

CHARLEY'S AUNT
A comedy based on
Brandon Thomas' 1892 farce
by
David Jacklin

2nd Draught
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CHARLEY'S AUNT was first produced at the Royalty Theatre, London, on December 21st, 1892, transferred to the Globe Theatre. Original London Run, four years. By way of comparison, Oscar Wilde's THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST, which opened in January, 1896, had completed its run and closed before CHARLEY'S AUNT closed.

CAST

STEPHEN SPETTIGUE: A well-to-do solicitor of about fifty-six to sixty. Rather stout and when not in a temper has a charming smile, so that in spite of everything, you can't help liking him. He has real charm of manner when he likes to use it. At other times, he is pompous, self-opinionated, assertive, and not open to argument. He is grey-haired, and can be rather bald -wears small short side whiskers. Dressed in a frock-coat, grey cloth waistcoat, wearing top-hat, and carrying furred umbrella, and gloves. This character should not be burlesqued; he is genuinely furious, but when he is charming, he knows how to make that too seem genuine.

COLONEL SIR FRANCIS CHESNEY, BART.: Late Indian Service. Tall, good-looking, smart in appearance and manner, wears small military moustache, actually fifty-one, but looking nearer forty, very smart, cheery and young in manner. Wears brown lounge suit, bowler hat and carries gloves and Malacca walking-stick. He has just arrived from London.

JACK CHESNEY: Graduate at St. Olde's College, Oxford; Tall, dark, good-looking, about twenty-two, wears light-coloured lounge suit and college tie, pink and white diagonal stripes. He laughs his way through life, is self-confident, quick, alert and must have "drive"; as he sets the pace of the play.

CHARLEY WYKEHAM: Graduate at St. Olde's College, Oxford CH; about twenty, good-looking, medium height, fair, Saxon type, charming and though shy is not awkward. Rowing type, wears white flannels, blazer and muffler, cheap watch in breast pocket of blazer with short chain hanging out. For later entrance with telegram, has changed blazer for a lounge suit coat, removed muffler and wears a collar and tie.

LORD FANCOURT BABBERLEY: Graduate at St. Olde's College, Oxford; He is small, about five foot three to five foot six at most. Good-looking, humorous face, smartly dressed in light grey peppercorn suit with waistcoat and black elastic-sided boots. He only removes his coat when he gets into the "Aunt's" dress. The suit must be light to show up well against the black petticoat and its elastic braces. The essential thing to bear in mind when he is impersonating "The Aunt" is that LORD FANCOURT has "never acted in his life before" or worn woman's, clothes. He still walks, talks and moves like a man, and never attempts to "act the woman". No effeminate female impersonation business. He tries to lighten his voice when he is first introduced, and it cracks appallingly. After that he speaks naturally, but being careful not to use the deep tones of his voice except to JACK, CHARLEY and BRASSETT, who know who he really is, or again when he forgets he is supposed to be a woman. He just looks a nice old lady of the Victorian era.

BRASSETT: A College Scout (manservant) between forty and fifty years of age, wears dark trousers and short dark grey alpaca coat, white collar and dark tie. He is always polite and never

familiar in his manner.

DONNA-LUCIA D'ALVADOREZ.: A well-preserved beautiful, kindly woman of middle age, with a young face, but grey hair. She has a keen sense of humour, and is capable of taking command of any situation. On no account sentimental, but with a deep feeling of real sentiment in her nature. This part should be played gaily with a light firm touch of comedy, amusement dominating her performance, and she dominating the situations from now on. Wears afternoon summer dress and coat to match, hat and gloves, and carries several visiting-cards in her purse-bag.

ELA DELAHAY: A young, pretty, unaffected little girl of seventeen or twenty. Also has a sense of humour and high spirits. This part should not be played either sloppily or sentimentally. Wears summer dress and hat and carries purse-bag and gloves.

AMY SPETTIGUE: Spettigue's Niece

KITTY VERDUN: Spettigue's Ward

The Scene: Interior of Jack Chesney's Rooms, St. Olde's College, Oxford, Summer, 1892.

CHARLEY'S AUNT
ACT I.

SCENE: D.R., an exit to the dining room, above that, a tiled fireplace with insert, over it a display of sporting memorabilia. Up of that, an archway, with a curtain, leading to the entrance from outside. Along the back wall, a set of three windows in an alcove with a window seat in front of them, a pair of curtains on a rod at the front of the alcove. To L. of that a sideboard with cupboard underneath, framed by a pair of oars with a cricket bat above it, along with pictures of chorus girls. A door L. of that leading to JACK's bedroom. Along the S.L. wall, bookcases frame a curtained window. An armchair and ottoman by the fire. Table C. with ashtray and books and two single chairs R. and L. of it. Writing-table L. below bedroom door, with A.B.C. time-table, magazine and "Corona" cigar-box. Quad seen through window and morning sunlight streams in.

(JACK discovered at writing-table, struggling to write a letter. He looks at what he's written and tears it up.)

JACK: I can't!*(Flings down pen.)* I don't know how to begin. I wish to goodness I'd spoken to her at the dance the other evening. *(Rises and paces.)* Instead, I've gone and left everything till the very last minute. By George! I know what I'll do. I'll write it out a dozen different ways, and send the best. *(Goes back to table and sits, takes up pen.)* So come on, Jack, you are in love with the dearest girl on earth – tell her so, or they'll be off north and you'll have lost your chance for ever. She's my fate, and I'm hanged if I shan't be hers! So here goes. *(Writing.)* "My Darling"! *(Stops. Tears up paper, places on L. of writing-table, begins again.)* "My Dear Miss Verdun" *(Stops again. Tears that up.)* "My Dear" Hang it, why not? *(Writes boldly.)* "My Dear Kitty"! That's grand!

(BRASSETT enters quietly to table.)

Now I can go ahead like a house on fire. "My Dear Kitty –"

BRASSETT: I beg pardon, sir, but would you mind – ?

JACK: Yes, very much; go away.

BRASSETT: Yes, sir, but –

JACK: I'm busy with the most important affair of my life; get out!

BRASSETT: *(Raising book or two off table, and hesitating.)* Yes, sir.

JACK: *(Aside.)* Just as I'd made such a good start, too! "My Dear Kitty – "

(BRASSETT goes to door.)

BRASSETT: *(At door.)* Beg pardon, sir?

JACK: I wasn't addressing you – go away!*(At letter again, savagely.)* "My Dear Kitty – "

(BRASSETT calmly drops books.)

JACK: Confound it! Go away!

(Exit BRASSETT, quickly. Enter CHARLEY, with letter.)

(Gets down on one knee.) "My Dear Kitty – "

CHARLEY: *(Mildly.)* I say!

JACK: *(Jumps up savagely.)* If you don't clear out, Brassett, I'll – *(Sees CHARLEY.)* Oh, it's you, Charley! What is it, old chap?

CHARLEY: Nothing, Jack. I don't want to interrupt you if you're – busy.

JACK: It's all right, Charley, don't mind me today; I'm nervous and naggy and nonplussed. *(Sits at table C.)*

CHARLEY: And so am I, Jack.

JACK: Why?

CHARLEY: *(Holding up a paper.)* I've been trying to write a letter.

JACK: A letter! To whom?

CHARLEY: To – to Miss Spettigue.

JACK: How far have you got?

CHARLEY: *(Brightening.)* Oh! I began awfully well. I didn't want to be too distant, and I didn't want to be too –

JACK: Familiar. What have you got?

CHARLEY: "My Dear Amy – " and then words failed me. Come on, Jack. You always know what to say and do.

JACK: Oh! Do I?

CHARLEY: Prescribe for me, old chap. What am I to say? *(Sits.)*

JACK: *(Aside)*. A good idea! I'll prescribe for him and take the medicine myself. *(Sits at writing-table. Energetically.)* Now then, let's see. You're in love with Amy Spettigue, and you want to know if there's any hope for you –

CHARLEY: They're all off to Scotland to-morrow.

JACK: Yes, I know, and you “want to see her at once. When and where? Bearer waits.”

CHARLEY: Exactly, old chap!

JACK: Very well then! *(Writing)* "My Dear Kitty – " *(Stops dead.)*

CHARLEY: *(Going to him.)* No! Not Kitty! Amy.

JACK: Oh, of course! *(Tears up paper, takes fresh sheet.)* Ah! "My Dearest Amy: Forgive me, darling, for thus addressing you, but I love you so deeply" – underlined –

CHARLEY: Rather strong, Jack.

JACK: Shut up! "So earnestly" – double underlined –

CHARLEY: Steady on!

JACK: "That I must write and tell you so. All I ask is – "

CHARLEY: *(Sits table C.)*. But, Jack! I've an aunt!

JACK: My dear Charley, most of us have; what about her?

CHARLEY: I ought to tell her first.

JACK: *(Flings down pen, rises and goes to fireplace.)* Oh! If you're going to drag relatives into it, we may as well wait till they all come back from Scotland.

CHARLEY: Why?

JACK: You know what “auntie”s are.

CHARLEY: That's just it; I don't know. I've never even seen her.

- JACK: Well, we won't be too hard on her; she hasn't interfered much up to now.
- CHARLEY: Except to find out that I was an orphan and send me to Eton, and to Oxford; and now she's coming here to lunch with me.
- JACK: And you've never seen her?
- CHARLEY: No. She went to Brazil before I was born, and became a sort of secretary to a very rich old Brazilian chap out there, called Dom Pedro d'Alvadorez; and now *(taking paper from pocket.)* I've seen this. *(Gives JACK paper.)*
- JACK: *(going down R. Reading.)* "Donna Lucia d'Alvadorez, the Brazilian millionaire, has taken Lord Topplesby's magnificent mansion in Belgravia. An English-woman of genial disposition and a financial genius, it was her capacity in this direction that earned the gratitude of her late husband, and led to a romantic death-bed marriage." Death-bed marriage! I say!
- CHARLEY: Go on, Jack, read the next.
- JACK: *(Reading.)* "Her only relation is a nephew at Oxford." Lucky fellow!
- CHARLEY: That's me! I wish she'd have come some other day.
- JACK: *(Looks at watch.)* She'll arrive by the next train, just in time for lunch.
- CHARLEY: *(Dolefully.)* Yes. I wanted to finish my letter to Amy but it's an awfully difficult letter to write – fearfully complicated.
- JACK: Why?
- CHARLEY: Well, you see, I've no people or anything.
- JACK: "No people," with a millionaire aunt from Brazil!
- CHARLEY: But I've no reason to expect anything more from her – I'm very grateful and all that – but I want to see Amy and –
- JACK: *(Suddenly.)* Charley! I've got a clinking good idea!
- CHARLEY: *(Gratefully.)* Jack, you are a good chap! Write it down and I'll copy it out.
- JACK: No, not for you! For me – for us both! You're gone on Amy; I'm absolutely mad for Kitty.

CHARLEY: Really, Jack?

JACK: Worse even than for cricket!

CHARLEY: Goodness me! And what's your "idea"?

JACK: We'll give a luncheon party for your aunt, tea afterwards.

CHARLEY: But my rooms are so small.

JACK: Never mind, we'll use mine. Brassett shall see to it. *(Calling.)* Brassett! *(To CHARLEY.)* Now, come on! First we'll ask the girls.

CHARLEY: *(As JACK pushes him toward the writing-table.)* Ask the girls?

JACK: To meet your aunt.

CHARLEY: What about old Spettigue?

JACK: Oh, their guardian. *(A moment's thought.)* The devil with old Spettigue!

CHARLEY: But he's away! Do you think they'll come without him?

JACK: They'll jump at it We'll send a note at once. You write – I'll dictate.

(CHARLEY writes.)

JACK: "My Dear Miss Spettigue –" *(Calling.)* Brassett, where are you? *(BRASSETT enters behind JACK.)* Brassett! *(Turns, sees BRASSETT.)* Oh – er, Brassett, get a messenger to take a note to Mr. Spettigue's.

BRASSETT: Yes, sir. *(Exit.)*

CHARLEY: Continue, Jack.

JACK: *(Gets envelope and pen.)* "Would you and Miss Verdun –" *(Puts cigar-box on knee to write on.)* " – do me the honour –"

CHARLEY: *(Repeating.)* " – the honour –"

JACK: " – to lunch with me and Mr. Chesney."

CHARLEY: *(Repeating.)* " – Mr. Chesney."

JACK: I'll address the envelope.

CHARLEY: *(Still repeating – while dipping pen in ink.)* "I'll address the – "

JACK: *(Before CHARLEY can write it.)* No, not that, you muff! "At his rooms, St. Olde's College, to-day at one o'clock." *(Addressing envelope.)* Miss Spettigue –

CHARLEY: *(About to write.)* "Miss – "

JACK: *(Stops him.)* No! "To meet my aunt – " What did you say her name was?

CHARLEY: Donna Lucia d'Alvadorez.

JACK: "Donna blah, blah, blah, blah. An answer by bearer will greatly oblige." *(Blots envelope.)*

CHARLEY: *(Writing.)* "– oblige. Yours sincerely, Charles Wykeham." *(Blots and folds letter.)* Splendid, Jack, you're a genius! *(Hands letter to JACK.)*

JACK: *(Puts letter in envelope and closes it.)* It's a glorious opportunity. We shall have them all to ourselves. *(Going L.C.)*

(Enter BRASSETT, L.I.E.)

BRASSETT: The messenger, sir.

JACK: *(Gives letter to BRASSETT.)* Give him that, and tell him to look sharp.

BRASSETT: Yes, sir.

(Glances at address on envelope, smiles and exits.)

JACK: *(Returns to table, takes up torn letters.)* This sort of thing is not to be settled by correspondence. *(Puts letters into wastepaper basket.)*

CHARLEY: No, and we shall have them all to ourselves.

JACK: Thanks to your aunt. I love that dear old lady already. *(Calling.)* Brassett!

(Re-enter BRASSETT, L.I.E.)

BRASSETT: Yes, sir?

JACK: Lunch for five.

BRASSETT: For how many, sir?

JACK: For five. *(Going to him.)*

BRASSETT: For five, sir? *(Laughs quietly.)*

(CHARLEY rises and goes over to them.)

JACK: *(To BRASSETT.)* What are you laughing at?

BRASSETT: Well, sir, I'm afraid our credit in the kitchen is somewhat hegs-austed.

JACK: *(To BRASSETT.)* Oh, is it? How are you off for "tick," Charley?

CHARLEY: Well, Jack, I'm afraid – er –

JACK: Never mind. Brassett, go to Bunter's.

BRASSETT: I'm afraid, sir, we owe Bunter's –

JACK: Oh, do we? Charley, you won't mind. *(Takes watch and chain off CHARLEY, gives them to BRASSETT.)* Here you are, Brassett.

BRASSETT: *(Looking at watch critically.)* I couldn't get anything on this, sir. *(Hands it back to JACK.)* However, sir, I'll tell Bunter's it's for me.

(CHARLEY sits at writing-table.)

JACK: *(Laughing.)* Oh, all right. Lunch for five at one o'clock. *(Goes down L.)*

BRASSETT: *(Looks at own gold watch.)* Rather short notice, sir.

JACK: Do what you must, only lunch for five at one. *(Putting watch and chain in his own waistcoat pocket, crossing to CHARLEY.)*

CHARLEY: *(To JACK.)* I say, Jack, that's my watch! *(Taking it back.)*

JACK: I beg pardon, old chap, my mistake. Champagne, Brassett.

BRASSETT: *(Sulkily.)* Very little left, sir. *(Opens sideboard.)*

JACK: Half a dozen bottles! *(R. of C. table.)*

BRASSETT: *(Imperturbably.)* Only four, sir, I think.

JACK: *(To BRASSETT, aggressively.)* Six, I'll swear.

BRASSETT: *(Taking bottles from cupboard.)* Four of champagne, sir, and I think, yes, one of claret. *(Taking out bottle of claret and holding it up.)*

JACK: Oh, hang the claret! All right. *(Aside to CHARLEY.)* He's sneaked those other two bottles. He's a corker!

CHARLEY: He's an un-corker! My fellow's just the same.

(BRASSETT smiles imperturbably and exits.)

JACK: You and your dear old aunt can view the chapel and cloisters while Kitty and I have our little talk.

CHARLEY: That's all very well, but what about Amy and me, and our little talk?

JACK: I never thought of that.

CHARLEY: Auntie's all very well as an excuse to get the girls to come here, but, by herself, she'll be an awful bore.

JACK: Well, Napoleon went over the Alps on an elephant, and I've been under them by train, so there must be a way out of this.

CHARLEY: But how? Couldn't we ask someone to meet her?

JACK: There's Freddy Peel

CHARLEY: He'd try to make love to our girls.

JACK: *(Clapping his hands.)* By George, I've got it! Babbs – Fanny Babbs!

CHARLEY: Oh yes; he's a jolly cheerful little chap.

JACK: Will amuse your aunt like the deuce.

CHARLEY: Splendid!

JACK: Brassett!

(BRASSETT enters.)

BRASSETT: Yes, sir?

JACK: Give Lord Fancourt Babberley my compliments and ask him to come here.

BRASSETT: Yes, sir. *(Goes to door.)*

CHARLEY: *(Crossing L. to BRASSETT.)* Say it's very important.

BRASSETT: *(As he goes.)* Yes, sir. *(Exits.)*

JACK: *(Shouting after BRASSETT.)* And very immediate!

BRASSETT: *(Off.)* Yes, sir.

JACK: And while Babbs is doing "gooseberry" with your aunt, we can have our chat with the girls.

CHARLEY: By the by, Jack, haven't you noticed something about Babbs lately – ever since he was so ill and had to go cruise the Mediterranean?

JACK: I've noticed he's been jolly hard up. *(Sits in chair back of writing-table.)*

CHARLEY: I fancy, from a few hints he's dropped, that he's a bit hard hit himself.

JACK: What, Babbs in love?

CHARLEY: Yes; and if I'm not much mistaken, he's as softhearted over a girl as –

JACK: As we are. All the better; he'll keep the old lady well out of our way.

CHARLEY: By George, Jack, you'll be Prime Minister one of these days.

(Enter BRASSETT.)

BRASSETT: His lordship asks, sir, if could you lend him a few bottles of champagne.

JACK: Lend him a few bottles of champagne!

CHARLEY: Well, of all the cheek! What shall we do?

JACK: Make him come. Lay for six, Brassett, and put that champagne on ice. And tidy up! Come on, Charley!

(Exeunt.)

BRASSETT: *(Annoyed.)* One o'clock! *(Looks helplessly at watch.)* Hurry, scurry, no time for anything. They come with a bang, they go with a bang, everything with a bang, except pay their bills with a bang. *(Looking at champagne ruefully.)* Well, I did think that little perquisite was safe, I did! *(Exits.)*

LORD FANCOURT: *(Off.)* Jack! I say, Jack, old man.

(LORD FANCOURT BABBERLEY climbs in at window, carrying large Gladstone bag.)

Where the Dickens are you? *(Looks around.)* I wanted to borrow some fizz. *(Sees champagne on table.)* Hallo! The very thing! *(Puts bag on table and starts wrapping up first bottle with antimacassar from chair.)* Serves him right, he shouldn't leave it about like that when I'm so beastly hard up. *(Puts bottles in bag.)* There! Four bottles. That's enough. *(Closes bag)* They can make do with whisky and soda. *(Starts for window.)*

(Enter JACK and CHARLEY, who pull him back in.)

JACK: Babbs! *(Takes bag and puts it on table.)* We've been looking for you.

LORD FANCOURT: No, really? How do you think I'm looking?

CHARLEY: Splendid, old chap!

LORD FANCOURT: Yes, I thought you'd be pleased with me. *(Takes bag.)* Well, ta-ta!

(CHARLEY stops him. JACK puts bag on table.)

JACK: Don't go, Babbs; you wanted to see us, didn't you?

LORD FANCOURT: Well, yes! I wanted to borrow some fizz, but –

JACK: Sorry. I could have spared you a couple of bottles, but that fool Brassett-

LORD FANCOURT: Yes! My fellow's just the same. Well, ta-ta! *(Makes a feint to bolt.)*

(JACK and CHARLEY miss him. LORD FANCOURT grabs bag and heads to window.)

JACK: *(Pulling him back.)* Where were you last night, Babbs?.

LORD FANCOURT: You know Freddy Peel, don't you? He gave a card party last night, and I won a hundred pounds. You should have seen his face!

CHARLEY: Did he pay you?

LORD FANCOURT: No, but he's going to – when his grandmother dies.

JACK: The old lady's been dead years! Freddy Peel hasn't sixpence!

LORD FANCOURT: No, really? He's an awful idiot, hasn't a particle of brains, has he? *(Picks up bag.)* Ta-ta; I'm off! *(Attempts to bolt towards window.)*

(CHARLIE brings him back. JACK puts bag on table.)

JACK: I say, Babbs, we want you to lunch with us to-day. Charley's aunt is going to pay him a visit.

CHARLEY: Of course, Babbs, you must stay to lunch.

LORD FANCOURT: No, really? I know Charley visits his "uncle" when he's hard up *(pulling CHARLEY'S watch out.)* so it's only right his aunt should return the visit.

JACK: *(Turning him face to face.)* See, we need a chap like you, full of humour.

CHARLEY: *(Turns him round the other way.)* Yes, Babbs, we do!

JACK: *(Turns him back.)* To interest and amuse a charming lady.

LORD FANCOURT: Yes. Who is she?

JACK: Why, Charley's Aunt.

LORD FANCOURT: What's she like?

CHARLEY: Well, we don't quite know. I'm meeting her to-day for the first time.

LORD FANCOURT: I say, Charley, she may turn out to be an awful old "croc."

JACK: She's a widow, and a millionaire, that's enough, isn't it?

LORD FANCOURT: Rather! *(To CHARLEY.)* I say, what's her name?

CHARLEY: *(Deliberately.)* Donna Lucia d'Alvadorez.

LORD FANCOURT: Oh, dem it, what a name! *(Seizes bag again and bolts to door.)*

(JACK and CHARLEY run him up to table .)

JACK: Look here, Babbs, Charley's aunt is a charming old lady.

LORD FANCOURT: Old lady! I say, haven't you got anything younger?

CHARLEY: Two nice young ladies.

LORD FANCOURT: Ah! I'll take them. You can have the aunt.

JACK: We need to be alone with the young ladies.

LORD FANCOURT: Oh! One for each of you, and the old "croc" for me. I'm off!

(LORD FANCOURT bolts up R. of table C. towards window with his bag and is brought back as before.)

JACK: Now listen, Babbs. We're friends, right?

CHARLEY: Friends who trust each other, eh?

LORD FANCOURT: All right.

JACK: Straight as a die, Babbs. We're in love.

LORD FANCOURT: You silly ass!

CHARLIE: No, the real downright serious thing.

LORD FANCOURT: I say, I'm not going to propose for you!

JACK: No! We'll do that for ourselves – if you amuse the old lady.

CHARLEY: Babbs, you don't understand our feelings.

LORD FANCOURT: Oh, don't I? I'm in love, too.

CHARLEY: What makes you think that?

LORD FANCOURT: I'm always wanting to hear the birds sing.

JACK & CHARLEY: Right.

LORD FANCOURT: And I'm getting fond of poetry.

JACK & CHARLEY: Right.

LORD FANCOURT: I can't sleep.

JACK & CHARLEY: Right.

LORD FANCOURT: I gave up drinking for a couple of days, but it made me ill, so I left off.

JACK: You've got all the symptoms. Tell us all about it.

(They sit around table. LORD FANCOURT places his hat on CHARLEY'S foot. CHARLEY removes it.)

LORD FANCOURT: Term before last, I was awfully ill and took the yacht round the Med. At Monte Carlo I met a chap named Delahay – quite ill and quite penniless.

JACK: Bad luck at the tables, eh?

CHARLEY: And what became of him?

LORD FANCOURT: He died, poor fellow! His only child was the sweetest little girl I ever saw.

JACK: And what became of “the sweetest little girl you ever saw”?

LORD FANCOURT: I lost her. A lady travelling home – from South America, I believe – took charge of her and brought her to England. I tried to tell her that ...

CHARLEY: ... you loved her?

LORD FANCOURT: But she was in such grief that ...

JACK: It all became a jumble of nonsense?

LORD FANCOURT: I must have looked a silly ass.

CHARLEY: At any rate, you can sympathise with us. *(BRASSET enters.)* Hallo! Here's the messenger back. *(BRASSETT hands a note to JACK and goes up, quietly arranges things during next scene.)*

JACK: *(Opens letter and reads.)* They're coming!

LORD FANCOURT: *(Taking the note.)* By Jove!

(CHARLEY takes it from him. LORD FANCOURT is left staring at his thumb and two first fingers spread out.)

CHARLEY: So they are! You'll stop, Babbs?

LORD FANCOURT: Oh, I say – I'm not dressed for ladies.

JACK: No, we won't let you go now we've got you.

LORD FANCOURT: But look here, Jack, I've something else to do.

JACK: Well, what?

LORD FANCOURT: I'm going to play in some amateur theatricals.

CHARLEY: Garn!

LORD FANCOURT: I'm very nervous. I've never acted before in my life.

JACK: What are you playing?

LORD FANCOURT: A lady – an old lady – And I'm going to try on the costume things before those theatrical fellows come.

JACK: You can try them on here. Where are they?

LORD FANCOURT: In my rooms, in a box on the bed, but –

JACK: Brassett! Fetch them quick! (*BRASSETT exits.*)

LORD FANCOURT: (*Bolts L. with his bag.*) No, I'll fetch them with my little bag.

(JACK intercepts him and throws the bag casually down on table C. LORD FANCOURT picks it up and shakes it gently to hear, then runs hand underneath to see if any are leaking. He puts bag on table. JACK, during this, gets whisky, water and glasses on salver from sideboard, places them on table, pours out two whiskies, hands decanter to CHARLEY, who pours for himself.)

CHARLEY: Babbs, you don't sympathise with us a bit!

(JACK pours water into one whisky.)

LORD FANCOURT: Don't I, though? I only wish I could see my own little girl!

JACK: Oh, she'll turn up. (*Offers drink to LORD FANCOURT.*) Drink?

(CHARLEY adds water to his own whisky.)

LORD FANCOURT: No, I've knocked it off.

JACK: Oh, very well. Here you are, Charley.

LORD FANCOURT: *(Seizes glass.)* All right, I'll have it.

JACK: Here's to the future Lady Babberley. What did you say her name was?

LORD FANCOURT: Haven't the slightest idea!

JACK: Go on with you! *(Lifts his glass.)* Miss Delahay.

LORD FANCOURT: Oh! Miss Delahay!

*(They drink, LORD FANCOURT places his glass on table.
Enter BRASSETT with dress-box.)*

BRASSETT: Your theatrical things, m'lord.

LORD FANCOURT: *(Taking box from BRASSETT.)* Thank you, Brassett. You're an awfully good chap. *(Feels in pockets.)* I say, Jack, could you lend me half a crown?

JACK: *(Feeling in pockets.)* Charley! Have you half-a-crown?

CHARLEY: *(Pulling out linings of trouser pockets.)* Not a farthing, Jack.

JACK: Brassett! Give me half a crown, will you?

BRASSETT: Yes, sir. *(Takes out a large handful of money, gives a half-crown.)*

JACK: Here you are, Babbs! *(Gives him the half-crown.)*

LORD FANCOURT: Thanks. *(Gives coin back to BRASSETT.)* Brassett, here you are.

(BRASSETT moves bag to chair at back, and exits.)

CHARLEY: *(Pointing to box.)* What have you got there? Let's have a look!

LORD FANCOURT: Tell you what. I'll try them on after lunch while you're all in the garden.

JACK: You can't; you'll be with us. Try them on now.

LORD FANCOURT: I've lost a lot of time over these theatricals, but next term I mean to work.

*(He exits. JACK goes front of fireplace. CHARLEY sits.
After a moment, a knock at the door.)*

JACK: Here they are! And your aunt's not come yet! *(Rushes to mantelpiece, notices photographs, slants them face down, arranges tie, smooths hair.)*

CHARLEY: *(Trying to see in mirror behind JACK.)* Good gracious! What shall we do?

(Enter BRASSETT, going to door.)

JACK: Oh, let them come in. We can explain. Show them in, Brassett.

(BRASSETT opens door. Enter SIR FRANCIS CHESNEY.)

SIR FRANCIS: Jack!

JACK: *(Turning, surprised, and delighted.)* Dad! *(Going to him.)*

SIR FRANCIS My dear boy!

(Overcome by emotion, they shake hands. SIR FRANCIS puts hat, stick and gloves on sideboard.)

JACK: Dear old dad! What brings you here?

SIR FRANCIS: To have a chat with you and to bring you your cheque.

JACK: Thanks, dad; you're a brick!

SIR FRANCIS: *(Smiling.)* A bit sun-baked, my boy; after all my years in India.

JACK: A bit crisped, dad, but still a picture.

SIR FRANCIS: How do you make that out?

JACK: How old are you?

SIR FRANCIS: What do you say to fifty?

JACK: Fifty?

SIR FRANCIS: One.

- JACK: Who'd believe it? Oh, dad, Charley Wykeham. Charley, my father.
- SIR FRANCIS: *(Shakes hands with him.)* Glad to know you, my boy, glad to know you.
- CHARLEY: Happy to meet you, sir. I'll leave you with your father, Jack. I'll watch out for ... you know. *(He exits.)*
- SIR FRANCIS: And you, Jack, seem much older than your age. I suppose it's the times. *(Cheerfully and unconcernedly.)* Well, we all grow old. *(Sits at table.)*
- (SIR FRANCIS takes out pocket-book containing cheque already made out to JACK, and a bundle of bills pinned together, with one very long one among them.)*
- JACK: Why, dear old dad, here you are, a smart, bang up-to-date sort of chap one can talk to like a chum! Do you drink?
- SIR FRANCIS: All I want.
- JACK: Eat well?
- SIR FRANCIS: Never noticed.
- JACK: There you are! Consequently health good, temper perfect!
- SIR FRANCIS: Here you are, my boy. There's your cheque. *(Gives cheque. Looking at bills.)*
- JACK: *(Sees amount of cheque, smiles.)* Thanks, dad!
- SIR FRANCIS: Never mind. *(He waves the bills, but smiles.)* Same when I was a lad. *(They laugh.)* I'm very satisfied with you. And now, my lad, we must begin to think. Now that I have come into the family title, I have also come into the family debts.
- JACK: Debts!
- SIR FRANCIS: With the result that, in short, Jack, you and I, for the next few years, will be, comparatively speaking, poor men.
- JACK: *(Rises.)* Poor men! *(Aside.)* This settles me with Kitty! By George! Dad, I've an idea! Couldn't this matter be settled by a wealthy marriage?
- SIR FRANCIS: Jack, I don't think I'd –

JACK: Listen. My chum – that is, Charley Wykeham's aunt, Donna Lucia d'Alvadorez, is coming here to lunch to-day. She's a widow.

SIR FRANCIS: *(Dubiously.)* A widow?

JACK: And a millionaire.

SIR FRANCIS: *(More hopefully.)* And a millionaire?

JACK: And a charming woman.

SIR FRANCIS: No, Jack, you mustn't do a thing of this kind merely for money.

JACK: Eh, what? No, not me, dad! You!

SIR FRANCIS: Me! You young rascal. *(Takes a mock swing at JACK, who dodges.)* No, I shall never marry again.

JACK: Think it over, dad. Lunch is at one o'clock. Go and make yourself look as nice as possible and, dad, put a flower in your buttonhole

CHARLEY: *(Shouting off, excitedly.)* I say, Jack!

(CHARLEY hurries in and runs into SIR FRANCIS.)

CHARLEY: Jack! Oh, you're still here, sir. Very sorry.

JACK: Charley, again. *Her* nephew – nice boy, you'll like him.

SIR FRANCIS: *(Laughing.)* I thought it was the fire brigade.

JACK: Now, don't forget, dad. A flower in your buttonhole – takes years off a man, a flower in his buttonhole.

SIR FRANCIS: *(Putting his hat on jauntily.)* All right, Jack. I'll have a look at her. *(Exit.)*

JACK: *(To CHARLEY.)* Well, what is it?

CHARLEY: *(Give JACK a telegram.)* Read that.

JACK: *(Reads.)* "Important business, don't expect me for a few days. Lucia d'Alvadorez." No!

CHARLEY: She's not coming!

JACK: But she must! Go! Wire! Telegraph! Hang it! The girls won't remain without a chaperone.

CHARLEY: *(At window.)* Couldn't we ask the Proctor's wife, old Mrs. – ?

JACK: Who'd sit and stare like an owl.

CHARLEY: Here they are! They're coming!

JACK: *(Rushing to window.)* What on earth are we to do?

LORD FANCOURT: *(Off.)* I say, Jack, come and look at me!

JACK: *(Irritably.)* What the deuce does he want? *(Opens door, looks off, takes a step back in amazement.)* By George! Splendid! Charley, do you know what a pious fraud is?

CHARLEY: *(Crossing to him.)* A pious fraud?

JACK: First cousin to a miracle! Look! It's your aunt!

CHARLEY: My aunt? *(Looking.)* Babbs! *(Turning back to JACK.)* My aunt!

JACK: It's the only one we've got, so we'll have to make the best of her.

LORD FANCOURT: *(Off.)* I say, chaps, look here!

(Enter LORD FANCOURT, dressed as an old lady, in black satin, fichu, wig, cap, etc. Stands up L.C., smiling.)

How's this?

(He walks down, smiling coyly from behind his fan. CHARLEY and JACK turn to each other and shake hands.)

JACK & CHARLEY: Splendid!

KITTY: *(Off.)* Oh yes, here it is, here's the name!

AMY: *(Off.)* Oh, so it is! "Mr. Chesney." I wonder if they're in.

(Knock at the outer door.)

LORD FANCOURT: Who's that? *(Turns to run.)*

CHARLEY: *(Seizing him by shoulders.)* The girls.

LORD FANCOURT: *(Looking at JACK.)* The girls?

JACK: Charley's aunt can't come.

LORD FANCOURT: Can't she? I'll go and take these things off. *(Turns to run.)*

(JACK grabs him, assisted by CHARLEY.)

CHARLEY: No, they won't stop if you do.

LORD FANCOURT: Won't stop! What do you mean?

JACK & CHARLEY: You must be Charley's (my) aunt!

(LORD FANCOURT faints. CHARLEY and JACK catch him and slide him to bedroom door. LORD FANCOURT tries to get away but is held. They push him in and lock the door. JACK goes to meet the girls. CHARLEY leans against the door. BRASSETT enters.)

JACK: Show them in, Brassett.

(BRASSETT opens door to KITTY and AMY.)

(Shaking hands with them.) How do you do? So kind of you to come!

KITTY: Oh, we were very pleased to be able to come. Weren't we, Amy?

AMY: Oh, yes. *(To CHARLEY as he joins her.)* Mr. Wykeham, are we too early?

CHARLEY: Oh no, no!

(They move to table. CHARLEY, in his nervousness, sits in the chair, then rises and offers it to AMY; she sits.)

KITTY: You didn't mention any time, Mr. Chesney. *(JACK gives chair, KITTY sits L. of writing-table.)* So, we came at once.

JACK: Oh, we're delighted! *(He signals CHARLEY that the drinks are on the table.)*

(CHARLEY, from behind table, leans over and puts his hat

over the drinks. BRASSETT takes tray and hat off, leaving whisky decanter. JACK, covers whisky with his hat.)

KITTY: *(Sitting.)* And this is where you think and study and do all your work?

(JACK takes hat with decanter, hides it in fireplace.)

JACK: Oh yes, we do a lot of that sort of thing here. *(Sits.)*

KITTY: You've jolly quarters here.

(JACK and KITTY continue to talk aside.)

CHARLEY: *(To AMY.)* I'm so glad you were able to come. You're off to Scotland to-morrow, and I ... we shall miss you so much.

AMY: Yes, Uncle takes us to some dreadful place and it's so dreary.

CHARLEY: It's a shame!

AMY: It's lucky uncle is away in town, or I don't think we could have come. He's so peculiar about Kitty.

CHARLEY: Why?

AMY: She's an heiress; you know, and he's her guardian.

(They talk aside.)

JACK: *(Ardently.)* Miss Verdun, those moments in the garden the other night were the very happiest of my life, and the moonlight – ah, moonlight is the true atmosphere for – for sentiment.

KITTY: I wonder how many people have said that?

JACK: Kitty, you are quite cynical, to-day.

KITTY: I know I am; I'm thinking of my guardian – Mr. Spettigue, who hurries us away from anyone we get to know anyone really well.

JACK: Why does he?

KITTY: Because he's a selfish, wicked old man.

JACK: Are you – really – sorry to go away?

KITTY: Don't speak about it any more, or, as Amy says, "I shall cry."

AMY: *(Rising.)* What a dear, sweet old lady your aunt must be, Mr. Wykeham! I am longing to know her.

KITTY: Yes; we'd have been here sooner, but I wanted to get some flowers for Charley's aunt. Has she come?

JACK: Oh yes, she's come.

AMY: Where is she?

CHARLIE: She's – er – just stepped in here! I hope.

(JACK and CHARLEY cross to the bedroom and open it..)

JACK: Girls, Donna Lucia d'Alvadorez, Charley's aunt.

(LORD FAN COURT doesn't appear. CHARLEY reaches in and grabs him, pulling him out.)

Donna Lucia, Miss Spettigue, Miss Verdun.

(CHARLEY & JACK move behind LORD FAN COURT, pushing him forward. Slight pause.)

JACK: *(Aside to LORD FAN COURT.)* Go on, say something!

LORD FAN COURT: *(Stares at them blankly, then:)* How do you do, my dears?

KITTY: *(Giving the flowers.)* We've brought you these.

LORD FAN COURT: *(Taking them.)* Oh, thank you!

(AMY joins CHARLEY. They move up.)

KITTY: I hope your journey hasn't tired you.

LORD FAN COURT: Oh no! It was very jolly. *(JACK prods him.)* Pleasant, I mean.

(LORD FAN COURT looks for a place to put the flowers and finally sticks them down the front of his dress, tries to

see over them, can't, so parts them and peers between.)

AMY: *(At back of table C.)* You look worried, Mr. Wykeham. Are you ill?

CHARLEY: No; I'm, I'm –

JACK: – a little affected at meeting his aunt to-day for the first time. *(Prodding LORD FANCOURT. Aside.)* Why the dickens don't you say something?

LORD FANCOURT: *(Aside.)* What the dickens am I to say?

JACK: Talk about the weather.

LORD FANCOURT: *(Aloud to girls.)* Charming weather.

KITTY: Oh, yes, delightful!

AMY & KITTY: *(Together.)* Oh, yes, it is charming!

AMY: *(To LORD FANCOURT.)* May I arrange these for you, Donna Lucia?

(LORD FANCOURT hands her the flowers. She joins KITTY who gets a vase and they arrange the flowers.)

LORD FANCOURT: *(Aside to JACK.)* What did you say my name was?

JACK: Donna Lucia d'Alvadorez.

LORD FANCOURT: Irish?

CHARLEY: English. Married a Portuguese abroad.

JACK: A widow.

CHARLEY: From Brazil.

JACK: And a millionaire.

LORD FANCOURT: I see. Do I have any children?

(CHARLEY kicks LORD FANCOURT's leg. BRASSETT enters with tray and arranges the luncheon things. BRASSETT also arranges chairs.)

Well, one ought to know. *(To girls.)* Yes, it is wonderful weather, for England.

KITTY & AMY: Yes, it is.

KITTY: Of course, Oxford is all very new to you, Donna Lucia, but it's a dear old place in any weather. Amy and I will show you all about.

LORD FANCOURT: Delighted! Shall we see go and see the chapel and the cloisters?

(JACK and CHARLEY pull him back into the chair.)

JACK: No! Charley and I will entertain the ladies.

(Rises. JACK and CHARLEY push him back as before.)

KITTY: You're staying till to-morrow, are you not?

LORD FANCOURT: *(To JACK.)* Am I staying until to-morrow?

JACK: *(Quickly and rather loudly.)* No.

LORD FANCOURT: *(Quickly and very loudly.)* No!

CHARLEY: I'm afraid auntie can't stay after to-day.

LORD FANCOURT: No; you see, it's my washing day. *(Crosses legs.)*

(CHARLEY pushes LORD FANCOURT'S knee down.)

CHARLEY: She has so much business to attend to – in town.

JACK: Yes, lawyers, stocks –

LORD FANCOURT: Yes, stocks and socks. *(JACK punches him.)*

AMY: *(Coming to him.)* Oh, I'm so sorry, we have so longed to know you.

LORD FANCOURT: Have you, my dear? *(Takes AMY'S hand.)*

AMY: Mr. Wykeham has made us quite love you.

LORD FANCOURT: *(Slipping his L. arm round AMY'S waist.)* Has he, my dear?

(CHARLEY takes LORD FANCOURT'S arm away angrily. LORD FANCOURT replaces it, CHARLEY pulls it away again. AMY kneels. LORD FANCOURT slips his arm round her shoulders and gives her a quick little hug, and both the boys a look of triumph.)

AMY: And he's so grateful; says he owes everything to you and never could repay you, and oh, he is such a good, frank, upright man – it was noble of you!

LORD FANCOURT: My dear, it was my duty to see to the welfare of my poor brother's...

JACK: *(Aside.)* Sister's, you fool!

LORD FANCOURT: *(Repeating.)* Sister's, you fool – *(Correcting himself)* sister's *(with aggressive look at JACK)* and *(To AMY)* brother-in-law's orphan girl – boy! *(Aside to JACK)* I'll say twins in a minute.

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(BRASSETT exits.)

AMY: But you were so far away, he might have been left to starve. You are kind. Anyone can see it in your face. I feel I could tell my whole heart to you!

LORD FANCOURT: You dear little thing!

AMY: You don't mind my talking to you like this, do you?

LORD FANCOURT: My dear, you are a very charming little girl, of whom I am sure I could soon grow very fond. *(Looks over AMY'S head at CHARLEY and waves.)* And you may tell me anything you like.

AMY: *(Rising.)* Oh, I feel I've known you years and years already.

(Kisses LORD FANCOURT and joins KITTY in window, sits L. corner. CHARLEY flies at LORD FANCOURT, pinching him viciously. JACK same.)

LORD FANCOURT: *(Aside.)* I'm sorry, but it was very nice.

(Enter BRASSETT, hurriedly, to JACK.)

BRASSETT: Mr. Chesney! Mr. Chesney! I beg pardon, sir, but Mr. Spettigue is enquiring for your rooms, sir.

AMY & KITTY: *(Together.)* Oh dear, my uncle (guardian) back already!

CHARLEY: Mr. Spettigue!

JACK: *(Aghast.)* I thought he was in London.

KITTY: Mr. Chesney, I beg of you to send him away.

(Knock on outer door. KITTY, AMY and JACK exit into recess. BRASSETT exits. LORD FANCOURT looks scared at knock, and bolts to window, leaps on to window-seat about to get out. CHARLEY seizes him round waist as he is getting through window, carries him downstage, LORD FANCOURT'S feet, with soles showing to audience spread out, CHARLEY plumps him down.)

LORD FANCOURT: *(In terror, grabbing CHARLEY.)* What am I to do?

CHARLEY: Stand your ground, Babbs. Tell him what you like, only get rid of him.

(CHARLEY exits recess and pulls curtains. Another knock.)

SPETTIGUE: *(Off.)* Why doesn't somebody answer this door?

(SPETTIGUE enters, angrily, with hat on.)

SPETTIGUE: *(To LORD FANCOURT.)* Why didn't somebody answer this door?

LORD FANCOURT: *(Fixing him aggressively and backing him across stage.)* Where did you get that hat? *(Aggressively.)* Take it off, sir!

(SPETTIGUE removes hat and is about to sit L. of table C.)

Don't sit down, sir! *(SPETTIGUE straightens.)* I didn't ask you to sit.

SPETTIGUE: *(Placing hat on table.)* I wish to see Mr. Chesney!

LORD FANCOURT: Well, he's not present. I am the only person present.

SPETTIGUE: The porter told me my niece and my ward were here. He saw them come in. *(Taps top of hat on last word.)*

LORD FANCOURT: And did he tell you he saw them go out? *(Taps hat twice with last two words, with fan.)*

SPETTIGUE: *(Loudly.)* No!

LORD FANCOURT: *(Just as loudly.)* Very well then, what more do you want?

SPETTIGUE: They've gone into the garden. *(Turning upstage, towards recess.)*

LORD FANCOURT: *(Turning with him.)* They've done nothing of the kind.

SPETTIGUE: *(Coming down again.)* Then they've gone into town.

LORD FANCOURT: Why didn't you think of that before? And now, sir, having got all the information you are likely to get, in your present condition – *(Eyeing him.)*

SPETTIGUE: Madam!

LORD FANCOURT: Disgraceful! What tavern have you been in?

SPETTIGUE: What do you mean, madam? I am perfectly sober.

LORD FANCOURT: Well, you don't look it. *(Sits and picks up time-table or other light book.)*

SPETTIGUE: Madam, I apologise. Good morning. *(Puts his hat on and goes.)*

(LORD FANCOURT half rises, knocks SPETTIGUE'S hat off with book, then sits again, assuming an unconscious air. This business is done by SPETTIGUE putting his hat on lightly and slightly on one side. LORD FANCOURT holds A.B.C. in flat of right hand, and half propels it out of his hand with an upward movement, catching the right side of hat, and so sending the hat upstage. Done otherwise at any other angle, there is a danger of the brim of the hat hitting SPETTIGUE'S nose.)

(Retrieves hat, pointing to it.) Did you see anything strike that hat?

LORD FANCOURT: Did you speak to me?

SPETTIGUE: Did you see ... ? Ah! *(He turns and puts it on again.)*

LORD FANCOURT: *(Aside.)* He wants me to do it again. *(Strikes hat with fan.)*

(SPETTIGUE gets his hat, puts it on and exits, angrily.)

(Calling to girls.) Oh, my dears! *(Re-enter KITTY and AMY, followed by JACK and CHARLEY.)* Olly-olly-oxen-free!

KITTY: It was sweet of you!

AMY: You darling!

(One on each side of LORD FANCOURT, they kiss him.)

CHARLEY: Look at him, Jack!

JACK: I'll punch his head! *(Knock on the door.)* Here's my father! *(To LORD FANCOURT)* Donna Lucia! *(LORD FANCOURT to JACK, CHARLEY joins girls.)* Take care, here's my father.

LORD FANCOURT: Look here, am I any relation to him?

JACK: No; you're Charley's Aunt, from Brazil.

LORD FANCOURT: Brazil! Where's that?

JACK: You know – er – where the nuts come from.

(LORD FANCOURT is seated in chair at writing table. CHARLEY stands in front, screening him from door. BRASSETT enters and opens door. Enter SIR FRANCIS CHESNEY in a frock coat with a deep-red carnation with silk hat, stick and gloves. KITTY and AMY up R.C.)

JACK: *(To KITTY.)* Miss Verdun, my father.

SIR FRANCIS: Delighted.

JACK: *(To AMY.)* Miss Spettigue, my father.

(KITTY and AMY bow.)

SIR FRANCIS: Charmed.

(Turns, sees BRASSETT and gives him his hat and stick who places them on hat-rack in recess and exits.)

Now, Jack, has she come?

JACK: Oh yes, she's come. Go on, Charley, introduce your aunt.

CHARLEY: Donna Lucia d'Alvadorez, Sir Francis Chesney, Jack's father.

(SIR FRANCIS stares at LORD FANCOURT)

LORD FANCOURT: How do you do, Sir Francis?

SIR FRANCIS: *(Blankly.)* How do you do?

LORD FANCOURT: I'm Charley's aunt from Brazil – where the nuts come from.

(CHARLEY kicks him then goes upstage and joins ladies in window. LORD FANCOURT holds his leg in pain.)

SIR FRANCIS: *(Aside to JACK.)* I say, Jack! *(JACK goes to him.)* Is that the lady?

JACK: Eh? Yes.

SIR FRANCIS: *(Turns towards door.)* Oh, by George!

JACK: *(Catching his arm to stop him.)* Oh, don't go, dad! *(Crosses to LORD FANCOURT. Aside.)* Go on, Charley's told you all about him.

LORD FANCOURT: *(Parroting; to SIR FRANCIS.)* Charley's told you all about him.

JACK: *(Whispering.)* No, no!

LORD FANCOURT: *(To SIR FRANCIS.)* No, no!

JACK: *(Whispering and prompting him.)* My nephew Charles.

LORD FANCOURT: *(To SIR FRANCIS.)* My nephew Charles has told me so much about you –

JACK: *(With a prod.)* – in his letters

LORD FANCOURT: In his letters! *(Aside to JACK)* Do it yourself then! *(Looks sulky.)*

SIR FRANCIS: I'm much obliged to Mr. Wykeham, but I only met him to-day.

JACK: Yes, but, dad, I've been simply photographing you to Charley for years.

LORD FANCOURT: Oh yes, he's a splendid photographer!

JACK: *(Aside to LORD FANCOURT.)* You've only just come to England, and you've never seen Charley till to-day.

LORD FANCOURT: *(Aside.)* Why the deuce didn't you say so before?

SIR FRANCIS: Jack! (*JACK comes to him. Aside.*) My dear boy, it's impossible!

JACK: What, dad?

SIR FRANCIS: Well – look at her!

JACK: Eh? (*Suddenly remembering.*) Oh, good gracious!

SIR FRANCIS: (*Returns to LORD FANCOURT.*) You've travelled a great deal, I suppose?

LORD FANCOURT: Oh yes, I've been a great traveller, Sir Francis. I came all the way from London only this morning. What a pretty flower!

SIR FRANCIS: Do you like it? (*Offers it.*) Will you accept it?

LORD FANCOURT: Oh, thank you. (*Takes, flower, holding it out.*) I'll have it stuffed. (*Puts it in dress.*)

KITTY: (*To JACK.*) You have very pleasant rooms here, Mr. Chesney.

AMY: Oh yes, they're awfully nice rooms, Mr. Chesney, I'm sure. Don't you think so, Sir Francis?

SIR FRANCIS: (*With a look from AMY to KITTY.*) Pleasanter to-day than usual, I fancy. (*Looks to LORD FANCOURT and shudders.*)

JACK: Open the champagne, Brassett.

BRASSETT: I – I can't find it, sir.

(*LORD FANCOURT laughing to himself*)

JACK: Can't find it? Do you know where it is, Charley?

(*Looking about room, under table, etc., R.*)

CHARLEY: No. (*Looking in recess up L.*)

JACK: (*Sternly to BRASSETT.*) What's become of it? I thought it was on ice.

LORD FANCOURT: (*Taps table with fan, they all look at him.*) What is it you want?

JACK: The champagne, Donna Lucia.

LORD FANCOURT: I thought you'd forget so I brought some with me. In my bag, Brassett.

(BRASSETT takes bag, goes to sideboard and takes out champagne. JACK punches LORD FANCOURT. Enter SPETTIGUE, in a rage, with hat on.)

SPETTIGUE: Ha! *(All rise except SIR FRANCIS. Sees girls.)* I was right after all!

(SIR FRANCIS rises, puts chair under table. JACK, taking the bull by the horns, coming forward.)

JACK: *(Offering his hand, gaily.)* Oh, Mr. Spettigue

SPETTIGUE: Don't address me, sir! *(To girls.)* So you take advantage of my absence!

JACK: Mr. Spettigue

SPETTIGUE: Don't address me, sir!

CHARLEY: *(Coming between JACK and SPETTIGUE)* Will you allow us to explain?

SPETTIGUE: My business is with this young man, sir *(JACK.)*, and not with you.

LORD FANCOURT: But you won't listen to either of them!

SPETTIGUE: *(Insolently.)* Go away, madam, and don't interfere.

LORD FANCOURT: Where did you get that hat? Take it off, sir!

SPETTIGUE: *(SPETTIGUE takes off hat.)* Damnation!

JACK: You forget yourself, sir!

SIR FRANCIS: Perhaps you will remember, sir, that ladies are present.

SPETTIGUE: I disapprove of their presence and require them to return with me. *(At door.)* Ladies, come!

(KITTY and AMY move reluctantly but LORD FANCOURT puts out his arms and they snuggle into his arms instead.)

SIR FRANCIS: Sir, you cannot put such an affront upon Mr. Wykeham's friends.

SPETTIGUE: I don't know you, sir.

SIR FRANCIS: (To CHARLEY.) Introduce me, Mr. Wykeham.

CHARLEY: Mr. Spettigue , Sir Francis Chesney.

(SPETTIGUE barely acknowledges introduction.)

SIR FRANCIS: Mr. Chesney is my son, sir; and (Of LORD FANCOURT) this lady is...

LORD FANCOURT: (Standing with an arm around each girl.) Pray don't introduce him to me. I've been sufficiently insulted by the old bound – er – gentleman already.

SPETTIGUE: I am deeply annoyed to find on my return from town, my niece and my ward lunching, without my permission, with these two young gentlemen.

SIR FRANCIS: To meet Mr. Wykeham's aunt.

SPETTIGUE: (Sneering.) Indeed?

SIR FRANCIS: (Anger rising.) There is no "indeed" about it, sir! I repeat, to meet Mr. Wykeham's aunt.

SPETTIGUE: In my mind, it matters little.

SIR FRANCIS: In my mind, it matters everything, therefore allow me to introduce you. (To LORD FANCOURT.) Donna Lucia d'Alvadorez! Mr. – (Aside to JACK) What's his confounded name, Jack?

SPETTIGUE: | Donna Lucia!

JACK: | Spettigue.

SIR FRANCIS: Mr. Spettigue.

SPETTIGUE: Not the celebrated millionaire? Oh, how do you do?

LORD FANCOURT: How d'ye do? I am Charley's aunt from Brazil – where the nuts come from.

SPETTIGUE: Oh, I am sorry, very, very sorry.

JACK: (Aside to LORD FANCOURT.) Go on, he's apologised. Ask him to lunch.

LORD FANCOURT: (To SPETTIGUE.) Well, I thought you were very rude, but you'll stay to lunch, won't you?

SPETTIGUE: If you wish it – and I am forgiven?

LORD FANCOURT: Forgiven! *(Takes flower from dress.)* Here, accept this as a peace-offering. *(Puts SIR FRANCIS'S flower into SPETTIGUE'S coat.)*

SIR FRANCIS: *(Indignantly.)* My flower! *(Offers L. arm to LORD FANCOURT)* Allow me, Donna Lucia.

SPETTIGUE: No, allow me. *(Offers R. arm.)*

SIR FRANCIS: Sir, I insist upon eminence.

SPETTIGUE: I think not, sir. The lady shall walk in with me.

SIR FRANCIS: Sir!

SPETTIGUE: Sir!

LORD FANCOURT: Gentlemen! Don't fight; there's plenty to go around! Catch me if you can!

(LORD FANCOURT flutters eyelashes at them and runs for the door, skirts raised. SIR FRANCIS and SPETTIGUE are shocked, then follow. KITTY and AMY follow, mystified. JACK and CHARLEY stare after them. BRASSETT laughs aloud.)

JACK: What are you laughing at, eh?

BRASSETT: Beg pardon, sir. I was thinking of an old aunt of mine

JACK: Eh?

BRASSETT: *(Respectfully.)* Uncle, I mean.

JACK: Mind your own business and get that champagne on ice.

BRASSETT: Of course, sir. *(Aside.)* College gents'll do anything!

(Exits.)

JACK: Oh, hang it! I've not had a moment alone with Kitty!

CHARLEY: Nor I with Amy.

JACK: Confound it all, what are we to do?

CHARLEY: Well, I am your guest.

JACK: *(Aggressively.)* Yes, but they're my rooms! *(Suddenly and brightly.)* Here, we'll toss for it. *(Feels in pockets, has nothing.)* Got any money?

(CHARLEY brings out of pockets, a knife, string, a key and a halfpenny.)

CHARLEY: A ha'penny, that's all.

JACK: *(Takes halfpenny.)* Sudden death. *(Tosses.)* Heads, you and Amy, tails me and – *(Sees KITTY off.)* – Kitty! Here she is! *(Pockets coin. Crosses L.)*

CHARLEY: Jack, that's all the money I've got!

(Enter KITTY. JACK gives the halfpenny to CHARLEY.)

KITTY: Oh, Mr. Chesney, there you are. It seems we must wait for the wine to chill.

JACK: Yes, I'm here – waiting. *(Aside to CHARLEY.)* Why don't you go?

(Enter AMY.)

AMY: Ah, Mr. Wykeham, there you are. It seems we must wait for the wine to chill.

CHARLEY: Yes, I was coming – I was waiting – I'm here. *(Aside to JACK.)* Hook it!

JACK: *(Aside.)* Beastly awkward. *(With sudden determination.)* Oh, I say, Charley, have you shown Miss Spettigue 'round the garden?

CHARLEY: Yes, Jack, I have – two or three times! In fact, we've just come from there. *(Aside to AMY.)* I wish he'd leave us.

JACK: *(To AMY.)* Lovely garden, isn't it?

AMY: Yes, I suppose it is.

JACK: "Suppose?" Oh, then, you haven't half seen it. *(Takes them by the arm to L.C.)* Charley, show her the roses and primroses and cabbages and things.

CHARLEY: But, Jack, I ...

JACK: And, Charley, tell Miss Spettigue those beautiful lines of yours: "To Our Garden In Summer."

CHARLEY: *(Aside.)* Jack, don't tell her I write poetry. She'll think I'm an awful ass.

JACK: What do you think, Miss Spettigue, half an hour to chill the wine?

AMY: Oh, very well, Mr. Chesney.

(Exit slowly.)

CHARLEY: *(Following AMY, then turns back. Aside to JACK.)* But, Jack, the others! Suppose we run into them?

JACK: It's a large garden; keep out of their way. *(Pushing CHARLEY off.)*

(Exit CHARLEY.)

(To KITTY.) At last, Miss Verdun – we are alone – my dear Kitty!

KITTY: *(Teasing.)* Don't you think it was rather selfish of us, Mr. Chesney, to send them away like that?

JACK: Well, we tossed for it.

KITTY: What?

JACK: I mean – er – they'll be much happier alone. And now, before – before – they return. *(With enthusiasm.)* Miss Verdun – my dear Kitty – *(About to put arm round her waist.)*

(KITTY backs a little away in surprise, with a look of comic enquiry. JACK pulls himself up.)

Won't you sit down? *(Offers chair then goes behind table. She sits.)* You know, Miss Verdun, there are times when a fellow's got to think hard and think long.

KITTY: I suppose so. *(Putting her hand on the table.)*

JACK: And there are times when a fellow mustn't think at all!

KITTY: Yes.

JACK: Well, then, Miss Verdun – Kitty – my dear Kitty – *(About to take her hand.)*

(Enter SIR FRANCIS.)

SIR FRANCIS: Oh, I beg pardon.

(JACK moves away, KITTY rises to go.)

No, don't mind me. I only wanted a word with my boy here.

KITTY: Oh, then, I'll run into the garden ... *(Catches JACK'S eye; he crosses to her.)* ... and see the roses and primroses and cabbages and things. *(Exit.)*

JACK: *(Turning to C.)* Hang it all, dad, I – ! What is it?

SIR FRANCIS: Well, Jack, having thought it over, I've determined to marry a lady of wealth. She's not lovely and not young but, hang it all, she has money.

JACK: All right, dad, as long as you are satisfied. Who is she?

SIR FRANCIS: Donna Lucia d'Alvadorez.

JACK: Well, congratu – What! Dad, this is impossible!

SIR FRANCIS: Impossible? You suggested it!

JACK: But, dad – you can't!

SIR FRANCIS: "Can't"! Why, Jack, change my things and put a flower in my buttonhole? And, by George, Jack, I believe the flower's done the trick!

JACK: She gave it away!

SIR FRANCIS: *(Slight nudge)* She's explained all that. I flatter myself she's taken rather a fancy to me, and as for old Spettigue, I don't think he has the ghost of a chance with her.

JACK: *(In horror.)* Old Spettigue! Great Heavens, what's happening? *(Turning, aloud.)* Dad! Take time, think it over.

SIR FRANCIS: *(Heroically.)* That's not the way an old soldier makes love. *(Briskly.)* I'm

going to get myself a good spanking brandy and soda to set me up!

(Exit SIR FRANCIS to rooms.)

JACK: Great Scot! What's Babbs doing?

(Enter CHARLEY.)

CHARLEY: Jack! Jack! I wish you'd speak to Babbs. He's taken Amy away from me, and gone off round the garden with her.

JACK: Well, that's nothing to what's going on here. *(Cork pops loudly off in rooms – both turn.)* Hear that? That's my dad getting himself a "good spanking brandy and soda."

CHARLEY: What for?

JACK: To propose to Babbs; that's all!

CHARLEY: This is all your fault!

JACK: Don't blame me! It's your muddle-headed aunt changing her mind!

CHARLEY: What shall we do?

JACK: Find Babbs, and put him up to the governor's game.

CHARLEY: "Find Babbs"? But, Jack – we must end this horrible ...

JACK: Oh, shut up, we must keep our heads – or we'll lose our heads. Come on!

(Exits with CHARLEY. Enter SIR FRANCIS.)

SIR FRANCIS: Now I'm ready for anybody or anything. She promised to meet me here in ten minutes – and time's up. *(Looking off.)*

(Enter SPETTIGUE, looking off.)

SIR F./SPETT.: *(Hears step, raises hat.)* Ah, my dear Don – *(They turn away abruptly.)*

SIR FRANCIS: *(Aside.)* That old fool Spettigue! And with my flower in his coat!

SPETTIGUE: *(Aside.)* That old fool Chesney! What's he hanging about here for?

SIR F./SPETT.: Are you – er – looking for anyone? *(They react to speaking together.)* No.

SPETTIGUE: Have you seen the garden? You ought to give it a good look before you go.

SIR FRANCIS: I will – before I go. *(Aside.)* What's he stopping here for?

SPETTIGUE: *(Aside.)* I wish I could think of something to get rid of him.

SIR FRANCIS: The ladies are in the garden. They might think it rude, both of us being away –

SPETTIGUE: Perhaps so, perhaps so. *(Aside.)* She's in the garden. *(To SIR FRANCIS.)* Pardon me.

SIR FRANCIS: Oh, don't mind me. Don't mind me!

(Exit SPETTIGUE.)

SIR FRANCIS: She doesn't appear to be coming. I think I'll go and have another.

(Exit. Enter LORD FANCOURT and AMY, arm-in-arm, JACK and CHARLEY opposite. AMY goes to CHARLEY.)

AMY: Ah, Mr. Wykeham, there you are. I thought I'd lost you

CHARLEY: Yes, I was afraid of that, myself. *(Takes AMY from LORD FANCOURT.)*

JACK: *(To LORD FANCOURT.)* Where have you been with that girl, you fool?

LORD FANCOURT: Nowhere. *(Flounces round, kicking skirt out backwards. Goes up.)*

JACK: *(Aloud.)* Charley, has Miss Spettigue seen the Chapel? *(Walking between them to exit.)* You must see the Chapel. It's an awfully pretty Chapel. *(AMY exits.)*

CHARLEY: *(About to exit, turns angrily.)* Jack, I'll punch his head if he does it again.

(LORD FANCOURT comes aggressively to CHARLEY, JACK between. CHARLEY strikes down at LORD FANCOURT over JACK'S shoulder. LORD FANCOURT tips CHARLEY'S hat off jeeringly with his closed fan. JACK hustles CHARLEY off.)

JACK: *(To LORD FANCOURT.)* You were to look after those two old chaps, and

– but I've no wish to argue.

LORD FANCOURT: (*Nose to nose with JACK*). No, I shouldn't argue if I were you.

JACK: Listen. My dad's coming. He's going to propose to you.

LORD FANCOURT: Well, I'm not going to marry him for you or anybody else.

JACK: Of course not, you idiot. Be calm and refuse him.

LORD FANCOURT: Be calm! A proposal puts any girl in a flutter. You know that. What am I to say? I've never been proposed to before.

JACK: Oh! Say he's taken you by surprise. Just refuse him!

LORD FANCOURT: Oh yes, I'll refuse him.

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(*Exit JACK through arch to R. LORD FANCOURT hides between arch and door to rooms. SIR FRANCIS enters, looking at watch.*)

SIR FRANCIS: Really, it's too bad. Ladies are proverbially unpunctual, but ...

(*LORD FANCOURT, peeping round corner, appears in archway R.C., holding up finger with fichu [neck cloth] archly to SIR FRANCIS*)

LORD FANCOURT: Oo-hoo! Oo-ah-hoo!

(*SIR FRANCIS raises hat. LORD FANCOURT looks coyly and swings end of fichu gaily round and round.*)

SIR FRANCIS: Ah, dear Donna Lucia, here you are! I popped into the garden to find you.

(*SIR FRANCIS exits to come to where LORD FANCOURT was. LORD FANCOURT, with skirts hiked up and long strides, steals quickly across and is nearly off. SIR FRANCIS reappears.*)

It's so good of you to come.

(*LORD FANCOURT, seeing SIR FRANCIS, stops, drops his skirts and sits.*)

(Aside.) Now for the plunge!*(Looks at LORD FANCOURT.)* How old is she? Well, a woman's never too old for a compliment. *(Clears throat. LORD FANCOURT clears throat.)* Donna Lucia, you'll pardon an old campaigner, I'm sure, but to meet you to-day, as I have done, is like a lonely traveller coming across some – er – bright little floweret – *(LORD FANCOURT turns his head coyly.)* – er – by the wayside.

LORD FANCOURT: *(Aside.)* What do I say to that? *(Aloud.)* That's very nice of you.

SIR FRANCIS: *(Aside.)* By George, she looks anything between fifty and a hundred.

(JACK appears at back, shakes fist at LORD FANCOURT, who cocks a snook at him. As SIR FRANCIS turns, LORD FANCOURT converts "snook" into stroking front hair. JACK exits. SIR FRANCIS clears his throat again. LORD FANCOURT clears throat too.)

SIR FRANCIS: Donna Lucia, do you know what a man longs for when he's lonely, desolate and wretched?

LORD FANCOURT: A drink?

SIR FRANCIS: No, Donna Lucia, he longs to plant in his own heart a bright little floweret.

LORD FANCOURT: Found by the wayside.

SIR FRANCIS: And I have come all the way from India to find that little floweret.

LORD FANCOURT: You must be tired. *(Indicating chair.)* Take a chair.

SIR FRANCIS: Thank you. *(Sits.)* And will you give me that floweret or will it be given away to another as you did before?

LORD FANCOURT: Ah, well, I was a naughty girl this morning. *(Putting corner of fichu in mouth, shaking it to and fro coyly, putting hand on table.)*

SIR FRANCIS: But, dear Lucia – *(Places hand on LORD FANCOURT's.)*

LORD FANCOURT: *(Taking hand away. Aside.)* He moves fast!

SIR FRANCIS: *(On one knee.)* Will you be my little floweret? Will you be my wife?

LORD FANCOURT: *(Gasps. Remembers JACK'S words.)* You've taken me by surprise!

SIR FRANCIS: Then I may hope?

LORD FANCOURT: No, don't hope. I wouldn't hope if I were you. I must refuse you. You see, I am not the woman you think I am.

SIR FRANCIS: Very well. *(Rises, picks up hat and goes back of table.)* Then will you accept my apologies for ever having broached the subject?

LORD FANCOURT: Oh, certainly! Any time you're passing.

SIR FRANCIS: *(Aside.)* Refused. What a relief! I'm sorry, though, for the boy's sake.

(SIR FRANCIS exits. Enter JACK.)

JACK: You fool, what did you want to make a fool of my dad like that for?

LORD FANCOURT: I didn't make a fool of the fool, you fool! Did you hear what he called me?

JACK: Yes, a floweret.

LORD FANCOURT: Yes – by the wayside – that's a nice thing, isn't it?

JACK: Why didn't you refuse him before he'd proposed?

LORD FANCOURT: I couldn't. A lady doesn't do such a thing. *(Looks off.)* Look out, here's old Spettigue. *(Pulls up sleeve, shaking fist.)* I'll land him one, I will. I'm off!

(Takes up skirts and runs off quickly. SPETTIGUE enters, sees LORD FANCOURT disappearing and exits after him.)

JACK: I must find Kitty. Why couldn't Charley's aunt be a lady and show up?

(Exit. A pause.)

DONNA LUCIA: *(Off.)* First door to the left? Thank you very much.

(Enter DONNA LUCIA, with opened sunshade framing her head, and ELA.)

DONNA LUCIA: The first door to the left, the man said, Ela.

ELA: Yes, here it is. *(Reads on door.)* "Mr. John Chesney." *(To DONNA LUCIA.)* Shall I knock?

DONNA LUCIA: Yes, do, my dear.

(ELA knocks.)

(Thoughtfully.) "Chesney." The name sounds familiar. *(To ELA.)* Knock again, dear. *(Closes sunshade.)*

(ELA knocks.)

ELA: The porter said they might all be in the garden. Isn't it all beautiful? And how lovely it must be by moonlight, when the silver bells chime to the angel of the night, who whispers "All's well, sweet bells, all's well!"

DONNA LUCIA: Let me see: "by moonlight," seen from the bridge of a certain yacht – as you listened to the chime of the ship's "silver bell", and someone called you "the angel of the watch" What was his name again?

ELA: Lord Fancourt Babberley.

DONNA LUCIA: "Lord Fancourt Babberley." *(Changing tone.)* Why, I'd almost forgotten! I've received word on the investments I made with your poor father's money. I'm sorry to say it will render you quite independent for life.

ELA: Independent!

DONNA LUCIA: And quite independent of me.

ELA: Oh, no!

DONNA LUCIA: Will you yet be my little girl and call me "Auntie"?

ELA: *(Hugging DONNA LUCIA.)* Yes, Auntie, yes.

DONNA LUCIA: *(Slight pause.)* You've never said how your poor father came to have so large a sum of money at the end.

ELA: He won it at cards. During his illness.

DONNA LUCIA: From whom?

ELA: *(After a pause.)* From Lord Fancourt Babberley.

DONNA LUCIA: Is Lord Babberley a gambler?

ELA: No!

DONNA LUCIA: *(Smiling to herself.)* Oh!

ELA: But, auntie, if ever we meet, I shall give it back!

DONNA LUCIA: After the trouble he took to lose it? I don't think he'd take it. *(Changing tone.)* Ah, my dear, you've set me thinking now.

ELA: What about?

DONNA LUCIA: Before I went to Brazil. I was very young and he was very shy. He got as far as a compliment and a blush and then –

ELA: And then?

DONNA LUCIA: Then he was ordered off with his regiment.

ELA: What was his name, auntie?

DONNA LUCIA: Frank. Frank Chesney. *(With a glance towards door.)* How strange!

(ELA rises. Enter SIR FRANCIS.)

SIR FRANCIS: *(Raising his hat with a slight bow.)* Ladies.

DONNA LUCIA: I'm afraid we're intruding

SIR FRANCIS: Not at all. *(Pointing.)* These are my son's rooms.

DONNA LUCIA: Mister?

SIR FRANCIS: Chesney.

DONNA LUCIA: Pardon me – are you – or rather, were you Lieutenant Frank Chesney?

SIR FRANCIS: *(Startled.)* I was. It's Colonel, now.

DONNA LUCIA: It must be more than twenty-five years... *(To ELA with mock concern.)* He doesn't remember me! *(Taking out several cards from card-case.)*

SIR FRANCIS: *(Thinking hard.)* Twenty-five years?

DONNA LUCIA: Everyone's card but my own of course. *(To SIR FRANCIS)* You've

forgotten the day you first embarked for India?

SIR FRANCIS: Of course not.

DONNA LUCIA: Have you forgotten – the evening before?

SIR FRANCIS: No – never.

DONNA LUCIA: *(holding out hand.)* Then – ?

SIR FRANCIS: *(Slowly surprised and delighted.)* Lucy! *(Takes off hat with L. hand, going to DONNA LUCIA and taking her hand.)* Good gracious! That night, by George, I nearly – Ah! *(Looking at her admiringly.)* You were in white – tied up with blue.

DONNA LUCIA: *(Laughing.)* Like a chocolate box!

SIR FRANCIS: *(With enthusiasm.)* You must meet my son! He's a splendid fellow. These are his rooms, but he has lent them to a friend, Charlie Wykeham.

DONNA LUCIA: Wykeham?

SIR FRANCIS: Who is entertaining some ladies – two young ladies – and his aunt.

DONNA LUCIA: His aunt.

SIR FRANCIS: A lady from Brazil.

DONNA LUCIA: *(Astonished.)* From Brazil!

SIR FRANCIS: Yes. Donna Lucia d'Alvadorez. I must introduce you. *(Steps toward door.)*

ELA: *(Aside to her.)* Auntie, what does he mean?

(SIR FRANCIS returns.)

DONNA LUCIA: Do I understand that Donna Lucia d'Alvadorez is here, actually here?

SIR FRANCIS: Do you know her?

DONNA LUCIA: I've heard of her. *(Absently fingering card. Deciding, she gives him the wrong card.)* My card.

SIR FRANCIS: *(Reading.)* "Mrs. Beverley-Smythe."

ELA: *(Aside to DONNA LUCIA.)* Auntie!

DONNA LUCIA: *(Aside to ELA.)* Ssh!

SIR FRANCIS: Perhaps you wouldn't mind coming into the garden to them?

DONNA LUCIA: *(Picking up sunshade by table.)* With pleasure. I'm quite curious to see them. *(To SIR FRANCIS, introducing.)* My niece, Miss Delahay.

SIR FRANCIS: How do you do?

ELA: Er – Colonel?

SIR FRANCIS: *(Slight bow.)* Colonel Sir Francis Chesney.

DONNA LUCIA: Come, Ela. Let us meet these intriguing people.

PERUSAL COPY ONLY
(ELA and DONNA LUCIA exeunt.)

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SIR FRANCIS: Ah, Jack, my boy, if *that* had been Charlie's aunt – things might have been very different. *(Exits after them.)*

(Enter LORD FANCOURT, runs rapidly across stage, holding up skirts in front only and exits. Enter SPETTIGUE, runs across stage, out of breath, top-hat wobbling perilously and exits.)

(Lights down.)

END OF ACT ONE

CHARLEY'S AUNT
ACT TWO

The Scene: as before. An hour later.

(Enter JACK and KITTY. He seats her at table C.)

JACK: And now at last I can speak to you. Miss Verdun. Kitty. My dear Kitty ...

KITTY: Yes, Jack?

JACK: Don't interrupt. I'm not going to hesitate. So, Kitty, my dear Kitty –

KITTY: Yes, Jack, you've said that before.

JACK: Oh, Kitty, do be serious! In a few hours you'll be hundreds of miles away, and it may be years before we meet again – unless – unless –

KITTY: Unless – *(An upward look at him)* – what?

JACK: *(Sits.)* I've told you how my father intended me for Parliament and all that?

KITTY: Yes.

JACK: Well, he tells me now, that, for the next few years, I shall have to give up all that and earn my own living.

KITTY: Well, that will do you no harm, Jack.

JACK: Now, that's how I look at it! I've worked hard, and so I intend to come out all right – one way or another. *(Aside.)* I've broken the ice at last!

KITTY: *(Aside.)* The dear fellow!

JACK: The question is, will you wait?

KITTY: Wait? *(Looking full at him.)* For what?

JACK: No. I beg pardon – I didn't mean that.

KITTY: Oh, you didn't mean it?

JACK: No. Yes. What I really mean is that – before I say anything further – I want you to understand – what I've been telling you.

KITTY: Oh, yes. What was that?

JACK: *(Sits.)* Well, to be practical, my position in life will be something in – er –

KITTY: The City.

JACK: Thanks. My home – er –

KITTY: Suburban.

JACK: Exactly! Transit –

KITTY: By bus.

JACK: My personal income –

KITTY: Small.

JACK: My extra income –

KITTY: Precarious.

JACK: But my fears will be nil and my hopes tremendous! *(Rising.)* Now you know all – *(Sits)* – and that's how I stand.

KITTY: Oh, *that's* how you stand. Well, I hope those happy conditions will be realised to your heart's content.

JACK: My dear Kitty, they will never be realised without you.

KITTY: *(Rises and moves away.)* Without me?

JACK: *(Rising.)* Now you're vexed with me. You hate the City!

KITTY: No.

JACK: You despise the suburbs!

KITTY: Hardly.

JACK: You loathe buses!

KITTY: Not at all.

JACK: *(Hopefully, going a step nearer.)* Then, Kitty?

KITTY: Yes, Jack?

JACK: I don't know what to say!

KITTY: "My dear Kitty – "?

JACK: "My dear Kitty" – you're a brick!

(JACK puts his arms round KITTY and kisses her.)

I've done it! I've done it – in spite of the lot of 'em!

KITTY: *(Laughs, then:)* Oh! What about my guardian, Mr. Spettigue?

JACK: I'll see him at once.

KITTY: No! That won't do. I must have his consent in writing.

JACK: In writing?

KITTY: So that he can't retract. You don't know him as I do. Hmm. There's only one person who can get that, so be a good boy and send her to me at once.

JACK: Who? Amy?

KITTY: No, Charley's aunt.

JACK: Charlie's aunt! But, Kitty –

KITTY: Be a good boy and send her to me while I find Amy. *(Exits.)*

JACK: Where are we now? This can't go on.

(Enter CHARLEY.)

CHARLEY: I've done it, Jack, I've done it!

JACK: Done what?

CHARLEY: I've let the cat out of the bag, and told her everything.

JACK: You fool! *(Holding him by coat.)* Told her what?

CHARLEY: *(Surprised.)* That I love her.

JACK: *(Letting him go.)* Oh, is that all?

CHARLEY: Yes, but Jack, we shall be in the dickens of a mess yet. She's gone off to find Donna Lucia to get her uncle's consent.

JACK: Well, keep cool, man, keep cool! We're all right up to now!

(LORD FANCOURT (without fan) enters, runs between JACK and CHARLEY and hides U.S. Enter SPETTIGUE who hums a love song and crosses the stage, exiting directly. JACK and CHARLEY grab LORD FANCOURT)

Here! What's your game, now?

CHARLEY: You'll drag us into awful disgrace.

LORD FANCOURT: *(Between them.)* Serve you right! The things he says to me!

JACK: He? Who?

LORD FANCOURT: That dirty old – Spettigue.

JACK: Well, what does he say?

CHARLEY: Yes, what does he say?

LORD FANCOURT: *(Opens his mouth but stops.)* No, Charley's too young. *(Pushes CHARLEY away, whispers to JACK)*

JACK: Really!

LORD FANCOURT: And, look how well I get on with the girls.

JACK: Yes, confound you, too well.

LORD FANCOURT: Oh, do I? *(Kicks skirt out of his way as he turns, goes up and puts brooch on table, then leans against arch, feet crossed.)*

CHARLEY: Jack, I can live this lie no longer.

JACK: Now, don't start that! Some lies have got to be lived. We'd be all right if this jackass would only behave like a lady.

CHARLEY: He can't! He doesn't know how to be a lady.

JACK: The idiot's ruining everything.

(LORD FANCOURT takes off fichu and flings it down.)

CHARLEY: I wish we'd asked Freddy Peel.

JACK: Freddy Peel would have been a man and behaved like a lady.

(LORD FANCOURT undoes dress.)

CHARLEY: We were fools to trust him.

JACK: The selfish beast!

(LORD FANCOURT steps out of dress.)

CHARLEY: When you think of all the misery he's put us through.

(LORD FANCOURT drops petticoat and sticks hands in his pockets.)

JACK: I could wring his neck.

(LORD FANCOURT stands grinning, hands in trouser pockets, in shirt sleeves, waistcoat and trousers, but still wearing wig, bonnet and mittens.)

CHARLEY: Look at him!

(They turn to look at LORD FANCOURT. As they realize that he has undressed, LORD FANCOURT bolts off, followed by JACK, who picks up petticoat and fichu. CHARLEY picks up dress and follows. Re-enter after a second. Exeunt again. They re-enter still running in the same order. LORD FANCOURT exits as SPETTIGUE enters. JACK and CHARLEY stop and hide dress, etc., behind their backs.)

SPETTIGUE: *(Breathlessly.)* Ah, Mr. Chesney, have you seen Donna Lucia?

(JACK and CHARLEY simultaneously point off. Exit SPETTIGUE L.I.E. JACK and CHARLEY run off opposite)

and return dragging LORD FANCOURT.)

LORD FANCOURT: *(Throwing them off.)* Here, you chaps. I won't do it any longer. It's Charley's turn!

(CHARLEY puts fichu half in coat pocket, gets petticoat ready to put over LORD FANCOURT's head. LORD FANCOURT puts his hands in pockets in sulky refusal. JACK drops petticoat over LORD FANCOURT's head and tries to fasten it round his waist while standing behind him, finding it won't meet, comes forward to see the cause.)

JACK: Take your hands out of your pockets!

(LORD FANCOURT does so and petticoat falls to the ground. JACK pulls it up and fastens it.)

And, now for your pretty dress.

(JACK picks up bottom of dress which CHARLEY is holding by the shoulders with sleeves hanging down. LORD FANCOURT turning, sees them holding dress horizontally, runs and dives into it, then shakes CHARLEY by the hand as his arm comes out of sleeve.)

JACK: We want old Spettigue in his best humour, so keep him that way.

LORD FANCOURT: *(Doing up dress.)* I'm not going to marry old Spettigue! I could never be happy with a man like that. Where's my antimacassar?

JACK: *(puts fichu on him.)* Just stop running after our girls, confound you.

LORD FANCOURT: Charley, am I all right behind? *(Straightening down his things, turns back to audience and gives his skirt a final flirt out behind with both hands.)*

CHARLEY : *(Looking off.)* Here are the girls!

KITTY: *(Taking LORD FANCOURT's arm.)* Oh, Donna Lucia, we've been looking for you everywhere.

AMY: *(Taking the other arm.)* We're in a difficulty.

LORD FANCOURT: A difficulty?

KITTY: And we want you to be an angel. Now Jack, do go away!

AMY: Yes, Charley, do go away.

LORD FANCOURT: Go away, they want me to be an angel.

(JACK restrains CHARLEY from punching him.)

We three girls need to be alone. Let's walk in the garden and you can tell me all about it.

(LORD FANCOURT places his arm around each girl and starts off. CHARLEY prevents JACK from hitting him.)

KITTY: We are going away.

LORD FANCOURT: Oh! My darlings, don't leave me. *(Squeezing them both.)*

AMY: Yes, we're going to Scotland.

LORD FANCOURT: Scotland! – where the whisky comes from.

KITTY: Oh, Donna Lucia, have you ever been in love?

LORD FANCOURT: Oh, yes, dozens of times. *(Surprise from girls.)* I mean – once in love always in love!

KITTY & AMY: *(Together; kissing LORD FANCOURT.)* You old dear! You dear thing!

(They go up together and exit.)

CHARLEY: I'll kill him! I'll out and out kill him!

JACK: No, you won't – I'll kill him first!

CHARLEY: Good gracious, Jack, what's he going to do?

JACK: How do I know till he's done it?

(LORD FANCOURT enters running, dragging a girl on each arm. Enter SPETTIGUE, L.I.E., wearing property top-hat with tin lining.)

SPETTIGUE: *(Places hat, crown down, on chair L. of table C.)* Ah, there you are dear

Donna Lucia. I have been looking for you all the afternoon.

(Enter DONNA LUCIA.)

SPETTIGUE: I have so much to say to you.

LORD FANCOURT: Well, you'd better make it quick.

DONNA LUCIA: Mr. Spettigue – Mr. Spettigue – *(SPETTIGUE turns.)* Will you introduce me to –

SPETTIGUE: *(Aside.)* Oh, for heaven's sake, why can't she leave me alone? *(Aloud.)* Oh, certainly! Donna Lucia, Mrs. Buttercup-Smith – Donna Lucia d'Alvadorez.

LORD FANCOURT: How do you do!

(They shake hands.)

LORD FANCOURT: I'm Charley's aunt from Brazil, where the nuts come from.

DONNA LUCIA: How do you do? Do you know I'm most interested in meeting you.

LORD FANCOURT: Really?

DONNA LUCIA: *(Smiling wickedly.)* I knew your late husband – intimately!

(LORD FANCOURT turns to bolt and runs directly into CHARLEY's arms.)

CHARLEY: *(Aside to LORD FANCOURT.)* What's the matter, Babbs?

LORD FANCOURT: *(In terror, pointing.)* She knew my late husband – intimately! *(Dashes across stage and runs into JACK's arms.)*

JACK: *(Aside to LORD FANCOURT.)* Well, everything all right?

LORD FANCOURT: No! She knew my late husband – intimately!

JACK: The deuce!

(Enter BRASSETT with tea, which he puts on table C.)

(Holding LORD FANCOURT.) Look out, here's tea.

LORD FANCOURT: Well, what of it?

(BRASSETT puts chairs around table.)

JACK: You must entertain. *(Tucks LORD FANCOURT'S arm in his and leads him to table--aloud, pleasantly. JACK seats LORD FANCOURT and offers chair to DONNA LUCIA and stands R. of LORD FANCOURT.)*

Now, Donna Lucia, will you pour tea?

LORD FANCOURT: |Oh, certainly.

DONNA LUCIA: |Oh, certainly. *(She realizes her mistake.)*

SPETTIGUE: *(Down L., aside.)* What an interruption! We were getting on so nicely.

LORD FANCOURT: Do we all take tea?

(LORD FANCOURT neatly pours tea into first cup then into one other. AMY takes it, gives it to SPETTIGUE. She rejoins KITTY and CHARLEY.)

DONNA LUCIA: *(To LORD FANCOURT.)* You haven't been in England long, have you?

JACK: *(Aside to LORD FANCOURT.)* Change the subject.

LORD FANCOURT: *(To DONNA LUCIA.)* Change the subject.

(LORD FANCOURT deliberately pours tea into SPETTIGUE'S hat on chair L. of table, very neatly, without spilling any, all the time talking over his shoulder to DONNA LUCIA.)

JACK: *(Aside to LORD FANCOURT.)* No. Do you take sugar and cream?

LORD FANCOURT: *(To JACK.)* No. Do you take sugar and cream?

JACK: *(Aside to LORD FANCOURT, losing patience.)* Ask her if she takes sugar and cream. *(Nodding towards DONNA LUCIA.)*

LORD FANCOURT: *(To DONNA LUCIA, aloud.)* Ask her if she takes sugar and cream. Mr. Spettigue?

(JACK catches sight of tea in hat and pulls LORD

FANCOURT'S sleeve. LORD FANCOURT stops pouring tea into hat and replaces teapot on tray as SPETTIGUE says; " I--er--")

SPETTIGUE: I – er – *(Turns, comes to table and unconsciously holds cup directly over hat)* I think I should like a little sugar and cream, Donna Lucia.

(LORD FANCOURT pours cream into cup, then into hat.)

LORD FANCOURT: Very well. Say when!

SPETTIGUE: *(Suddenly discovering tea in hat, puts cup on table and lifts up hat.)* My hat, my hat!

(DONNA LUCIA rises, goes R., laughing.)

LORD FANCOURT: *(Puts down milk jug, looks apologetically concerned, and takes hat.)* I beg your pardon.

(He makes three circular movements with hat to mix the milk and tea, opens lid of teapot, pours tea back into teapot, again without spilling any, hands hat back to SPETTIGUE. LORD FANCOURT taps bottom of it. BRASSETT takes hat from SPETTIGUE. LORD FANCOURT gaily flips down lid of teapot and sits. BRASSETT exits to rooms with hat. SIR FRANCIS enters and joins DONNA LUCIA.)

SPETTIGUE: *(To LORD FANCOURT.)* Donna Lucia, will you give me the chance to speak with you alone?

LORD FANCOURT: *(Rises.)* Alone? I can't – it's impossible.

SPETTIGUE: I will take no denial. I must have you to myself for a few minutes. *(Enter ELA, arch R.C.)*

DONNA LUCIA: *(Announcing her.)* I'd like you all to meet my niece, Miss Delahay.

LORD FANCOURT: *(Looks at her, rises.)* Miss Delahay!

(He must get hold of each side of his dress skirt only, without catching up petticoat too, preparatory to throwing skirt over head later.)

SPETTIGUE: Lucia, we must be alone!

LORD FANCOURT: *(Almost shaking his skirts.)* No, no. I can't, my tea! *(Turns, meets ELA.)*

ELA: That voice! It is – it is! Oh! No!

(LORD FANCOURT puts skirt over his head and runs off; ELA runs off opposite. DONNA LUCIA follows ELA; SIR FRANCIS follows DONNA LUCIA. SPETTIGUE follows LORD FANCOURT; JACK and CHARLIE follow SPETTIGUE. AMY and KITTY shrug and go off on their own. The stage is empty for a moment.)

(LORD FANCOURT runs on, skirts still over his head and comes to a stop, panting. Enter CHARLEY and JACK, who quickly catch LORD FANCOURT and bring him struggling C. JACK L. of him, CHARLIE R.)

JACK: You've been going along all right, if you'd only paid more attention to old Spettigue. Why did you bolt like that?

CHARLEY: Think of the solemn promise you gave to help us, for the girls' sakes. You are going on like some disgraceful old – old –

LORD FANCOURT: Oh, go on – finish it! *(Hands folded as old lady)* "Don't spare me!" *(As a man again.)* She wasn't here then.

JACK: She – who?

LORD FANCOURT: Miss Delahay.

JACK: What, the girl with Mrs. What's-her-name-Smythe?

LORD FANCOURT: Yes, Mrs. Butterscotch-Smythe's niece.

JACK: Well, what of her?

LORD FANCOURT: Why, she's the little girl I met at Monte Carlo, and this Butterscotch woman is the woman who took her away – and I'm off. *(Bolts.)*

JACK: Stop him, Charley! *(CHARLEY stops him, and brings him down.)* You've got us into this deuce of a mess!

LORD FANCOURT: Well, of all the beastly, ungrateful things to say! I want to talk to her.

JACK: What about?

LORD FANCOURT: I want to tell her what you fellows have been telling your girls. Hang it! I'm just as much in love as you are.

CHARLEY: Was there ever such an idiot?

LORD FANCOURT: No! There never was! Look at me! Just ... look at me!

JACK: *(To CHARLEY.)* Well, if the worst comes to the worst, we'll take the bull by the horns, and – say it was all his fault.

LORD FANCOURT: You can take the bull by the tail for all I care, and what's more, you can tell those confounded girls of yours to leave off kissing me in front of *her*. *(Shouting)* I won't stand it.

JACK: *(Shouting.)* Don't shout, you idiot!

LORD FANCOURT: And, Charley, you'll have to make some excuse to Miss Verdun for me.

CHARLEY: Miss Verdun! What have you got to say to Miss Verdun?

LORD FANCOURT: I promised to get old Spettigue's consent to your marriage in writing, you idiot! You're a couple of babies, you want your mothers with you!

DONNA LUCIA: *(Off.)* This way, Ela.

CHARLEY: They're coming!

JACK: *(Forcing LORD FANCOURT to sit.)* Here, sit down, quick!

(All sit. Enter DONNA LUCIA with a fan, ELA with smelling salts. All three men rise, but CHARLEY pushes LORD FANCOURT down.)

DONNA LUCIA: How is your aunt, Mr. Wykeham? We were afraid she might be ill.

ELA: Yes, is there anything the matter?

CHARLEY: Er – auntie's a little upset by the – by the heat, that's all.

DONNA LUCIA: The heat? I found it rather cold!

CHARLEY: Yes! That's what I mean – no heat! You see, Donna Lucia's lived so long

in Brazil – where the heat comes from.

(DONNA LUCIA hides her amusement and sits.)

ELA: *(Giving JACK the smelling salts.)* Won't you try auntie's smelling salts?
(LORD FANCOURT stares at ELA.)

JACK: Thank you. She's often like this. Isn't she, Charley?

(ELA sits by DONNA LUCIA. JACK shoves smelling salt bottle under LORD FANCOURT'S nose who sneezes violently. Enter AMY, followed by KITTY.)

AMY: I hope Donna Lucia is all right?

KITTY: Yes, is she?

ELA: Oh, yes, Mr. Chesney says she is all right now.

KITTY: *(To JACK.)* Well, leave her with us, and go and tell Mr. Spettigue; he's most anxious. *(Takes smelling salts from JACK.)*

AMY: Yes, we'll look after her now.

(Exeunt JACK and CHARLEY., after shaking fists at LORD FANCOURT in a warning manner. A long silence as LORD FANCOURT looks awkwardly at each of them.)

ELA: *(Aside, to DONNA LUCIA.)* I wonder who she really is, auntie?

DONNA LUCIA: *(Aside, to ELA.)* Oh, some old thing they got after receiving my telegram.

ELA: Say something to her, auntie. I like to hear her talk.

DONNA LUCIA: I would, my dear, but look at her. If I thought they intended that to be like me, I'd never forgive them.

(Loud laughter off R.)

LORD FANCOURT: *(Aside.)* Well, at least someone can laugh!

DONNA LUCIA: *(Aloud.)* I say, Donna Lucia, what's the story?

(LORD FANCOURT looks alarmed.)

LORD FANCOURT: (*Aside in terror.*) That's torn it!

DONNA LUCIA: – that Dom Pedro was so very fond of telling?

LORD FANCOURT: (*Aside in terror.*) I must put a stop to this. (*Aloud.*) Won't one of the young ladies play something, please?

DONNA LUCIA: (*To ELA.*) How rude of her to interrupt like that!

ELA: Oh, she couldn't have heard you, auntie.

KITTY: Oh, do tell us the story, Mrs. Beverley-Smythe.

AMY: Yes! Anything about Dom Pedro would be so interesting. Do tell us.

DONNA LUCIA: But perhaps Donna Lucia would prefer to tell Dom Pedro's story herself?

LORD FANCOURT: Tom Pedro? I don't know him.

DONNA LUCIA: (*Mischievously.*) Your late husband, you know, Dom Pedro d'Alvadorez.

LORD FANCOURT: Oh, yes, of course. I know his name but I don't remember his stories. I don't hold with such frivolity. (*Aside.*) When I get those two fellows!

ELA: Auntie, don't tease her so, tell the story yourself.

DONNA LUCIA: Well, Dom Pedro, who was the kindest soul in all the world – but (*To LORD FANCOURT*) – will Donna Lucia give me permission?

KITTY: Oh, you won't mind Mrs. Beverley-Smythe telling the story, will you?

AMY: And you'll listen, won't you?

LORD FANCOURT: (*Resignedly.*) Well, if I must, I must! (*Turning towards DONNA LUCIA.*)

(*KITTY arranges cushions for him.*)

DONNA LUCIA: Well, as I said before, Dom Pedro, who was the kindest soul in all the world, once found one of his cellarmen – (*LORD FANCOURT looks uneasy.*) – tipsy. Very tipsy.

LORD FANCOURT: Tut, tut!

DONNA LUCIA: So Dom Pedro, whom the man did not recognise –

LORD FANCOURT: Why, was Dom Pedro tipsy?

KITTY: No, no, the man, Donna Lucia.

AMY & KITTY: *(One into each of LORD FANCOURT's ears.)* The man was tipsy!

DONNA LUCIA: Dom Pedro was, of course, most abstemious.

LORD FANCOURT: Are you sure?

DONNA LUCIA: So Dom Pedro said to the man, "What would Dom Pedro say if he saw you like this?"

LORD FANCOURT: "Tipsy" like this?

KITTY & AMY: *(One into each of LORD FANCOURT's ears.)* Yes, yes!

LORD FANCOURT: And what did the man say?

DONNA LUCIA: The man said – and that's where it's so funny –

LORD FANCOURT: Oh, is that where we laugh?

KITTY & AMY: *(One into each of LORD FANCOURT's ears.)* No, no!

DONNA LUCIA: The man said, "Oh, that's all right, Dom Pedro's often like this."

LORD FANCOURT: Tipsy?

KITTY & AMY: *(One into each of LORD FANCOURT's ears.)* Yes!

(General laughter, except LORD FANCOURT.)

LORD FANCOURT: Well, of all the demmed silly stories! *(Suddenly collapses with laughter. To DONNA LUCIA.)* What was the man's name?

DONNA LUCIA: Really, I don't know the man's name.

LORD FANCOURT: Oh, that's a pity!

DONNA LUCIA: *(Getting her own back.)* But don't you remember the story? It was a favourite one of Dom Pedro's.

Loan FANCOURT: Oh, perfectly! I shrieked when I heard it first. *(Forgetting himself, pulling*

up knees of trousers through his skirt.) I say, that reminds me of a very funny story. I – *(Sees girls, recollecting himself.)* Won't one of the young ladies play something, please?

KITTY: Oh, I'm so out of practice. You sing something, Amy!

AMY: Oh, I can't. I know nothing new.

LORD FANCOURT: Sing that charming little ballad, Ta-Ra-Ra-Boom-De-Ay.

AMY: I'm afraid I can't, Donna Lucia.

DONNA LUCIA: *(To LORD FANCOURT.)* Won't you sing something for us, Donna Lucia?

LORD FANCOURT: Me?

DONNA LUCIA: Yes, one of those little Brazilian songs Dom Pedro was so fond of.

LORD FANCOURT: Oh, I haven't sung since I had the measles.

DONNA LUCIA: What?

LORD FANCOURT: Over forty years ago.

DONNA LUCIA: *(Aside to ELA.)* A libel! I was the merest infant forty years ago.

LORD FANCOURT: But I shall try. Sing along, now! Ta-ra-ra, BOOM-de-ay! Ta-ra-ra, BOOM-de-ay!

SPETTIGUE: *(Off.)* Come along, my dear friends, come along!

KITTY: Here they are! *(Aside to LORD FANCOURT.)* Now don't forget the letter!

LORD FANCOURT: Oh, no, I won't forget. Ta-ra-ra, BOOM-de-ay! Ta-ra-ra, BOOM-de-ay!

KITTY: *(Aside to AMY.)* Let's get them all into the garden and leave her alone with Mr. Spettigue.

(Enter SPETTIGUE, SIR FRANCIS, JACK and CHARLEY.)

SPETTIGUE: Bring out the cigars, Jack, unless the ladies – *(To DONNA LUCIA.)* Mrs. Beverley-Smythe, *(To LORD FANCOURT.)* Donna Lucia, do you object?

LORD FANCOURT: *(without thinking, using deep voice.)* Smoking? Oh, no! I like it. *(Pulling himself up and using lighter voice.)* It kills the insects and things! *(Sits staring at ELA again.)*

CHARLEY: *(Aside.)* Look at him, Jack.

JACK: *(Aside.)* What's he doing?

CHARLEY: *(Aside.)* Staring at her like he did all through dinner.

JACK: *(Aside.)* The fool!

SPETTIGUE: *(Aside.)* I must make an opportunity to see her alone. *(Aloud.)* It's a sweet evening. Perhaps some of you may care to enjoy the garden.

JACK: No, thank you, sir.

KITTY: Donna Lucia has been entertaining us.

SPETTIGUE: Yes, we heard the music. *(Leaning over LORD FANCOURT.)* How charming of you, Donna Lucia! *(To CHARLEY.)* What should we have done without your dear aunt, Charley?

CHARLEY: *(In hollow tone.)* Oh! *(Joins AMY.)*

JACK: *(Aside to CHARLEY.)* Don't groan like that, you idiot! *(Aloud.)* Are you fond of music, Mr. Spettigue?

SPETTIGUE: *(To LORD FANCOURT, with a look.)* I – I hope to be.

(SPETTIGUE covers LORD FANCOURT's hand.)

LORD FANCOURT: *(Slaps SPETTIGUE'S hand.)* Why – are you going to take lessons?

(SPETTIGUE goes to DONNA LUCIA and ELA.)

(Aside.) What's he looking at me like that for, the old boiled owl?

JACK: *(Taking SIR FRANCIS aside.)* Dad, I'm glad you know about Kitty now. She's a splendid girl, isn't she?

(KITTY crosses to LORD FANCOURT.)

SIR FRANCIS: I like her very much, I must say, Jack.

JACK: From what you said at first, dad, I thought I was quite without means.

SIR FRANCIS: Not altogether, my boy. And you've thought this matter over well?

JACK: Night and day, dad, ever since I first met her.

SIR FRANCIS: It's a serious step, you know. A serious step.

(JACK joins CHARLEY.)

KITTY: *(Aside, to LORD FANCOURT.)* Now, don't forget – in writing. *(Goes to AMY, aside.)* Amy, let's get them all out into the garden. You take Charley.

JACK: *(To CHARLEY.)* I'm glad I told the dad now.

(SIR FRANCIS joins AMY. SPETTIGUE joins LORD FANCOURT. KITTY sits on ottoman, JACK stands by her. CHARLEY joins AMY.)

SPETTIGUE: *(To LORD FANCOURT.)* Why won't you listen to reason?

LORD FANCOURT: I'll listen to reason, *(Coyly.)* but I need my little letter!

SPETTIGUE: Ah, I remember, I've not written it yet.

LORD FANCOURT: Not yet! *(Swings round, back to audience.)*

(SIR FRANCIS goes to window and looks off.)

SPETTIGUE: *(Spoonily.)* We must find an opportunity to talk it over – alone!

LORD FANCOURT: That will be nice! *(Swings back again. Coyly.)* but don't forget the letter!

(SPETTIGUE and LORD FANCOURT continue talking together. SIR FRANCIS crosses up L.)

AMY: But, Charley, why are you so depressing? We ought to be happy to-day.

CHARLEY: Great joys sometimes bring a sort of reaction. *(With a look at LORD FANCOURT.)*

AMY: Oh, come into the garden!

(Exeunt CHARLEY and AMY. SPETTIGUE crosses to

table. ELA goes up window, LORD FANCOURT watching her. She turns and smiles to him and exits immediately to garden. SIR FRANCIS goes to DONNA LUCIA.)

JACK: I've told the dad, and he's delighted! But, Kitty, you won't regret turning your back on "society" and "The Row" and – ?

KITTY: And the stifling hollowness of my own "Monday" and everybody's else's "rest-of-the-week" and have something real to think about? Jack, the vista is too heavenly. *(Rises and whispers.)* Come into the garden.

(Exeunt JACK and KITTY. SPETTIGUE goes to LORD FANCOURT.)

SIR FRANCIS: Shall we join them?

DONNA LUCIA: Yes, it's a charity to leave those two people alone.

SIR FRANCIS: Indeed, why?

DONNA LUCIA: *(Rising.)* Only a little match-making mischief, that's all.

SIR FRANCIS: On Spettigue's account?

DONNA LUCIA: *(Slyly.)* No – on Donna Lucia's.

(DONNA LUCIA and SIR FRANCIS exeunt. SPETTIGUE goes to window, watches them off. LORD FANCOURT rises and hides.)

SPETTIGUE: *(Joyfully.)* They've gone. *(Finds LORD FANCOURT gone.)* Lucia! Where are you?

LORD FANCOURT: *(Popping out playfully.)* A-ah!

SPETTIGUE: Ah, there you are! Lucia, how I have longed for this moment

LORD FANCOURT: *(Aside, keeping furniture between them.)* Oh, he's at it again.

SPETTIGUE: Lucia, I must speak to you!

LORD FANCOURT: No. I am very angry with you.

SPETTIGUE: Lucia, you wound me; don't say that!

(Seizes LORD FANCOURT'S hand. LORD FANCOURT snatches it away.)

LORD FANCOURT: (Dodges.) But I do say that – after the promise you made me.

SPETTIGUE: *(Catching up.)* Promise?

LORD FANCOURT: The consent to the girls' marriage you promised in writing.

SPETTIGUE: *(Cornering LORD FANCOURT.)* Lucia, how can you, when we have so much to say that more nearly concerns ourselves. *(Arms around LORD FANCOURT.)*

(LORD FANCOURT drops to his knees and crawls quickly out of SPETTIGUE's arms.)

LORD FANCOURT: No, we have not! *(Running opposite, skirts raised.)* You don't know me! I'm no ordinary woman.

SPETTIGUE: *(Following.)* Lucia, I beg of you to listen to me!

LORD FANCOURT: I'll listen to you with pleasure – once I've got the letter! *(Taps him, hard, with the fan.)*

SPETTIGUE: Will you hear me, Lucia?

LORD FANCOURT: *(Annoyed and bored.)* You're not hearing me! I need the letter!

SPETTIGUE: *(Arms around LORD FANCOURT from behind.)* Lucia, do I deserve this?

LORD FANCOURT: *(Reverses him into an arm lock.)* You deserve six month! Ha, ha, ha!

SPETTIGUE: *(As LORD FANCOURT skips away.)* Lucia, you are a puzzle, an enigma!

LORD FANCOURT: *(At window, melodramatically.)* How dare you! Until you give me the letter, all is over between us.

SPETTIGUE: Lucia, that decides me. I go – to write a brief note.

LORD FANCOURT: *(Coyly.)* With full consent, signed and dated, don't forget!

SPETTIGUE: Then will you say you will be mine?

LORD FANCOURT: I'll say anything you like – *(Passionately.)* – only don't be too long in the

study.

SPETTIGUE: Darling! *(Blows a kiss toward LORD FANCOURT, who picks up the cigar box and catches the kiss in it, slamming the lid shut.)*

(SPETTIGUE exits.)

LORD FANCOURT: That's all right! *(With amusement.)* What devils we women are! I shall be an old woman for the rest of my life. I haven't had a drink or a smoke all day! *(Catches sight of cigar box.)* By George, I wonder how long he'll be? Hanged if I don't chance it! *(Opens cigar box, dodges the "kiss" that escapes from it, picks a cigar, lights it with match which he strikes on his boot. Puffs vigorously)* Beautiful! Beautiful! *(Puffs.)*

(Enter DONNA LUCIA with ELA.)

DONNA LUCIA: *(Aside to ELA)* She's smoking! *(Aloud.)* Ahem!

(LORD FANCOURT, startled, draws in a large mouthful of smoke, then hides cigar, holding lighted end reversed in palm of hand, looks from DONNA LUCIA to ELA and then straight ahead in agony, holding smoke first in opposite cheek to each one he looks at, then in both cheeks, screwing up eyes, almost bursting.)

ELA: *(This must be spoken over laughter or LORD FANCOURT would burst! Rapidly.)* Auntie, did you find it chilly?

DONNA LUCIA: Yes, my dear, I thought I'd get a wrap of some kind.

ELA: I'll go upstairs and get you something. *(Exits. LORD FANCOURT runs to window and blows out smoke.)*

DONNA LUCIA: Are you alone?

LORD FANCOURT: Yes, I'm all alone – and so sad.

DONNA LUCIA: Dear me, what a dreadful smell of cigar smoke! *(Secretly much amused.)*

LORD FANCOURT: Yes, I noticed it myself. *(Changes cigar into L. hand.)* I'll go and find out who it is.

DONNA LUCIA: No, don't go. *(Takes LORD FANCOURT's left arm. He transfers the cigar to his R. hand and hides it behind his back)* I wanted to talk to you.

LORD FANCOURT: *(Amiably.)* Lovely!

DONNA LUCIA: About your late husband, Dom Pedro.

LORD FANCOURT: Oh, that will be nice.

DONNA LUCIA: Do you know, when I met Dom Pedro, he told me he had no wife.

LORD FANCOURT: Oh, the wicked story-teller! He has cruelly deceived us both!

DONNA LUCIA: The Dom Pedro I knew was noble, kind and gentle.

LORD FANCOURT: That was his father – old gentleman with a white moustache.

DONNA LUCIA: Do you know, Donna Lucia, I'm surprised you don't indulge in the habit of smoking – so many Brazilian ladies do, you know.

LORD FANCOURT: *(Shows cigar in hand.)* Well, to tell you the truth, that's just what I was doing when you came in.

DONNA LUCIA: Then, pray don't let me interrupt you!

(LORD FANCOURT smokes.)

(Aside.) I shouldn't have been surprised at a corn-cob pipe!

LORD FANCOURT: Would you care for one?

DONNA LUCIA: No thanks. *(Both turn, but LORD FANCOURT kicks his skirt out of the way in turning. They go up C. together. DONNA LUCIA fans herself with R. hand; LORD FANCOURT does the same with L. hand.)*

Donna Lucia – *(Turning and taking his arm. Coming down C. They stop fanning.)* – pardon my curiosity, but have you any children?

LORD FANCOURT: *(Can't remember what he'd been told.)* Only a few. None to speak of.

(Enter ELA with wrap.)

ELA: Here's your wrap, auntie. *(Puts it on DONNA LUCIA'S. shoulders.)*

(LORD FANCOURT throws cigar out window.)

DONNA LUCIA: Thank you, dear. I am meeting Sir Francis in the garden. I fancy he has

something to say to me. And as it's rather chilly (*Turning at window, with a knowing smile.*) perhaps you'd better stay in!

(Exits. LORD FANCOURT steals a look at ELA then goes slowly to window. Turns to exit.)

ELA: Oh, don't go – please!

LORD FANCOURT: (*Stops.*) I was going into the garden.

ELA: It has turned quite chilly. Auntie had me stay here because of that.

LORD FANCOURT: (*Concerned.*) Can I get you a wrap of any kind?

ELA: No, thank you, auntie thinks I'm better here. I've been ill, you know.

LORD FANCOURT: Oh, but I didn't know.

ELA: Oh, I'm all right now, if I take care.

LORD FANCOURT: (*Seriously.*) Yes, you must take great care.

ELA: (*Taking LORD FANCOURT'S arm and helping him to a seat.*) Auntie, I fancy, is more particular than usual this evening – (*Seats LORD FANCOURT, puts cushion behind his back.*) For, you know – (*Quick look.*) – years ago, she and Sir Francis were – (*Whispering.*) – nearly sweethearts.

LORD FANCOURT: How nearly?

ELA: He was shy and went away without telling her he was ever so fond of her and without knowing that she was ever so fond of him. But the noblest man I ever knew was shy, and oh, so kind! (*With a look round.*) When papa had become so ill, he lost a large sum of money to papa at cards, on purpose, auntie thinks. I asked the doctor if it wasn't doing harm for papa to gamble with him and he said, "Not the game that gentleman is playing." (*A little pause.*) But if ever we meet again, I mean to give it all back.

LORD FANCOURT: Oh, no, you mustn't do that. It would be like accusing him of cheating.

ELA: But it was so much!

LORD FANCOURT: And do you think he'd take it back?

ELA: But he went away before I had time to tell him how much I – I – for his kindness to my poor father. *(Moves away. LORD FANCOURT rises quietly and goes to look out window.)* I don't know why I'm telling you all this, but I like to talk to you. *(Putting her hand on his arm.)* I like you.

(She kisses his cheek, then exits. LORD FANCOURT watches ELA go off, then punches a cushion four times, vigorously. SPETTIGUE enters with letter.)

SPETTIGUE: Lucia!

LORD FANCOURT: Now what? *(Sees SPETTIGUE and assumes his character once again.)* Ha, ha! Have you got the letter?

(SPETTIGUE shows letter. LORD FANCOURT tries to snatch it. SPETTIGUE holds it out of his reach.)

SPETTIGUE: Yes, here is the letter. But first, make my happiness complete. Say that from this blissful moment we are engaged!

LORD FANCOURT: We are engaged. *(LORD FANCOURT gets the letter.)* Got it.

SPETTIGUE: Darling!

LORD FANCOURT: Mr. Spettigue?

SPETTIGUE: Call me Stephen.

LORD FANCOURT: *(Reading letter.)* Is this the letter – Stephen?

SPETTIGUE: Yes, that is the letter. Say we are betrothed, darling!

LORD FANCOURT: *(At door.)* We are betrothed, darling!

(Quick exit. Enter SIR FRANCIS and DONNA LUCIA.)

SPETTIGUE: *(Shaking SIR FRANCIS by both hands.)* Ah, Sir Francis, Mrs. Beverley-Smythe, congratulate me, congratulate me!

(SIR FRANCIS looks puzzled.)

DONNA LUCIA: I knew it!

SPETTIGUE: I'm the happiest man in the world – but where are the dear children? This

must be a day of happiness and rejoicing for us all, for us all!

(Exits.)

SIR FRANCIS: *(Taking DONNA LUCIA'S wrap off.)* What on earth does he mean?

DONNA LUCIA: *(Sits.)* Can't you guess?

SIR FRANCIS: No.

DONNA LUCIA: Didn't I tell you what would happen if we left them alone?

SIR FRANCIS: Eh? You don't mean that?

DONNA LUCIA: I fancy he'll find out his mistake before long.

SIR FRANCIS: That rascal of a boy of mine made some sort of a stupid suggestion that I should –

DONNA LUCIA: That you should offer your hand and heart to Donna Lucia d'Alvadorez.

SIR FRANCIS: When I think of what a fool I might have been –

DONNA LUCIA: Then you don't envy Mr. Spettigue? Think of her millions.

SIR FRANCIS: Ah, Lucy, when I saw your face –

DONNA LUCIA: You didn't recognise it!

SIR FRANCIS: No, but when I did – and you'll be content for a while with a cottage and your old sweetheart?

DONNA LUCIA: And you? You would take a penniless widow?

SIR FRANCIS: Nothing could make me happier!

DONNA LUCIA: *(Moving close to him.)* Frank!

SIR FRANCIS: *(Moving closer to her.)* Lucy!

SIR FRANCIS: *(A little pause. DONNA LUCIA smiles.)* What are you smiling at?

DONNA LUCIA: I was only thinking of –

SIR FRANCIS: Of what?

DONNA LUCIA: *(Sits.)* Of the fate of Donna Lucia d'Alvadorez – from Brazil, where the nuts come from.

SIR FRANCIS: Well, she's a quaint little figure, I must own.

(Enter ELA.)

ELA: Auntie! *(With look to SIR FRANCIS, whispering.)* Has Sir Francis ...?

DONNA LUCIA: *(Patting her cheek.)* Ssh!

(ELA smiles, kisses DONNA LUCIA and sits. SIR FRANCIS comes down and sits.)

SPETTIGUE: *(Off.)* Come along, my dear children, come along!

(Enter SPETTIGUE followed by KITTY and AMY, JACK, and CHARLEY.)

SPETTIGUE: Kitty, you sit there. *(Indicates)* Amy there. *(Indicates.)* I have something to tell you. Something you will all be very pleased to hear. *(Looking round.)* But where is Donna Lucia?

(General movement as they look around.)

DONNA LUCIA: I fancy Donna Lucia will be with us, soon.

SPETTIGUE: It's just as well! Now, before she returns, I have a little secret to tell you.

ALL: A secret? Oh, really? *(Etc.)*

CHARLEY: *(Aside to JACK, quick and low.)* Good gracious, Jack, what's he going to say?

JACK: *(Aside to CHARLEY, quickly.)* How do I know till he's said it?

SPETTIGUE: Situated as I am, a lonely widower, a mateless uncle – surrounded with grave responsibilities – my ward – *(Indicating KITTY)*, my niece – *(Indicating AMY)*, a good fairy has, I may say, tripped in among us, bringing with her unexpected light and joy!

CHARLEY: *(Aside to JACK.)* Who does he mean?

JACK: *(Aside to CHARLEY.)* Shut up!

SPETTIGUE: Under her influence, I have consented to the engagement of my niece to a gentleman in whose honour and probity I have the fullest confidence – Mr. Charles Wykeham. *(CHARLEY goes to AMY and takes her hand.)*

AMY: Charley, how sweet of your dear aunt.

SPETTIGUE: Furthermore, I have consented to the union of my ward with John, only son of my friend, Sir Francis Chesney. *(JACK goes to KITTY. SPETTIGUE points to the carnation in his coat.)* Ah! Sir Francis! *(SIR FRANCIS laughs.)* But what will you say to a third engagement?

(CHARLEY and JACK meet C.)

ALL: A third? What? *(Etc.)*

SPETTIGUE: Our good fairy – nay, let me add without further metaphor one whose name is as honoured in the South-Western hemisphere as that of Rothschild is in Europe – *(Rather smugly.)* – has consented to become Mrs. Stephen Spettigue. I allude to our dear friend, Donna Lucia d'Alvadorez.

(CHARLEY faints in JACK's arms. AMY rushes to him.)

What wrong?

JACK: Too much excitement for one day.

(JACK and AMY fan CHARLEY, who revives.)

CHARLEY: *(Breaking from JACK, wildly.)* Mr. Spettigue, I can listen to this ghastly farrago no longer.

SPETTIGUE: Mr. Wykeham, sir! What do you mean?

CHARLEY: I say, sir – and I don't care what the result may be, Jack – I can listen to this ghastly...

SPETTIGUE: *(Breaking in.)* What, sir, in espousing my niece?

CHARLEY: *(Wildly.)* I can't – I won't espouse her! *(General excitement. AMY turns to KITTY, crying.)* – under these false and lying pretences! *(DONNA LUCIA smiles.)* That ridiculous woman –

SPETTIGUE: Do you allude in such a manner to –

CHARLEY: I say, that awful woman –

SPETTIGUE: Speak with more respect of your aunt.

CHARLEY: She is not my aunt!

(Dead silence for a long moment.)

JACK: *(Quietly out of the silence.)* That's torn it.

SPETTIGUE: Not your aunt! What do you mean?

CHARLEY: I love Amy far too sincerely to –

SPETTIGUE: Never mind that, sir! Explain your words!

JACK: *(Coming forward.)* Mr. Spettigue – will you allow me to say that the blame is mine – and let me explain?

SPETTIGUE: I am addressing this person. *(To CHARLEY.)* Answer me, sir,.

CHARLEY: At the last moment, this morning, my aunt – on whose account we had invited Miss Verdun and Miss Spettigue – telegraphed to say she couldn't come. The ladies were arriving momentarily and we –

JACK: *(Overriding.)* And I, sir, prevailed upon another person, to – well –

SPETTIGUE: To personate her. I've been treacherously, infamously deceived!

JACK: *(Trying to calm SPETTIGUE.)* I beg your pardon, sir, you forget you were not expected.

SPETTIGUE: A frump like that, with a wig! You'll tell me it wasn't even a woman, next!

JACK: Well, you can't blame her for that.

(Joins KITTY who looks at him severely. CHARLEY tries to go to AMY, who moves away from him.)

LORD FAN COURT: *(Off.)* May I come in?

(Anxious looks from all.)

SPETTIGUE: *(Savagely.)* Turn that woman out of this house!

(Enter LORD FANCOURT in men's dress. General movement of surprise..)

LORD FANCOURT: I say, may I come in?

SPETTIGUE: I say, Turn that woman out of ... *(Turning, sees LORD FANCOURT.)* Who are you, sir?

LORD FANCOURT: *(Hands in front of him like an old lady.)* I'm Charley's aunt from Brazil – where the nuts come from.

JACK: Fancourt Babberley! You duffer!

LORD FANCOURT: "Fancourt Babberley, I beg your pardon."

ELA: *(Aside to DONNA LUCIA.)* Auntie! And I told him everything!

SPETTIGUE: *(Still furious.)* What does this mean, sir?

LORD FANCOURT: It means that we've all done very wrong and we're all extremely sorry, and tender you our humblest apologies – my apologies, I should say, for if I hadn't offered the temptation, the whole thing would never have occurred.

CHARLEY: And if Mr. Spettigue will allow us to add our apologies –

JACK: And say we have no words to express our contrition.

SPETTIGUE: *(Raging.)* It's infamous, infamous! But where is the document obtained from me under these fraudulent pretences?

LORD FANCOURT: Oh, the letter, I have the letter! *(Produces it.)*

KITTY: It's mine, mine!

SPETTIGUE: Miss Verdun! *(To LORD FANCOURT.)* Give it to me. Sir, I demand it! *(Coming forward to take it.)*

(LORD FANCOURT holds up letter in L. hand.)

DONNA LUCIA: *(Interposing.)* Allow me. *(Takes letter.)*

SPETTIGUE: I shall dispute it – under her father's will. I shall dispute it.

DONNA LUCIA: This letter is addressed – and has been delivered – to Donna Lucia d'Alvadorez.

SPETTIGUE: But she – (*Looking at LORD FANCOURT.*) – I mean he – is not Donna Lucia d'Alvadorez.

DONNA LUCIA: No – but I am!

ALL: You!

SIR FRANCIS: Lucy!

CHARLEY: My aunt! (*Said unconsciously, like the slang expression.*)

SPETTIGUE: You will pardon me if I retire. (*Turning to LORD FANCOURT.*) As for you, sir, I shall enquire from the authorities, your college – in the morning.

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(*Opens doors, about to exit, stops, takes out buttonhole and throws it C. Exits R. LORD FANCOURT catches carnation and goes to door R.*)

LORD FANCOURT: (*Grabs CHARLEY.*) Charley, can he have me up for breach of promise?

AMY: (*Indignantly to CHARLEY.*) Charley – (*Stamping foot*) – No! Mr. Wykeham! How dare you? I'll never forgive you! I'll never forgive any of you, for treating uncle Stephen like that! (*Turns to exit.*)

DONNA LUCIA: (*Taking her hand.*) Be patient with us, my dear. Your uncle shall have the most profound reparation my influence can make. For my own part, I only shared in the deception when I found (*To LORD FANCOURT*) another lady established in my place.

LORD FANCOURT: (*To CHARLEY.*) No wonder she knew all about my late husband.

DONNA LUCIA: In the meantime, my dear, don't throw away your love now. You may never have a second chance.

(*DONNA LUCIA hands AMY over to CHARLEY. They go into a corner and make up.*)

KITTY: Well, I'm as sorry as anyone, but I still intend to marry Jack.

DONNA LUCIA: Indeed? Then he must wait till I'm his mother.

JACK: Mother?

SIR FRANCIS: *(Coming to DONNA LUCIA.)* Yes, Donna Lucia has done me the honour to recollect an old affection, and has promised to assume that authority – so look out, Jack!

(JACK sits with KITTY.)

DONNA LUCIA: Lord Fancourt Babberley. *(LORD FAN COURT comes her.)* I am afraid you have gained one confidence that nothing could excuse.

LORD FAN COURT: I reproach myself beyond expression, but – *(Looking at ELA.)* – I wouldn't part with the memory of that confidence to save my life, and if Miss Delahay will allow me, I am willing to atone for it for the rest of my life.

(DONNA LUCIA holds out a hand to ELA.)

ELA: *(Smiling.)* Auntie!

(DONNA LUCIA hands her across to LORD FAN COURT who takes her under his arm. As they turn, he kicks CHARLEY'S leg with his instep. CHARLEY limps round with AMY.)

DONNA LUCIA: Charley, I'll never forgive you if you deceive that sweet girl again! Now, where's my son?

JACK: Here, "mother"!

DONNA LUCIA: We shall have a very serious talk before I give you this. *(Shows letter. To LORD FAN COURT.)* And as for you, sir –

LORD FAN COURT: *(With ELA.)* Oh no, never again! Miss Delahay has consented to think me over as a husband, and, in future, I resign to Sir Francis Chesney all claims to "Charley's Aunt."

(Lights down.)

END OF PLAY.