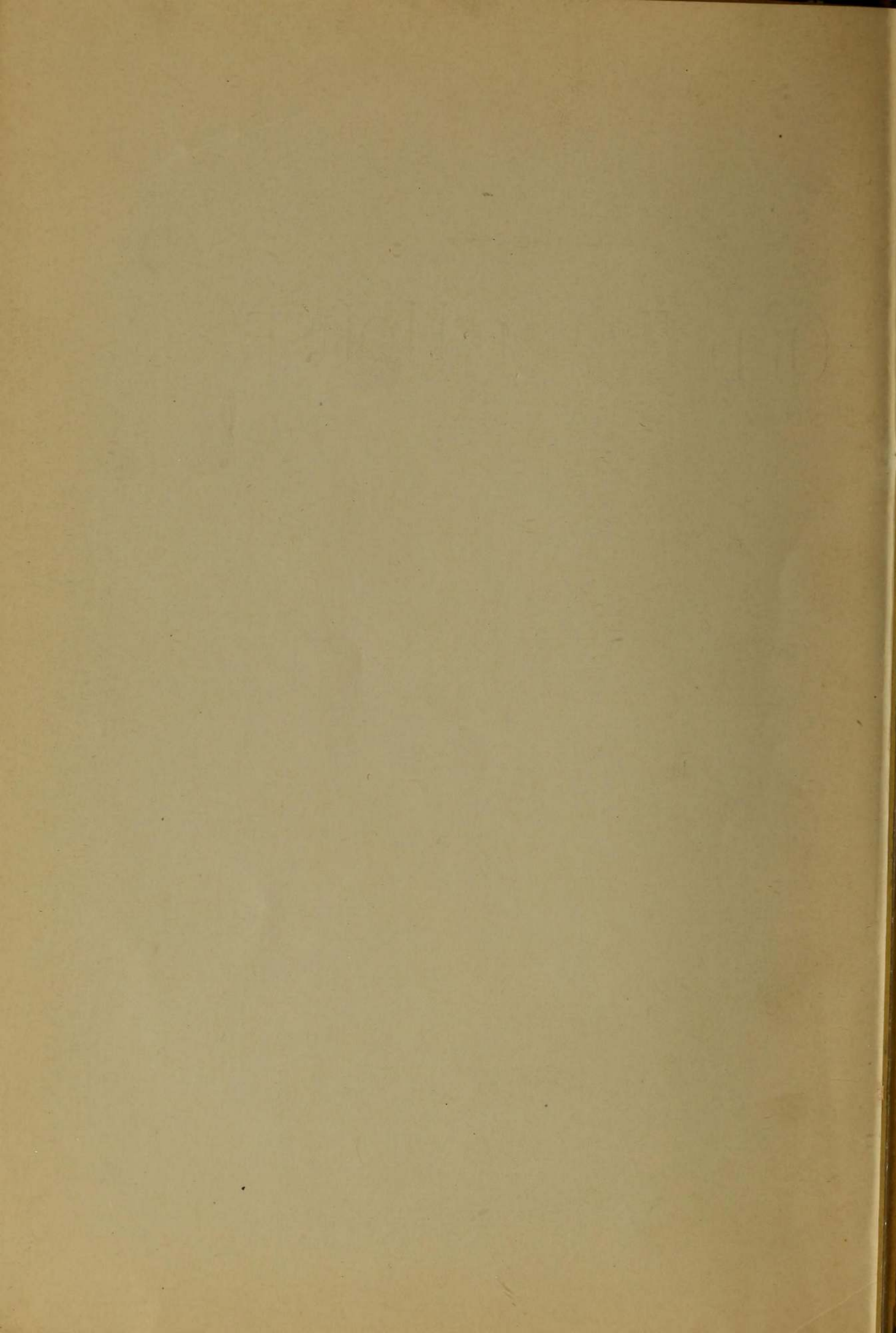




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— THE —

OLD FARM HOUSE.

— ● —
A TRAGI-COMEDY

IN FIVE ACTS,

— BY —

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DAWSON A. BLANCHARD.



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New Orleans, La.

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THE OLD FARM HOUSE.

A TRAGI-COMEDY IN 5 ACTS.

PREFACE.

This play is full of unexpected incidents. In its conception and gradual development, it shows a marked departure from the hackneyed, blood curdling school. The story is quite simply told, and each act follows its predecessor, as naturally as the events of every day life. Its plot does not call for any startling violation of probability, and its *dramatis personæ* are sufficiently varied to give pleasing effect. There is no call upon the scenic artist for startling situations, and the action throughout is rapid enough to give entrain to the whole. The tone of the play is elevating, and there is not a line in it that could create a false impression of life. Even in the stronger scenes, there is an entire absence of rant and violent action; and throughout, emotion is expressed most forcibly by its apparent suppression. By a happy combination of circumstances the real criminal is discovered, and his victim restored to the arms of devoted parents.

SYNOPSIS.

Thomas Bisland is a respectable and industrious *Virginia* farmer, who has by hard labor, made for himself and wife a happy home. Their son Willie (an only child) is a promising youth, and has just returned from college grown into manhood. He is the idol of his parents. He falls in love with Blanche, the neighbor's daughter, whose father lives in retirement. His love is reciprocated; and that gives offence to Roland Hawk, an aspirant for preferment, who in a spirit of jealousy plans the destruction of his successful rival. He leads him on by insidious ways to the gaming table, and Willie soon falls a victim to his own infatuation. He meets with Capt. Portland, a ship owner, and in a moment of shame and despair, engages for the sea. He disappears suddenly, and soon tidings come to the village from afar, of the wreck of the ship *Columbia*. The cause of his flight is soon revealed to the father. Roland Hawk obtains a mortgage on the farm. Having quarrelled with a companion at the card table, he finds himself compelled to accept a challenge to fight. He meets with the scorn of the lady whose love he has sought, and with a desire for revenge, orders the sale of the Bisland farm. Recreant to duty, he leaves for parts unknown. The farm is sold under seizure, by the Sheriff — and is purchased by a stranger. A happy denouement follows. Willie has returned home, and the "Old Farm House" is saved.

CHARACTERS.

THOMAS BISLAND,	a Farmer.
WILLIE BISLAND,	the Farmer's son.
JAMES LUDLOW,	a retired gentleman.
CAPT. PORTLAND,	of the ship Columbia.
ROLAND HAWK,	a man of the world.
SAM. HIGGINS,	Inn-keeper.
NED. BUTLER, }	Chums.
FRANK MAYO, }	
DAVID,	a farm hand.
COL. FRANCIS,	Lawyer.
MRS. JANE BISLAND,	Farmer's wife.
BLANCHE LUDLOW,	Mr. L's daughter.
MRS. MOLLIE HIGGINS,	Inn-keeper's wife.
SALLIE,	Maid.

Sheriff, servant and villagers.

Synopsis of Scenery.

ACT I.

SCENE 1.—View of the Old Farm House.

SCENE 2.—A Garden.

ACT II.

SCENE 1.—A Village Inn.

SCENE 2.—A Garden.

ACT III.

SCENE 1.—The Inn.

SCENE 2.—Willie's Home. (A dream.)

ACT IV.

SCENE 1.—The Inn.

SCENE 2.—A Library.

ACT V.

SCENE 1.—Bachelor Quarters.

SCENE 2.—Court House.

SCENE 3.—Home of the Bisland's.

ACT I.

SCENE 1.—*View of the "Old Farm House" and yard.*

Dave. (With a pitch fork in his hands—soliloquizes :) Well, the squire's son is home at last. Golly, what a fine looking fellow he is to be sure! Every inch a man he is too. The old folks will just go crazy about him, I reckon. Him and me used to be mighty thick together, once upon a time. I wonders if edication spiles a man's temper, and makes him too much for them that's left behind! I aint got any larning, much to speak about, but I've got them that's good and true friends to me, and that I mean to stick by. The young man is right smart, polished off with larning, but I knows he's got the same blood as his good and honest father, and that says all for him. The squire is a true man, and the son—

Willie. (Enters on the scene calling for Dave, whip in hand.) Dave! Oh Dave! Ah, here you are. I did not know you were so close at hand when I called.

Dave. All right, Sir! You are up early this morning.

Willie. (Aside :) He is a little stiff with me. (Loud :) Yes, Dave, I wish to go off on a canter this bright morning, to get an appetite for breakfast. Have you any good horse flesh in the stable? I am fond of a good horse!

Dave. Yes, Sir; just the thing you want. The squire bought him for you, and I think he is well trained. Wait a bit: I will saddle him for you.

Willie. Oh no! by no means. You unlock the stable, and I will attend to the animal myself. I am not above doing that, you know, Dave.

Dave. Never mind that, Sir. The horse is used to me. Wait a bit, and I will have him ready in jiffy. (Dave hurries off, and Willie appears undecided.)

Willie. The poor fellow seems ill at ease. I must try to make him forget the present and recall the past. We were boys together, and father thinks there is no one like him. I hope he does not dislike me.

Dave. (Appears.) The horse is ready, Sir. He is a little bit skittish, but I reckon you don't mind that, Sir.

Willie. No, Dave. There is only one thing I do mind—and that is, the word *Sir* you use so often with me.

Dave. (Confused.) Beg pardon—no offence I hopes.

Willie. On the contrary, Dave. I think only, you mean to be too polite with me. I will call you *Mister David* if you persist.

Dave. Oh! I would rather not, Sir. I mean—(confused). Your father has always been a good friend to me, Sir.

Willie. Now, Dave! Well you need not mention that, as I know you are quite indispensable to him. But *I* would like less formality on your part, if you please. Don't you remember the good old times we had together as boys, when we played and romped over these fields?

Dave. I do indeed, (warmly) and I hopes you have come to stay with us now!

Willie. Oh yes! My school days are about over now. You must tell me what's been going on hereabouts since I left home for college.

Dave. Not much to speak about—cepting the gentleman and his darter that's come to settle in our neighborhood.

Willie. Indeed! When was that? Who are they? My father has not mentioned that circumstance to me!

Dave. Mr. Ludlow, a widow—

Willie. Ah! A widower did you say! Well, go on.

Dave. Yes, that's what I mean. The gentleman has—oh, such a fine looking darter! And she's mighty fond of the squire's lady. Comes here regular.

Willie. Amazing! And she is very beautiful you say? Who else says so, Dave?

Dave. Why, Sallie says so too. And she is a knowing one.

Willie. And who is Sallie, Dave?

Dave. Beg pardon, Sir. The lady's maid is Sallie.

Willie. A friend of yours I judge?

Dave. We've kind of taken to each other, Sir.

Willie. With a view to matrimony—eh?

Dave. Oh! I dasnt say as much yet, Sir.

Willie. Well, I hope you will keep good friends.—Is the young lady much looked after?

Dave. She's all the talk around. But Miss Blanche and her father go out so seldom, that the young prigs can get a peep at her at the meeting house only of a Sunday.

Willie. Well, if she visit my mother as you say she does, perhaps I will be more favored than the rest of mankind in being able to see her. Thanks, Dave, for all this information. Now for the pony.

Dave. If you take the left-hand road at the forks, you will get a longer ride, and pass right by the mansion. There's heaps of style there!

Willie. I wish very much to see it, and will take your advice. So here goes! (Exit.)

Dave. A fine young fellow he is. Not a bit of a prig. But it's no use—I can't talk to him like I used to do afore he went to college. He was a wanting of me to do it, and every time I was going to call his name, natural like, it stuck right—here in my throat, and would'nt come out. That's for the want of an edication. (Dave looks up at the sky.) Well, I wish we could have some rain. Dry weather makes poor crops. The Squire will be axing my pinion again today. I wish I could tell him its going to rain. I reckon I better take another look at the field afore I see him. (Dave goes off, while talking.)

(Enter Mr. & Mrs. Bisland, who appear by the style of their dress to be busy about the farm.)

Mr. Bisland. Wife, I was just thinking in what way to employ Willie about the farm. It would be well to place some responsibility on his shoulders.

Mrs. Bisland. Yes, Thomas, but not now. He must be allowed a little freedom at first. You know he will soon tire of doing nothing. I wonder where he can be!

Mr. Bisland. Passing by the stable, I noticed the pony was not there. I guess he is out for a morning ride. How wonderfully he has grown. He is quite a man now. I hope his absence from home has not altered his nature.

Mrs. Bisland. No, Husband! His nature is as gentle and docile as ever. He has not changed a bit for the worse.

Mr. Bisland. Is he not a little wilful though—predisposed to independence? It is good if not carried too far!

Mrs. Bisland. Husband, our boy is as near perfection as

circumstances will admit, and you know it too! He is as much like you Thomas, as God intended it!

Mr. Bisland. Dear Wife, I have no fault to find with our Willie. I meant only to lead you on to talk about him. Does he know of the existence of the beautiful girl, our neighbor's daughter?

Mrs. Bisland. I have not mentioned her name to him as yet. Willie will have a pleasant companion in her, and that will reconcile him to a country life.

Mr. Bisland. But suppose Blanche would not fancy him?

Mrs. Bisland. Not fancy him! A monstrous thought! What girl would not be pleased with *his* attentions? He is fit for a princess. Let me tell you,—although I have not in my correspondence with Willie, given him the slightest hint about her; still, I never failed to talk about him to Blanche, and to make known to her the noble traits of our darling boy. I believe my delineation of his character quite pleased her. Now, what say you to that?

Mr. Bisland. I can only say, that he could not have had a better advocate than his mother,—not even excepting his father. But here he comes already. He could not have ridden far!

Willie. Good morning my dear mother, my dear father! (Touching his mother affectionately.) (Gladly :) I have just returned from a little canter on the highway—and a glorious appetite it has given me for breakfast!

Mr. Bisland. You rode the pony I see! Dave says, he is a little skittish at times, but I suppose you are still a good horseman!

Willie. Yes, father! I rather like his mettle. It was a quick ride with him to the forks!

Mrs. Bisland. Did you see the new mansion on the left hand road to town?—Yes!—and what think you of it?

Willie. Oh! It is a beautiful residence,—fit for a lord. I am told there is a princess residing there. Indeed, I got a peep at her this morning.

Mrs. Bisland. You did—and what—then?

Willie. Well, I made her a most courtly bow as I rode by.

Mrs. Bisland. And how were you rewarded?

Willie. With an angelic smile,—of course!

Mr. Bisland. Take care, Sir! That's dangerous ground to go

over. (Laughs heartily.) Cupid is standing watch there, and may pierce you with his arrows!

Willie. All right,—father! I will be guarded, (laughing). (Mr. Bisland goes out laughing.) And how comes it, mother, you never mentioned this young lady to me in your letters?

Mrs. Bisland. For obvious reasons, my son. You were busy with your studies, and must not be disturbed on any account, —and again, I meant to give you a pleasant surprise when you came home.

Willie. You have succeeded, mother dear! This pleasant surprise has only added zest to the pleasure of being at home.

Mrs. Bisland. Are you fond of ladies' society?

Willie. Dear mother, if all ladies were like you, I would not have a heart big enough to contain all my admiration. (Caressingly :) And who is this Mr. Ludlow?

Mrs. Bisland. A retired gentleman. He is a widower, and has but one child, a charming daughter!

Willie. Do you know her well?—Does she visit here?

Mrs. Bisland. Oh, yes! We are good friends. —Blanche is her name, and I love her very much.

Willie. When will I have the pleasure of making her acquaintance, mother?

Mrs. Bisland. Very soon. We will make a call this evening together.

Willie. (Joyfully :) I will be your gay cavalier.

Mrs. Bisland. I will send David over with a message to her this morning. And now for breakfast. Have you forgotten your hunger?

Willie (Jokingly :) Well,—I believe I have some appetite left. (Takes his mother around the waist, and they go off together.)

This scene is shut off quickly by a *Lane*, to prepare for the next scene.
(Mr. Bisland and Dave appear.)

Dave. It is awfully dry, Sir,—too dry. We need rain bad!

Mr. Bisland. Well—don't let that worry you, Dave. It will come in good time —What do you think of my son liking the country? Can't we make him useful here? I wish he had your experience, as the farmer's life is surely the most independent of all.

Dave. To be sure, Sir! But he will make a fine lawyer or a docter, or a preacher, Sir, with his edication.

Mr. Bisland. An education is good to have, Dave; but, you see it does not fit a man for every occupation in life. My son has had a good chance to learn at school, and has availed himself well of the chance,—but I fear it may have unfitted him for this kind of a life.

Dave. Oh no, Sir! He's mighty glad to be home agin.

Mr. Bisland. Well—we will see. Time will tell! I think we had better go on to the house. It's breakfast time.—There's my good wife blowing the *horn*. (Exeunt.) (A horn is heard.)

—————
The scene opens on a garden.

SCENE 2. *Miss Blanche culling flowers, and her maid Sallie watering the plants.*

Blanche. The flowers look fresh this morning, and will scarcely need watering, Sallie. Oh! what a beautiful geranium. This will add very much to the bouquet I am making for papa.

Sallie. Your papa is very fond of flowers, aint he, Miss Blanche?

Blanche. He dotes on them,—and whenever I gather a bouquet for him, and place them on the breakfast table, he seems to enjoy his food *ever so much more!*

Sallie. That's strange, aint it? Did'nt you tell me once, the flowers had a language?

Blanche. I meant to tell you, that there were beautiful thoughts and sentiments associated with them; for instance, this geranium denotes gentility—and the apple blossom you have there, conveys the idea of preference.

Sallie. Oh, does it? Well, I'm glad to know that!

Blanche. And why so? Why are you glad, Sallie?

Sallie. Because, it saves the trouble of having to speak the words if you think about such things at all. Oh, Miss Blanche, did you see that gentleman ride by? He must be the young man Dave was a telling me about, Mr. Bisland's son who was expected home.

Blanche. Yes! it may be so. I have heard of him also, from his mother.

Sallie. Aint he handsome though! Miss Blanche, I do believe he bowed to you!

Blanche. I expect he did, Sallie. Now I've gotten a beautiful collection of flowers this morning, and will take them right in to papa. I expect he is waiting for me.

Sallie. Must I go on watering, Miss Blanche?

Blanche. No,—you need not. The dew was quite heavy last night. (Exit.)

Sallie. Now, if Miss Blanche would only fall in love with this nice young gentleman, I am sure I would not feel quite so foolish when Dave comes around here. Misery loves company, they say. (Sighing.) (Dave appears suddenly, and startles Sallie.) Oh Heavens! How you did scare me, Dave! Why didn't you make a noise of some kind to let me know you were there? I don't like your *stealing* on me in that way. (Sits down on a bench and appears agitated.) (Dave approaching slowly says:)

Dave. Sorry I made you feel onpleasant. Stealing is not a bad thing to do though (kisses her quickly,) and I don't mind doing it sometimes.

Sallie. (Jumps up.) Oh, you unmannerly fellow! What do you mean by such actions? (Dave wants to sit by her.) (Dramatically :) Keep your distance, Sir, or I will call for help!

Dave. (Amazed :) Well! I did not come for to make you angry, Miss Sallie. If you say it's unfair, I can give it back to you.

Sallie. Yes, and get another one! I did'nt think you so mean, Dave. I want you to know I have'nt made up my mind quite yet,—so mind your P's and Q's in the future. (Pouts a little.)

Dave. Oh certainly, Miss Sallie! I will mind them all, only don't be put out with me. I did'nt mean to be onkind, you know!

Sallie. Are you sorry you misbehaved?

Dave. 'Deed I am. Give us your hand on it. (Anxiously.)

Sallie. No—here's a flower instead,—find out what it means, and—well I am going. (Starts to run away.)

Dave. (Starts after her, calling her back.) Oh Sallie, Sallie! wait a bit—I have a message for Miss Blanche. (She returns quickly.)

Sallie. Why did'nt you tell me so before? What is it?

Dave. But tell me first what I must do with this here flower? You said, find out something! What something?

Sallie. (Amused :) Oh, you goose! It's a button holder.

Dave. (Amazed :) A button hole! What's to find out in a button hole?

Sallie. Pshaw! Ask somebody else. Why don't you give me the message, Goose. (Amused.)

Dave. Miss Sallie, you are a Hangel!

Sallie. Well if I am, angels have wings, and I am going to fly away. (Starts to go again.)

Dave. The message, Sallie! Oh stop please, (She stops.) You haint in a good humor this morning with me, Sallie.

Sallie. Dave, if you don't speak at once, I will leave you!

Dave. Well, the squire's lady and Mr. Willie will be a coming over this evening. That's the message.

Sallie. (Clapping her hands.) Oh, I am so glad, I'm so glad! You may come too, Dave! (She makes him a curtsy with much formality.) "Au revoir," Mr. David. (Trips away gaily.)

Dave. What's that she said? O revore! (Looks at the flower and repeats :) O revore! (In a puzzled manner :) That gal is too smart for me. What the deuce have I got to find out about a twig of apple blossom? And she called this a button hole too! She's a monstrous smart gal though—I haint got up to her mark yet, but I will by and by! (Exit.)

(Mr. Ludlow appears in the garden with Blanche leaning on his arm affectionately.)

Mr. Ludlow. Daughter, I mean to ride over to town this morning. There must be some mail there for me. Will you accompany me?

Blanche. Yes, father, I will be delighted. I have just received a message from our good friends, the Bislands. They will be over to tea this evening, and their son, just returned home, will accompany them.

Mr. Ludlow. Ah, I am glad to hear it! They are always welcome. Bisland must be happy to have his son at home, as he is the only child.

Blanche. His mother has often spoken about him to me. She says he carried the highest honors at college.

Mr. Ludlow. That speaks well for the lad. I am reminded that we will soon have another visitor—a Mr. Roland Hawk whose acquaintance I recently made. He is a man of the

world; and I am told, of some wealth and importance hereabouts. I fear our seclusion will not last long, and we will be obliged to entertain people, whether we will or no. What say you to that, daughter?

Blanche. It is not to my liking. But if you think well of it, father, I will be only too glad to assist in chasing away melancholy from your mind. Now, I will get my hat—and meet you around at the garden gate, eh?

Mr. Ludlow. Yes! I will see to the carriage. (Exeunt.)

(Mr. Hawk appears, walking *leisurely*, and examining the surroundings.)

Hawk. By Jove, this is fine! This Mr. Ludlow has displayed much taste here. I judge there must be some wealth lurking around. Well, it's my business to look after that. I have succeeded thus far in introducing myself to him, and now I must play for the lady's smiles. The hour is rather early for a visit, and may be called unsuitable,—but it is hard to curb my impatience,—besides, a country gentleman is never early and never late. So here goes. (Hesitates.) What! timid, Roland Hawk! Go hang yourself, Sir, for a driveling idiot. Here you stand on her very threshold, and thinking *now* about conventionalities! By Gad! I will face the music! Come what may! (Sallie appears.) Ah! I need not go any further.—Pardon me! I desire to see Mr. Ludlow!

Sallie. I am sorry, Sir, he has just gone out with his daughter.

Hawk. (Aside :) Confound the luck!

Sallie. But you may overtake them. They have ridden to town.

Hawk. Oh no! I am in no hurry. Pray, who may I have the honor of addressing?

Sallie. (Timidly :) Sallie is my name, Sir. I am the lady's maid.

Hawk. A very suitable maid you are, for any one.

Sallie. (Pleased :) Thanks—Will you come in, Sir, and wait?

Hawk. (Aside :) The girl is pretty. (Loud :) I should like very much, Miss Sallie, to do so, but I have an engagement, and will have to forego the pleasure. Be pleased to present my card with my compliments. I hope to return again very

soon, and now must bid you good-day. Your hand, Miss Sallie!

Sallie. (Extends her hand awkwardly.) Good morning, Sir! (Runs away.) (Exit.)

Hawk. By Jove, I was half tempted to stay! That girl is really captivating. But it's best to be prudent. It was a narrow escape anyhow. I never came so near kissing a girl before in my life, without doing it. She was friendly, but she might have prated. Remember Roland! there is a big stake before you. (Exit.) (Curtain.)—

ACT II.

SCENE 1.—*Public Room of a Village Inn.*

(The Landlord is smoking his pipe complacently, and soliloquizing:)

Mr. Higgins. This is indeed a bright morning! I guess the usual company will be here to-day. (Glancing at the clock.) Almost 10 o'clock! Well, I reckon Hawk will be showing up directly. *He* is always punctual. A regular one he is,—spends money liberal, just like it was easy to get. This card playing is getting to be more than a pastime here. Well, so long as I don't take a hand in it, Mrs. Higgins can't object. (Rubbing his hands together with an air of satisfaction.) It pays! I shan't object!

Mrs. Higgins. (Enters, unobserved, and startles her husband.) Mister Higgins! are you talking to yourself? Who are you talking to anyhow? (Looking around.)

Mr. Higgins. No Ma'am. I was a thinking loud.

Mrs. Higgins. Pray, Mr. Higgins, don't get into that habit. You will be a doing it in your sleep, and a disturbin me mor'n than ever.

Mr. Higgins. To be sure I will, Ma'am.

Mrs. Higgins. Oh, you will, eh! Now Mr. Higgins, I say you will not. I will put a stop to it.

Mr. Higgins. (Apologetically :) You did not understand me, Mrs. Higgins. I meant to say I would do—

Mrs. Higgins. No, Sir! I did understand every word you said. You said, "To be sure you would."—Now, Mr. Higgins, do I understand Hinglish or not?

Mr. Higgins. I never doubted it, Mrs. Higgins. Of course you understand your own language, and speak it too!

Mrs. Higgins. Well, don't say I don't understand. Am I right or am I wrong?

Mr. Higgins. Always right, Ma'am,—always right.

Mrs. Higgins. You know, Mr. Higgins, two wrongs don't make a right.

Mr. Higgins. You are right again, Ma'am.

Mrs. Higgins. I am glad to hear you say so, Mr. Higgins. It is always right to acknowledge a wrong. Now, I know there is something wrong in the kitchen this morning, and I am going right there to make it all right. (She goes out smartly.)

Mr. Higgins. (Bewildered :) I am glad of it... It's all right, and it's all wrong. Damn if I know which it is. Well, it's only her way.

Roland Hawk. (Enters.) Good morning, Landlord! Am I the first here?

Mr. Higgins. (Eagerly :) Yes, Sir! first and foremost. Have a chair, Mr. Hawk. The Newspaper is on the table.

Hawk. (Draws a Cigar.) Give me a light first. I met with a set-back a few days ago, Higgins, and it has put me out of sorts with the world. Give me some drink. That's medicine for me!

Higgins. Yes, and very good medicine it is too. (Hurries away, and Hawk takes up the paper.)

Hawk. Hallo! what's this! (Reads aloud :) "We take pleasure in chronicling the arrival home of Mr. Bisland junior, who has recently returned from college, bearing the highest honors of his class. He is the son of our respected fellow-citizen Thos. Bisland, Esq., and has a bright future before him." (Landlord has returned with a bottle and tumblers.) Who is this young Bisland noticed here in the paper? I don't know him!

Higgins. A youngster who has been away at school. Haven't seen him for several years, but I guess he is a chip of the old block.

Hawk. Join me, Landlord! He is spoken of as a young man of talent. I hope he will be one of us. The more the merrier. (Enter Butler and Mayo.) Ah! here are our friends, Damon and Pythias! Well gents, glad to see you. Better late than never. Come, be seated.

Butler. I tell you what, it took some persuasion to get me here this morning. The day is too fine for indoor pleasure, and my nag needs exercise.

Mayo. Well Ned, we've got the day before us.

Hawk. What's your horse—a thorough bred?

Butler. You bet,—and a beauty it is too! I wouldn't take a thousand for him. Come, Hawk, and take a look at him! You are a judge of horseflesh.

Hawk. Yes, by and by I will. Come, let us have some wine. Landlord, more tumblers! and a pack of cards!

Mayo. Come, Ned! It's early in the day. We can play an hour or two. (Butler sits down reluctantly, and landlord places more tumblers on the table, with the cards.) (Willie enters at that moment, and landlord speaks to Hawk hurriedly. They turn to look at Willie.)

Higgins. That's the young man — that's Mr. Bisland! (He approaches Willie in a cordial manner.) Good morning, Sir! —Mr. Bisland's son I believe! Glad to see you!

Willie. I had no idea you would recognize me so easily, Mr. Higgins. I have been absent so long.

Higgins. Although you have grown up into manhood, I could never forget you, Sir. Mrs. Higgins will be glad to see you.

Willie. Thanks. I am riding around, familiarizing myself with the old scenes. I do not find many changes hereabouts!

Higgins. Oh no! Things are pretty much at a stand still in this part of the country. You've seen the mansion, I reckon?

Willie. Yes, and a beautiful place it is, Sir,—fit for a prince!

Higgins. You are right—and *there* is a princess living there. Have you seen her yet?

Willie. I have the honor of her acquaintance.

(The card players have been playing and drinking alternately. Hawk rises from his seat, and approaches the landlord.)

Hawk.—Mr. Higgins, I will thank you for an introduction to this gentleman!

Higgins. Mr. Hawk and gentlemen! this is Mr. Bisland, the son of an old friend of mine.

(They all salute each other, and Hawk offers his hand.)

Hawk. I am more than happy to meet you, Sir! We have just opened a bottle; will you join us? (Willie expresses assent, and they approach the table.) Card playing is a pastime for us; (he is handed a glass,) and if you have no objections, we will be pleased to have you take a hand, and form a set with us. Join me, gentlemen, in this request!

Butler. Have this seat, Sir!

Mayo. That will vary the monotony somewhat!

Hawk. Will you play at pocker?

Willie. I know no other game but euchre!

Hawk. Well, that will do to begin with. I will play partners with you, no one objecting!

Butler. I have no objections whatever.

Mayo. The cards are dealt. Your lead, Mr. Bisland!

Hawk. We sometimes make it interesting by putting up a small stake. The loser will pay for the cigars this time.

Butler. It's agreed. (They play on, Higgins looks annoyed.)

Higgins. (Aside :) It's very unfortunate. I wish it had not happened. He is no match for them.

Butler. Why Bisland, you are in luck!

Hawk. I congratulate myself in having you for a partner.

Willie. You flatter me, Sir!

Hawk. No, I never flatter but women. (All laugh.)

Higgins. (Aside :) Damn it! What would I say if Tom Bisland was to come in now! It's too bad!

Butler. Where is *your* luck, Frank!

Mayo. Gone to the Devil! I get no cards!

Hawk. Be patient, gentlemen! Fortune is a fickle dame!

(At this moment a noise is heard as if of carriage wheels, and the landlord looks quickly out of the window.)

Higgins. A carriage in front of my house! why it's squire Ludlow and his daughter. (He runs out, and the card players

jump from their seats to look. Willie follows the landlord out quickly.)

Higgins. (His voice is heard :) Good morning, squire! Won't you light?

Hawk. Damn the fellow! He has invited them in. Hide the cards. (Appears excited.)

Mayo. (Looking out of the window.) By George! Bisland seems well in with the lady.

Butler. Did you notice how he hurried out at the mention of the name?

Mayo. I guess he is making up to her.

Hawk. (Aside :) He is, is he? I will see to that.

Mayo. (At the window :) The gentleman declines the invitation. Now they are off. (Landlord and Willie enter.)

Higgins. The squire stopped to tell me, he is expecting a friend on here—a sea captain—who will stop with me a while.

Hawk. Well, Landlord!—you will get good pay from him I warrant.

Higgins. I always treat my guests hospitably, Mr. Hawk.

Hawk. I will answer for that, Higgins. Come, gentlemen, let us resume. (He sits at the table.)

Butler. Enough for me! I am glad of the interruption.

Mayo. I am of the same mind. Let's go and look at the nag. (The two move towards the door.)

Butler. I can beat you on a race, Hawk!

Hawk. Not to-day, some other time. (Butler and Mayo go out, and Willie is about to follow.) You are not going yet, Mr. Bisland?

Willie. Yes, I had no idea of remaining here so long, and, besides, I have an engagement which—

Hawk. You must keep. I would not deter you from fulfilling that duty. Keep your engagement, Sir.

Willie. I am glad to have met you, Mr. Hawk.

Hawk. And with all sincerity I say, I hope we shall know each other better in the future.

Willie. I fully reciprocate the wish.

Hawk. Your company suits me well, Sir. No flattery. Our friends who have just left us, have also a keen appreciation of good company. We will make a gay quartette, Sir.

Willie. I feel I have fallen in good hands here.

Hawk. Now Sir, you flatter me! It will afford me much

satisfaction to have you call at my bachelor quarters. Here is my card. My friends are always welcome there.

Willie. I hope to be able to do so. (They move on towards the door while talking.)

Hawk. Do so at once; you have a cordial invitation to dine with me to-morrow.

Willie. With all my heart. (They reach the door.)

Hawk. (With great politeness :) You first. (And they pass out.)

Higgins. (Excitedly :) By George! It is too bad. The fellow has entrapped him, and I could do nothing to prevent it. (Scratches his head.) Well, the lad is old enough to take care of himself. It's not my interest to interfere anyhow. Hawk spends his money like a man, and that's his own affair. If any one else wants to do the same, is Sam Higgins going to say no! I never said gambling was allowed here,—but somehow, Hawk has got the better of me there,—and if he gets the better of them chaps, it's no fault of mine either. What's the difference anyhow!

(This scene is closed, by quickly drawing the folds together to represent a hedge or lane and to enable the shifting of Scenery in rear.)

Hawk. (Appears, walking slowly as if meditating. He has changed his dress.) It is not long since I visited this spot, so near to her home,—and here I am again to-day, without a purpose. Am I to be so easily vanguished! By heavens! No. If the power of Satan can help me out, I will have it. Was it in a boastful spirit he told me of his expectations? I think the youth does half suspect that I love her. Pshaw! I am mad with jealousy, and that renders me incapable of thought and action. Well, all is fair in love and war, and my rival must be removed from out my path. I have taught him to gamble, and now, I will teach him to drink. I will not be beaten in the race. * * * Oh, Blanche! If thou wert but mine, I feel I could be a truer man!—Bah! This is a maudlin feeling! I must look at facts sternly in the face, and fight him to the bitter end, yes, to the bitter end! To-morrow, I will come again. I will come with a cooler head, and stronger heart, to hear her speak the words that will save me, or destroy him. (Exit.)

(The folds will open and produce the next regular scene.)

SCENE 2.—*A Garden. (Blanche and Willie together).*

Willie. (Altered in his looks.) You seem sad to-day, Blanche. Come, let us be seated, and tell me the cause of your sorrow.

Blanche. You speak rather flippantly to be made a confidant of!

Willie. I did not intend to be so. But I know *you* have no sorrows to tell about!

Blanche. I have much to be sad about. Even *you* have been able to discern it!

Willie. Your tone has assumed one of displeasure. Tell me, I beseech you, the cause of your displeasure?

Blanche. (Waiting a moment, as if forcing herself to speak.) Very well!—As your betrothed, I presume I have a right to speak. We have known each other scarcely three months, and yet I find, a change has come over you.

Willie. Why? How so? Am I not your devoted lover?

Blanche. No! Your devotion is not wholly mine. A man whom I despise, shares your devotion.

Willie. Blanche! What can you mean? Who is it that has defamed me?

Blanche. My heart tells me, you are no longer what you have been. Your association with that man has made it so.

Willie. You speak of Mr. Hawk I presume. You wrong him, Blanche, and in so doing, you wrong me too. He is a gentleman by every instinct; and he has honored me with his preferences above all others. Why should I disdain his friendship?

Blanche. Because my instincts are also true. They teach me to abhor his very presence. You confer distinction on him by accepting his friendship. For my sake, you should sever yourself from him at once.

Willie. But, how can I do so? Why should I throw off a man, who has treated me with so much distinction, without at least some provocation?

Blanche. Because I ask it of you. Because, she who has promised to be your wife, demands that you bring to her a pure and unsullied name!

Willie. (Haughtily :) Miss Ludlow, I—am at a loss to understand you. (She rises from her seat in apparent agita-

tion.) Blanche, forgive me! I am not myself to-day. Your reproaches I cannot bear. (She moves away as if to leave him.) Oh, do not leave me in anger! (Seizing her hand.)

Blanche. Nay, do not be deceived,—my love is unchanging. (Sadly :) There is one, whose influence perhaps, is more potent than mine. Your mother! Go, seek advice from her, whose love you cannot doubt. (Tenderly :) Do you promise?

Willie. (Sadly :) My Mother?—Yes—I promise. (He drops her hand—and she leaves him standing, as if rooted to the spot.) Gone!—gone with that promise from me! Oh, what is to become of me! How shall I keep my word! It would fill my mother's heart with unspeakable anguish, if she but knew the extent of my degradation!—Why should Blanche have spoken so! How could she have learned the dark and terrible secret, which binds me to that man. 'Tis impossible to make the confession—impossible to sever myself from this evil genius! Ruin stares me in the face, but—a bold play!—luck!—luck!! and all will be well!!! (Despairingly :) No—I have no luck!—I have no friend! I am ruined! (He falls on a bench, in the rear of the stage, somewhat screened, and in deep anguish remains with drooped head in his seat as if meditating.)

(Hawk appears at that moment on the scene, unseen by Willie.)

Hawk. I will stop here to reconnoitre. Nothing in sight, neither Mistress or Maid! Damn my impatience! Shall I go on! What excuse for doing so? I might spoil it all by being too hasty. Why cannot I let my plans develop themselves! Here are notes that are as good as a future mortgage on her hand; (laughs,) and I hope to have more, before I am done with him. (Examines the notes.) So you are to be married soon! On what? (Laughs hard.) There's many a slip between the cup and the lip. (Laughs.) Hallo! who is this? (Willie has risen and is approaching Hawk unconsciously.) The lad himself! There is something wrong already, and Satan has befriended me. . . . Bisland! Where are you going?

Willie. Ah! Mr. Hawk! (Aroused :) I am going home,—not well to-day.

Hawk. Out of sorts perhaps! By God, you have nothing to complain about,—surely not of your luck last night. You

pulled down the score a couple of thousands. Butler says you have the devil's luck. Come, cheer up, and come with me. I am on the way to the Inn. There is nothing like good company to elevate the spirits.

Willie. I beg you will excuse me. I am not fit company for any one to-day.

Hawk. I say, you consider me your friend? Well, take my advice, and never show the white feather.

Willie. (Stiffly :) Sir! I am ready at all times to meet the demands of courtesy.

Hawk. Certainly,—your friends expect to get the 'amende honorable' Bisland—and if you prefer, we will go to my quarters. Come,—throw away all cares. Life is too short to be fritted away in vain repinings. We are a jolly set when we get together. Let us take the world as it comes. (Takes Willie by the arm and urges him on.) Come on, my boy,—you are on the road to fortune again! (Exeunt.)

David. (Appears.) What in the devil can that sneaking rascal be a doing around here again! This aint his beat no-how! There now,—he's done hawked in the squire's son, jest as I was a going to find him myself. His good mother is a deal put out fur his not coming home last night. I'm sure that spalpeen is all to blame for it. I aint had a chance to drop a word in his ear. But he mought think I were taking a liberty wid him. Larning has made him so genteel like. I can't talk to him like I used to do afore he went to college. Bad luck to this Jay *hawker*, fur a trying to lead off a honest young man from right doin! He is a sheep in wolf's clothing, so Sallie tells me. He squirzed her hand, and talked grand like to her, thinking my Sal was a giddy girl! (Laughs.) Never you mind, my gentleman! I'll have an eye to you.

(Exit.) Curtain.

ACT III.

SIX MONTHS HAVE ELAPSED.

SCENE 1.—*Public Room of the Inn.* (MR. HIGGINS AND WIFE.)

Mrs. Higgins. (Excitedly :) A pretty 'how do you do' it is, Mr. Higgins, to have my house turned into a gambling saloon for the benefit of that fashionable prig Roland Hawk! How can you sit still, Mr. Higgins, and see that man a fleecing his

friends out of all they earn, day after day, and night after night, and out of all reason! Why, Mr. Higgins, the next thing will be your taking a hand in it too. Now, Mr. Higgins, understand that I can play at pocky too, (taking up the pocker, and shaking it ominously at him,) you mind that!

Higgins. Why, Mrs. Higgins, you are rather hard on me! It's true, Hawk is playing it rather fine, but remember, Mrs. Higgins, he is a paying customer, and many a bottle of wine he pays for.

Mrs. Higgins. Doin it fine, Sir! Fine, Sir! A fine thing it is to be a cheatin and a robbin and a swearin all day long, and all night long too. Mr. Higgins, have you lost your honor, or have you lost your senses?—Mr. Higgins!

Higgins. (Reluctantly :) Neither, Mrs. Higgins. I meant to say—the meaning of the word fine is—

Mrs. Higgins. Is *fine*, Sir, all the world over!

Higgins. Oh, Mrs. Higgins! You confound me!

Mrs. Higgins. (Screams :) What's that you say! Confound me! Mr. Higgins, are you swearin at me at this time of life? Do you mean to say confound me!

Higgins. (Desperately :) No, Ma'am,—God forbid that I should do so.

Mrs. Higgins. Mr. Higgins, you did say it. Oh, I wish the Parson could hear you now! Are you takin lessons from them youngsters? Mr. Higgins, you are a *fine gentleman*. Indeed, you are!

Higgins. I had no intentions, Ma'am—

Mrs. Higgins. Intentions, Sir! Mr. Higgins, do you know what place is paved with intentions? How dare you talk of intentions to me!

Higgins. Mrs. Higgins! My intentions are always to be respectful to you.

Mrs. Higgins. (Appeased :) Well, Mr. Higgins, if you mean to be so, do the right thing. Here's the Captain in our house a lookin on all the while. What can he think of my management! Am I right, or am I wrong?

Higgins. (Wearily :) Always right, Ma'am. Mrs. Higgins, the Captain says he will be a goin soon. His business with Mr. Ludlow is near finished. (Looking out of the window.) Here he comes now, and young Bisland is with him.

Mrs. Higgins. Mr. Higgins, Willie Bisland goes too much with that man Hawk for his own good. His father has always been a good friend to us.

Higgins. I know it, Ma'am. But I aint had a chance to talk to the young fellow yet.

Mrs. Higgins. What, in all this time! Well, I'll talk to him myself. Mr. Higgins, you've worried me so, I had forgot it was near dinner time. (She hurries out, and Capt. Portland enters with Willie.)

Capt. Portland. My young friend, there's nothing like a sea-faring life. Come, let us be seated, and I will give you some of my experience. Landlord! I've had a fine walk this morning,—got through with business, and now I am ready to hoist sail.

Higgins. Sorry you have to leave us, Captain.

Capt. Portland. Well, Sir, it is pleasant to come ashore for a day or two,—but an old sea-dog like me is better off on board ship. I was just about to talk to my young friend here on that very subject. Give me the grand old ocean for my couch, and I feel again the true vigor of manhood. Ah, gentlemen! the profession of a sailor stands above all others in its usefulness and magnificence!

Willie. Very true, Sir! What would the world be to-day, if it were not for our adventurous seamen!

(Mr. Higgins has disappeared.)

Capt. Portland. Young man! You have the ring of the true metal in you. A sailor's life would become you well. How do you mean to steer your course in this busy world?

Willie. I am only a farmer's son, and have not as yet determined upon a profession. I think, I would like to go to sea.

Capt. Portland. Indeed! There is room for you on board my ship! I am in search of a supercargo, and I believe you would be well adapted for that! If you can make up your mind to join my fortunes, a grand and promising future is before you.

Willie. Capt. Portland, you do me honor! I am truly grateful to you. When do you leave here?

Capt. Portland. To-morrow morning, before sun up, I will be on my way to port. In two days more, I will weigh anchor. The offer is open to you. What say you, my lad?

Willie. (Meditatively :) It will not take me long to decide. (Resolutely :) Yes,—I have decided. All things being equal, I will be with you in less than two days. May I ask that this matter be kept strictly private between us ?

Capt. Portland. Business is business, Sir. You will have nothing to fear or to regret on that score.

Willie. Thanks! The time is short, and I must now say good bye, until we meet again.

Capt. Portland. (Taking him by the hand :) Stick to your resolution, young man, and all will be well. (Exit Willie.) What the deuce does the lad mean! Is he going to run away? Well, that's none of my business. He is a likely young fellow, and suits me well. He might do worse by staying here! It's a lucky chance. (Landlord enters.) Landlord, I must be off betimes in the morning. By the by, what do you know of our young friend Bisland? I have quite taken to the lad!

Higgins. A fine young fellow, Sir! I've known his father for many a year. No one need be ashamed to know him. Why, Sir, farmer Bisland came here a poor man, and by hard work and honest dealing has made himself a name. He owes no man a dollar.

Capt. Portland. Good enough!

Higgins. He gave the boy a college education, and there's no reason why *he* should not make *his* mark!

Capt. Portland. I judge so from a short acquaintance. I met him here you know, in what I should call, rather *gay* company. But the lad looks to me a quiet and genteel fellow,—something bordering on the melancholy?

Higgins. Melancholy! Why, he ought to be the gayest lad around here! (Amused :) It's the common report he is to get the beautiful Miss Ludlow for a bride! He ought to be a *very happy* man, eh, Captain?

Capt. Portland. (Startled :) The devil! (Aside :) It's too late now—(Loud :) Well, you know Landlord, love is a disease, and it makes people melancholy like, while the spell is on them. Of course, you know something about it.

Higgins. (Confused :) Well no,—Yes I mean,—but it's kind of healed up, you know . . . I guess you've got no wife.

Capt. P. You guess right. My wife is my ship, and my family, my crew! But you know, my dear Sir, we are not all adapted to the same kind of business. Where would be the

Inn without the woman! My ship is better off without her. A ship is no place for a woman!

Higgins. My wife would say to that, captain, "Where the man goes, the wife should follow!"

Capt. P. Ay—ay! But a sailor has no right to a wife, and that shuts out the woman, you see! I make it a point in the selection of my crew, never to employ a married man. A man has no right to marry a woman, and then leave her to go off on long cruises, perhaps never again to return. Yes, Sir! It is an article of faith with me, and should be made a fundamental law, never to permit a married man to go to sea.

Higgins. Well, Sir, I believe you are right. There's logic in what you say. (A bell rings.) Ah, there's the dinner bell! There's logic in that too, eh? (Moving as if going.)

Capt. P. I will convince you of that fact directly. (They laugh at the joke and disappear.)

This Scene is shut off by an *Avenue* or *Roadway* Scene, to enable shifting of Scenery in rear.

Blanche. (Appears, walking slowly and looking despondent.) Days have gone by since last we met, and yet he comes not! Was I unkind to him? Did I upbraid him too hastily? Oh Willie! Why do you not come to me!— My mind is full of strange doubts and fears, and I feel some terrible misfortune is to happen to me! Oh, what shall I do? What shall I do? (Sallie appears, waving her handkerchief, as if beckoning some one in the distance.) Come, Sallie. It is getting late, and papa will be anxious about us. (She sees Sallie waving.) (Eagerly :) Who is it you see? Who is coming?

Sallie. Dave is waiving his hat and running this way! I think he may want to speak to you, Miss Blanche! He may have a message for you!

Blanche. (Aside :) It is strange there should be needed now an intermedium between us! (Loud :) No, Sallie, I cannot wait. If there be a message, you may receive it for me. (Exit.)

Sallie. Poor dear! It is a terrible thing to be in love. I don't believe much in these long engagements nohow! It gives them fellows too much time to think. When *I say yes* to Dave, I want him to marry me *exactly* five days afterward. (She looks again in the direction where Dave is supposed to

be.) Well, where is he? I do declare, if he has'nt gone the other way, and turned his back on me! Never mind, Sir! I will make it *ten* days now! (Exit.)

This short Scene is drawn aside, and the next regular Scene represented.

SCENE 2. *Willie at Home—alone in his chamber at night.*
(*Music soft.*)

Willie. (He sits at a table, with drooping head.) (Soliloquizes :) I cannot sleep! Oh, if I could only sleep that sleep of peace which once was mine! What is there in life to hope for? The beautiful dreams of my life have passed away, and I will soon be an outcast, away from home! Home! My dear, dear old home! given away, for less than a mess of pottage! Great God! do I deserve a single merciful thought from Thee! My father! My mother ever tender and true—how have I returned your love for me! I cannot bear the thought—it will make me mad, it will make me mad! Cursed the hour that saw me barter away life, hope and happiness!! (He paces distractedly the floor of his room.) Why did I yield to him! Why did I yield to the tempter! To-morrow, and perhaps those I hold most dear will learn to hate me! To-morrow,—oh happy thought! I will be far away from here, and out of the reach of their scorn! Father, awake! Mother, awake before it be too late!—But no—it is better thus; better that I should leave them, and fly from a scene of woe and desolation! Have I not ruined them—and made them poor, poor, poor—! (He gives way to excessive grief.)—They sleep now the sleep of the innocent, little knowing to what a depth of degradation their son has fallen! They sleep a peaceful sleep, unconscious of the misery that is in store for them! and I, the wretch, (frantically), the miscreant, the cause of their desolation, am allowed to live! Oh death! thou wouldst be a welcome visitor now! If a sudden leap into the wilds of eternity could only restore the past, gladly would I accept my doom!—My mother taught me to pray—to pray to God for his mercy. His mercy! Oh laugh ye demons at the thought!—But *I will* pray—not for mercy for me—but for mercy for my father—for mercy for my mother! (He falls on his knees at the bedside.) Oh my God, Thou who art called the merciful Lord! have pity on them who have been wronged!

Visit not my sin upon them—but keep them ever from harm! (Rises from his knees and goes to the table.) I must not leave them without a line of farewell. My absence would be spread abroad, and the impending evil would fall sooner upon their devoted heads! (He prepares to write.) They will say perhaps, I was ill and had to go abroad. (He writes hastily.) There!—I will place it here under my pillow, and my mother will surely find it. My *poor* mother! (He paces his room again distractedly.) Blanche, my beloved! Will you ever forgive me! No—when she has learned the extent of my iniquity, she will rejoice at her escape! Had I listened to her gentle chidings, my fate would have been so different—oh, so different! The cup of happiness was offered to me, and I have dashed it from my lips! Oh why do I linger here! Why stay here another moment! (Dispairingly :) Have not I chosen to be an outcast—a miserable outcast!!—(Suddenly :) The hour is growing late and I must fly—I must be gone before I lose my courage! There is nothing I can take away—nothing, nothing—for nothing belongs to me—no, not even the roof that shelters me now!—This small valise—yes—it was my college companion—I *will* take it, I will preserve it as the *only* remembrance of happier days! (He has placed some linen in the valise.) Farewell, my father! Farewell, my mother!—farewell my home!—(Going to the door of his chamber, hat in hand.) Shall I ever see them again! Heaven help me! (Disappears.)

(Mrs. Bisland enters en deshabille, candle in hand, looking as if she were tired and distressed.)

Mrs. Bisland. He is not here. His bed is still untouched! Oh, why does not my boy come home! What evil spirit is it that keeps him from me! I think he must come to-night, and I will sit here and wait for him. It is late, but my boy will surely come. I must see—my boy—to-night. (She is falling asleep in the chair.) I—must—see.... ..

(TABLEAU.) She has fallen asleep. The audience is shown a *shipwreck scene* in the rear of the stage. She is *dreaming*—and at the moment the ship is sinking, she screams—“oh save him” throwing her arm up—and *Curtain* falls.

ACT IV.

ANOTHER MONTH HAS ELAPSED.

SCENE 1. *The Inn. A group of people, some standing and some sitting.*

Landlord. (Reads the paper aloud:)

Mr. Higgins. Telegraphic news.—“Ship Columbia lost at sea, in a great storm off the coast of Norway.—All lives lost” That’s bad news, bad news!

Hawk. Was that Capt. Portland’s ship, Mr. Higgins?

Mr. Higgins. Yes, Sir! It must be. He’s gone on—his *last* voyage, and that poor lad is gone too!

Butler. Is it positive that Bisland went to sea?

Mr. Higgins. Every thing points that way, Mr. Butler.

Mayo. It will be a terrible blow for his father. I wish it could be kept from him.

Mr. Higgins. Ah, Sir, bad news travels fast.

Hawk. Ludlow I imagine will be startled at the news. He was part owner of that ship.

Butler. Ah! That accounts for the Captain’s visit here some time ago.

Mayo. Did he know that Willie Bisland was going with Capt. Portland? It looks like a mixed up thing to me!

Mr. Higgins. Yes, very mixed up. I never know’d much about it,—but I rather think the young man was running away from trouble, as he thought.

Hawk. Jumped from the frying pan into the fire.

Higgins. No, Sir! He was drowned. But the less said about it the better. I don’t know that there is much difference though between a shipwreck on sea and a shipwreck on land.

Hawk. Come now, landlord. You’ve dwelt long enough on a poor subject. Give us a bottle of wine, and a pack of cards, and I will enliven the company a little! Boys, let’s have a game!

(Mrs. Higgins is heard calling, “Mr Higgins!”)

Mr. Higgins. Mrs. Higgins is calling! (and hurries to her).

(The rest of the company leave the Inn, except Hawk and his two friends.)

Hawk. He shivers at her call. (They laugh.)

Mayo. The last game we had with Willie Bisland was at your quarters, Hawk, was it not?

Hawk. Yes,—don't mention it. He played like a mad man.

Butler. Or rather like a fool. He played for all he was worth!

Mayo. What an infatuation he had for cards. I remember when we first fell in with him, he scarcely knew one card from the other. Well I'm sorry he's met with such an untimely end. Where's Higgins?

Hawk. Have patience, gentlemen. I called for the cards, you know, but Mrs. Higgins *called* for Mr. Higgins, and that settles it. (They laugh.)

(Landlord appears.) Come, Higgins, a pack of cards.

Higgins. Gents, Mrs. Higgins has religious scruples against card playing,—and the Parson has been arter me about it. Now I wish to please all sides, and to make matters equal, I have fixed up a nice room for you up stairs, where you can play and be free from interruption. Will that do, Mr. Hawk?

Hawk. Oh certainly! I rather like the arrangement!

Butler. All right, Landlord. That will do.

Higgins. Come then,—follow me. This way, Gents!

(They all go out after Mr. Higgins, who appears scared.)

Mayo. (Derisively :) Indian file! Tip-toe, gentlemen!

Mrs. Higgins. (Appears.) Those gamblers here again! I surely heard their voices! Where is Mr. Higgins?

(Mr. Higgins comes in timidly.)

Higgins. (Cheerfully :) Mrs. Higgins, I was looking for you!

Mrs. Higgins. (Stiffly :) Mr. Higgins, I was looking for you!!

Higgins. Yes, ma'am. It's all right now.

Mrs. Higgins. What's all right, Sir?

Higgins. I meant to say there would'nt be any more card playing in this hall.

Mrs. Higgins. And do you mean to tell me such a bare faced lie!!

Higgins. Pon my word, Ma'am. There won't be any more card playing *in this hall!*

Mrs. Higgins. Oh Gracious me! what a sinner! (Screaming the words.)

Higgins. Mrs. Higgins! I call you to witness there is no one in this hall, but you and me—

Mrs. Higgins. And you want to prove it by me! You want to prove it by me, Mr. Higgins!!

Higgins. (Desperately :) Mrs Higgins! It's worth all of my life to quarrel with these men. Hawk is a bad one.

Mrs. Higgins. Well, Sir! I told you so long ago.

Higgins. But I've stowed them away out of sight.

Mrs. Higgins. You have, have you! Mr. Higgins, that does not satisfy my religious scruples. The Parson says, there is no compromise between right and wrong.

Higgins. I know it, Ma'am, but what am I to do?

Mrs. Higgins. Mr. Higgins, have you no conscience? There's Willie Bisland already gone to the dogs!

Higgins. (Quickly :) No he was drowned, I'm not responsible for that. Roland Hawk is all to blame for it.

Mrs. Higgins. That man will bring a curse on this house.—Shut it up, Mr. Higgins, if you can do no better.

(A great noise is heard in the house like men fighting. Mrs. Higgins falls fainting on a chair, and Mr. Higgins looks very much frightened.)

Mrs. Higgins. (Crying :) O Lord! What can be the matter!

Higgins. My God! I believe they are fighting!

Mrs. Higgins. Oh Mr. Higgins! See what it is! I will die!!

(Mrs. Higgins goes into hysterics—and Higgins appears bewildered.)

(At this moment, Hawk rushes in, all dishevelled, with a bottle in his hand as if using it to defend himself, followed by Mayo, who has thrown himself in the way between him and Butler, who follows closely with a stick in his hand, clubbed as if to strike with. Butler's face is all bloody, and he is cursing and trying to get at Hawk. Mr. Higgins catches hold of the stick as it is raised, and a struggle ensues between them for its possession. Mayo is urging Hawk to go away, and Mrs. Higgins is screaming for help. There is a general turmoil in the room.)

Butler. He is a thief! He is a swindler! Let me kill the

scoundrel! *By Heavens*, I will have his blood! (Hawk has disappeared, and Mayo is holding Butler back.)

(This *Scene* changes rapidly into a Street of the Village, representing a House with a lawyer's sign, to enable shifting of Scenery in the rear.)

Francis. (Comes out from the House, with a letter in his hand.) A hasty summons, this! What does it mean? (Breaks open the letter and reads,—smiling says :) Ah! a duel on the tapis! Well, I like that! It will break the monotony of this dull country life! Hawk is my client, and now he wants to engage my services as a friend in this affair! Well, I do not object. I am quite willing he should share the honors of a duellist with me! I wonder how it originated? I will go to him at once and find out. He will have instructions for me.
(Exit.)

Mayo. (Appears.) Yesterday they were friends,—to-day, they are bitter enemies! Too much wine—too much wine! Butler is in a rage now, and has demanded satisfaction. As a blow was struck, there can be no compromise. Blood, nothing but blood can wipe off the insult! Well, my man is an excellent shot, and if he but keeps cool, the other will surely bite the dust. Here is the lawyer's office! I suppose he will be ready to arrange the preliminaries for the meeting. I would much rather though it were a law case. (He enters the office,—scene changes.)

SCENE 2. *Interior of the Bisland home.*

Mr. Bisland. (Seated, near his wife who is weeping.) Dear wife! Do not grieve so much! Cannot you become reconciled to the will of Providence! Your grief has well nigh broken my heart!

Mrs. Bisland. Ah, husband! Your courage is great! Would to God, mine was the same! I have never ceased to hope until now! That Willie would come back to us some day, has been a sustaining hope for me! But now—he is dead!—Oh God, have pity on me! (She gives way to excessive grief.)

Mr. Bisland. (Approaches her :) Wife! Is there nothing I can say to console you?

Mrs. Bisland. (Beseechingly :) Tell me it is not true. Tell me he is not—dead!

Mr. Bisland. Dearest! Must we deny a truth, because it

seems so hard to believe! But, God has worked miracles before—

Mrs. Bisland. Yes—oh yes! May he not have caught a plank! and have been saved by a passing ship! Oh husband, tell me it is so! It may be only a dream!

Mr. Bisland. We do not know that,—we cannot know it,—at least for the present.—But, there may be—the remotest possibility, that, as the ship was wrecked near the coast—(he is unable to finish.)

Mrs. Bisland. I know what you would say, husband! but you are afraid to say it,—that he was saved! He was a good son, husband—he was a dutiful child—would God take away his young life?

Mr. Bisland. Wife! Read to me the lines he left for us.

Mrs. Bisland. (Takes from her bosom a crumpled note, and kisses it.) Here it is, husband! It seems so stained with tears. How he must have suffered while writing—I never knew my boy to shed a tear. His was a happy nature. Could he have gone away with a broken heart? It gives no clue at all, as to his motive for leaving home. (Reads :) “I leave you dear Parents, with a repentant heart.—Farewell, loved ones. May Heaven shield you from harm.—Tell Blanche it is better so. I am not worthy of her love.”—There is some hidden meaning in these words,—a secret sorrow, too heavy for him to bear. (Weeps.)

Mr. Bisland. It is strange indeed! Could Blanche have been unkind to him!—I thought them devotedly attached to each other.—Wife! I believe our estrangement with Ludlow has made things more obscure.—In the excess of our grief we have perhaps been unmindful of the wrongs of that girl.

Mrs. Bisland. But, why has she not sought to explain?

Mr. Bisland. Dearest! A woman slighted is unforgiving! It was my duty to go to Ludlow.—

David. (Enters.) Miss Blanche, Sir, is at the door. She wants to see the Mistress very much. (Exit.)

Mr. Bisland. I will go to meet her, wife. Let us receive her cordially. Our wish is almost granted! (Exit.)

Mrs. Bisland. God grant that I may learn something about this dark and mysterious affair. May Heaven forgive her, if she was unkind to him.

(Enter Mr. Bisland with Blanche leaning on his arm. She sees Mrs. Bisland in tears, and rushes to her, and is folded in her embrace.)

Mrs. Bisland. Oh Blanche! I am *so glad* to see you!

Blanche. I fear I do not come as an angel of Mercy—but as one who feels the deep anguish of your heart, I have come to mingle my tears with yours.

Mrs. Bisland. (Eagerly :) But,—have you no tidings of my boy?

Blanche. None, but the worst.—Compose yourself, dear friend, and may Heaven help you to bear the agony of this moment. (She caresses Mrs. Bisland and hides her own tears.)

Mrs. Bisland. Say on, dear girl! I am resigned—to His will!

Blanche. The news—have been confirmed—(hesitating) and there was no one—saved, (in a whisper.)

(Mr. Bisland is seated in an arm chair near his wife. *She* falls on her knees, and buries her face in his lap with the exclamation :)

Mrs. Bisland. Oh husband! *This is too much—!* (falls fainting.) (Mr. Bisland supports her, and Blanche chafes her hands.)

Blanche. Do not be alarmed, Sir. It is only a momentary weakness. There—she is better! (They raise her up.) She had better go to her chamber—Oh, let me be as a daughter to you!—I cannot fill the void in your heart, but I will try at least to comfort you.

(With her arm encircled about her waist, and Mr. Bisland supporting her also, they slowly retire.)

David. (Appears very much agitated.) My God—My God! What's going to happen next! (He appears to be looking for something.) The squire says I must run for the Doctor! Poor Lady! It is enough to kill her.—What's that? A ring at the door bell! (Goes out quickly.)

(Mr. Bisland returns to the library or sitting room.)

Mr. Bisland. Poor Wife! I fear the worse has yet to come (disconsolately). (David enters.) Do not lose any time, David.

David. No, Sir! but there is a gentleman awaiting to see you, I think it is lawyer Francis, Sir.

Mr. Bisland. Lawyer Francis! What business has he with me? Admit him, David.

Mr. Francis. (Enters.) Good morning, Mr. Bisland! I hope you are not much disturbed by this call. I desired to see you on important business. (Sits down.)

Mr. Bisland. (Astonished.) Indeed! Your visit I must acknowledge has taken me unawares. I am ill prepared for business of any kind to-day.—I will hear you, Sir!

Francis. I regret the occasion, Sir,—but professional duty cannot always be deferred. I am pressed by my client to see you without delay.—I have waited some days already.—

Mr. Bisland. Your client! And pray, what may be your business with me, Sir?

Francis. Mr. Hawk is my client—and he has charged me with the collection of these notes. (Produces them.)

Mr. Bisland. Notes! What means this? Why, Sir, I do not owe Mr. Hawk or any other man, a single dollar!

Francis. It is a debt owed by your son—and these are Drafts drawn against you.

Mr. Bisland. (Sadly :) My son is dead! He could not have made debts without my knowledge!

Francis. Will you have the kindness to examine, and satisfy yourself? I think they are genuine?

Mr. Bisland. (Examines the notes.) My God, Sir! I am bewildered. How came this about?

Francis. I have no knowledge of that, Sir. I am only charged with their collection. You do not repudiate the claim I hope?

Mr. Bisland. Sir! It is a strange fatality that awaits me—No—I do not deny the truth of this fatality—

Francis. I regret you take it so much to heart. Remember, I am only acting as a lawyer.

Mr. Bisland. Mr. Francis, I have nothing to blame you for. It is your client who has done me harm.

Francis. Pardon me! I will not discuss the merits of the gentleman.—When will you feel disposed to pay this amount?

Mr. Bisland. I cannot answer you at once.—It is a large sum,—a very large sum to pay—

Francis. Well Sir—to avoid anything like a protest, which would only make matters worse, I would suggest a compromise.

Mr. Bisland. Anything—that will save my son's name from the odium that would fall upon him.

Francis. As an accommodation to you, Mr. Bisland, I propose that you give a mortgage on this property.—That will give you time.

Mr. Bisland. Thanks! I see no other way of extricating myself than doing as you advise.—Our little farm was to-day, I thought, squarely out of debt,—to-morrow, alas! it will have passed away entirely from me.

Francis. Oh, not quite so bad, Sir! A good season and a good crop, and you will weather the storm.

Mr. Bisland. God grant it may be so! But, it is a large sum, a very large sum to pay.

Francis. I will have the deed prepared for your signature, to-morrow—And now, Sir, in taking leave of you, I must thank you for the amicable adjustment of this affair.

Mr. Bisland. (Proudly :) I would have given my life's blood to honor the name of my son. As a favor, I ask you, to keep this matter from the public gaze!

Francis. You need have no fears about that, Sir. (Exit.)

Mr. Bisland. (Paces the room in deep woe.) Oh Willie, my son! What have you done! I see now—It is all clear to me! But I must not blame him! He fled from home to hide his shame! and—the poor boy—is dead! He was no doubt, the victim of a most foul plot.—My boy was too good—too noble, to have wilfully wronged his father. And his mother, who loves him so much, how can I keep this terrible secret from her! She suffers now, knowing him to be dead! But the knowledge that he had done wrong, would surely kill her. Blanche too, has never lost faith in him. Better to have lost fortune and all, than to have been unjust in a single thought to an innocent girl. But it is all clear now—I will keep it from them until the last moment. (He has seated himself, with drooping head he weeps—and apparently falls asleep.)

Blanche. (Appears at the door—looks in and calls :) Mr. Bisland! Father! No answer.—He must be asleep! Poor man! It is the sleep of weariness! (She approaches his chair silently.) What would I not give to make them happy again! (He moves in his chair) I fear I have wakened him! (She starts to go.)

Mr. Bisland. (He wakes up.) Blanche! Is it you? Come,

sit by me, child, I wish to speak to you—How is my wife? Has she sent for me? (She sits by his side.)

Blanche. No, Sir!—She is resting quietly, and I came to see about you. You look so sad and weary!

Mr. Bisland. Thanks, child! You are a good friend to us.

Blanche. I could not do less for him, father!

Mr. Bisland. And you are very sure, my dear girl, that Willie loved you faithfully?

Blanche. I never doubted it—

Mr. Bisland. Never do—never doubt it. When he left us, there was something amiss with him.—His mind was unhinged! (In a whisper.)

Blanche. It must have been so.—Oh no! I never doubted his love, and I am sure he never doubted mine.—

Mr. Bisland. Kiss me my daughter.—I am much comforted. (He rises from his seat wearily.) And now, I must leave the patient in your hands for a little while. I have the farm to see about.

Blanche. Cannot David do that for you? You look so careworn to-day,—sleep will do you good.

Mr. Bisland. Work I need now, child, more than sleep—David is a good and trusty servant, but he cannot replace me in all things. Be patient, I will soon return. (Exit.)

Blanche. Patience! Ah, how nobly he bears it all. His heart is as soft and gentle as a woman's, but the mind of man is such, that it controls the softer feelings. And, how true the father to the son. He wishes me ever to think well of him who is now lost to me! Ah, Willie! How I do regret our last parting! But can my sorrow be measured with that of your devoted parents! At the sight of so much misery my heart is ready to burst. (She falls into the chair and weeps.)

Curtain.

ACT V.

ONE YEAR HAS ELAPSED FROM THE OPENING.

SCENE 1. *Mr. Hawk at home.*

Hawk. (Reading paper.) Confound these newspapers anyhow! There's nothing to learn from them. (Throws the paper away, and paces the room.) I have much to think about

to-day. In the first place, my engagement with Mr. Butler. Damn the fellow! He wants to kill me right away. Ha! ha! ha! Well Sir! I mean to put off that pleasant pastime for you for a season at least. I have no desire to be made a target for you. Francis, lawyer like, has undertaken to negotiate for me, and will delay matters as long as possible. Meanwhile, I will arrange all my affairs,—and some bright summer's morning—ha, ha! Roland Hawk will be missing—ha, ha! Yes—I must go abroad. T'is better to place the broad Atlantic between this frantic youth and myself.—Besides,—I have promised myself the pleasure of a Continental tour for many a day. Now is the best time for it. There is nothing to hold me back! That woman has rejected me, and I have now only to be avenged. I will strike deep down into your heart, my lady! The friends you revere so much, will be driven from their home, and every wail that rises from that quarter, will find a responsive echo in your heart. Revenge is sweet! ha, ha, ha! Put on the screws, Mr. Francis! Screw them down hard, Sir. Screw them down hard! Show them no mercy. (Rings a bell, and servant enters.) John, have you delivered my message to Mr. Francis?

Servant. Yes, Sir! He will be here as soon as possible.

Hawk. Remember, I am not in for any one else.

Servant. I will mind you, Sir.

Hawk. You may go on packing, but not one word about it to any one!

Servant. All right, Sir. I think I heard the bell!

Hawk. It must be Francis. Admit him at once.

(Servant goes out. Hawk lights a cigar. Mr. Francis enters.)
Ah! Francis, I am glad you are punctual!

Francis. Why so? Anything wrong?

Hawk. No,—not particularly so. But I wished to confer with you—

Francis. About the duel?—

Hawk. Yes—and about other matters. Have a cigar!

Francis. Mayo says, his man is chafing at the delay.

Hawk. Damn the fellow! Is he so anxious to become a corpse?

Francis. He is practicing hard every day, and will make a good shot. Have you done any of that?

Hawk. No—but I have nerve, Francis—and that will serve as well.

Francis. Don't be over-confident, my friend! Better try your weapons before hand.

Hawk. I will take good care of myself at the proper time. Tell Mayo, I will soon be ready. Now for business. I want the mortgage foreclosed.

Francis. What! Already! I promised Mr. Bisland to give him a longer time.

Hawk. But you forget the other matter that confronts me. I ought to have my affairs arranged before going on the field of battle.

Francis. True. I had not thought of that.

Hawk. You must see Bisland to-day, and demand payment, in default of which, you must place the matter in the hands of the Sheriff. After that is done—I can think better of giving Mr. Butler satisfaction.

Francis. Of course. As the challenged party, you have the right to determine upon the time and place of meeting.

Hawk. I mean to insist on my rights. But above all things, let the mortgage be foreclosed without delay.

Francis. Very well! I will see to that at once. The money you say, or a peremptory sale? (He rises to go.)

Hawk. Yes! There is no time for sentimentality now.

Francis. You are in dead earnest, I see—and that is surely a display of nerve. Poor Butler!

Hawk. Well Francis—you do your part, and I will do mine.

Francis. I am your man all the way through, Roland! (Shakes hands with him.)

Hawk. I know it, my good fellow! your friendship will never be forgotten. By—bye! (Francis retires, and Hawk bursts into a fit of laughter.) Good! I've thrown dust into his eyes too! Let him blow my horn for a few days longer, and all will be well. There is nothing left for me to do, except to write a few words of instruction to the Sheriff, about the disposition of the money to be realized from the sale of the farm. Every thing else has been transferred by private conveyance—and now, I am ready, as Capt. Portland says, 'to hoist sail'. Ho! for Liverpool—Old England! La Belle France, Rome and its monasteries!—and—well—there's money enough to go round the world ten

times! Money enough, Miss Ludlow, to win the finest lady in the land! Bah! My heart is not broken. It is as hard as yours.

(He sits down to his desk or table to write, and immediately the scene changes into a street of the village for a few minutes, to enable a change of scenery in the rear.)

(Mr. Francis and Mr. Ludlow come out together from a house.)

Ludlow. It was a sudden departure and I am glad the fellow has disappointed you, Francis, as you were engaged in a bad cause. That man Hawk is a fiend,—and anything you can do now to thwart him, will be gratefully appreciated by myself, as well as by the public at large. You have an immense influence among the people, and I beg of you to use it in behalf of my poor friend Bisland.

Francis. Mr. Ludlow, you will permit me to say that I am not the only one who has been deceived by this man's character. It was only yesterday I saw him, and I always took him to be a gentleman and a man of courage, and for that reason was willing to serve him. As I have been made a dupe of, by him, and compromised my name in a measure, I intend now as you suggest, to serve Mr. Bisland to the full extent of my ability. The sale will take place to-day, and I will be promptly on the ground to look after his interest.

Ludlow. This is indeed gratifying to me. Poor Bisland may yet be saved of his home, and your intervention, Mr. Francis, will surely do it. Let us go at once.—

(Exeunt.)

(This short scene is drawn aside for the next regular scene.)

SCENE 2. (*Court House in view—Public Stand, and Placard. A crowd of people assembled.—Sheriff rings a bell, and calls.*)

Sheriff. Attention!—Under a process of law, and pursuant to a decree of the Honorable Court for this District, the Sheriff, by virtue of a writ of seizure, will this day proceed to sell at public auction to the highest bidder, the following property, to-wit:—“The farm, together with all the buildings and improvements thereon, rights, ways and advantages thereunto belonging or in any wise appertaining: Said property known as the *Bisland Farm*, situated within the jurisdiction of said

Honorable Court, to be sold in satisfaction of judgment. Terms, cash on the spot.”—Sale takes place inside, gentlemen, without further delay. (He descends from the stand, goes into the Court House, and is followed by the crowd.)

(Mr. Higgins leaves the crowd, and is met by Butler and Mayo who appear on the scene. Sheriff’s voice heard occasionally.)

Higgins. I can’t go in there, to see another man slaughtered! That is something I never expected to hear of—farmer Bisland sold out for debt—! Why, Sir, I can’t understand it!

Mayo. Not so hard to understand, Higgins. I’m told that Hawk had a mortgage on the place.—

Higgins. A mortgage, for what? Damee Sir, I know the property was free from debt. My old friend Bisland told me so himself!

Mayo. That may be all true. But I do know, that this property is being sold under a judgment obtained by Roland Hawk.—

Butler. The swindler! How many victims does he count here?

Higgins. You are right, Sir. It can’t be nothing else but a swindle. Squire Bisland is too honest a man to owe any one a dollar.

Butler. And I say furthermore, that this man Hawk is a coward, —a poltroon of the first water!

Mayo. Do you know the fellow has fled —and sold out lock, stock and barrel?

Higgins. No! (Eagerly :) How’s that? when was that?

Mayo. Well, do you remember the squabble that occurred at your house, when there came very near being a murder?

Higgins. I do indeed! I never will forget it, Sir. Mrs. Higgins had her *first fit of hysterics that day.*—

Mayo. Well—Butler here, sent him a challenge. Of course we had to keep it quiet. He accepted the challenge but would’nt name the day.

Higgins. The law is against fighting duels, is’nt it?

Butler. Damn the law, if I could have winged the fellow!

Higgins. He would have deserved it! Where is he gone?

Mayo. Mr. Francis, who answers for him, is unable to say. He showed us a note in which Hawk tells him he is

unexpectedly called away; and Francis is so put out about it, I think he is ready to fight himself.

Higgins. Well, gentlemen, I am glad indeed to hear all that. I hope we have got rid of that man!

Butler. That's poor satisfaction for me!

Higgins. All the better, Mr. Butler. If you have run him away without having had to fight with him, I say it's all the better. Oh! this will be glorious news for Mrs. Higgins. If she begins to cry about this here sale, I will just tell her about the runaway, and then I know she will clap her hands for joy—Oh! this is glorious news! Glorious, glorious! (Laughs heartily.)

Mayo. I think, we've seen the last of him. (Sheriff is heard.)

Butler. Come, Frank! Let's attend the sale. (And they go.)

(Dave appears, and is greeted by Mr. Higgins.)

Higgins. Ah, Dave! This is a sad day for the Squire!

Dave. Yes, Mr. Higgins. The poor squire and his lady are waiting now to hear who is master of the farm. And it's me that's got to bring back the news to them. This is the worse job I ever had to do in my whole life! I tried to dodge it—but says the Squire to me—"Dave, my good boy—go to the sale, and let me know who has bought the farm in." Says he, I can't ask any one else to do that for me. It may be the last service you can do for me as Master here," and the old man broke right down, and coul'nt speak any more. (Dave wipes his eyes and Mr. Higgins scratches his head, and clears his throat.) How different everything was a year ago. The squire was happy—his lady was happy—the squire's son was here. But the happy days are all gone now.—

Higgins. Don't you think the squire's bad luck all comes from his son's acquaintance with Roland Hawk?

Dave. To be sure, Sir! It was a dark day when the young man fell in with him. That man was bad in more ways than one. The last time he took the squire's son away with him—and that was but two days before he went to sea,—I watched him. It was in the lane, close by to Mr. Ludlow's garden. What was the spalpeen a doing there, and a skulking around

you ask me? Well, Sir, I will tell you. He was laying snares, and a trying to turn the head of a honest young woman.

Higgins. What! Laying snares for Miss Ludlow?

Dave. Worse than that, Squire! Snares, agin the young woman—who sarves Miss Blanche!

Higgins. The rascal!

Dave. Sallie is a honest girl—and she told me more than you could listen to. If my eyes could av seen it, I would have broke the scoundrel's neck just where I found him. So help me God, I would! Bad luck to you, my fine gentleman, for your devil's tricks agin honest Sallie! (He shakes his fist.)

Higgins. Well, Dave, I've good news for you. The rascal will never trouble you again.

Dave. How so, Squire Higgins? Is'nt he rich and up in the world? And is'nt he free to come and go as he please? We poor folks das'nt speak agin the likes of him.

Higgins. Hear me out, Dave! The fellow is gone,—and I believe will never come back again.

Dave. The Lord be thanked for that! How did it come about Squire? Tell me about it!

Higgins. Well, come over to the Inn, and I will talk to you—We can get the news of the sale there as well as here—

Dave. Squire! I will follow you any where to hear what you've got to say. (Exeunt.)

(Two strangers come in hurriedly on the scene—They appear a little under excitement.)

(The auction sale is progressing—The strangers stop and listen.)

1st Stranger. Here we are at last! See there—a placard! (Points to it, and his companion reads.)

2d Stranger. It is the sale. (Excitedly :) I hope we are in time!

1st Stranger. Lose no time. Bid high, and let it not slip through your hands. It is a rare chance!

2d Stranger. I will buy it, if it takes all my wealth! Come on!

1st Stranger. Give them a broad-side, and no quarter!

(The strangers enter the Court-House.—Mr. Ludlow appears.)

Ludlow. There is no use of my appearing there. The Sheriff has my bid, and if there be no competition, as I have reason to hope there will not be, the property will apparently pass into my hands, neighbor Bisland will be secured of his house, and the mortgagee will not realize one half of his claim. It is a peremptory sale, without conditions, and Francis tells me, the title will be made good. Well, if matters turn out as I wish them, Francis will certainly deserve some credit for the part he has taken. He certainly is more of a friend now to Bisland than to the other man. (Butler and Mayo have appeared on the scene.) Ah, gentlemen! you are just from the sale? What result?

Butler. Sold! Knocked down to a stranger!

Ludlow. What do you tell me! The farm passed into the hands of a stranger! Who can it be?

Mayo. A total stranger to us! The Sheriff was just on the point of knocking down to you, when suddenly a voice was heard in the rear, and five hundred better offered.—

Ludlow. (With disappointment :) This is certainly an unlooked for result! Was Francis there?

Mayo. I saw Francis. He looked rather bewildered.

Butler. The crowd too, seemed dissatisfied. As there was but little competition, the place sold for only half value.

Ludlow. (Excitedly :) What was the Sheriff about? As our plan was frustrated, he should have run it up to the highest figure!

Butler. He was knocked clear off his pins!

Ludlow. It looks like a conspiracy! Gentlemen, let us go to the Inn! These strangers are apt to go there. I will make another effort for poor Bisland. (The crowd come out of the Court House.)

Butler. And I, will do all I can to thwart the villain!

Exeunt.

(This Scene is shut off by a *Roadway*—for change of Scenery in rear.)

1st Stranger. It was a narrow escape anyhow! Five minutes more, and it would have been too late.

2d Stranger. Yes—and it was an inspiration that led me to take up that Portsmouth paper. The advertisement or Sheriff's notice was the first thing that caught my eye. We

have been favored thus far, beyond my most sanguine expectations.

1st Stranger. Here are the forks of the road! Your path lies to the left, and mine to the right. We part here.

2d Stranger. Yes—but to meet again. (They separate and disappear.)

Dave. (Appears.) If I had stayed longer, I might have knowed more about it. But, no one could tell me! Oh, this is a hard, hard life! To work so hard and long, and lose it all in one day. And me! I will lose my Sal! No popping the question now! Why, she'd turn up her nose and tell me to git! Would you be that mean to me Sal? Oh no! She's a honest gal, and would only say, "Dave, you must wait a spell."—Wait! Yes, I will wait til my hair turns gray, if you will wait for me, honey! Here's the forks! This road leads right to my Sal! That one—well, I'll take it! Don't give up the ship Dave, even if she be sinkin! (Exit.)

(This scene is pushed aside, to make place for the final scene.)

SCENE 3. *Home of the Bislands.*

Mrs. Bisland. (In deep mourning, is occupied in knitting.) Husband! Is the home to be sold to-day?—Well, why don't you want to say it? I know the mortgage is pressed against us, and I know you cannot pay it! I have thought it over and over. The wheat has failed and the corn fallen short, in a way that never happened before. I know it is best to give it—it is best that the debts be paid, the debts that our thoughtless Willie in the hour of his weakness made. And he, dear boy, would have paid them—you know it husband as well as I—if the ship had not gone down in the billows, that night, on the dark stormy sea! But somehow, I have not ceased hoping—I have never ceased to pray, that a merciful Providence would shield us here, and save us on this terrible day!

Bisland. Dear wife! You bear it nobly! Need I conceal from you now, that our home is to be sold to-day! There! It is wrong to grieve you so—you have had enough to bear!

Mrs. Bisland. Ah Willie, my baby boy! I hope you cannot see us! It would grieve you to know the trouble that has come to father and me! Husband! How can we leave it, the home we have always known! It seems as if it was breaking my

heart, but the fount of my tears is dry. It may be the man that will own it, will be chopping it down or digging it up and burning it out of the way. Why every bush on the dear old place, is as dear as a tried old friend. No other place in the wide, wide world will ever be half so dear.

Bisland. Dear wife!—Let us grieve only after the dead.

Mrs. Bisland. Yes, yes—I am but a sorry help meet, since I have so childish grown. There—there! (caressingly) go on to the village, and let me have it out alone. (Mr. Bisland goes out sadly.) Poor Thomas! he's growing feeble—he steps so weary and slow! There is not much in his looks to-day like twenty years ago! But I know his heart is youthful, as it was when we were wed, and his love as strong as ever for me, and for Willie—our boy that's dead! Oh Willie! my baby boy—Shall I never see thee more—never hear thy footsteps coming through the open door! I knew when my boy was coming, be it ever so early or late—he was always whistling “Home, sweet home” as he opened the garden gate! And many and many a moment, since the night when the ship went down, have I started up at a whistle like his, out there on the road from town. And in many a night of sorrow, in the silence early and late, have I held my breath at a footstep that seemed to pause at the gate. But now—I am well nigh hopeless, since hope for my boy has fled, for selling the farm means giving him up, and knowing for sure *he's dead*. Hist! I hear footsteps now! Can that be Thomas coming! He usually steps so slow! There's something that sounds like gladness, and the man he used to be! (Mr. Bisland enters smiling.) What Thomas! Why are you smiling? looking so gay and light? Why don't you tell me quickly?—must we go from the farm to-night? (He smiles.) What's that! You bring me tidings, tidings of wonderful joy? Oh Thomas—you cannot mean it! Here—let me look in your face! (He whispers to her)—Tell me again—(She looks around at the open door and sees her son standing there.) It is—(with a joyful cry) Willie!!

(He rushes to his Mother and holds her in his embrace for a minute, and falls on his knee before her.)

Willie.—Oh, Mother dear! Do you forgive me? I have come back to bring you joy! See here, a title deed! It is father's—it is yours! The home is yours forever!—(The mother again embraces her son, and speaks:)

Mrs. Bisland. May God be praised for his mercy to us!—Willie my son! There has been a ministering angel with us all the while in our sorrow—She is here—and in waiting—Come!—Love her, my Son—oh, love her truly! and may Heaven bless you both! (Mother and Son go out.)

Bisland. (Advances to meet Mr. Ludlow who has just entered with Capt. Portland.) Dear Ludlow, I am glad to see you!

Ludlow. I congratulate you, friend Bisland! Let me introduce Capt. Portland, who is anxious to take you by the hand.

Bisland. (Extending his hand.) I bear you no ill will, Captain! You are welcome here!

Capt. Portland. Sir, I could expect to hear nothing less from the father of the noble youth who saved my life!

Bisland. Indeed! Did my son save your life in the shipwreck? The praises of my son sound like sweet music to me, Sir!

Ludlow. Captain, relate the adventure! I know you are a live man now, but I would like to know how near you came to being a dead man!

Capt. P. Willie can tell it better than I. Where is he, Mr. Bisland? But for him, I repeat, I would have been food for the sharks.

Bisland. He is at present with his mother and—sweet heart. (Laughing.)

Capt. P. Let them be happy together! What atonement can I make for having unwittingly caused them so much misery!

Bisland. Say not so, Captain! It has all happened for the best. God in His mercy has ordained that we should sometimes taste of the cup of bitterness, to fully appreciate the magnitude of His power and greatness.

Ludlow. This has also been a severe test of Willie's courage and devotion. I am better satisfied, Bisland, to give my daughter away to such a man, than to one who has never known the troubles and disappointments of life.

Capt. P. Very true, Sir. It is aptly said, that "It is an ill wind that blows no one good."

Ludlow. Bisland! The Captain and I have agreed to take your son, the late super cargo of our ship, into partnership with us.

Capt. P. Yes, Sir, he will henceforth be third owner of our new ship!

Bisland. Gentlemen, your generosity exceeds all bounds! Is Willie aware of his good fortune?

Capt. P. I have no family of my own, Sir, and he has become my son by adoption—therefore he inherits all I've got. I have told him so—(Willie enters with his mother on one arm and Blanche on the other.)

Willie. Captain! Here is my mother, who is very anxious to know you!

Capt. P. Madam, will you permit me to congratulate you on the happy restoration of your son?

Mrs. Bisland. I thank you, Sir, for your good wishes as well as for your friendship for my boy.

Capt. P. But what think you ladies of my taking him off to sea again? I have a new ship!

Mrs. Bisland. (Aghast.) Oh, do not think of it, Sir!

Blanche. (Amazed.) You cannot be speaking seriously!

Willie. Capt. Portland's well known ideas of the disqualification of married men for the sea precludes any thought of seriousness!

Capt. P. (Abruptly.) But you are not a married man, Sir.

Willie. Soon to be though! (Smiling on Blanche. She conceals herself behind Mrs. Bisland.)

Mrs. Bisland. Oh fie, gentlemen! Spare her blushes!

Dave. (Appears.) Mr. Higgins and his wife are without!

Bisland. Admit them, Dave!—They are honest folks, and have not been here for a long time. (They enter.) Welcome, friends—welcome!

Higgins. I heard of your good luck, Squire, and me and Mrs. Higgins could'nt help coming—

Mrs. Bisland. (Offering Mrs. Higgins a seat.) It was kind of you to come with Mr. Higgins!

Mrs. Higgins. Well, I'm right glad to see that boy back again!

Willie. Thank you, Ma'am!

Mrs. Higgins. Ah Sir! Many a fret have I had about you—Ask Mr. Higgins there!

Higgins. (Looking rather disconcerted.) Well Sir! Mrs. Higgins has always had a level head about most things you know! The Inn couldn't well go without her!

Mrs. Higgins. Neither could Sam Higgins, you'd better say!

Capt. P. I will testify to that, Mrs. Higgins. You are as indispensable to your husband as a rudder to a ship.

Higgins. Well said, Captain! And she's all spread too when her sails are flapping! (Laughs.)

Mrs. Higgins. (Astonished.) *Mr. Higgins!*

Bisland. Never mind them, Mrs. Higgins. They speak only to your advantage. What say you, Ludlow?

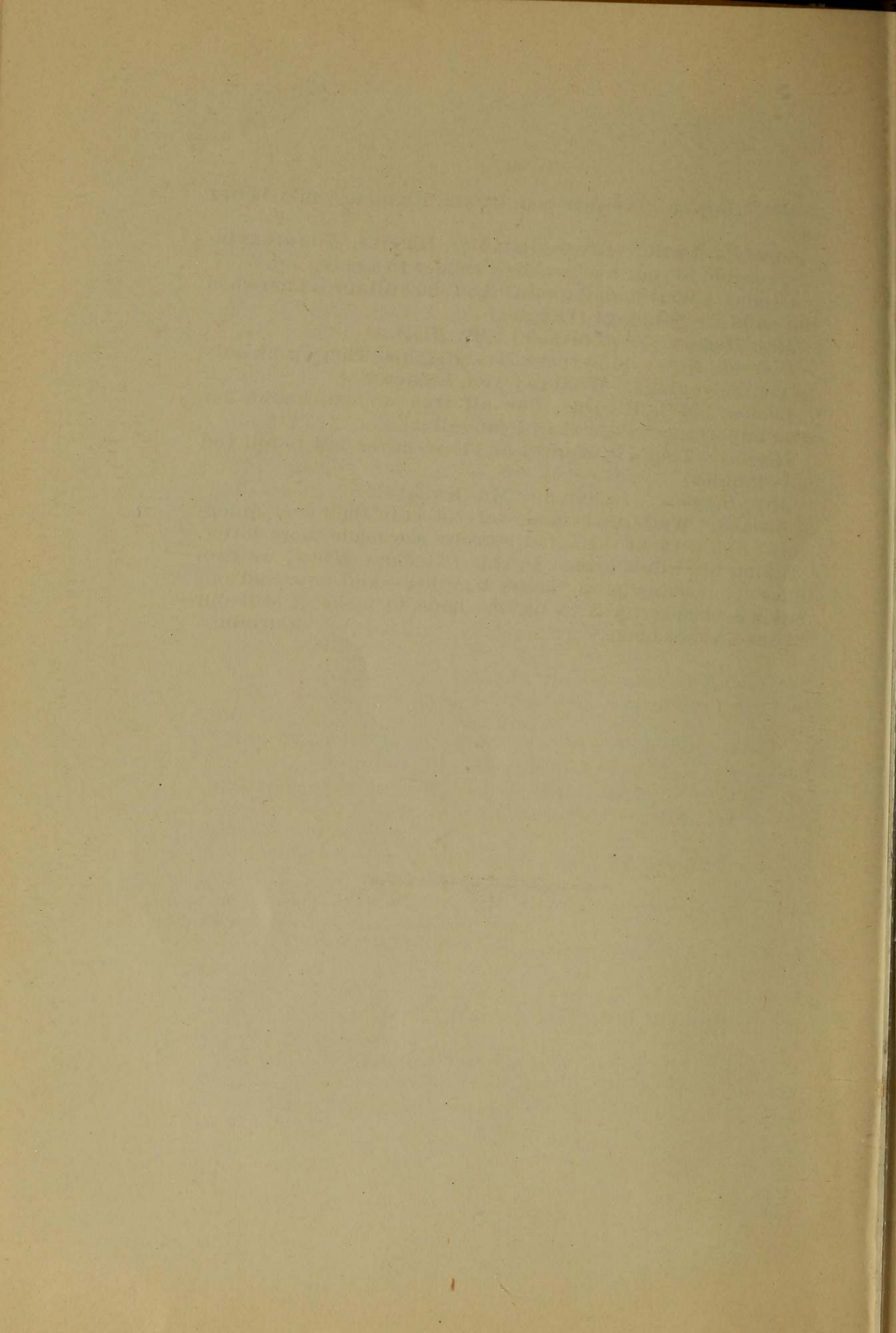
Ludlow. Mrs. Higgins, like all true women, knows her own importance better than I can tell it!

Higgins. That's it, Squire! and they never fail to tell you so--(laughs.)

Mrs. Higgins. (Irritated.) MR. HIGGINS!!

Bisland. Well, life is made very sweet in their companionship; and without them, our sorrows are made more bitter. (Taking his wife's arm.) In this *Old Farm House*, we two, have spent many happy hours together—and now that our boy has been restored to us, we hope to make it still our "Home, sweet home."
Curtain.







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