SAMUEL FRENCH SAMPLE PERUSAL

This sample is an *excerpt* from a Samuel French title.

This sample is for perusal only and may not be used for performance purposes.

You may not download, print, or distribute this excerpt.

We highly recommend purchasing a copy of the title before considering for performance.

For more information about licensing or about purchasing a play or musical, please visit our website.

www.samuelfrench.com
www.samuelfrench.co.uk

SF PERUSALS

CLARA'S ON THE CURTAINS!

Being a further misadventure of the Wickley Women's Guild as first recounted in "Her Grace Will Be Here"

by

ARTHUR LOVEGROVE

SAMUEL  FRENCH

LONDON

NEW YORK TORONTO SYDNEY HOLLYWOOD

© 1973 BY ARTHUR LOVEGROVE

Rights of Performance by Amateurs are controlled by Samuel French Ltd, 52 Fitzroy Street, London W1P 6JR, and they, or their authorized agents, issue licences to amateurs on payment of a fee. **It is an infringement of the Copyright to give any performance or public reading of the play before the fee has been paid and the licence issued.**

The Royalty Fee indicated below is subject to contract and subject to variation at the sole discretion of Samuel French Ltd.

Basic fee for each and every performance by amateurs in the British Isles — Code D

The publication of this play does not imply that it is necessarily available for performance by amateurs or professionals, either in the British Isles or Overseas. Amateurs and professionals considering a production are strongly advised in their own interests to apply to the appropriate agents for consent before starting rehearsals or booking a theatre or hall.

The verses of *The Shooting of Dan McGrew* are printed by kind permission of the copyright owners, Keith Prowse Music Publishing Co., Ltd.

ISBN 0 573 03352 8

Please see page iv for further copyright information

CHARACTERS

Mrs Mabel Claythorpe
Miss Clara Simpson
Mrs Iris Nicholson
Mrs Sonia Carter
Mrs Jeanne McGregor
Mrs Mavis Moffatt
Mrs Amanda Price
Miss Celia Lupton
Mrs Annie Craddock
Miss Shirley Craddock

The hall in which the production takes place is supposed to represent the hall and stage of the Wickley Women's Guild

Time – the present. About 6.45 pm on a winter's evening

COPYRIGHT INFORMATION
(See also page ii)

This play is fully protected under the Copyright Laws of the British Commonwealth of Nations, the United States of America and all countries of the Berne and Universal Copyright Conventions.

All rights, including Stage, Motion Picture, Radio, Television, Public Reading, and Translation into Foreign Languages, are strictly reserved.

No part of this publication may lawfully be reproduced in ANY form or by any means — photocopying, typescript, recording (including video-recording), manuscript, electronic, mechanical, or otherwise — or be transmitted or stored in a retrieval system, without prior permission.

Licences are issued subject to the understanding that it shall be made clear in all advertising matter that the audience will witness an amateur performance; that the names of the authors of the plays shall be included on all announcements and on all programmes; and that the integrity of the authors' work will be preserved.

The Royalty Fee is subject to contract and subject to variation at the sole discretion of Samuel French Ltd.

In Theatres or Halls seating Four Hundred or more the fee will be subject to negotiation.

In Territories Overseas the fee quoted in this Acting Edition may not apply. A fee will be quoted on application to our local authorized agent, or if there is no such agent, on application to Samuel French Ltd, London.

VIDEO-RECORDING OF AMATEUR PRODUCTIONS

Please note that the copyright laws governing video-recording are extremely complex and that it should not be assumed that any play may be video-recorded for *whatever purpose* without first obtaining the permission of the appropriate agents. The fact that a play is published by Samuel French Ltd does not indicate that video rights are available or that Samuel French Ltd controls such rights.

CLARA'S ON THE CURTAINS!

The hall and stage of the Wickley Women's Guild. About 6.45 pm on a winter's evening

If possible (though it is not essential) a record playing "There's No Business Like Show Business" is heard before the house lights go down. It continues for a moment or two afterwards, then dies away. A moment later Mrs Mabel Claythorpe bursts through the centre gap in the curtains. Mabel is a large, middle-aged woman, domineering, with a booming voice. She is the Chairman of the Wickley Women's Guild and lets nobody forget it. She is dressed in a kimono and her hair is in a net

Mabel (*glaring* L *and booming*) Clara, will you please open these curtains!

Miss Clara Simpson enters L, *in front of the curtains. She is a twittering, nervous spinster of uncertain age. She is dressed in a jumper and slacks*

Clara (*very agitated*) I'm terribly sorry, Mabel, but you've only just given me this job. I can't open them, they're stuck.

Mabel Stuck? Stuck? You are stage manager which means that you are in charge of the curtains. Clara, as stage manager—unstick them!

Clara Yes, Mabel, of course! At once! I'm terribly sorry . . .

Mabel Clara, the curtains!

Clara Yes, Mabel.

Clara scuttles off L *and disappears behind the curtains, and Mabel goes behind them* C. *There is a pause*

Mabel (*from behind the curtains*) Pull, Clara, pull!

The curtains suddenly fly apart about six feet and reveal Mabel standing C

Clara (*off*) There, Mabel, I've done it. I've opened them.
Mabel (*booming*) Clara, come here!

Clara enters L *behind the curtains to stand beside Mabel, who pulls her through the gap so that they both stand* C

Tonight, Clara, the Wickley Women's Guild are presenting a variety show, plus a dramatic one-act play, to help raise money for the Mayor's appeal fund to preserve the town's clock tower. Through the industry of our members we have sold all the tickets and——

Clara (*eagerly*) I sold six.

Mabel —we are to be honoured by the presence of the Mayor himself and it is our intention, nay our duty, to present a performance worthy of the occasion. And we can't do that if ninety per cent of the audience can't see the show! Clara, will you please open the curtains so that the entire stage can be seen!

Clara (*turning and seeing the six-foot opening*) Oh dear! But, Mabel, I pulled, I really did pull!

Mabel This is no time for pulling. Heave, Clara, heave! Put some back into it.

Clara (*tearfully*) But I'm not the heaving type, Mabel. Can't you persuade Wilkins to do them as he usually does?

Mabel Because tonight of all nights he's suddenly decided that he is the scene shifter only, and he refuses, positively refuses, to do any other duties.

Clara But we haven't got any scenery!

Mabel Who is bringing on the chairs and tables and setting up the various items we need for the one-act play? Wilkins! Who is working the thunder sheet at the play's most dramatic moment? Wilkins! Who is pushing the piano on and off the stage six times during the performance at the insistence of Mrs Wainwright so that she can be seen playing the instrument? Wilkins! Who is managing the lighting throughout the show?

Clara (*quickly*) Wilkins!

Mabel Right! Do you want to overwork the man?

Clara (*twittering*) No, Mabel, of course not! But I do feel . . .

Mabel And who insisted on being stage manager? (*Pointing an imperious finger*) You did!

Clara I never! You said at the first meeting . . .

Mabel Rehearsal, Clara, rehearsal! Let us be professional, please!

Clara Well, whatever you call it, you said at the first one, "I propose Clara Simpson as stage manager, all those in favour, carried unanimously," and I haven't been allowed to manage anything except make cups of tea.

Mabel (*aghast*) You are to manage the curtains, the most important part of the show! How are the audience to know an item is finished unless you pull the curtains?

Clara (*tearfully*) But I wanted to *be* an item. I wanted to recite.

Mrs Iris Nicholson enters R *in front of the curtains. She is in her middle forties, gay, slim, and very attractive. She is dressed in a very smart dress and has a mink cape slung carelessly around her shoulders. She stands* R *surveying Mabel and Clara, who do not see her, with amusement*

Mabel Clara, we gave you an audition and you recited the only poem you said you knew, and after the first verse of "I have a little shadow that goes in and out with me" we decided that you and your little shadow would be better out than in. In fact, the entire committee, with the exception of yourself, realized that you were no Dame Sybil Thorndike.

Clara (*with sudden temerity*) Well, when you sing *Mad Dogs and Englishmen* you should realize that you are no Noel Coward! So there!

Mabel (*outraged*) Clara!!

Clara (*aghast at her temerity*) Oh dear! Oh dear!

Clara rushes off L *behind the curtains*

Iris She's right y'know, you aren't! And you shouldn't wear shorts and a toupee. They may give the appearance of heat, but you haven't the figure.

Mabel (*swinging around furiously*) I'll have you know, Iris . . .

The curtains fly to and Mabel is enveloped in them. She fights furiously free and stands in front of them

Iris (*interestedly*) Was that meant to happen?

Clara appears in front of the curtains down L

Clara Oh dear, they've closed again. I'm so sorry, Mabel . . .
Iris You pulled the wrong rope, dear.
Mabel That will be our biggest worry this evening, Clara on the curtains.
Iris But I thought Wilkins was on the "rag".
Mabel Well, he's not! Clara is.
Iris I hope that's the least of your worries. (*To Clara*) The other rope, dear!
Mabel (*furiously*) Clara, will you please learn how to operate the curtains. Good heavens, the show starts in just over an hour.
Clara (*horrified*) An hour? Oh, my goodness!
Mabel (*shouting*) Clara, open the curtains!
Clara (*now a bundle of nerves*) Yes, Mabel! Of course, Mabel! I'll really try. Oh, heaven help me!

Clara disappears and at that precise moment the curtains fly completely open revealing an empty stage which has only drapes

Iris (*gazing upwards*) Heaven certainly did!
Clara (*popping her head out from the corner* L) No, that was Wilkins showing me how.

Clara disappears again

Iris (*moving up stage*) I hope Clara proves an apt pupil.
Mabel Thank God, they're open at last. (*Turning up stage to address Iris*) Now, listen to me, Iris . . .

The curtains suddenly close again as quickly as they had previously opened, leaving Mabel alone in front of them

Clara (*popping her head round the side; proudly*) And that was *me*! I did that.
Mabel (*shouting*) Congratulations! Now will you please open them and keep them open.
Clara Yes, Mabel! Of course, Mabel! At once!

Clara again disappears and a moment later the curtains fly

completely open once again. Clara's head appears once more

I did that, too!

Iris (*languidly applauding*) Darling, you will be the hit of the show.

Clara Do you really think so?

Iris Yes, apart from Mabel, of course.

Clara (*delighted*) Oh, thank you, Iris, dear.

Clara disappears

Mabel (*icily*) And what did you mean by that?

Iris That Clara operates the curtains in a most professional manner. She'll probably pinch the notices.

Mabel I meant that bit about me. I didn't like the way you said it.

Iris Darling, I meant what I said. Of course you'll be a hit. Apart from producing the entire show you're in eight of the variety items out of twelve in the first half. You can't be anything else but a hit, they can't miss you. Your name appears on the programme with such regularity it would take a dose of salts to shift it.

Mabel Iris! That is professional jealousy. Just because you are an ex-actress and insisted on producing the show . . .

Iris (*gently*) I was asked to generally supervise and produce the one-act play.

Mabel And when we didn't agree with your advice you flounced out.

Iris Correction! When *you* didn't agree and took over the entire production I made a dignified exit.

Mabel The remark you made when you did exit . . .

Iris (*giggling*) I always did like a good exit line.

Mabel It was vulgar in the extreme.

Iris Tell me, did you do what I told you to do with the show?

Mabel Iris!

Iris Obviously not! It's still going on!

Mrs Sonia Carter enters R *with a great rush. She is in her early forties, plump but attractive, and knows it. She is very fulsome*

and gushing in her manner. She is attired in an over-elaborate wrap

Sonia (*dramatically*) Darlings, darlings! Tragedy, tragedy! (*Wringing her hands*) What shall we do? What *can* we do?
Iris We haven't the faintest idea until we know what tragedy has occurred.
Mabel Sonia, for heaven's sake, what's happened?
Sonia (*waving her hands dramatically*) It's Amanda, poor, poor Amanda! I went into the other dressing-room just now and you'll never guess. You can't possibly imagine the disaster.
Iris She really does build up the suspense. I can't wait for the next instalment.
Mabel (*shouting*) Sonia! What's happened?
Sonia Darlings, it's so shattering! She's lost her voice, completely and utterly.
Mabel Lost her voice? She can't have! I was only speaking to her ten minutes ago.
Sonia (*still full of drama*) But now it's gone. (*Flicking her fingers*) Just like that! What can we do?
Iris Institute a search party, it can't have gone very far.
Sonia Iris darling, how can you joke. It's tragic! It's a shattering disaster!

Mrs Amanda Price enters R, *a very pretty young newly-wed. She is tenderly escorted on one side by Mrs Mavis Moffat, a youngish woman; and on the other by Mrs Jeanne McGregor, who is slightly older. Mavis and Jeanne are in housecoats, Amanda in a pretty wrap*

Jeanne Mabel! Iris! Oh, Iris, thank heaven you're here.
Iris I just drifted along early to offer best wishes or condolences all round.
Mavis We need more than that. Do you know what's happened?
Iris We have been informed, with a wealth of dramatic detail, by Sonia.
Jeanne But what are we going to do? Amanda's voice just went. One moment she was speaking and then she couldn't.
Mabel Nonsense! No-one's voice goes just like that.
Iris I must admit yours never has.

Mabel (*booming*) Amanda! I command you to speak. Speak!
Iris And that's an order.

All eyes are on Amanda, who keeps on opening and shutting her mouth like a goldfish

Mabel Speak!
Amanda (*in a strangled whisper*) I—can't!
Jeanne (*frantically*) You see, she can't! Poor Amanda!
Sonia We daren't tell the others. Can you imagine the panic? Can you *imagine*?
Iris My mind boggles.
Sonia (*with a sweeping gesture that includes everyone*) It must be our little secret.
Iris My lips are sealed.
Mabel Don't be ridiculous, Sonia. How can we keep this a secret?
Iris It'll be difficult to keep it from the audience. Some sharp-witted member is bound to notice.
Mabel (*shouting*) Shut up, Iris! This is serious.
Sonia Serious! It's catastrophic, complete and utter!
Mavis (*frantically*) It's worse than that! Apart from items in the variety half she's playing the lead in the play.
Mabel (*taking command*) Don't panic! We have just over an hour. Right! First of all—a doctor.
Iris (*turning to the front*) Is there a doctor in the house?
Mabel (*shouting*) Clara, here! At once!

Clara scuttles on L *in a great flurry*

Clara Yes, Mabel, yes! I'm here!
Mabel Find a doctor! At once!
Clara Yes, Mabel, of course.

Clara turns and goes to run off L, *but suddenly stops and turns again with a little squeal*

A doctor? Oh, Mabel, are you ill?
Mabel Of course not. Amanda has lost her voice. Get a doctor and there's no time to be lost.
Clara (*in a panic*) Lost her voice? But what about the show?
Mabel (*shouting*) I'll attend to that! Clara, a doctor!

Clara (*even more panic-stricken*) Yes, Mabel!

Clara rushes off L, *shrieking*

Amanda's lost her voice!

Iris Bang goes our little secret. That's what I like about Clara, calm and controlled in any crisis. She'll probably return with the greengrocer.

Mavis She's only got to telephone.

Iris Nobody told her that. She's probably haring up the High Street by now.

Jeanne But what are we going to do? Don't you realize the show starts in about an hour?

Mabel (*striding back and forth*) Of course I realize it.

Sonia (*wringing her hands*) An hour! This is a crisis! But what can we do? (*Her voice rises tragically*) What?

Iris (*admiringly*) What a performance! Is she as good in the show?

Sonia But what can we do?

Iris Well, we can wait for the doctor.

Mabel For heaven's sake let me *think*!

Sonia Of course. Quiet, everyone! Dear Mabel, such a rock.

A pause, as they all gaze at Mabel

Mabel (*suddenly stopping*) Right! Let us consider the facts.

Mavis Consider the facts? There's only one fact. Amanda's lost her voice.

Jeanne And she's playing the lead in the play, apart from other items.

Mabel Let me think. I am the producer. Stop panicking. Her voice may come back.

Jeanne If it comes back as quick as it went it should be back now. Oh, Amanda, please say something, *please*.

Amanda (*a strangled whisper*) I—can't.

Iris What on earth was she doing when it went?

Mavis (*distractedly*) She was absolutely wonderful last night at the dress rehearsal, but she wanted to make sure so we were going through her lines . . .

Jeanne And for some unknown reason she dried a few times . . .

Mavis And then she suddenly lost her voice.

FINISH READING THIS SCRIPT

Visit our website to purchase the full script or to explore other titles.

www.samuelfrench.com
www.samuelfrench.co.uk

To stay up to date on all that we are doing, follow us on social media:



*Titles for licensing are subject to availability depending on your territory.

SF PERUSALS