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SF PERUSALS

Tons of Money

A Farce in Three Acts

Will Evans and Arthur Valentine

A Samuel French Acting Edition

SAMUEL FRENCH
FOUNDED 1830

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TONS OF MONEY

Produced at the Opera House, Southport, on March 20th, 1922. Transferred to the Shaftesbury Theatre, London, on April 13th, 1922, and to the Aldwych Theatre, London, on October 30th, 1922. The play was withdrawn on January 29th, 1924, after a run of 733 performances.

CHARACTERS

(*In Order of Appearance*)

SPRULES (a Butler)	*Mr. George Barrett.*
SIMPSON (a Parlourmaid)	*Miss Ena Mason.*
MISS BENITA MULLETT	*Miss Mary Brough.*
LOUISE ALLINGTON	*Miss Yvonne Arnaud.*
AUBREY HENRY MAITLAND ALLINGTON	*Mr. Ralph Lynn.*
GILES (a Gardener)	*Mr. Willie Warde.*
JAMES CHESTERMAN (a Solicitor)	*Mr. J. Robertson Hare*
JEAN EVERARD	*Miss Madge Saunders.*
HENERY	*Mr. Tom Walls.*
GEORGE MAITLAND	*Mr. Sydney Lynn.*

SCENES

ACT I

SCENE.—*Aubrey Henry Maitland Allington's house at Marlow.*

(*Three weeks elapse between Acts I and II.*)

ACT II

SCENE.—*The same.* (*Afternoon.*)

(*One day elapses between Acts II and III.*)

ACT III

SCENE.—*The same.* (*Late afternoon.*)

TONS OF MONEY

ACT I

SCENE.—*Library of* AUBREY HENRY MAITLAND ALLINGTON'S *house at Marlow. The room is handsomely furnished.*

At back C.—*somewhat deeply recessed—double French windows, approached from the room by shallow steps, open to a terrace, and command a view of the river and the landscape beyond. In the recess and to the* L. *of the window, built into the wall, is a bookcase, and below this, in the angle of the room facing the audience, a door.*

At the extreme L. *of the room is a low-backed arm-chair, and behind it, against the wall, a bronze statuette with an electrolier. Below the window* L.C. *a large settle couch with cushions is set at an angle facing* R., *and immediately above it, and at its* R. *end, a small, square table on which is a telephone.*

In the R. *wall of the window recess, facing the bookcase, is a low cabinet, and in the wall above it a speaking-tube. On the* R. *of this, in the wall facing the audience, stands a grandfather's clock.*

On the R. *of the clock,* R.C. *in the back flat, are large double doors which lead to a passage from which a stairway rises to the* R., *and at the foot of the stairway a large leaded window.*

The square, stone fireplace is in the R. *wall, with bronze and irons in the hearth and a fender stool against the high curb. Above it a small dinner waggon.*

R.C. *is a gate-legged table, which at the rise of the curtain is laid for breakfast: there is a small chair above it and one is set on its* R.

A winged arm-chair immediately below the fireplace and a smaller one facing it.

The room has a high panelling, and the plain walls above this are decorated with tapestries.

TIME.—*Morning.*

(*As the* CURTAIN *rises the telephone bell rings; after a slight pause it rings again—enter* SPRULES *through double doors; he is dressed in butler's morning clothes, is severe and precise in his manner, is slightly grey and wears side-whiskers. He carries a silver salver which he puts down as he takes up the telephone.*)

SPRULES. Hello! Hello! Yes, this is Mr. Allington's house. No, sir, the master isn't down yet. I expect him any hour now, sir. What name please, sir? Ches—Chester—Mr. Chesterman. Very good, sir. I'll tell him you rang up. (*Replaces receiver and goes to breakfast table, picks up letters, writs, etc.*)

(*Enter* Simpson *through double doors carrying tray with hot dishes, coffee and milk, which she places on sideboard, up stage* R. *She is a smart parlourmaid.*)

Simpson. Anything excitin', Mr. Sprules?

Sprules. Nothing much! (*Taking up letters.*) Hello, here we are again. Bill! Bill! Bill! (*Smells one.*) Lady! (*Glances over other letters.*) And more bills!

Simpson. Who's got most? (*Puts hot plates on breakfast table.*)

Sprules. About fifty-fifty.

Simpson. I never saw such a 'ouse.
Sprules. And you never will again.
Simpson. Do they ever pay anybody?
Sprules (L.). Not if they can help it.
(*During this, business of arranging breakfast table.*)

Simpson (R.). I wonder the blooming creditors waste paper and ink sending the bills in. (*Placing hot coffee and milk on table.*)

Sprules. Creditors, Miss Simpson, are like fishermen and lovers, they exist on hopes.

(*Enter* Miss Benita Mullett *from the garden. She is an elderly lady dressed in black or mauve, white hair and spectacles. She is very prim in manner, but always speaks abruptly, very deaf and rather fussy. She comes down* L.)

Miss Mullett. Simpson, have you seen my knitting?

Simpson. No, ma'am. (*Placing toast rack on table.*)

Miss Mullett. One can't keep anything in this house. (*Crosses in front of table* R.C. *to* R., *sees breakfast table.*) What! Breakfast not over yet!

Simpson. Master and mistress just coming down, ma'am.

Miss Mullett. What!

Sprules (*loudly*). Master and mistress are just coming down, ma'am. (*Places chair for* Aubrey *at back of table which is set for two.*)

Miss Mullett. All right, don't shout, I'm not deaf. (*Takes morning paper from back of chair set at* R. *of table for* Louise.)

(*Exit* Simpson *through double doors.*)

I never saw such a house! When I was a girl we always had breakfast at eight o'clock. (*Sits in chair down* R. *near fireplace.*)

(*Enter* Mrs. Louise Allington *from staircase. She is a young and pretty woman of about four-and-twenty, very smartly dressed.*)

Louise. Good morning, Auntie Ben! (*Round* L. *of table to* Miss Mullett).

Miss Mullett (*severely*). Good afternoon, my dear. (*Gives her cheek to be kissed.*)

(LOUISE *kisses her cheek.*)

D'you know it's eleven o'clock.

LOUISE. Well, dear, what of it? (*Sits down* R. *of table and begins to look at her letters.*)

(SPRULES, *who has remained at top of table, takes the covers off dishes and exits through double doors.*)

MISS MULLETT. Where's your husband?

LOUISE (*reading letter*). Aubrey will be down soon—he's in his bath.

MISS MULLETT. The hours you and Aubrey keep, my dear, are a perfect disgrace.

LOUISE. I loathe early rising.

MISS MULLETT. The early bird catches the worm, my dear.

LOUISE. Well, if there's only one worm, auntie, why should I spoil the market. (*Pouring out coffee.*)

MISS MULLETT. Your husband is worse than you are!

LOUISE. Aubrey has the artistic temperament.

MISS MULLETT. What's that?

(*Enter* AUBREY HENRY MAITLAND ALLINGTON *down staircase and through double doors. He is a tall clean-shaven man of about thirty-five. He wears a smart lounge suit and monocle, and has a careless off-hand manner. He goes up to window, stands with his back to the audience, business of inhaling the air and doing dumb-bell exercises. He then comes down stage.*)

AUBREY. That's wonderful! Those bath salts have gone straight to my head. (*Comes down and goes to* LOUISE.) Good morning, all. (*At his place at table, taking cover off entrée dish.*) Good morning, fish; good afternoon, rolls. (*Picking up bills.*) Good night, bills. (*Noticing* MISS MULLETT.) Good morning, Auntie Ben . . . (*Goes* R. *He places his finger on her cheek and makes a kissing noise with his lips.*) Brighter London! The warmth of her welcome quite unnerves me. (*Sits at breakfast table centre back.*)

LOUISE (*reading*). Here's a letter from Cousin Jean, Aubrey. She's coming for the week-end.

AUBREY. I've got bad news too. (*Flourishing letters.*)

MISS MULLETT. I was just asking what the artistic temperament was, Aubrey.

AUBREY. The artistic temperament, Auntie Ben, is a disinclination to work, and an aversion to soap and water.

LOUISE. I'm sorry, dear. I just said you had it.

AUBREY. Oh, darling, don't say that! I wear my hair short, and have two baths a day. (*Serves fish to* LOUISE *and himself.*)

LOUISE (*reading letter*). You know, Aubrey, I'm fed up with this woman.

AUBREY. Cousin Jean

Louise. No, this dressmaker of mine.

Aubrey. Wants money?

Louise. Yes.

Aubrey. I'll send her a cheque.

Louise. Don't be silly, dear, it wouldn't be met.

Aubrey. I beg your pardon, the day the bank refuses to meet my cheques, I shall take my overdraft elsewhere.

Miss Mullett (*reading newspaper, not heeding their conversation*). An extensive V-shaped depression is rapidly approaching from the North Sea.

Aubrey. That's Cousin Jean.

Miss Mullett (*still reading*). Stormy weather may be expected. Louise, you had better see about my goloshes.

(*During this* Aubrey *takes writ out of envelope.*)

Louise. Yes, auntie, I will. (*To* Aubrey.) What's that funny paper you've got there?

Aubrey. That's a writ.

Louise. Really, what for?

Aubrey. For those cigars you gave me on my last birthday.

Louise. It's a pity you smoke so much, Aubrey.

Aubrey. Smoke! I gave those cigars to the gardener. He's cleared the garden of blight. (*Reading from another letter.*) Now what the dickens does this mean?

Louise. Does what mean?

(*Enter* Sprules *from doors* R., *comes down* L. *of table.*)

Sprules. Oh, I forgot to tell you, sir, a Mr. Chesterman rang up this morning.

Aubrey (*reading*). Any message?

Sprules. He asked if you were down, sir, and I said you weren't up.

Aubrey (*laughing*). You mean he asked if I was up, and you said I wasn't down. That's very good! (*Attempts to shake hands, then realizes that it is* Sprules *he is talking to.*)

Sprules. Er—yes, sir.

Aubrey. All right, Sprules.

Sprules. Very good, sir.

(*Exit* Sprules R. *through double doors.*)

Aubrey. He must be the fellow who's written this letter. (*Reading.*) Chesterman, Chesterman & Chesterman, Lincoln's Inn Fields.

Louise. Why do West End solicitors always have three names in the firms?

Aubrey. All the most dangerous things go in threes. Three Star brandy. Three-card trick. Three brass balls.

LOUISE. What does it say?

AUBREY (*reading*). "Dear Sir——" (*To* LOUISE, *aside.*) He calls me dear. "Our Mr. James Chesterman will call on you to-morrow morning at eleven o'clock to acquaint you with a matter of considerable importance to yourself. Faithfully yours, Chesterman, Chesterman (*turning over letter*) & Chesterman." (*Thoughtfully.*) Now is that a threat or a promise?

LOUISE. He's either got some money to give us, or else wants some of ours.

AUBREY. Darling, he's a solicitor.

MISS MULLETT. Who's a solicitor?

LOUISE. Mr. Chesterman, auntie.

MISS MULLETT. Who's Mr. Chesterman?

AUBREY (*standing*). The fellow we're talking about.

MISS MULLETT. Why?

AUBREY (*loudly and impatiently*). He's coming here.

MISS MULLETT. Don't shout, I'm not deaf. When's he coming?

AUBREY. Any moment.

MISS MULLETT. What?

AUBREY. Any moment!

MISS MULLETT. Then I'm going. (*Turns up towards double doors.*) My father used to say lawyers were like leeches,

(AUBREY *rises and goes to open doors for her.*)

only leeches do let you go sometimes.

(*Exit* MISS MULLETT *through double doors.*)

AUBREY (*resuming breakfast*). I love having Auntie Ben here, she worries me to death. (*Sitting down.*)

LOUISE. Poor dear Auntie, she means well.

AUBREY (*reading letter*). Does she; then, of course, there's no hope for her.

LOUISE. By the way, dear, Jannaway——

AUBREY. January?

LOUISE. No, Jannaway!—called yesterday to see you. He wondered if you've forgotten you owe him a £100.

AUBREY. Tell him I have quite forgotten it.

LOUISE. I've a letter here from Robinson too—

AUBREY. Robinson Crusoe?

LOUISE (*holding letter*). —saying that if his account isn't paid next week, he'll commence proceedings.

AUBREY. Well, I'm not stopping him.

LOUISE. No; but, Aubrey, do be serious. One can't run bills for ever.

AUBREY. One can try.

LOUISE. What about your new invention?

AUBREY. Which one, the hair restorer, the blasting powder, or the rat remover?

LOUISE. The blasting powder.

AUBREY. Oh! Gadinite? That's going to make our fortune

LOUISE. Fortune! How?

AUBREY. Why, it's the most wonderful explosive that's ever been dreamt of. Now say you're making a railway.

LOUISE. I'm making a railway.

AUBREY. No, darling, I don't want you to say it. I mean imagine you're making a railway, you come to a mountain, what do you do?

LOUISE. Look at it.

AUBREY. No, blast it . . . when you've done that the mountain's gone.

LOUISE. Where's it gone to?

AUBREY. Blown sky-high! D'you realize (*impressively*) that one pinch of this powder, just as much as you could put on a . . . sixpence, is enough to blow up the whole of half London—er—er—the half of whole London.

LOUISE (*awestruck*). Aubrey, are you going to sell your blasted powder in sixpenny packets?

AUBREY (*laughing*). It's going to make our fortune, that's all.

LOUISE. Why, it'll be worth . . . what will it be worth, Aubrey?

AUBREY. One million and four pounds.

LOUISE. Aubrey, but surely you can't be certain of the four.

AUBREY. It's the four I am certain of.

LOUISE (*after a pause*). Then why not give a dinner-party to all the people we owe money to? . . .

AUBREY. We'd have to take the Albert Hall.

LOUISE. And tell them about your new invention. It might keep them quiet.

AUBREY. You don't seem to realize that the people we've got to invite are the people we've got to go to to supply the dinner.

LOUISE. But that's my point. We invite them to dinner and order the materials for the dinner from them. If they refuse our orders they won't get any dinner, and if they accept them they will be sure to come.

AUBREY. Knowing they never get paid in any case.

(GILES *appears at French windows. He is a typical old gardener, wearing flannel shirt, corduroy trousers, green baize apron and heavy boots. He is carrying his hat, in which are three eggs.*)

LOUISE. I think it's a fine idea. I think I'm going to write something like this: "Dear Mr. Brown, Will you and your wife come and dine with us on Thursday. P.S. Kindly send me up a case of champagne." They can't refuse.

(GILES *comes down stage.*)

AUBREY. I shan't know what to talk to them about.

LOUISE. It doesn't matter, we owe them all money. They'll have lots in common; besides, think how Jean will enjoy it.

AUBREY. Yes, I don't suppose she knows a third of the people we owe money to.

(*By this time* GILES *has reached the settle and very slowly takes the eggs one by one and places them on a cushion on settle.*)

LOUISE. Well, Giles?

GILES (*taking his time to answer*). Eggs! (*Ambles slowly up stage.*)

(*Exit through French windows.*)

(AUBREY *and* LOUISE *both watching him intently until he disappears.*)

AUBREY. Little chatterbox! Why does he lay the eggs in here —er—bring the eggs in here?

LOUISE. Poor old soul, he's proposed to cook and she's refused him, so he won't go near the kitchen. (*Looking round the room.*) Of course it's the expense of this big place that's doing all the mischief.

AUBREY. Don't be silly, darling, there's only one way to get credit, that is make people believe you've got miles more money than you have.

LOUISE. They can easily do that with us; look at this room for instance, anyone coming in here . . .

AUBREY. Well, what's wrong with this? (*Taking up letter.*) That coat-of-arms isn't right, I admit, (*indicating one over fireplace*) it ought to be a couple of bailiffs rampant. (*Reading letter.*) Oh, Lord, that's done it . . .

LOUISE. Done what?

AUBREY. That account of Mannerings, they got judgment against us, you know; this letter says that unless that £500 is paid within a week I'm bankrupt. Don't worry, darling, that's a bit of fun.

LOUISE. It's not much use giving that dinner then.

(*Enter* SPRULES *through double doors, stands* R. *of doorway.*)

SPRULES. Mr. Chesterman, sir.

AUBREY (*rising*). More trouble.

(*Enter* JAMES CHESTERMAN *through double doors. He is a clean-shaven man, very precise in manner, neatly dressed, gold pince-nez, carries attaché-case, hands his silk hat to* SPRULES *on entering.*)

(*Exit* SPRULES *through double doors.*)

CHESTERMAN (*crossing down left behind* AUBREY, *who is seated at table*). Mr. Allington?

(Aubrey *bus., of turning* R., *misses* Chesterman *on entering. On hearing his voice turns* L., *and sees him standing* L.)

Aubrey. Ah, there you are, Mr. Chesterman. (*Shakes hands.*)

Louise (*rising*). I'd better go, Aubrey.

Aubrey. No, no, no. Stay, dear. Mr. Chesterman, my wife, my fish. (*Takes attaché-case from* Chesterman, *walks round looking for somewhere to place it, finally hands it back to* Chesterman.) Will you have some breakfast?

Chesterman. No, thank you, I always breakfast at eight.

Aubrey. We always dine at eight. Please sit down. (*Indicating settle.*) Oh, excuse me. (*Takes eggs from cushion and places them in ash tray on table* L.C.) The gardener laid these—er—er—put them there.

Chesterman (*sitting on settle*). I wrote you last night, Mr. Allington. My name is Chesterman, of the firm of Chesterman, Chesterman & Chesterman of Lincoln's Inn Fields.

Aubrey (*sits at breakfast table*). Yes. I've just this moment opened your letter.

Chesterman. You'll permit me to ask you a few questions?

Aubrey. Certainly, certainly and certainly.

Chesterman. I'm right, I think, in believing that you are Aubrey Henry Maitland Allington?

Aubrey. Yes, all of them. (*Brings his chair to* R.C., *puts serviette and plate on his knee, going on with his breakfast.*)

Chesterman. Son of the late Charles Maitland Allington of Wintercroft in the county of Devon.

Aubrey. I've always understood so.

Chesterman. You have a brother, John Whittingham Allington.

Aubrey (*tersely*). Yes, but that's not my fault.

Chesterman. Please answer my question, Mr. Allington. Is that so?

Aubrey. I regret to say it is.

Chesterman. That is an expression I can neither endorse nor contradict.

Aubrey. You never knew my brother.

Chesterman. I didn't.

Aubrey. Obviously.

Chesterman. Mr. Allington, your brother I believe once did you some injury.

Aubrey. You're right. (*Putting plate back on table and rising.*) It was *some* injury. He married the only girl I ever loved!

Louise. Aubrey! (*Springing up.*)

Aubrey. Oh, before I met you. (*Takes up entrée-dish and polishes it unconsciously.*)

Louise. Yes, but you never told me.

Aubrey. I was too broke—broken-hearted. My brother's last action—Mr. Chesterman, my brother's last action——

CHESTERMAN. Mr. Allington, your brother's last action was to—die a week ago. (*Standing down, a little* L.)

AUBREY (*crossing* R. *to fireplace*). I'm sorry!

CHESTERMAN. Your brother has left you——

AUBREY (*scornfully*). His kind wishes?

CHESTERMAN. A life interest in his entire fortune.

(*Business of trying to put his hand in his pocket.*)

LOUISE (*standing by her chair, in surprise*). A life interest in his entire fortune?

CHESTERMAN. Yes, madam—expressing at the same time his sincere regrets for any injury he might have done you.

(*There is a pause.*)

LOUISE (*thoughtfully*). I wonder if it's too late to send the dear fellow a nice wreath?

AUBREY (*to* LOUISE). Allow me, dear, the head of the house. Mr. Chesterman, what can I say? (*Crosses* L.C. *in front of table.*)

LOUISE (*reprovingly*). Nothing, dear.

AUBREY. Nothing, dear.

CHESTERMAN. The estate—I am quoting from figures sent me from Mexico—amounts roughly to four hundred and seventy thousand dollars. (*Sits* C. *of settle.*)

AUBREY (*excitedly walking up and down stage* C.) Four—hundred and seventy thousand—dollars!!!

CHESTERMAN. Yes.

(AUBREY *gazes at him for a moment and then begins to laugh,* LOUISE *joining in.*)

AUBREY (*cross* L.). I'll buy it.

CHESTERMAN (*puzzled*). You'll buy what, Mr. Allington?

AUBREY. Yes—I mean, what am I expected to say? (*About to rest his foot on settle—does so on telephone table—realizes his mistake—then puts it down.*)

CHESTERMAN. I'm afraid I don't understand you.

AUBREY. Well, what's the joke?

CHESTERMAN. Mr. Allington, I don't know what you're driving at. If you are casting aspersions on my—— (*Rises.*)

AUBREY (*seeing* CHESTERMAN *is getting rattled, smoothes his head*). No, no, no! I beg your pardon! But is it really true?

CHESTERMAN. Here is the will. (*Takes will from pocket.*)

(AUBREY *takes will from* CHESTERMAN; LOUISE *in turn, advancing to* R.C., *takes it from* AUBREY.)

AUBREY. And it amounts to what, you say?

CHESTERMAN. As far as can be at present ascertained, four hundred and seventy thousand dollars.

LOUISE. I think he might have left it in pounds. (*Studying will, below table* R.C.)

CHESTERMAN. In Mexico they speak of everything in dollars, madam. (*Goes* L.)

LOUISE. Are there sixteen dollars to the pound, Aubrey, same as ounces?

AUBREY. It depends on the height of the sea-level, darling.

CHESTERMAN. Your interest, Mr. Allington, is only a life one.

AUBREY. That won't worry me. (*Goes up stage.*)

(LOUISE *sits* R. *of table, listening.*)

CHESTERMAN. In the event of your death, the money passes to your cousin, George Maitland of Mexico.

AUBREY. He'll never get it. (*Coming down* C.)

CHESTERMAN. And why not, pray?

AUBREY. He's gone to a place where they don't issue return tickets.

CHESTERMAN. I beg your pardon.

AUBREY. Cousin George had a sticky end in a whisky saloon in Mexico.

CHESTERMAN. So I've heard, Mr. Allington, but no one seems to know positively what actually occurred.

AUBREY. The only other party who could tell us, Mr. Chesterman, was so full of George's bullets that he had no further interest in the proceedings.

CHESTERMAN. All the same we have no actual proof of death.

AUBREY. No, George had the proof.

CHESTERMAN. All the same, we are advertising for him.

AUBREY. Well, unless they issue asbestos editions I don't think it will reach him.

CHESTERMAN. Still, Mr. Allington, dead or alive, let's hope he won't be wanted for a long time.

AUBREY. I entirely agree.

CHESTERMAN. And now I must leave you, merely congratulating you on your good fortune, and hoping you will both live long to enjoy it. (LOUISE *rises, going up* R.)

(*During this* AUBREY *takes* CHESTERMAN'S *hand, notes he is wearing a ring, and examines it closely.*)

AUBREY (*shaking hands*). Spoken like a true friend and a Special Constable. (*Unconsciously taking up an egg from the table, and offering it to* CHESTERMAN.) Have an egg? Oh, I beg your pardon. (*Sits* L.)

CHESTERMAN (*crossing to* LOUISE, *who is standing up stage* R.). Good-bye, Mrs. Allington. (*Shakes hands.*) I will leave you that

copy of the will. (*Indicating will on breakfast table.*) If there is any immediate advance——

AUBREY. What's that?

LOUISE. Immediate advance, dear.

AUBREY (*excitedly—crossing to* CHESTERMAN *as he goes towards double doors*). Oh, yes, yes, certainly, make it as immediate as possible. Good-bye, Mr. Chesterman, good-bye. It can't be too immediate.

(*Exit* CHESTERMAN *through double doors.*)

(AUBREY *standing at double doors, shouts after him.*)

Good-bye, Mr. Chesterman! Take any hat you like!

(LOUISE *comes down* R., AUBREY *comes down* C., *both showing great excitement. They stand facing one another.*)

LOUISE. Aubrey, I think I want to scream or dance!

AUBREY. Well, darling, scream and dance, we can afford it, now!

(*Both rush to one another, embrace, laughing loudly and excitedly.*)

(*Enter* SPRULES *hurriedly through double doors; he stands* R.C., *amazed, as they both stop guiltily.* AUBREY *is looking over* LOUISE'S *shoulder.*)

SPRULES (R.). Did you call, sir?

AUBREY (L.C.). No, n-no, Sprules, we were merely screaming, that's all.

SPRULES. Very good, sir.

(SPRULES, *looking puzzled, exits and closes the door.*)

(LOUISE *and* AUBREY *resume their former excitement,* AUBREY *throws cushions about, takes pile of letters, bills, etc., from table.*)

AUBREY. Look, darling. (*Throws bills in the air.*) There they go, full pack. (*Falls into his chair at table* R.C.) I feel better now.

LOUISE (*falling into arm-chair* R.). So do I.

AUBREY. Now where's that will? (*Not seeing it at first, is perturbed.*) Darling, it was here a minute ago. I haven't thrown it away, have I?

LOUISE (*helping him to find it, picks up writ from table.*) Here it is, darling.

AUBREY (*taking it from her, and throwing it back on the table*). No, that's a summons, dear. Ah, there's the will. (*Taking it from table.*) Now, let's have a look at it. (*He becomes very important, pulls his chair to* L. *of table.*) Don't get excited, darling; have you never had money left you before? I have, all mine's left me. (*Reading from will—places his foot on chair* L. *of table.*) I, John Whittingham Allington, being of sound mind . . .

Louise. What, dear? (*Coming behind table and looking over his shoulder.*)

Aubrey. Being of sound mind, dear. They have to put that in to account for his going to a solicitor.

Louise. I see.

Aubrey. I give, bequeath and devise all my real and personal estate of which I may die possessed or to whom I may hereinafter become entitled together with all lands, estates, here—here—dit . . .

Louise. Here-dit-a-ments.

Aubrey. Here-dit-a-ments, tenements, massages . .

Louise. Mes*suages*.

Aubrey. Sewages or any other properties.

Louise. I see now why they put that bit in about the sound mind.

Aubrey. Never mind, we don't want to understand it. We'll take a month's holiday and study it. (*Folds it up and places it in drawer of table by settle* L.C.) Four hundred and seventy thousand dollars. (*Turning and taking* Louise's *hands.*)

Louise. Four hundred and seventy thousand dollars.

Aubrey. That's about one hundred and twenty thousand pounds, about six thousand a year. Why, it's a fortune! (*Picks up receiver of telephone.*) Am I there? Yes. (*Replaces receiver.*)

Louise. There's simply nothing we can't afford. (*Sitting arm-chair* R.)

Aubrey. One hundred and twenty thousand pounds! We can pay off every bill we owe. (*Goes to settle.*)

Louise. What's that?

Aubrey. I say we can pay off every bill we owe. (*Sitting on settle.*)

Louise. Yes, but——

Aubrey. But what, we've got tons of money. (*On settle.*)

Louise (*deliberately*). But we owe tons of money, Aubrey, and by the time we've paid for the tons of money, there won't be any tons of money left. (*Rises and stands by breakfast table.*)

Aubrey. And we'll be bankrupt next week. (*Rises. Gets* C.)

Louise. It will all be taken by the official retriever.

Aubrey. Oh, Lord, I'd forgotten that.

Louise. But our creditors won't. (*Sits chair* R. *of table* R.C.)

Aubrey. They'll simply swarm round us now. (*Sits on chair he has moved to* L. *of table.*)

Louise. Of course they will.

Aubrey. Like a flock of wasps.

Louise. Do wasps flock, Aubrey?

Aubrey. Yes, if they want to.

Louise. Oh, I never knew they did.

Aubrey. Whom do we owe money to?

Louise. Every one we've ever dealt with.

Aubrey. Shall I make a list? (*Picking up an envelope from table* R.C., *crosses* L.)

LOUISE. Of the people we owe money to?

AUBREY (*turning to her*). No, of the people we don't—it would be miles quicker.

LOUISE. Aubrey, don't fool. (*Goes up stage* R.C.) It's too serious.

AUBREY. It's perfectly disgusting, you know, the way people give credit. (*Sits on settle.*)

LOUISE (*walks round up to French windows*). I think they ought to make it a criminal offence.

AUBREY. They simply don't deserve to be paid!

LOUISE. Besides, think how hurt your brother would be if he thought we'd used his money to give to people he didn't even know. (*Coming down* C.)

AUBREY. Well, what are we to do?

LOUISE. Is it necessary for our creditors to know we've come into money? (*Crosses* R.)

AUBREY. My dear girl, how can we prevent it? They're bound to know.

LOUISE. Yes, I suppose so.

AUBREY. Of course they'd know if I had five shillings. They'd know like a shot.

(*Pause.*)

LOUISE (*suddenly*). Aubrey, I've got an idea!

AUBREY. What?

LOUISE. What happens if you die?

AUBREY. I shall probably be buried.

LOUISE. Don't be absurd! I mean, who gets the money?

AUBREY. George Maitland, my first cousin. Chesterman just told us so!

LOUISE. But you say he's dead.

AUBREY. So he is.

LOUISE. Sure?

AUBREY. Absolutely. Positive!

LOUISE. Then why not—bring him—to life again. (*One knee on chair* R.C., *as she faces* AUBREY, *who is still seated on settle.*)

AUBREY. D'you think I'm a corpse reviver?

LOUISE. You're very dense, dear! If once we can kill *you*——

AUBREY. Eh?

LOUISE. If once we can make people believe you're dead, you can come to life again as George Maitland, your cousin, and claim all the money.

(AUBREY *contemplates her slowly as her meaning dawns on him.*)

AUBREY. By Jove, what a brain wave. (*Rises, crosses to* LOUISE.)

LOUISE. That's what I thought.

AUBREY. You mean——? Let's figure this out!

(Aubrey *takes* Louise *to settle, they sit down close to each other.* Aubrey *down stage.*)

Louise. You've got to die! And there must be no mistake about it.

Aubrey. But how am I going to die?

Louise. Never mind that now. You're dead!

Aubrey. Yes.

Louise. Your will is read. You leave everything to me!

Aubrey. But, darling, there's nothing to leave.

Louise. Exactly, that's what I'm driving at!

Aubrey. What's the good if there's—— Oh, I see! And so the poor dog had none. (*Points to bills on table.*) The Retriever!

Louise. Quite so. Exit crowd of sorrowing creditors.

(Aubrey *goes* c. *Both burst out laughing.* Louise *remains seated on settle.*)

Aubrey. Can't you see them all coming to the funeral with eyes full of writs and pockets full of tears? (*Imitating a Jewish moneylender's walk.*) Well, I'm dead—now what happens? (*Sits again, close to* Louise.)

Louise. Now George Maitland appears.

Aubrey. I see—that's me.

Louise. Exactly—what's George like?

(Aubrey *crosses to sideboard* r., *and brings family album out of drawer, comes down* c.)

Aubrey. I've got a photograph of the whole family—dating from 1784—with finger-prints. There you are—that's George as he was before he went to Mexico. (*Business of turning pages over and over.*)

(Louise *rises and comes* c., *looks very closely at photographs—pages touch the end of her nose.*)

And here's the photo he sent after he'd been out there a few years.

Louise. Oh, is that George? How tall is he?

Aubrey. Oh, he's a fine-looking, big strapping chap—just about my build. (*Bracing himself up as he says this.*)

Louise. Could you make yourself look like that, Aubrey?

Aubrey. Oh, easily.

Louise. But he's quite good looking.

Aubrey. Exactly.

Louise. Then that's settled. (*Puts album on settle.*) Chesterman has advertised for you, I mean for George. (*She sits on settle.*)

Aubrey. Yes, don't you remember he said so? (*Sits on settle.*)

(*Both on settle,* Aubrey *up stage end of settle.*)

Louise. Well then, after you're dead, wait a few weeks, and then

send a wire to Chesterman: "Just landed in England. Seen your advertisement. I am on my way down. George Maitland."

AUBREY. Shall I be able to stay here?

LOUISE. Of course! We're cousins!

AUBREY. And after everything's fixed up, we can get married.

LOUISE. How ripping! (*Sits closer to* AUBREY—*affectionately.*) Fancy having a second honeymoon with one's own husband.

AUBREY. It's never done, darling, but we'll try it. Now, the next thing is——

(*Enter* SPRULES *double doors.* AUBREY *turns round quickly.* SPRULES *comes down to* MISS MULLETT'S *chair* R., *and moves cushions as if looking for something.*)

What do you want, Sprules?

SPRULES. Miss Mullett wants to know if she left her wool here, sir?

AUBREY (*rises and goes* C. *towards* SPRULES). Tell Miss Mullett to go to the dev—to the dining-room—no, don't tell her that! No, it isn't here!

SPRULES. Very good, sir.

(*Exit* SPRULES *through double doors.*)

LOUISE. Well, how are you going to die?

AUBREY. I don't know, I've never done it before. (*Sits on settle.*)

LOUISE. We've got to bury you too.

AUBREY. Well, don't harp on it.

LOUISE. Then after the funeral—— We mustn't forget to put it in all the papers.

AUBREY (*regarding* LOUISE *fixedly*). Have you made a hobby of this sort of thing?

LOUISE. No, dear, but it's most essential that there shouldn't be any doubt whatsoever regarding your death. (*Rises and crosses round back of breakfast table to fireplace* R.)

AUBREY (*grimly*). There won't be any by the time you've finished with me.

LOUISE. Well, we *must* get the details right.

AUBREY. Don't get them too right, remember I'm only an imitation corpse.

LOUISE. No, I won't, dear. (*Coming to* C.) Now, who shall we invite to the funeral? (*Sits* R. *of* AUBREY *on settle.*)

AUBREY (*angrily—jumps up and goes* C.). No one! I won't have anyone at all. (*Paces room from* L. *to* R.)

LOUISE. Aubrey!

AUBREY. You're not going to have a picnic at my expense, so don't think it. (*Pauses down* L.)

LOUISE. But, dear, the look of the thing.

AUBREY. Who cares about the look of the thing? I shan't be there to see it.

LOUISE. Oh, no, I was thinking you would be.

AUBREY. Well, don't think those things. (*Crosses to telephone table.*) I'll take jolly good care I'm not. (*Sits on edge of telephone table.*)

LOUISE. What's worrying me is *how* you're going to die.

AUBREY. Exactly, how?

(*A slight pause, during which both think deeply.*)

LOUISE. What about a nice fit?

AUBREY. Whose feet—oh, fit! Why don't you say fit. "I" before "E" except after "Z." (*Business of imitating a fit.*) Oh, no, thanks, the moment I start throwing fits, Sprules will come and sit on my head.

LOUISE (*still on settle*). I thought it was rather a good idea.

AUBREY. I'm sorry to differ from you, dear; I think it's a pretty bad idea. People get over fits.

(AUBREY *rests his foot on chair, table* R.C.)

LOUISE. I'll take good care you don't.

(AUBREY *looks at* LOUISE *suspiciously.*)

AUBREY (*deliberately*). Well, anyhow—fits—are—off! (*Goes back to his place on settle.*)

(*Another pause.*)

(LOUISE *rises, in thought, to behind settle.*)

LOUISE (*thoughtfully*). You wouldn't like to hang yourself on the banisters, dear?

AUBREY. No, I shouldn't.

LOUISE. Or throw yourself slightly out of the window?

AUBREY. Certainly not. You can't throw yourself slightly out of a window, you either do it all or none at all. (*Rises from settle and goes to fire* R.)

LOUISE. I thought you might.

AUBREY. Well, think again. (*Sits in arm-chair* R.)

LOUISE. Aubrey, if you could only cut your throat. *Comes* C.)

AUBREY. What! (*Jumping up from chair.*)

LOUISE (*hastily*). Oh, not much, darling, only a teeny little bit.

AUBREY. Oh, I thought you meant cut it right off.

LOUISE. It would be the making of us, Aubrey!

AUBREY. Well, I won't do it. (*Crosses to* L.)

LOUISE. I was afraid you wouldn't. (*Going slightly* R. *behind*

breakfast table.) But you couldn't turn up as George Maitland until you are dead, so you may as well decide quickly how you are going to die.

(AUBREY *sits on settle.*)

(*Enter* GILES *with flowers from French windows.*)

AUBREY. No! If I'm going to die, what I really want is——

GILES. Flowers. (*Places flowers on settle beside* AUBREY.)

(*Exit* GILES *through French windows.*)

AUBREY (*edging away from the flowers*). I've taken a sudden dislike to flowers. How can I be killed at once? (*Moves and sits chair extreme* L.)

(LOUISE, *who has come round table* R.C., *crosses and stands in front of settle.* SPRULES *opens double doors, speaks from there.*)

SPRULES. Any orders for the butcher? (AUBREY *starts.*)

AUBREY (*turns suddenly—sees* SPRULES). No! run away—we're busy.

LOUISE. I'll see you later, Sprules.

(*Exit* SPRULES, *closes double doors.*)

AUBREY. I never saw such a house. One can't even arrange to die quietly.

LOUISE. If I could hasten your end——

AUBREY. You will do that all right.

LOUISE. Well, think of something. I don't want to stay here all day. (*Turns up* C. *of stage to window.*)

(*Enter* SIMPSON *through double doors.*)

SIMPSON. Please, madam, what time would you like dinner to-night?

LOUISE. Oh, any time—half-past seven.

AUBREY. I shan't want any dinner, Simpson.

(LOUISE *signs to* AUBREY *to be quiet.*)

(SIMPSON *exits through double doors.*)

I shall be dining in heaven.

LOUISE (*coming down stage behind settle*). You were always an optimist, Aubrey. (*Laughs.*) Let's put it off until to-morrow. (*Takes flowers and places them on telephone table.*)

AUBREY. I'll do nothing of the sort. I ought to be dead by now.

LOUISE (*very earnestly.*) All right then, you'll die to-day, if I have to kill you with my own hands.

AUBREY. Nice sympathetic creature.

LOUISE. We must find a way.

AUBREY. Well, darling, I've thought over here, and I've thought over there . . .

LOUISE. We can shoot you. (*Walks* R., *thoughtfully.*)

AUBREY. You can't.

LOUISE. And we might poison you——

AUBREY. You've got a mind like a Newgate Calendar.

LOUISE (R.). We could explode you, though!

AUBREY. What? (*Rises, goes* C.)

LOUISE. That's the idea! The blasted powder. (*They meet* C.)

AUBREY. Explode me!!

LOUISE. Yes, we'll have a nice explosion and you can be blown to bits.

AUBREY. Oh! Let me tell you, madam, we are not going to be exploded. I'm sorry—any other time I can do anything to oblige you—— (*Goes* L. *towards settle.* LOUISE *moves to him and seats him on settle.*)

LOUISE. Listen!

(*Both on settle.*)

I want you to go down into your workshop at the bottom of the garden and make a heap of all the most explosive things you've got on one of the tables.

AUBREY (*sarcastically*). Then sit on it, and light a pipe.

LOUISE. You know that speaking-tube in the workshop—the other end of that? (*Goes up stage, points to speaking-tube on wall* C., *and returns to above telephone table.*)

AUBREY. Yes—well?

LOUISE. Draw the table close up to it and put a lighted candle on it so that it stands *touching the end of the speaking-tube.*

AUBREY. Well?

LOUISE. Round the candle you can pile gunpowder with a train leading to all the new blasting powder.

AUBREY. Yes?

LOUISE (*standing above telephone table*). The moment I blow down the tube it will knock the candle over, fire the gunpowder and the whole place will be blown sky-high. There you are!

AUBREY. Pardon me! There I'm *not.*

LOUISE. Of course you're not, you're miles away by then. (*Sits by* AUBREY *on settle again.*) You've told the servants you're not to be disturbed——

AUBREY. Yes?

LOUISE. But five minutes before the explosion you've locked the door, and got away unnoticed.

AUBREY. Oh, and they still think I'm there?

LOUISE. Exactly. At twelve o'clock—I'll come in and say "Where's the master?"

Aubrey. And they'll say: "He's in his workshop, ma'am, and isn't to be disturbed till twelve o'clock."

Louise. That's it. Then at twelve o'clock I'll blow down the tube, there'll be a terrible explosion——!!! And they'll spend the rest of the day hunting for pieces of you——

Aubrey. Ripping! (*Roars with laughter.*)

Louise. In the meantime, you will have crept up to the attic, pack a bag with all the things you will require for about three weeks, and take all the loose cash you can find about——

Aubrey. I've done that.

Louise. Then you can get away when the coast is clear.

Aubrey (*rises—walks round settle,* L. *end, speaks from back*). Ripping! When shall I turn up as Cousin George?

Louise. Give it three weeks, it will look better.

Aubrey. Yes, but in any case I'll ring up before I arrive. (*Kisses her.*) Ha, ha! I'm glad I thought of that idea!

Louise (*kneeling on settle*). Of course. Now I'll ring for Sprules. (*Goes to and rings bell at fireplace.*) Remember I shan't blow down the speaking-tube till twelve o'clock.

Aubrey. Funny to think that when next we meet, I shall be dead. (*Both up* C.)

Louise. Darling! It will be the wisest thing you've ever done. Good-bye, darling. (*Kisses him.*) See you in three weeks.

(*Enter* Sprules *through double doors.*)

Yes, clear away, Sprules.

(*Exit* Louise *through double doors.*)

(Aubrey *comes down singing—catches sight of* Sprules *standing up* R.C.)

Aubrey. Oh, Sprules—— (*Seeing* Sprules *staring at him.*) What's the matter, man?

Sprules. You're looking a little pale, sir.

Aubrey. I'm feeling a little pale. I've got a wonderful idea, Sprules.

Sprules. Yes, sir?

(Simpson *enters with tray through double doors, helps* Sprules *to clear the breakfast things from table.* Aubrey C.; Sprules *top of table;* Simpson *on* R. *of table.*)

Aubrey. And I'm going down to my workshop to experiment.

Sprules. Yes, sir.

Aubrey. I mustn't on any account be disturbed, Sprules.

Sprules. I'll see that you're not, sir.

Aubrey. You see, I'm working on some very high explosives, Sprules.

SPRULES. Yes, sir.

AUBREY. Frightfully high explosives, Sprules. So high that if they exploded you'd never find a bit of me again.

SPRULES. Very good, sir.

AUBREY. In fact Sprules, they're so high that I'd rather nobody left the house till I've finished.

SPRULES. Yes, sir.

(*After* SIMPSON *has cleared the breakfast things, she exits through double doors.*)

AUBREY. That will be, say—(*looks at his watch*)—say twelve o'clock, Sprules.

SPRULES. Yes, sir. (*Removes white cloth from table.*)

AUBREY. Of course, it wouldn't matter if I was killed.

SPRULES. No, sir.

AUBREY. What!

SPRULES (*injured*). No, sir, but——

(*Enter* MISS MULLETT *through double doors, comes down to* AUBREY C. *on his* R.)

MISS MULLETT. Oh, I was looking for you, Aubrey.

AUBREY. I'm just going down to my workshop, auntie. (*Going up* C.)

MISS MULLETT. I'll come with you. (*Moves after him.*)

AUBREY (*quickly*). Oh, no, no, no!

MISS MULLETT. And why not, pray?

AUBREY (*bringing her down stage*). You can come—er—after twelve o'clock. Not a moment before. I've got some frightfully dangerous work on and I wouldn't have anyone near me. (*Business of arm round her neck and squeezing her chin.*)

MISS MULLETT. Very well, have it your own way. (*Goes to chair* R. *Sits down and begins knitting.*)

AUBREY. And, Sprules, if any of my creditors call, tell them to come round again—after twelve! After twelve, Sprules, don't forget.

(*Exit* AUBREY *into garden through French windows to* R.)

MISS MULLETT. Where's Giles, Sprules?

SPRULES (*taking table up* L. *behind settle*). I don't know, ma'am; shall I find him for you?

MISS MULLETT. What?

SPRULES. I say, shall I find him for you? (*Moves chair at* R.C. *to table* L.C.)

MISS MULLETT. Don't shout, man! I'm not deaf!

SPRULES (*moves* LOUISE'S *chair up to* L. *of clock*). Can I give him a message for you, ma'am?

MISS MULLETT. No, it doesn't matter; I told him to bring me a cucumber so that I can make the salad for lunch. (*Looks at her watch.*)

(*Enter* SIMPSON *at double doors with telegram, glances at* SPRULES *who is by clock, with an aside* "Where's master?")

(*Enter* GILES *with cucumber through French windows.*)

Yes, Simpson?

SIMPSON. Telegram for the master, ma'am.

(*Exit* SPRULES *through double doors.*)

MISS MULLETT. Well, give it to me. I'm going down to the workshop in a few minutes, and I'll give it to him. (SIMPSON *comes to her and gives telegram.*)

GILES (*on steps of window*). Cucumber!

MISS MULLETT. Oh, there you are, Giles—you're late.

(*Exit* SIMPSON *through double doors.*)

GILES (*up stage, looking at clock*). I ain't late—you said twelve o'clock—ain't twelve o'clock.

MISS MULLETT. That clock's slow. (*Goes on knitting.*)

GILES. You needn't shout, 'm—I ain't deaf!

(GILES *puts clock on to twelve o'clock.*)

MISS MULLETT (*speaking under her breath*). Oh, what impudence—impertinent——

(*Enter* LOUISE *through double doors.*)

LOUISE. Ah, there you are, auntie! (*Coming down to her.*)

MISS MULLETT (*still seated* R.). Louise, here's a telegram for Aubrey, my dear—shall I take it?

LOUISE (R.C.). No, no! Not yet, because——

GILES. Please, 'm, I—— (L.C.)

LOUISE. One minute, Giles—— (*To* MISS MULLETT.) Aubrey mustn't be disturbed, auntie, until——

(GILES *goes to table and places the cucumber with the eggs and flowers.*)

MISS MULLETT. Until what, my dear?

LOUISE. Until twelve o'clock, auntie!

MISS MULLETT. It is twelve o'clock now, dear.

LOUISE. What! (*Turns round and looks at clock.*) Why, so it is. (*Goes across to speaking-tube.*)

GILES. Please, 'm—— (*Trying to get a word in.*)

LOUISE. Do be quiet a minute, Giles. (*Gives a violent blow down speaking-tube and stands listening. To* GILES.) Now, what is it?

GILES. Oh, I only wanted to tell you, 'm, just put that clock on ten minutes.

LOUISE. What!!! (*She drops speaking-tube and stands gazing at* GILES *in horror.*)

(*A tremendous explosion is heard off* R.)

MISS MULLETT. Gracious! What's that? (*Jumps up.*)

LOUISE. It's the workshop—and Aubrey's there!

(MISS MULLETT, GILES *and* LOUISE *rush wildly to French windows.* SPRULES *and* SIMPSON *rush on from double doors shouting and screaming. They all make for the garden, but debris from explosion, bricks, tiles, fragments of plaster, etc., is falling, preventing them from going that way.* SPRULES, *waving his arms about wildly, ushers them back through double doors, shouting:*)

SPRULES. Giles! Giles! Simpson! Save yourselves!

(*They all rush out through double doors, leaving* LOUISE *in mental agony. She thinks* AUBREY *has been blown up.*)

(*Smoke is seen through French windows—check lights on back cloth slightly.*)

(LOUISE *walks slowly down* R., *sinks into arm-chair.*)

LOUISE. I've killed him, I've killed him.

(*At that moment* AUBREY *appears from French windows* R., *his face is blackened with gunpowder, his clothes are hanging on him in shreds, he gazes wildly around as he staggers on to* C. *of stage and collapses on settle* L.)

CURTAIN.

ACT II

SCENE.—*Same as before. The table used for tea is set up stage* L. *to open, and one small chair—another small chair is set by the clock, and one on* R. *of table* L.C.)

TIME.—*Three weeks have elapsed.* (*Afternoon.*)

(*At rise of the* CURTAIN, LOUISE *is discovered lying on the settle; she is reading a novel, she is in deep mourning, but her attitude shows complete indifference, and she is laughing over her book. After a slight pause* SPRULES *enters from double doors* R.; *the moment she hears him she sits up, puts her book away and sighs heavily.*)

SPRULES (*up* R.C.). Mr. George Maitland is on the 'phone, madam.

(LOUISE *rises and is going towards doors* R., SPRULES *indicating 'phone on table.*)

I've put you through.

(LOUISE *turns back to table* L.C. *to 'phone and picks up receiver.*)

LOUISE. Hello! Yes, Mrs. Allington speaking.

(SPRULES *is still lingering at double doors, hoping to hear the conversation.* LOUISE *looks at him.*)

(*He exits.*)

(*When the door closes her voice and expression must change.*)

Yes, yes, is that you, Aubrey darling? . . . All right, I'll call you George. (*Laughing.*) I must get used to it. Everything all right? . . . You'll be down in half an hour, good! . . . But it's deadly dull being a widow. Where are you now? . . . Reading—they couldn't bury you, Aubrey, because they couldn't find anything of you to bury. (*Laughing.*) Oh yes, all in black. . . . Oh, Aubrey, I mean George, I wish there was some way I could be sure of recognizing you when you come in, what? . . . You'll be singing—oh, Aubrey, I never knew you had a voice. (*Laughing.*) All right, dear, you shall have the room next to mine.

(SPRULES *has entered through double doors, and stands listening.* LOUISE *changes her tone again.*)

Then I'll expect you in half an hour, Mr. Maitland. Good-bye. (*Hangs up receiver.*)

Sprules (*crossing at back to* L.). I suppose Mr. Maitland will have the spare room, ma'am? (*Takes small gate-leg table from front of bookcase* L.C.)

Louise. Er—no, Sprules. I think you'd better put him in the blue room.

Sprules (*surprised; stopping* C. *with table*). The one next to yours, ma'am?

Louise. Yes, I think so. It's a more attractive room.

Sprules. Very good, ma'am. (*Sets table down* C.)

(*Enter* Simpson *through double doors, with tea things, places them on cabinet by clock.* Louise *crosses to her.*)

Louise. Has Miss Everard arrived yet?

Simpson. Not yet, ma'am.

Louise. It's quite time she was here. I think I'll walk down and meet her.

(*Exit* Louise *French windows to* L.)

Sprules (*waits till she has disappeared. To* Simpson). Now what does she want to put him in the room next to hers for?

Simpson (*up* R.C.). Who's "him"?

Sprules (L.C. *at table*). Mr. Maitland.

Simpson. Well, why shouldn't she? (*Takes tablecloth from drawer of cabinet.*)

(Sprules *beckons to her mysteriously, she comes down to him.* Simpson R.C.; Sprules L.C.)

Sprules. Who do you think is coming here this afternoon?

Simpson (*puzzled*). Why, Mr. George Maitland, of course.

Sprules. Mr. George Maitland don't exist—he's dead.

Simpson. Well, if 'e's dead, 'ow can 'e be coming 'ere to-day?

Sprules. He isn't—but *she* thinks he is. (*Looks round to see they are not overheard.*)

Simpson. Wot on earth are you drivin' at, Mr. Sprules?

Sprules. Listen! The poor guv'nor being dead, the money goes to his cousin, George Maitland of Mexico.

Simpson. 'Ow do you know?

Sprules. 'Cos I've seen it in the will. I come across it in the drawer after the poor master's death, so I took the liberty of reading it.

Simpson. Well?

Sprules. Now, I happens to know too, that George Maitland of Mexico is dead, but they've never had actual proof of his death, so they've advertised for him. (*Looking round,* L. *and* R. *at back, makes certain no one is about.*)

Simpson. Yes?

Sprules (*comes down stage to* L. *of* Simpson). Well, I says to

myself: "Sprules," I says, "it's a lot of money it is, and you want to get married . . ."

SIMPSON (*coyly*). Oh, Mr. Sprules. (*Toying with tea-cloth, corner of which she is biting.*)

SPRULES. Don't fidget with that thing! (*He snatches the tea-cloth away and puts it on table.*) "But George Maitland is dead, so he can never get it."

SIMPSON (*puzzled*). Go on.

SPRULES. But if someone exactly like him came along and said: "I'm George Maitland from Mexico, and I claim that money"—they'd have to brass up. (*Goes up to cabinet* R. *for tray.*)

SIMPSON (*up* C., *breathlessly*). So you've got someone to dress up as George Maitland, and it's him who's coming here to-day.

SPRULES (*goes to double doors, tray in hand*). You've got it.

SIMPSON (*eagerly, up* C. *following a little*). Who is he?

SPRULES (*placing tray on sideboard for a moment, makes certain the doors are closed, picks it up again, comes down and brings* SIMPSON *forward*). My brother Henery.

SIMPSON. What, him who's at Drury Lane; then that's why he came to see you yesterday.

SPRULES. That's right—I had to prime him up and show him the photo of the real George Maitland so that he could know what to make up like. (*Places tray on tea-table.*) If this comes off it means tons of money for us.

SIMPSON (*coyly*). Then—we shall be able to get married, Mr. Sprules.

SPRULES (*comes* C. *and places his arm round* SIMPSON'S *waist*). Yes, and we can clear away to a nice little country cottage, and no one will be any the wiser. (*Kisses her.*)

SIMPSON. Have you fixed it all up?

SPRULES. I've put my brother through his paces.

SIMPSON. And he's coming here to-day as George Maitland.

SPRULES. Yes, he got the wind up about it, but I told him it was as easy as falling off a log. He was on the telephone to the mistress just now; as a matter of fact, *I arranged for him to come to-morrow*, but he must have changed his mind.

SIMPSON (R.). What's he like?

SPRULES (L.). You can't mistake him, he's got a brown beard and moustache—he'll announce himself as George Maitland—and I've arranged that if we want to warn him to signal like this. Number one—(*business scratching elbow*) that means—be careful. Number two—(*business rubbing ear*) that means—danger, and number three—(*business rubbing nose and making a clicking noise with mouth*) come into the kitchen.

(SIMPSON *imitates him.*)

Don't make that noise.

Simpson. You did it.

Sprules. Yes, I know, but I am trying to explain things to you, and if we can't catch his eye, we've got to drop something, so as to draw his attention, like this—— (*Business of pretending to drop tray on table.*)

Simpson. If it's very important?

Sprules. Yes, not otherwise. (*Places a chair from up* L. *at* R. *of table.*)

Simpson (*admiringly, sitting on the chair* R. *of table*). You have got a wonderful brain, Mr. Sprules.

Sprules (*proudly*). A good butler is like a patent medicine—there's nothing he can't do. (*Kiss.*)

(*Both laugh*—Miss Mullett *enters through double doors—they suddenly become grave.*)

Miss Mullett (*coming down* R.). Where's your mistress?

Simpson. She's just gone out to meet Miss Everard, ma'am.

(*Exit* Simpson *through double doors.*)

Miss Mullett. What!

Sprules (C., *loudly*). She's just gone out to meet Miss Everard, ma'am.

Miss Mullett. You needn't shout, I'm not deaf.

(Giles *is seen to enter from* R. *of terrace, followed by* Miss Jean Everard *and* Mrs. Allington. Jean Everard *is a distinctly pretty woman of about* 28. *She is very smartly dressed in travelling costume.* Mrs. Allington *leans on her arm and speaks very sadly and feebly.*)

Jean (*as they descend steps of window*). He keeps the garden beautifully. (Giles *disappears* L.)

Louise. Yes, dear, but he's a terrible nuisance, he's always having trouble with cook. (*To* Sprules.) Sprules, go and see about Miss Everard's luggage.

Sprules (*crossing at back*). Yes, ma'am.

(*Exit* Sprules *through double doors.*)

Miss Mullett. I was just asking after you, Louise.

Louise. Auntie, this is Miss Everard—my aunt, Miss Mullett.

(Jean *and* Miss Mullett *shake hands.*)

Miss Everard is an old friend of mine, auntie.

(Miss Mullett R.C.; Jean C.; Louise L.C.)

Jean (*to* Miss Mullett). I simply had to come down and see her, Miss Mullett. Poor Louise.

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