see the farmers.

MRS. STRINGER. I know you now. I thought I'd seen you before. You are the man who was sellin' books on improvin' the farm.

MR. HARTWELL (*rising*). Yes. I remember you didn't think much of my books, Mrs. Stringer.

MRS. STRINGER (*rising*). Well, maybe they done some good. But I guess I'd better be goin' on out into the kitchen and see Molly. I just come over to borry some sugar an' saluratus. I'm goin' to make a cake an' my box ain't come yet from the mail order house. I always buy from them when I have the ready money. I said to my man, Jake, I sez, sez I, "I'll jest run over and borry some off of Molly." Molly's a good neighbor. Yes, indeed.

(Exit into kitchen, L.)

MRS. HARTWELL (*anxiously*). Did Dave Dalton ever say anything to you about Doris?

MR. HARTWELL. He told me about a girl he was very much interested in. I had no idea it was your friend. He said—I have forgotten the circumstances, it's so long ago. It seems to me there was a misunderstanding. I remember he blamed the mother.

MRS. HARTWELL. Didn't you tell me that you stopped over night with him when you came to get me? I thought Mrs. Stringer said he was out west.

MR. HARTWELL. Yes, he came home about a week ago. He's going to work his farm again.

MRS. HARTWELL. That looks as though he were planning to get married.

MR. HARTWELL. He didn't say anything about it. We were talking about stock and improvements for the most part.

MRS. HARTWELL. Well, I'm going to find out if there's any truth in this gossip. I'd like to know if Doris does care for him.

MR. HARTWELL. Most of the gossip in these rural communities is just hearsay. "Tommy rot" I call it. Dave's a fine fellow, as fine as I ever met.

MRS. HARTWELL (*going to L.*). Here's a telephone. You call him up and ask him to come over. Then we'll see what happens.

MR. HARTWELL (*putting his arm around her*). You little match-maker. Do you scent a romance?



Mrs. Stringer: I just come over to borry some sugar and some saleratus.

MRS. HARTWELL. Wouldn't you like to see our two good friends as happy as we are? Hurry up and 'phone before Mrs. Stringer gets her sugar and saleratus. (*Takes telephone book.*)

MR. HARTWELL. And finishes her first story, "I sez to her, sez I." Never mind looking in the book, dear. I remember his number. We were pretty intimate that summer. (*Sits at desk. Takes up receiver.*) Hello, Central? Give me 6-4 call 2, please yes This you, Dave? Good, this is Hartwell. Yes with my wife congratulations? Thanks, I deserve them. Say, we are staying at the Fields. My wife wants to know you can't wait. Say, can't you drive over? Thanks, we can't this time. Yes, come right away, as soon as you can get here. We'll expect you as soon as your machine can make the trip. . . . Good! Good-bye. (*Hangs up receiver.*) I wonder if Doris is the girl he used to talk so much about.

MRS. HARTWELL. I should think she would have told me. I confided in her.

MR. HARTWELL (*rising*). We'll soon know. I hope she is. She's peach—just the girl—

(*Enter Doris, with lemonade on small tray.*)

DORIS (*laughing*). Is that what you call her (*Mr. and Mrs. Hartwell look self-conscious*), your wife, I mean. You two turtle-doves must turn your attention to something more acid than peaches. Let me hand you a lemon by way of contrast. (*Serves lemonade.*)

MR. HARTWELL. It is well said that an optimist is one who takes a lemon, when given to him, and makes it into lemonade.

MRS. HARTWELL. Doris must be a good optimist then, for this is delicious.

MR. HARTWELL. Just the thing after our dusty ride.

DORIS. Let's drink to the health of the new bride and groom. (*All drink.*)

MR. HARTWELL (*looking at Doris*). And may there be many more of them.

DORIS (*changing the subject*). Who takes up the work you have left? I should think those mothers and babies would miss you dreadfully. (*Hartwell takes empty glasses and then amuses himself with a magazine at table.*)

MRS. HARTWELL. I turned them over to a very capable woman from the department of Home Economics in our university. She seems well able to handle the work.

DORIS. I was glad to hear that Ida Johnson is delighted with the life in the Jane Addams Cottage. All she needed was to have her desires for a good time directed along right lines.

MRS. HARTWELL. Yes, Ida is a good girl. The home provides the kind of recreation the girls enjoy. She doesn't care to go to public dances now.

DORIS. The Welfare League is surely doing a good work.

MRS. HARTWELL. I'm glad that you think so. I loved it. Now, of course, I am anxious to learn some of the problems of the farm home.

MR. HARTWELL. Seems to me that you have been working out some of them already.

DORIS. Yes, in our home. I can't tell you how much your wife has done for us.

MRS. HARTWELL. (*looking out of French window, C.*) Isn't the country beautiful! We never really appreciate it until we have lived in the dirty, noisy city; the flowers and the birds and the beautiful stretches of woodland and pasture.

MR. HARTWELL. And the sunsets. Don't forget them. I have never enjoyed anything more than the sunsets, and the sunrises, too, when I am up early with my farm work. How I love it all. (*Sits in Morris chair, C.*)

MRS. HARTWELL. (*crossing to him.*) And to think that I am actually out here to enjoy it all with you. (*Sits on arm of chair. Hartwell puts arm around her.*) It's too good to be true. (*Doris walks back to window. Mrs. H. rises and follows.*) You must come often and share our home with us. (*Puts arm around her.*)

DORIS. Thank you, dear.

(*Enter Mrs. Field, L., carrying packages.*)

MRS. FIELD. How do you do—I s'pose it's Mrs. Hartwell now. Well, (*shakes hands*), I'm mighty glad to see you. There's been a big improvement in this place since you were here before.

MRS. HARTWELL. I'm interested in the changes you have made. Let me introduce my husband, Mrs. Field, Mr. Hartwell.

MRS. FIELD. (*shaking hands*). Congratulations, sir. You've got a good wife and she'll make you a good home.

MR. HARTWELL. Thanks, I agree with you.

DORIS. What interesting looking packages you have brought, mother. What's this?

MRS. FIELD. This is a vacuum cleaner Jones wanted us to try. It will save carrying the rugs out and beating 'em.

MRS. HARTWELL. I think you'll like it.

MRS. FIELD. Here's a cream whip that will whip cream in half the time it takes to do it in the old way, and an apple corer.

MRS. HARTWELL. What's this?

MRS. FIELD. This is a fruit press. It'll save a lot of time when the cannin' and preservin' season comes. Here is a dish drainer. You just have to wash the dishes good in soap and water an' put 'em into this. Then you set this in the sink and turn boiling water onto 'em. The dishes almost dry themselves. Mrs. Smith has one, an' she says it saves her ten or fifteen minutes every time she washes her dishes.

(*During the above conversation all are busy opening and examining the packages.*)

MRS. HARTWELL. These give me some new ideas for my kitchen. We busy farmers' wives must be on the lookout for devices that will save time and work.

DORIS. Wouldn't you like to go to your room? You must be tired after your trip.

MRS. HARTWELL. I am somewhat soiled. My suitcase is in the auto.

MR. HARTWELL. I'll bring it in.

(*Exit Mr. Hartwell, L.*)

MRS. FIELD. It seems so good to see you with Doris again. I never can be thankful enough to you for what you did for me and mine.

MRS. HARTWELL. Please don't mention it. It was nothing. Your friendship and your daughter's have meant everything to me.

MRS. FIELD. You must stay with us as long as you can now, and come over often to see us.

MRS. HARTWELL. Thank you, Mrs. Field, I shall be glad to.

MRS. FIELD. Now, I must feed the chickens in the brooder. I know you and Doris want to have a good visit.

(Exit Mrs. Field, L.)

MRS. HARTWELL. Do you have to start lunch? I will help you.

DORIS. Oh, no. I put the meat and vegetables in the fireless cooker long ago.

MRS. HARTWELL. So you even have one of those. Good! You are up-to-date.

DORIS. When father found that mother really needed things to make the work easier, he was ready to buy anything we suggested.

MRS. HARTWELL. I believe all men are that way. The trouble is they don't realize the inconveniences their wives are tolerating.

DORIS. Come, dear, I'm going to give you the room opening on the sleeping-porch.

MRS. HARTWELL. The one with the river view? Good!

(Exit Doris and Mrs. Hartwell, L.)

(Enter Mr. Hartwell with suitcase, and David, R.)

DAVID. Now for the charming bride. I'm crazy to meet her. Do I get a chance to kiss her?

MR. HARTWELL. The idea of a staid old bachelor like you talking of kissing the bride. *(Laughs.)*

DAVID. The only opportunity we "staid old bachelors" have to grow sentimental. *(Looks around.)* Believe me, this house has changed some since I saw it last.

MR. HARTWELL. When was that?

DAVID. Three years ago, before I went west.

MR. HARTWELL. Farm houses are being improved all over the country and it's about time. Excuse me a minute till I take this suitcase upstairs, to my wife.

(Exit Hartwell, L.)

(Dave wanders around room, picks up a photograph from mantel and stands looking at it with his back to the door. Enter Doris, L.)

DAVE *(thinking it is Hartwell)*. This is the woman I had always hoped to make my wife, but she couldn't see things my way. *(Doris looks over his shoulder at picture, then tries to slip out. David turns and sees her.)* Oh! It's you, Doris. Please don't go unless you are offended at what you heard me say. You know it's true, dead true.

DORIS. Dave, I'm not offended. You're the one to feel that way. *(Comes forward and shakes hands.)* I have always wanted to apologize for the way I talked to you the last time I saw you.

DAVID. Oh, forget it! You were driven to it.

DORIS. No, I was young and silly and didn't know what I was talking about.

DAVID. That's past and gone. Let's begin all over again.

DORIS. Very well, I'm perfectly willing—glad to.

DAVID (*taking her hand*). No, let's begin where I left off. I still love you, have been more crazy than ever about you since we've been separated—

DORIS (*drawing away her hand*). How about the other girl?

DAVID (*taking her hand again*). I tell you, there never was any other girl. The gossips have been busy with my name, I hear. Do you think you could change your mind and marry a farmer?

DORIS. I'll never marry anyone but a farmer, one of nature's noblemen.

DAVE. And his name?

DORIS. And his name shall be called David. (*David takes her in his arms.*)

NED (*looking through window*). Say, Sis, Dave was your beau after all, wasn't he?

(*Curtain*)

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