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Charley's Aunt

Still Running!

A Play

Brandon Thomas

A Samuel French Acting Edition

SAMUEL FRENCH
FOUNDED 1830

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CHARLEY'S AUNT

Produced at the Royalty Theatre, London, on December 21st, 1892, transferred to the Globe Theatre. Original London Run, four years.

CAST

Stephen Spettigue	*Mr. Ernest Hendrie*
Colonel Sir Francis Chesney, Bart.	*Mr. Brandon Thomas*
Jack Chesney	*Mr. Percy Lyndal*
Charley Wykeham	*Mr. H. Farmer*
Lord Fancourt Babberley	*Mr. W. S. Penley*
Brassett	*Mr. Cecil Thornbury*
Donna Lucia d'Alvadorez	*Miss Ada Branson*
Amy Spettigue	*Miss Kate Gordon*
Kitty Verdun	*Miss Nina Boucicault*
Ela Delahay	*Miss Emily Cudmore*

CHARACTERS

COLONEL SIR FRANCIS CHESNEY, BART	Late Indian Service
STEPHEN SPETTIGUE	Solicitor, Oxford
JACK CHESNEY	Undergraduates at St. Olde's College, Oxford
CHARLES WYKEHAM	
LORD FANCOURT BABBERLEY	
BRASSETT	A College Scout
DONNA LUCIA D'ALVADOREZ	From Brazil
KITTY VERDUN	Spettigue's Ward
AMY SPETTIGUE	Spettigue's Niece
ELA DELAHAY	An Orphan

Commemoration Week, Oxford, 1892.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT I.

Jack Chesney's Rooms in College. (Morning).

"When pious frauds . . . are dispensations."—*Hudibras.*

ACT II.

Garden outside Jack Chesney's Rooms. (Afternoon).

"While there's tea there's hope."—*Pinero.*

ACT III.

Drawing Room at Spettigue's House. (Evening).

"Dinner lubricates business."—*Boswell.*



W. S. PENLEY

THE ORIGINAL
"CHARLEY'S AUNT"

"I'M NO ORDINARY WOMAN"



"YOU MUST BE CHARLEY'S AUNT"

CHARLEY'S AUNT

ACT I.

"When pious frauds . . . are dispensations."—*Hudibras.*

SCENE.—*Interior of Jack Chesney's Rooms, St. Olde's College, Oxford. Morning.*

The walls are oak panelled or half-panelled or plain cream-washed walls with beautiful, low heraldic ceiling in cream, picked out in colour and dull gold. Door opening off, with passage backing, leading to outer door L.I.E. *Door opening off to bedroom, with light backing,* L.U.E. *Between doors an oak sideboard with cupboard underneath. Large opening and recess with portiere to draw* L.C. *Long stone-mullioned embayed window* R.C. *with view of quad and practicable centre casement, to open off, window seat with four river cushions and one magazine. Long red rep fabric curtains. Upright piano* C. *with pile of music on top between window and recess. Fireplace* R., *looking-glass, etc., on mantel, low bookcases* R. *and* L. *of it. Saddle back armchair by fire with white antimacassar. Table* C. *with ashtray and books and table cover in dark material on it with two single chairs* R. *and* L. *of it with sweater over back of* L. *chair. Writing-table down* R.C. *by fire, with A.B.C. time-table, magazine and "Corona" cigar-box. Stage cloth. Circular hat stand inside* R.C. *corner of recess with boxing gloves, single sticks, etc. on it. Plaster bust of Plato on pedestal* L. *corner of room—angle. Clock and photographs of chorus girls and flowers on mantelshelf, more photographs and books on top of book-cases, pipes, tobacco jars, etc. Prints on walls above. Tray with three tumblers, one square decanter half full of whisky, one glass jug of water on sideboard, four champagne bottles, one bottle of claret (open) in sideboard cupboard. Above on wall* L. *groups of Rowing Eights, football teams. Six dining-room chairs arranged as follows: two* R. *and* L. *of* C. *table, one below door* L.I.E., *one at piano, one* L. *side of writing-table, one top* R. *corner by window. Antique furniture, well-worn comfortable chairs. Quad seen through window and sunlight streams in through window.*

CURTAIN MUSIC: "*The Eton Boating Song,*" *by A. D. E. W. Orchestra plays first* 16 *bars with gradual crescendo—*CURTAIN *starts to rise—orchestra plays next* 16 *bars more softly with gradual diminuendo till music ceases at full rise of curtain.*

JACK *discovered seated at writing-table, unlit pipe in mouth, struggling wildly to write a letter. He looks at letter and tears it up.*

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

JACK. I can't! I can't get into the vein. (*Flings down pen.*) I don't know what to say—don't know how to begin. I wish to goodness I'd spoken to her at the dance the other evening, (*rises, to* C.) when she told me they were all going away for the summer; instead, I've gone and left everything till the very last minute, and now I'm regularly nonplussed. By George! I know what I'll do. I'll make an exercise of it. I'll write it out a dozen different ways, and send the one I think looks the best. (*Goes back to table and sits, takes up pen.*) So come on, Jack, here we are, in love with the dearest girl on earth—tackle her like a man, and tell her so, or they'll be off north, you'll be gone down, and have lost your chance for ever. She's my fate, and I'm hanged if I shan't be hers! So here goes. (*Writing.*) "My Darling"! (*Stops.*) Rather strong, perhaps, to begin with. (*Tears up paper, places on* L. *of writing-table, begins again.*) "My Dear Miss Verdun——" (*Stops again.*) No, too formal—and not a bit what I really feel. (*Tears that up.*) "My Dear——" Hang it, why not? (*Writes boldly.*) "My Dear Kitty"! That's grand!

(BRASSETT *enters quietly door* L.U.E. *to table* C.)

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

Now I can go ahead like a house on fire. (*Looking proudly at letter.*) "My Dear Kitty, I——"

BRASSETT. I beg pardon, sir, but would you mind——?

JACK. Yes, very much; go away, I'm busy.

BRASSETT. Yes, sir, but——

JACK. I'm busy with the most important affair; get out!

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

JACK (*aside*). Just as I'd made such a good start, too! (*At letter again.*) "My Dear Kitty——"

(BRASSETT *calmly drops books back on to table.*)

(*Aloud.*) What are you doing, Brassett? Confound it all, what do you want?

BRASSETT. I merely wish to say, sir, that I have laid out a few things which——

JACK. All right, thank you, get out and leave me alone.

BRASSETT. Which I thought you wouldn't care to——

JACK (*in despair*). Take 'em—keep 'em! Take every blessed rag I've got . . . only go away!

(BRASSETT *goes to door* L.U.E.)

(*At letter again, savagely.*) "My Dear Kitty——"

BRASSETT (*at door*). Beg pardon, sir?

JACK. Confound it! I wasn't addressing *you*—go away!

(*Exit* BRASSETT, L.U.E., *quickly. Enter* CHARLEY, L.I.E., *with letter, comes* C. CHARLES WYKEHAM *is about twenty, good-looking, medium height, fair, Saxon type, charming and though shy is not awkward. Rowing type, wears white flannels, blazer and muffler, cheap watch in breast pocket of blazer with short chain hanging out. For later entrance with telegram—has changed blazer for a lounge suit coat, removed muffler and wears a collar and tie.*)

"My Dear Kitty——"

CHARLEY (*mildly*). I say——! (*To* C.)

JACK (*throwing down pen, jumping up savagely*). If you don't clear out, Brassett, I'll—— (*Meets* CHARLEY C.) Oh, it's you, Charley! What is it, old chap?

CHARLEY. Nothing, Jack. I don't want to interrupt you if you're busy. (*Going.*)

JACK (*going* C.). It's all right, Charley, don't go, it's only that fool Brassett.

CHARLEY. What's he doing? (*Coming back to* C.)

JACK. Only bagging all my clothes because I'm going down, and worrying me like Old Harry while I'm trying to write a-most-important-letter. (*Moving towards table* R.) Don't mind me to-day; I'm nervous and naggy and nonplussed. (*Sits on end of table* R.C.)

CHARLEY. And so am I, Jack.

JACK. Why?

CHARLEY. I've been trying to write a letter, too.

JACK. A letter! To whom?

CHARLEY. To—to Miss Spettigue.

JACK (*going to* CHARLEY, C.). How far have *you* got?

(*Both* C.)

CHARLEY (*brightening*). Oh! I began awfully well, but—I didn't want to be too distant, and I didn't like to be too—too——

JACK. Familiar. Well?

CHARLEY. So I just said, "My Dear Amy"—and then words failed me, and I've come to you for advice. You always know what to say and do.

JACK (*dubiously, with a look towards letter*). Oh! Do I?

CHARLEY. You know my idiotic complaint; I'm shy—you're not.

JACK. Aren't I?

CHARLEY. So prescribe for me, old chap. What am I to say? (*Turning away* L., *sits* R. *corner of table* C.)

JACK (*going* R.C., *aside*). A good idea! I'll prescribe for *him* and take the medicine myself. (*Sits at writing-table* R., *gets paper, etc. Energetically.*) Now then, let's see. You're in love with Amy Spettigue, and you want to know if there's any hope for you, and if so——

CHARLEY. You see, they're all off to Scotland to-morrow.

JACK. Yes, I know, and you want to see her at once. When and where?—bearer waits. Do I diagnose the case accurately?

CHARLEY. To a "Tee," old chap!

JACK. Very well then; you'll want to say something to this effect: (*writing*) "My Dear Kitty——" (*Stops dead.*)

CHARLEY (*going to him, writing-table* R.C.). No—not Kitty—Amy.

JACK. Oh, of course, what am I thinking of? (*Tears up paper, takes fresh sheet. In casual, glib tone, writing.*) "My Dearest Amy—Forgive me, darling, for thus addressing you, but I love you so deeply"—underlined——

CHARLEY (*surprised, moving nearer—interrupting*). Rather strong, Jack.

JACK. Shut up! "So earnestly"—also underlined——

CHARLEY. Oh, I say! (*Turning away* C.)

JACK. "That I *must* write and tell you so. All I ask is——"

CHARLEY (*sits table* C.). But there's one obstacle to my putting it quite as straight as that, much as I'd *like* to.

JACK. What's that?

CHARLEY. Well—er—I've an *aunt*.

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

CHARLEY. I feel I ought to tell her first.

JACK (*flings down pen, rises and goes to fireplace*). Oh! If you're going to drag an *aunt* into the business, we may as well wait till they all come back from Scotland.

CHARLEY. Why?

JACK. You know what "auntie" is when *she* steps in.

CHARLEY. No, I don't. That's just it; I *don't* know her. I've never even *seen* her.

JACK. Well, we won't be too hard on *that* aunt; she hasn't interfered much in your affairs up to now.

CHARLEY. Except to find out that I was an orphan and have me sent to Eton, and to Oxford; and now my guardian writes to me that she's coming here this morning by an early train, and will take luncheon with me at one o'clock.

JACK (*coming down to back of chair* L. *of writing table*). And you've never seen her?

CHARLEY. No. She went out to Brazil before I was born, and became a sort of secretary to a very rich old Brazilian chap out there, called Dom Pedro d'Alvadorez; and now—by the merest accident

in the world (*taking "Truth" from pocket and pointing to marked paragraph*) I've seen this. (*Gives* JACK *paper.*)

JACK (*going down* R. NOTE: "*Lucia*" *is pronounced* "*LOOSIA*"—*Portuguese, NOT Spanish. Reading*). "Madam—or rather Donna Lucia d'Alvadorez, the Brazilian millionaire, who has taken Lord Toppleby's magnificent mansion in Belgravia, is an English-woman of genial disposition, and a financial genius. Indeed, it was her capacity in this direction that earned the gratitude of her late husband, and led to a romantic death-bed marriage." (*To* CHARLEY.) Well, I don't see much in that! (*Offering paper back.*)

CHARLEY. Go on, Jack, read the next.

JACK (*reading*). "Her only relation—is a nephew at Oxford"—lucky nephew!

CHARLEY. That's me.

JACK. By George, Charley, this is a startler! (*Throws paper to* CHARLEY.) And she may be here any minute? (*Goes to mantel-piece, looks at clock.*)

CHARLEY. I've met all the trains up to now. I wish she'd have come some other day. (*Rises, moves away down* L. *a little.*)

JACK (*turning, looks at clock*). She'll arrive by the next, just in time for lunch.

CHARLEY (*dolefully*). Yes, it's a bore. I wanted to write that letter to Amy.

JACK (*sits on table* R.C., *thinking*). I don't know so much about that!

CHARLEY (*comes* C.). But it's an awfully difficult letter to write—fearfully complicated.

JACK. Why?

CHARLEY. Well, you see, I've no people or anything.

JACK. "No people," with an aunt like that! (*Pointing to paper which is in* CHARLEY'S *hand.*)

CHARLEY. But I've no reason to expect anything from her—more than she's already done for me—for which, of course, I'm very grateful and all that—but I want to see Amy and put it to her that if——

JACK (*suddenly—coming* C. *to* CHARLEY). Charley! I've got a clinking good idea!

CHARLEY (*pushing* JACK *towards writing-table—gratefully*). Jack, you are a good chap! Write it down and I'll copy it out.

JACK (*stopping him*). No, not for you—for me—for us both. You're gone on Amy—I'm in love with Kitty.

CHARLEY. Really, Jack?

JACK. Madly. Worse than anything I ever took up—even cricket! I was writing to tell her so when you came in. (*Pointing.*) There's the letter.

CHARLEY (*wringing* JACK'S *hand with effusion*). I'm so glad! and what's your "idea"?

JACK. Hang letter-writing! We'll give a luncheon party for your aunt, tea afterwards in the garden.

CHARLEY. In the garden?

JACK. Yes, I'll get leave.

CHARLEY. But my rooms are so small.

JACK. Never mind, I'll lend you mine. (*Pushing* CHARLEY *towards writing-table chair* C.) Brassett shall see to it. (*Calling towards* L.) Brassett! (*To* CHARLEY.) Now, come on! First we'll ask the girls.

CHARLEY. Ask the girls? (*Standing behind writing-table.*)

JACK (*by chair* L. *of writing-table*). To meet your aunt.

CHARLEY. What about old Spettigue?

JACK. Blow old Spettigue!

CHARLEY. Oh, I forgot. He's up in town for a few days on business. (*Sits at writing-table.*)

JACK. So much the better. (*Calling.*) Brassett!

CHARLEY. Do you think they'll come?

JACK. They'll jump at it.

CHARLEY. What makes you think so?

JACK. Well, what do you think?

CHARLEY. Why, Jack, you know, I rather agree with you.

JACK. We'll send a note at once—you write it—go ahead.

(CHARLEY *writes to dictation.*)

"My Dear Miss Spettigue——" (*Calling.*) BRASSETT, where *are* you?

(BRASSETT, L.U.E., *and comes down* L. *of* JACK.)

Where *are* you? (*Turns, sees* BRASSETT *standing* L.) Oh—er, Brassett, get someone to take a note to Mr. Spettigue's.

BRASSETT. Yes, sir.

(*Exit* L.I.E.)

CHARLEY. Yes, Jack, I've got that.

JACK (*gets envelope, pen and book to write on*). "Would you and Miss Verdun——" (*puts foot on chair* L. *of writing-table and puts cigar-box on knee to write on*) "do me the honour——"

CHARLEY (*repeating*). ——"the honour"——

JACK. ——"to lunch with me and Mr. Chesney."

CHARLEY (*repeating*). ——"Mr. Chesney"——

JACK. I'll address the envelope.

CHARLEY (*still repeating—while dipping pen in ink*). "I'll address the——"

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

CHARLEY. Miss—— (*about to write*).

(JACK *stops him before he writes.*)

JACK. No, look out! "To meet my aunt——" What did you say her name was, Charley?

CHARLEY. Donna Lucia d'Alvadorez.

JACK. "Donna"—— All right, stick it down. "An answer by bearer will greatly oblige." (*Blots envelope.*)

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

JACK (*takes letter, puts it in envelope and closes it*). It's a glorious opportunity. They're off to Scotland.

CHARLEY. And we're off "down."

JACK. And now we shall have them all to ourselves. (*Going* L.C.)

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

BRASSETT. The messenger, sir.

JACK (*gives letter to* BRASSETT). Give him that, and tell him to look sharp. (*Turns back slowly to* CHARLEY.)

BRASSETT. Yes, sir.

(*Going* L. *At door quick glance at address on envelope, smiles and exits* L.I.E.)

JACK (*returning to table, takes up torn up letters*). This sort of thing is not to be settled by correspondence. (*Tears up letters, gives fragments to* CHARLEY, *who puts them into paper basket.*)

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

JACK. Yes, and we couldn't have asked them if it hadn't been for your aunt. I'm beginning to love that dear old lady already. (*Calling.*) Brassett!

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

BRASSETT. Yes, sir?

JACK. Lunch for five.

BRASSETT. For how many, sir?

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

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

(CHARLEY *rises and goes over to them.*)

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

BRASSETT. Well, sir, I'm afraid our credit in the kitchen is somewhat exhausted. (*Pronounced "hegs-austed" by taking a catch-breath in the middle.*)

JACK (*to* BRASSETT). Oh, is it? (*Turning to* CHARLEY.) How are you off for "tick," Charley?

CHARLEY. Well, Jack, I'm afraid my guardian's rather—er——

JACK. Oh, is he? (*Pause, then to* BRASSETT.) Never mind, Brassett, get it outside—go to Bunter's.

BRASSETT (*shaking head doubtfully*). I'm afraid, sir, we owe Bunter's——

JACK. Oh, do we? (*Turns to* CHARLEY *and sees his watch-chain.*) Charley, you don't mind (*takes watch and chain off* CHARLEY) it'll be all right when my cheque comes? (*Gives them to* BRASSETT.) Here you are, Brassett, do the best you can with that.

BRASSETT (*taking them and looking at watch critically*). This is no good, sir. I couldn't get anything on this, sir. (*Hands it back to* JACK.) However, sir, I've no doubt it will be all right at Bunter's, if I say it's for *me*. (*Goes behind table* C.)

(CHARLEY *goes to chair* L. *of writing-table and sits.*)

JACK (*laughing*). Oh, all right, Brassett; lunch for *five* at one o'clock. (*Goes down* L.)

BRASSETT (*looks at own gold watch*). Rather short notice, sir. (*Takes books off table* C *and puts them on sideboard* L.)

JACK. All right, long pay; go where you like, do what you like, only lunch for *five* at one. (*Putting watch and chain in his own waistcoat pocket, crossing to* CHARLEY.) That's all right, Charley, isn't it?

CHARLEY (*to* JACK). I say, Jack, (*taking watch and chain*) that's *my* watch!

JACK. I beg your pardon, old chap, my mistake.

BRASSETT (*at sideboard*). What wine, sir?

JACK. Champagne.

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

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

BRASSETT (*imperturbably*). No, sir, I think not; (*getting out four from sideboard cupboard*) only four, sir. (*Puts them on sideboard.*)

CHARLEY. Oh, quite enough.

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

BRASSETT. Pardon me, sir—only four of champagne—— (*puts them on table* C.) and I think (*taking out bottle of opened claret*) yes, one of claret. (*Holding it up.*)

JACK. Oh, hang that claret!

(BRASSETT *puts it on sideboard.*)

It's been open a month. All right. (*Aside to* CHARLEY). He's sneaked those other two bottles. He's a corker!

(BRASSETT *comes down* L.C.)

CHARLEY. My fellow's just the same.

(JACK *gives ferocious glance at* BRASSETT, *who returns it imperturbably.*)

JACK. They all are!

(BRASSETT *exits* L.I.E.)

Now, while you and your dear old aunt are looking at the chapel and the cloisters, Kitty and I can have our little talk.

CHARLEY. Yes, Jack, that's all very well, but what about Amy and me, and our little talk? She'll be in our way horribly.

JACK. I never thought of that.

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

JACK. She'll be worse than that. She'll be a brute of a nuisance. (*Sits on table* C.)

CHARLEY. What shall we do ?

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

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

JACK. Yes. Someone we can depend upon.

(*Re-enter* BRASSETT, L.I.E. *Busies himself at sideboard.*)

CHARLEY. But whom ?

JACK (*sees* BRASSETT *; aside to* CHARLEY). What about Brassett ? He's a pompous sort of chap, and as artful as a corkscrew, can't we turn him into a Don, or something, for the day ?

CHARLEY (*dubiously*). Yes, that's a good idea, Jack, but——

JACK (*after another look at* BRASSETT). No, won't do—we shall want him to wait at table.

CHARLEY. Oh, of course, so we shall.

JACK. There's Freddy Peel.

CHARLEY. Oh, he's such a cynical chap.

(BRASSETT *exits through recess up* L.)

JACK (*sits again on table* C.). Besides, he'd neglect your aunt.

CHARLEY. Yes, and want to make love to our girls.

JACK (*suddenly*). By George, I've got it ! *Babbs—Fanny Babbs* ! We'll ask *him.*

CHARLEY. Oh yes ; why didn't we think of him before ?

JACK. He's a jolly cheerful little chap. Will amuse your aunt like the deuce and keep her in a rattling good humour.

CHARLEY (*comes to* JACK). Splendid !

JACK. Brassett !

(BRASSETT *re-enters, comes down* L.C.)

BRASSETT. Yes, sir.

JACK. Go to Lord Fancourt Babberley's rooms, give him my compliments, and ask him to come here at once.

BRASSETT. Yes, sir. (*Goes to door* L.I.E.)

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

BRASSETT (*as he goes*). Yes, sir.

(*Exits* L.I.E.)

JACK (*shouting after* BRASSETT). And very immediate !

BRASSETT (*speaks off*). Yes, sir.

JACK (*crossing to fireplace*). And while Babbs is doing " gooseberry " with your aunt, we can have our chat with the girls.

CHARLEY (*sits on table* C.). By the by, Jack, talking of Babbs' cheerfulness, haven't you noticed something about him lately—ever since he was so ill and had to go off to the Mediterranean ?

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

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

JACK. What, Babbs in love !

CHARLEY. Yes ; and if I'm not much mistaken, he's as soft-hearted over a girl as——

JACK. We are. All the better ; he'll feel for us. He'll see the necessity then of keeping the old lady well out of the way.

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

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

BRASSETT. His lordship's compliments, sir, and he says he can't come, he has a luncheon party, and could you lend him a few bottles of champagne ?

JACK (*rising*). Lend him a few bottles of champagne ! Well, of all the cheek !

CHARLEY (*seated on* C. *table*). Who's he got coming ?

JACK (R.C., *angrily*). Oh, Freddy Peel, and a lot of idiots like himself, I expect, and they'll be howling comic songs all the afternoon.

CHARLEY. Yes, it'll sound awfully bad, won't it ?

JACK. He mustn't ! (*Crossing* L.C. *to* BRASSETT.) Here, Brassett, lay for six. (*Comes to* CHARLEY.)

BRASSETT. Yes, sir. (*Gets to back of table* C., *moves books to piano at back.*)

CHARLEY. What shall we do ? (*Going to* JACK.)

JACK (*at door* L.I.E., *taking* CHARLEY *with him*). Come on, we'll go to him, we must *make* him come, he can't upset all our plans in this selfish way. (*Puts* CHARLEY *across to* L.I.E. *To* BRASSETT.) Put that champagne in ice, Brassett. And tidy up my room. Come on, Charley, come on !

(*Exeunt* CHARLEY, *propelled by* JACK, L.I.E.)

BRASSETT (*annoyed*). One o'clock ! (*Looks helplessly at watch.*) Put room in order first—always the way ! (*Opens windows wider, picks up book from window seat.*) Hurry, scurry, no time for anything. They come with a bang, they go with a bang, everything with a bang, except pay their bills with a bang. (*At door* L.U.E., *looking at champagne ruefully.*) Well, I did think that little perquisite was safe, 'pon my word I did !

(*Exits* L.U.E.)

LORD FANCOURT (*calling off* R.). Jack ! I say, Jack old man.

(LORD FANCOURT BABBERLY: *He is small, about five foot three to five foot six at most. Good-looking, humorous face, smartly dressed in light grey peppercorn suit with waistcoat and black elastic-sided boots.*

He only removes his coat when he gets into the "Aunt's" dress. The suit must be light to show up well against the black petticoat and its elastic braces.

The essential thing to bear in mind when he is impersonating "The Aunt" is that LORD FANCOURT *has "never acted in his life before" or worn woman's clothes. He still walks, talks and moves like a man, and never attempts to "act the woman." No effeminate female impersonation business. He tries to lighten his voice when he is first introduced, and it cracks appallingly. After that he speaks naturally, but being careful not to use the deep tones of his voice except to* JACK, CHARLEY *and* BRASSETT, *who know who he really is, or again when he forgets he is supposed to be a woman. He just looks a nice old lady of the Victorian era.*)

(LORD FANCOURT BABBERLEY *appears at window up* R.C., *carrying large Gladstone bag.*)

LORD FANCOURT (*climbing in at window*). Where the Dickens are you? (*Looks hurriedly in bedroom* L.U.E.) I wanted to borrow some fizz. (*Goes to cabinet* L.) I wonder where they keep it. (*Turns and sees champagne on* C. *table.*) Hallo! By George—the very thing! (*Puts bag on table and opens it. Starts wrapping up first bottle with antimacassar from chair* R.C.) Serves him right, he shouldn't leave it about (*puts first bottle in bag*) in this ostentatious way (*puts second bottle in bag, wrapping third bottle with another antimacassar or scarf from chair* L.C.) when I'm so beastly hard up. (*Puts third bottle in bag.*) Won't they be jolly waxy? (*Puts fourth bottle in bag and closing bag.*) That's a bottle apiece (*comes* C. *with bag*) and they must make out with whisky and soda. (*Going* L.)

(*Enter* JACK *and* CHARLEY, L.I.E. *They meet* LORD FANCOURT *at door and bring him back to* C., CHARLEY L. *of him,* JACK R. *of him.*)

JACK. Hallo, Babbs. (*Takes bag from* LORD FANCOURT, *puts it on table* C.) We've just been over to your rooms to find you. We've been talking about you.

LORD FANCOURT (C.). No, really? (*To* JACK.) I say, how do you think I'm looking?

JACK (R., *cheerily*). Splendid, old chap!

(CHARLEY L.)

LORD FANCOURT. Yes, I thought you'd be pleased with me. (*Takes bag and bolts towards* L.I.E.) Well, ta-ta!

(CHARLEY *stops him at door* L.I.E. *They bring him back as before.* JACK *takes bag from* LORD FANCOURT *and puts it on table* C.)

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

(*All three down* C. *as before.*)

LORD FANCOURT. Oh yes ! I wanted to borrow some fizz, but——

JACK. Sorry I can't. I could have spared you a couple of bottles, but that fool Brassett——

LORD FANCOURT. I know. My fellow's just the same. There's no reasoning with them, is there ? Well, ta-ta ! (*Makes a feint to bolt.*)

(JACK *and* CHARLEY *miss him and land on* C. *table over bag.* LORD FANCOURT *grins.*)

JACK (*comes down* R., *to* LORD FANCOURT, C.). I looked you up last night, Babbs, but you were out.

(CHARLEY *comes down* L.)

LORD FANCOURT (C.). Yes. You know Freddy Peel, don't you ? He's an awful idiot—hasn't a particle of brains, has he ? But *I'm* all right ! He gave a card party last night, and I won a hundred pounds from him. You should have seen his face ! It makes me laugh now.

JACK. Why, Freddy Peel hasn't sixpence !

LORD FANCOURT. No, really ?

CHARLEY. Did he pay you ?

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

JACK. Why, the old lady's been dead years !

LORD FANCOURT. No, really ? That's beastly ! You know, I'm stumped, and he's had an awful lot out of me. But he's an awful idiot, hasn't a particle of brains, has he ? But I'm all right ! (*Picks up bag.*) Ta-ta ; I'm off ! (*Attempts to bolt towards window.*)

(JACK *intercepts and brings him back to table as before.* JACK *puts bag on table.*)

JACK (*down* R.). I say, Babbs, we want you to stay and lunch with us to-day.

LORD FANCOURT (C.). I say, you chaps, don't play the giddy goat ! I've got to meet my tutor.

JACK (*with mock concern*). Babbs, you mustn't work like this. You're looking quite pulled down.

LORD FANCOURT (*to* JACK). Am I really ? (*Turns to* CHARLEY.)

CHARLEY. I was only telling Jack so just now.

LORD FANCOURT. Do you think I shall die ? (*Turns to* JACK.)

JACK. Not you ! You don't want to worry over all this study. You'll be a great man of one sort or the other one of these days without all that.

LORD FANCOURT. Well, that's what *I* think, you know. But I ought to do something. We've had a wonderful lot of Johnnies in

our family—great Johnnies in the army and navy and things !

JACK. I'll bet they never killed themselves with study !

LORD FANCOURT. No, but I must do *something*.

JACK. Of course, Babbs, you must stay to lunch. Charley's aunt is going to pay him a visit.

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

(*All laugh, pushing* LORD FANCOURT *to and fro.* CHARLEY *regains his watch.*)

JACK. Now that's just the sort of thing we want—a jolly smart chap like you, with a fund of humour and a lot of brilliant conversation. (*Turns* LORD FANCOURT *round so that they face each other.*)

CHARLEY. Yes, Babbs, that's it ! (*Hands on* LORD FANCOURT'S *shoulders and turns him round same as* JACK *has done, so that they face each other.*)

JACK (*pulls him back facing* C.). To interest and amuse a charming lady.

LORD FANCOURT. Yes. Who is she ?

JACK. Why, Charley's Aunt.

LORD FANCOURT. What's she like ?

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

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

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

LORD FANCOURT. Rather ! (*To* CHARLEY.) Put me down for a chance, Charley. I'll take a chance !

JACK. We didn't care to ask Freddy Peel, did we, Charley ?

CHARLEY. No. (*Turning away* L.)

JACK. No.

LORD FANCOURT. No. He's an awful idiot ! . . . I say, what's her name ?

CHARLEY (*deliberately*). Donna Lucia d'Alvadorez.

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

(JACK *and* CHARLEY *bring him back,* R.C., *turn him round and run him up to table* C. *on which he falls face downwards, putting bag on table.* JACK *brings him down* C. *again.*)

JACK. Look here, Babbs, it's no use ; you must stay to lunch. You'll find Charley's Aunt a *charming* old lady.

LORD FANCOURT. Charming *old* lady ! I say, look here, haven't you got anything younger coming ?

*" Croc," short for " crocodile." This was a slang expression of 1892 ; the modern equivalent would be " frump."

CHARLEY. Oh yes, two other ladies.

LORD FANCOURT. Nice? Young?

CHARLEY. Yes.

LORD FANCOURT. Ah! That's more in my line. How many did you say?

JACK. Two.

LORD FANCOURT. Oh, I see. One for each of you, and the old "croc" for me. No thanks, I'm off!

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

JACK (*coming down* R. *of him*). Now listen, Babbs. This is an awfully serious affair.

LORD FANCOURT (C.). I should think so, with an old "croc" like that!

CHARLEY (*coming down* L. *of him*). And we want your *help* as a friend.

JACK. Yes, Babbs, a friend we can *trust*, eh?

LORD FANCOURT. Rather!

JACK. We'll take you into our confidence. No humbug—straight as a die. We're in love.

LORD FANCOURT. What, Charley as well? You silly ass! (*Pushes him away, sits on table* C.)

(CHARLEY *goes down* L.)

JACK. No fool of a flirtation business, but the real downright serious thing. (*Sits on corner of writing-table.*)

CHARLEY. And, Babbs, if you knew the girls as well as we do, you wouldn't wonder at it.

JACK. And they're coming here to lunch to-day.

LORD FANCOURT. I say, have you proposed? (*From one to the other.*)

JACK. No, that's just it.

LORD FANCOURT. Oh, I see. You want me to propose for you?

JACK. *No*! We'll do that for ourselves. That's why we've asked them to come.

CHARLEY. You know, Babbs, you don't understand our feelings a bit.

LORD FANCOURT. Oh, don't I, though. I say—— (*Rises, comes down* C., *beckons boys to him. All* C.) Haven't you noticed how sad I've been lately?

CHARLEY. Yes.

JACK. What is it?

LORD FANCOURT. Well, I don't know, but I think—I'm in love too.

CHARLEY. What makes you think that?

LORD FANCOURT. I'm always wanting to be alone, and hear the birds sing.

(JACK *and* CHARLEY *laugh.*)

And I'm getting so fond of poetry. I can't sleep. I took to drink for a couple of days, but it made me ill for a week, so I left it off.

JACK. You've got all the symptoms. Sit down and tell us all about it.

(LORD FANCOURT *goes to chair* R. *of table* C. CHARLEY *sits on table* C. JACK *sits at table* R. LORD FANCOURT *places his hat on* CHARLEY'S *foot.* CHARLEY *removes it.*)

LORD FANCOURT. You remember when I was ploughed ?

JACK. Beastly shame !

LORD FANCOURT. No, not last time—the term before. I was awfully ill, and took the yacht round to the Mediterranean, and at Monte Carlo I came across an English officer named Delahay—quite penniless and dying. You know, Jack, he tried to commit suicide.

JACK. Bad luck at the tables, eh ?

LORD FANCOURT. Yes. He'd beggared himself and his only child, the sweetest little girl you ever saw, Jack. And to amuse him and keep his spirits up, I used to play cards with him.

CHARLEY. And what became of him ?

LORD FANCOURT. He died, poor fellow !

JACK. And what became of her—the sweetest little girl you ever saw ?

LORD FANCOURT. I lost sight of her. A lady travelling home that way—from South America, I believe—took charge of her and brought her to England. You know, Jack, I tried to tell her that——

JACK. You loved her ?

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

JACK. It all oozed out of your finger-tips and the points of your hair !

LORD FANCOURT. But after all, you know, I might have been rejected and I should have looked a silly ass.

JACK. At any rate, you can sympathise with us.

(*Knock off* L.I.E.)

(*Enter* BRASSETT L.U.E. *and exits* L.I.E.)

JACK. Hallo ! Here's the messenger back.

(JACK, LORD FANCOURT *and* CHARLEY *all hurry across* L. BRASSETT *re-enters with note, hands it to* JACK *and goes up* L.C. *to sideboard, quietly arranges three tumblers, whisky decanter and jug of water on tray during next scene.*)

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

(*They are looking over each other's shoulders while* JACK *opens note.* LORD FANCOURT *takes note from* JACK.)

LORD FANCOURT. By Jove !

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

CHARLEY. So they are ! (*Goes* R. *and sits in writing-chair with his back to* JACK *and* LORD FANCOURT, *reading letter.*)

JACK. You'll stop, Babbs ?

LORD FANCOURT. Oh, I say—look here—— (*Looks at clothes.*)

JACK. No, you'll do as you are. We won't let you go now we've got you.

LORD FANCOURT. But look here, Jack, don't play the giddy goat ; I've something else to do.

JACK. What is it ?

LORD FANCOURT. It's something awfully important.

JACK. Well, what ?

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

JACK. Rot ! He'll be ploughed again—won't he, Charley ?

LORD FANCOURT. But I've given my word.

JACK. What are you playing ?

LORD FANCOURT. A lady—an old lady—and I've never acted in my life before——

JACK. Oh ! That's his tutor, eh, Charley ?

LORD FANCOURT. And I'm going to try on the things before those fellows come.

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

LORD FANCOURT. In my rooms, in a box on the bed, but——

(BRASSETT *at sideboard.*)

JACK (*to* BRASSETT). Fetch them, Brassett, quick !

(BRASSETT *exits* L.I.E. CHARLEY *goes up to window.*)

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

(JACK *intercepts him ; they struggle for bag,* JACK *gets it and throws it casually down on table* C. LORD FANCOURT *picks it up very concerned, takes a step or two down and shakes bag gently to hear if any bottles are broken, then runs hand underneath to see if any are leaking—reassured, puts bag on chair* L. *of* C. *table. Neither* JACK *nor* CHARLEY *sees any of* LORD FANCOURT'S *business with bag.* JACK, *during this, gets whisky, water and glasses on salver from sideboard, places them on* C. *table.* CHARLEY *coming down* R. *to* C. *table.* JACK *behind* C. *table.* LORD FANCOURT L. *of table.* JACK *pours out two whiskies, hands decanter to* CHARLEY.)

CHARLEY (*pouring out whisky for himself, leaving decanter on* R. *corner of table*). Babbs, you don't sympathise with us a bit !

(JACK *pours water into one whisky.*)

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

JACK (*adding water to second whisky*). Oh, she'll turn up one of these days. (*Offers drink to* LORD FANCOURT.) Have a drink?

(CHARLEY *adds water to his own whisky.*)

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

JACK. Just a small one.

LORD FANCOURT. I'm teetotal.

JACK. Oh, very well. Here you are, Charley. (*Offers glass to* CHARLEY.)

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

JACK. I tell you what we'll do. We'll drink her health—wherever she is. Here's to the future Lady Fancourt Babberley. What did you say her name was?

LORD FANCOURT. Haven't the slightest idea!

(JACK *and* CHARLEY *laugh.*)

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

(*They drink.* LORD FANCOURT *places his glass on table. Re-enter* BRASSETT *with dress-box,* L.I.E.—*a large brown cardboard box with gilt edges, like an exaggerated chocolate box.*)

BRASSETT. Your things, m'lord.

(CHARLEY *goes down* R., *sits chair side of writing-table.* JACK *goes* R.C. *front of* C. *table.*)

LORD FANCOURT (*taking box from* BRASSETT). Thank you, Brassett. You're an awfully good chap. (*Crosses to* JACK; *aside.*) I say, Jack, could you lend me half a crown? (*Turns up-stage and puts box on window seat at back.*)

(BRASSETT *at sideboard.*)

JACK (*feels in pockets, then aside to* CHARLEY). Charley! Have you half-a-crown?

CHARLEY (*pulling out linings of trouser pockets*). No, Jack, I haven't.

JACK (*crossing* L., *aside to* BRASSETT). Brassett! Give me half-a-crown, will you?

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

JACK (*comes* C.). Babbs!

(LORD FANCOURT *comes down* R.C.)

(*Aside to* LORD FANCOURT.) Here you are. (*Gives half-crown and crosses to* CHARLEY R.)

LORD FANCOURT. Thanks. (*Crosses to* BRASSETT, L.) Brassett, here you are.

(JACK *and* CHARLEY *see half-crown given back to* BRASSETT *and laugh.* CHARLEY *collapsed in chair* L. *of writing-table.* JACK *ditto into chair* R. *of table* C. LORD FANCOURT *turns, puzzled, crosses to* JACK. JACK *whispers to him, points to* BRASSETT, *then twice to himself, then to* LORD FANCOURT *and then to* BRASSETT *again.* LORD FANCOURT *joins in laughter and goes up to window seat and picks up dress-box.* BRASSETT, *during this, removes bag from chair* L. *of table* C. *to chair at back, and exits* L.U.E.)

JACK (*to* LORD FANCOURT, *pointing to box*). What have you got there ?

LORD FANCOURT. Chocolates.

CHARLEY. Chocolates ? (*Still seated in chair.*)

JACK. Let's have a look !

LORD FANCOURT. No, I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll try them on after lunch while you're all in the garden.

JACK. You can't do that ; we shall want you with us. Try them on now, won't take long, will it ?

LORD FANCOURT. Only a minute or two. (*Lifts box on to his* L. *shoulder, crossing up-stage to* L.) I've lost an awful lot of time over these theatricals. (*At door.*) But next term I mean to work.

(*Exits* L.U.E. JACK *goes up to front of fireplace.*)

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

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

(*Knock.*)

JACK (*to* CHARLEY *at chair*). Here they are, and your aunt's not come yet. (*Rushes to mantelpiece to see the time, notices photographs, slams them face down, arranges tie, smoothes hair all in a hurry, returns below table* C.)

CHARLEY (*rises, getting behind* JACK). Good gracious ! What shall we do ? (*Also trying to see in mirror.*)

(*Re-enter* BRASSETT, L.U.E., *goes to door* L.I.E.)

JACK. Oh, let them come in. We can explain. (*Crossing* L.C. *below table* C.) Show them in, Brassett.

(BRASSETT *opens door, showing in* KITTY *and* AMY, *closes door and goes up back* C., *and then exits* L.U.E.)

(*Shaking hands with* KITTY.) How do you do ?

(*Shaking hands with* AMY.) So kind of you to come !

KITTY. Oh, we were very pleased to be able to come.

(*They both cross to table* R. CHARLEY *joins* AMY L.)

Weren't we, Amy ?

AMY. Oh, yes. (*To* CHARLEY.) Mr. Wykeham, are we too early ?

CHARLEY. Oh no, no !

(*They shake hands and move up to* C. *table together.* CHARLEY, *in his nervousness, backs into the chair, then offers it to* AMY ; *she sits chair* L. *of* C. *table.*)

KITTY. Yes, Mr. Chesney, you didn't mention any time.

(JACK *gives chair,* KITTY *sits* L. *of writing-table.*)

JACK. Oh, not at all, not at all ! We're delighted ! (*Going to fireplace to look at clock. Aside.*) She'll be here soon.

(*Enter* LORD FANCOURT L.U.E., *in his shirt-sleeves—to* C. *upstage, sees girls and bolts back* L.U.E. JACK *and* CHARLEY *in terror the girls may see him.* CHARLEY, *from behind table, leans over table, hides the drink, etc., with his hat, on table* C. BRASSETT *takes tray from table* C. *and off through recess up* L.C., *leaving whisky decanter.* CHARLEY *leans forward talking to* AMY *and screening whisky with his hat, at the same time signalling with his hand behind his back, to* JACK.)

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

(JACK *rapidly takes decanter from table* C., *hides it in fireplace and returns to chair behind writing-table.*)

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

KITTY. You've jolly quarters here.

(JACK *and* KITTY *continue to talk aside.*)

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

AMY. Yes, Uncle always takes us to some dreadfully remote place at this time of the year, where we never see a soul, and it's *so* dreary.

CHARLEY. Why does he ?

AMY. I don't know.

CHARLEY. It's a shame !

AMY. Why, are you sorry we're going ?

CHARLEY. Sorry ? Why, it's put me—and Jack—into a perfect fever ; that's why we were so anxious to see you here to-day.

AMY. It's lucky uncle is away in town, or I don't think we could have come.

CHARLEY. Why ?

AMY. I don't know, but he raises such odd objections, and then you know he's so peculiar about Kitty.

CHARLEY. Why ?

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

(*They talk aside.*)

JACK (*ardently*). Miss Verdun, have you forgotten that dance the other night? I *never* shall.

KITTY. No.

JACK. No! Those stolen moments in the garden by ourselves were the very happiest of all my life, and out there in the moonlight —ah, moonlight is the true atmosphere for—for sentiment.

KITTY. I wonder how many people have said that?

JACK (*let down a little*). Kitty, I know when you like you can be an awful plague, but to-day you are quite cynical.

KITTY. I know I am; I'm thinking of that man.

JACK. Of what man?

KITTY. Of my guardian—Mr. Spettigue, who hurries us away from all our best friends directly we get to know anyone really well, for fear of——

JACK. For fear of what?

KITTY (*evasively*). Oh, I don't know!

JACK. Why *does* he?

KITTY (*looking up and smiling*). Because he's a selfish, wicked old man.

JACK. Are you—really—so sorry to go away?

KITTY. No, I am angry. But don't speak about it any more, or, as Amy says, "I shall cry."

AMY (*rising and speaking to* CHARLEY *as they come down* L. *a little*). What a dear—sweet—old lady your aunt must be, Mr. Wykeham! I am longing to know her. Where is she?

CHARLEY (*aside*). Jack! (*Rapidly. In agonized aside and beckoning* JACK, *who goes* R.C. *to him.*) Where's my aunt?

(JACK *whispers something in his ear and turns away.*)

(*Not catching it.*) What?

(JACK *shrugs shoulders hopelessly and returns to* KITTY. KITTY *and* AMY *see nothing of this last scene, which must be played rapidly.*)

CHARLEY (*to* AMY, *hesitatingly*). Oh, why, she's hardly arrived yet.

AMY (*surprised*). No, oh! (*Crosses to* KITTY.) Kitty, Mr. Wykeham's aunt hasn't come yet.

KITTY (*rising*). Hasn't come? (*Crossing to* C.) Oh—— (*Turning to* JACK.) Then we must—we'll—run and do some shopping—and come back. Shan't be long. Good-bye!

(KITTY *crosses* AMY *to* L.I.E. CHARLEY *has worked round to door, which he opens.* JACK *follows.*)

AMY (*to* JACK). Good-bye.

JACK. Good-bye.

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