

ESMERALDA.*

A PLAY IN FOUR ACTS.

CHARACTERS :

"OLD MAN" ROGERS A North Carolina Farmer.	JACK DESMOND An American Artist in Paris.
LYDIA ANN ROGERS His Wife.	NORA DESMOND } His Sisters.
ESMERALDA His Daughter.	KATE DESMOND } His Sisters.
DAVE HARDY A Young North Carolinian.	"MARQUIS" DE MONTESSIN A French Adventurer.
ESTABROOK A Man of Leisure.	GEORGE DREW An American Speculator.

ACT I.

Room in Rogers's house, North Carolina. Rough log interior. Window and door in background.
Drew appears at door—looks in a little, and knocks.

DREW. There doesn't seem to be any one about. (*Steps in and looks around.*) From the general aspect of things, I should say it wouldn't be difficult to make a bargain with them—and a good one. They are generally pretty innocent. Now if Estabrook will keep quiet! (*Looking around, goes to door.*) Estabrook! Esta—oh, he's making a sketch of some confounded thing or other. Estabrook!

ESTABROOK. (*Enters, with sketch-book.*) With all respect for your energy of character, I must confess that it jars on the pastoral nature of the scene. What's the difficulty? Business again, I suppose. Oh! this is the house where the owner of the unlimited vein of iron ore—

DREW. (*Puts hand over Estabrook's mouth.*) For heaven's sake, keep still.

ESTABROOK. My dear fellow, there's a vigor about you that might be toned down—to advantage.

DREW. Look here! I must make a bargain with these people. It's a matter of thousands of dollars.

ESTABROOK. And this is the house—the little house they live in—and there's a simplicity about it—

DREW. Never mind the simplicity about it. I want to find the people. (*Knocks on door.*)

DREW. There's some one, at last! (*Hurries to door.*) Hallo! Hallo, you, I say! (*To Estabrook.*) He's chopping wood. Hallo!!

OLD MAN. (*Outside.*) Mother, whar air ye? Some un's a-hollerin' at the door. Lyddy Ann!

DREW. No, it's you I want. Can't you come here for a few moments?

OLD MAN. (*Appearing at door.*) She aint yere.

DREW. Who isn't here?

OLD MAN. She aint—Lyddy Ann—mother, ye know.

DREW. Do you mean your wife?

OLD MAN. Y—yes. That's her.

DREW. I don't want your wife.

OLD MAN. Who d'ye want then? Esmeraldy?

DREW. No, I want the man who owns this farm around here. It's rather a barren place, but I thought—

OLD MAN. Waal, mother—she's out some-where.

DREW. Look here. Is this farm hers or yours?

OLD MAN. Waal, I reckon I paid fer it—sorter—but mother, she—she kinder runs it—an' I don't 'low to enterfere much. That's the way it is. But wont ye set down?

DREW. Thanks.

OLD MAN. (*Glances toward Estabrook.*) Aint he 'long with ye?

DREW. Yes—oh, yes. Estabrook—this is the gentleman I was looking for.

OLD MAN. Howdy! howdy! I'm glad ter be made acquainted. Rogers is my name. Set down. Mother, she'll be pow'rful glad ter see ye—pow'rful. Whar air ye from?

ESTABROOK. New York—as much as any-where.

OLD MAN. Lor', how tickled mother wud be ter see ye. She haint never been ter New York, but 'Liz'bethville—whar she was raised—it kinder made her feel like she knew suthin of how New York was. That's three churches to 'Liz'bethville, an' four stores, an' a post-office. She's high-sperreted, mother is.

DREW. And you say she takes charge of your farm for you?

*The drama of "Esmeralda" is founded upon a short story of the same name by Mrs. F. H. Burnett, which appeared in this magazine for May, 1877. It is here printed through the courtesy of the Madison Square Theater, where it was produced October 30, 1881, and is still being played. In abridging the play to meet the requirements of the magazine, passages have been necessarily omitted which are striking features of the stage representation. Copyright, 1881, by Frances Hodgson Burnett and W. H. Gillette. All rights reserved.

OLD MAN. Waal, yes—she kinder runs things. She's a pow'rful manager, mother is—an' she's high-sperreted, an' it's—waaal—it's kinder easier ter let her. An' her bein' raised in 'Liz'bethville makes her more businessliker than me an' Esmeralda.

ESTABROOK. And who is Esmeralda?

OLD MAN. She's my little gal—'tleast she aint so little now. She's eighteen years old an' a-goin' ter be married—Lor', just ter think of her a-goin' ter be married!

DREW. I suppose the land round here isn't good for much. Now yours, for instance. What is your wife's opinion of it?

OLD MAN. Waal, I dunno so much about thet.

DREW. Hasn't she ever given you her opinion of it?

OLD MAN. Wa-al—no—not eggzackly. She's kinder confined herself more to givin' me her opinion o' me fer buyin' it.

DREW. Um! What does she say?

OLD MAN. Waal—she sez a heap—now an' ag'in—when she gits started on thet, we kinder change the subjick.

DREW. (*Gets up and walks to and fro.*) Well, I suppose she'll be here before long, wont she? You see, I have a little idea—that is, it occurred to me that possibly—

OLD MAN. Say! Was ye thinkin' o' stayin' 'round yere till she comes?

DREW. Yes.

OLD MAN. An' talkin' to her about the land?

DREW. Yes, I wanted to have a little talk with both of you.

OLD MAN. Oh, ye wont need me—when ye git her started ye wont need me. I reckon I'll hev to go an' git a load o' wood about—about ten miles from yere. I 'low I'd better start now. (*Gets up hastily.*) Ye wont need me, when ye git her started about the land.

DREW. (*Catching Old Man's arm.*) Look here, you musn't go. (*Gently pushes him back into seat.*)

OLD MAN. (*Nervously.*) Thet thar wood—we can't do without it.

ESTABROOK. (*Aside.*) Oh, this is a shame—to get the poor old chap's land like this—it's a rascally shame, by Jove!

MRS. ROGERS. (*Outside.*) Esmeralda, where's your father?

OLD MAN. (*Starting.*) Thar—thar she is—an' thet thar wood!

DREW. Look here. The best thing for you to do is to take us over the farm. Suppose we go before she comes.

OLD MAN. I think we'd just as well.

MRS. ROGERS. (*Outside.*) Esmeralda! Esmeralda!

OLD MAN. (*Going quickly toward door, stopping.*) Le's go! Le's go! She haint feel-

in' her best—I kin tell. (*Beckons Drew vigorously. Exit.*)

ESTABROOK. Drew, it's a shame—it's a confounded shame. (*Going.*) And such an innocent old fellow, too. (*Exit with Drew.*)

Enter Mrs. Rogers from door Left. She looks about.

MRS. ROGERS. There was some one here—I heard him talking. (*Looking out of window.*) There they go! What did he take them away for without letting me see them! Always drudge—drudge—drudge—nothing else—and no chance of anything else. I ought to be used to it by this time. But I suppose I never shall be. It comes over me morning, noon, night. And there's no escape. I was a fool. There wasn't a man in 'Lizabethville or 'round I mightn't have had when I was teaching school there—and some have done well since then—done well—and moved off to big cities. And for a mere fancy—a whim—I came to this—to drudge my life out on a rocky farm—and never see a soul from month's end to month's end. And I was a handsome girl, too—and always had it in me to long for what was going on outside. What fools girls are!

Esmeralda enters door with a pail.

ESMERALDA. (*Timidly.*) Mother!

MRS. ROGERS. Oh, you're there, are you? What makes you slink about that way, as if you were scared? That's one of your father's ways. Where have you been?

ESMERALDA. (*Nervously.*) I've—been pulling the corn for supper—and here it is, mother.

MRS. ROGERS. Here it is! Where? It isn't in the pail.

ESMERALDA. (*Looks in pail.*) Oh—I—I—must have left it there. We were talking—and—and he laid it down by me on the grass—and—I think I forgot it. I'll go and get it.

MRS. ROGERS. Stop! Who was with you?

ESMERALDA. Dave, mother—

MRS. ROGERS. Don't hang your head down as if you had no spirit in you. That's another of your father's ways. You two are so alike you drive me wild. What was it you were talking about?

ESMERALDA. We were talking—he was saying—he—was saying—

MRS. ROGERS. Did it take him a week to say it? Well, go on!

ESMERALDA. If—if you don't mind—I'll call him, mother, and—he'll tell you himself. He's down by the bars. He wanted to come in with me—but—

MRS. ROGERS. But what? You were afraid to let him, I suppose. As if I didn't know what he wanted.

ESMERALDA. (*Timidly draws near Mrs. Rogers and lays a hand on her arm.*) Don't be angry, mother—please don't. It's all my fault. Don't let what I do make you blame Dave or—our father.

MRS. ROGERS. It's not so much your fault as your father's. You get it all from him. You'd be well enough if you had some spirit, and set more value on yourself.

ESMERALDA. (*At door.*) Mother, he's coming.

MRS. ROGERS. Well, you might have done better. (*Aside.*) If there was any sort of a chance for her around here, I'd never listen to it for a moment. If we'd lived in 'Lizabethville!

ESMERALDA. Here he is, mother.

Dave enters. He goes at once to Esmeralda and takes her hand.

DAVE. Well, Mrs. Rogers, may be you know how it is with us.

MRS. ROGERS. (*Rather sullenly.*) Oh, yes, I know—I'd have been blind not to have seen it.

DAVE. And—I—hope you've nothing particular against it.

MRS. ROGERS. Nothing particular—no more than I've nothing particular for it.

DAVE. I know I aint good enough for her, but—

MRS. ROGERS. Well, she might have done better.

DAVE. She might have found a richer fellow—and a smarter fellow, but she couldn't have found one anywhere who'd think more of her.

ESMERALDA. I shouldn't care for money, mother—I shouldn't know what to do with it; but when I go away from father—dear, gentle father—I couldn't bear to go to anyone who was different, and Dave—I—I've known Dave so long. Tell her about the little house, Dave.

DAVE. (*Laughs.*) I've been building a house for my wife. I drove the last nail yesterday, and it's standing there under the chestnut trees.

ESMERALDA. And he never told me a word of it till to-day—and it's so far off the road that no one has seen it—and father knew it all the time, but he never said a word.

MRS. ROGERS. Oh, you've built a house. Well, that shows you've got something in you. What kind of a house is it?

DAVE. Frame, and pretty enough, too. Oh, yes, it's pretty—'taint built for me, you know—a rough chap like me could get along with any place. "Taint for you," says I,

"but for a little creature with soft ways—and she's got to be kept in mind. Make your stairs easy," I says, "for she's going up 'em every day—Heaven bless her! Fix the shelves the right height, and drive your nails so a person can reach 'em that aint six feet in her stockings." I drove in one nail last night for a sun-bonnet to be slung up on—a little white sun-bonnet, and I stood and looked at it in the twilight until I swear I could see that little bonnet hang there. It was the last thing I did to the house. And there it stands waiting. And if anything should happen to part us—though, thank God, nothing could—it would stand there waiting until it fell away board from board, and there wasn't anything left of it.

Enter Old Man from door in background, followed by Drew and Estabrook.

OLD MAN. Oh, she's yere—an'—an' so's Esmeraldy, an' Dave.

DREW. (*To Mrs. Rogers.*) Madam, allow me to explain.

MRS. ROGERS. Oh, you can't tell me anything. It's the land, or the taxes for the land.

DREW. I don't wonder at it. Would you sell it cheap?

MRS. ROGERS. Cheap? I'd sell it for almost nothing.

DREW. What would you say to five hundred dollars?

MRS. ROGERS. Will you give that?

DREW. I will, if you'll settle the matter right up now, as I'm in something of a hurry. If you agree, I'll pay you the money down; if you say no, that ends it.

MRS. ROGERS. I'll do it.

Old Man and Esmeralda, who have watched the whole affair with breathless interest, are much grieved. Old Man covers his face with his hands and bows his head.

OLD MAN. Mother, ye aint really—goin' ter sell the old place?

MRS. ROGERS. Of course I am, and glad of the chance. Come! (*All except Dave follow her into room left.*)

Dave stands motionless. After a moment he moves a little uneasily, goes and looks after them; comes down Center.

DAVE. There's something wrong. He didn't look like a man that would cheat, but you can't tell. I've seen those men before—yes, I saw 'em on the hill—and—one of 'em was picking up stones and hammering pieces off the—e— There's ore on this farm! Am I too late? (*Runs to door.*) Yes. (*Staggers back.*) They have signed! (*An idea occurs to him. Opens door and speaks.*) Would you come here a moment? (*Nodding.*) You, sir!

Yes. Could you come out here? I want to see you. (*Drew appears at the door.*)

DREW. Did you want to see me, my friend?

DAVE. Yes, if you'll please come here. It's very important, sir.

Drew hesitates a moment, looks back, apparently satisfied, comes quickly out toward Dave. Dave moves up a little, and without apparent effort comes around between Drew and the door.

DREW. What do you mean?

DAVE. I don't mean anything but this: There's ore on this place!

Drew makes a quick motion toward door. Dave stands before him. They regard each other.

DAVE. (*Quietly.*) I thought so.

DREW. Young man, you are too late; the farm is sold. He has signed a bond for a deed.

DAVE. Well, I reckon you haven't got it yet.

DREW. That may be, but I will have it in a moment.

DAVE. I don't think so.

DREW. Don't you? Oh, well, we're all apt to be wrong once in a while. (*To Estabrook, who appears at door.*) E-Estabrook, just get that contract for me.

ESTABROOK. My dear fellow, I wouldn't touch it with a ten-foot pole.

DREW. (*Aside.*) Confound it! (*To Dave.*) Come, now. You're a man of sense. This is simply a matter of business with me. The farm may be worth a little something, but not so very much. Now I'm willing to do the fair thing. What'll you take to keep it dark?

DAVE. How? How do you mean?

DREW. (*Aside.*) They're coming. (*To Dave.*) See here! I'll give you a thousand dollars if you wont say a word.

DAVE. What!

DREW. Here, I'll—I'll make it five—five thousand—just to keep quiet half a minute.

DAVE. Five thousand! (*Derisively.*) Why, I wouldn't wrong that old man for a million!

Enter Mrs. Rogers with bond in her hand, followed by Old Man and Esmeralda.

DREW. (*Desperately.*) Ten thousand.

DAVE. No, sir!

DREW. (*Making toward Mrs. Rogers.*) Then I warn you not to interfere. (*Dave seizes Drew. A short struggle.*) Let me pass, young man.

MRS. ROGERS, ESMERALDA, OLD MAN. Dave! Dave! What does all this mean?

Dave throws off Drew, and seizes bond out of Mrs. Rogers's hand.

DAVE. Nothing, only the land you were going to sell this man is worth a fortune.

MRS. ROGERS. (*To Drew, almost fiercely.*) Is this true?

DREW. (*Crossing to Mrs. Rogers.*) Madam, it is a fact that there is an iron drift on your farm.

MRS. ROGERS. And you've been trying to get it from me for nothing!

DREW. I always buy as cheap as I can. Since our former bargain is off, I will make you as good an offer as any one.

MRS. ROGERS. What is your offer?

OLD MAN. (*Going to Mrs. Rogers.*) Mother, seems like if we could jest save out the old house, it 'ud be a heap o' comfort.

MRS. ROGERS. Save it! I've done with it and everything that's gone along with it. I've done with it. Step this way, sir. (*Drew and Mrs. Rogers move toward door.*) I'd as soon sell to you as any one, but this time I'll see that you don't get the best of me. I'll sell you only a part of it, and you may work it on shares. Dave! I wish to speak with you.

Dave leaves Estabrook and follows Mrs. Rogers and Drew. Estabrook goes toward door in background. Old Man goes and takes hold of Estabrook's sleeve.

OLD MAN. Mother, ye know—(*Motions toward door.*)

ESTABROOK. Yes, I know.

OLD MAN. She—she's pow'rful high-sperreted, an' ye know how high-sperreted people is. Ef—ef ye could do anything about gettin' him ter leave the house standin', not ter pull it down, it 'ud be a heap o' comfort to us, me an' Esmeraldy—a heap o' comfort. Ef ye'd jest let it stand awhile, mebbe—mebbe I could kinder save up myself—by littles—ter pay ye fer it. Lor! ye don't know what a comfort it'd be to know it was a-standin' yere. Seems ter me like it's been yere so long that the mountains 'ud kinder miss it.

ESTABROOK. (*Takes Old Man's hand.*) Mr. Rogers, it shall stand here if I have to buy it out myself—I will buy it out myself—I'd rather buy it out myself.

OLD MAN. Will ye? Lor! Will ye? Esmeralda, he's a-goin' ter keep it fer us. Come yere.

ESMERALDA. You—are very kind to us.

ESTABROOK. (*Taking Esmeralda's hand.*) Don't thank me. It's nothing. (*Takes Old Man's hand. Goes to door. Pauses and passes hand over eyes.*) The atmosphere here is getting misty! (*Exit.*)

OLD MAN. (*To Esmeralda.*) Don't cry, honey. Come here.

ESMERALDA. (*Trying to brush away tears.*) Oh, forgive me, father. She—she'll take me away from him—and—the little house will stand empty. I shall never see it.

OLD MAN. (*Softly caressing her.*) Thar,

thar, honey, don't ye believe it. She caynt be hard enough fer thet.

ESMERALDA. Did she ever spare me? Did she ever spare you? Hasn't she been against him always? It's all over, father—it's—all—over.

MRS. ROGERS. (*Outside.*) I shall go to 'Lizabethville to-morrow, an' then I can let you know. Dave will show you the road. Good-night.

DREW. (*Outside.*) Good-night.

OLD MAN. She's coming.

Esmeralda rises and goes to the spinning-wheel. Mrs. Rogers enters from door in background. She stops and looks at Esmeralda.

MRS. ROGERS. What are you there for? There's no need of your touching that again.

OLD MAN. 'Twont hurt, mother—an' it kinder ockypies her thoughts.

MRS. ROGERS. She's got plenty to occupy her thoughts. Here she is going to be a lady—with all the world before her. I shouldn't have slept a wink for happiness if such luck had come to me.

OLD MAN. But, mother, we aint all on us alike, and Esmeraldy she aint alike.

MRS. ROGERS. She's got to give up all that nonsense about Dave Hardy.

OLD MAN. Now, mother—

MRS. ROGERS. He's done something for us about selling the land, and I'll see that he's paid; but I should be a fool to let him spoil everything right at the start.

OLD MAN. It'll go kinder hard with him, mother. You know thet.

MRS. ROGERS. It will at first, but he'll soon get over it.

OLD MAN. But Dave—mebbe he aint alike, nuther.

Enter Dave, by door in background.

DAVE. Why, old man! Esmeraldy!

MRS. ROGERS. Stop where you are.

DAVE. What has happened here?

MRS. ROGERS. You may as well have it now as later. You heard what I said about the life we've lived?

DAVE. You said you'd done with it.

MRS. ROGERS. So we have—and with everything that belonged to it.

DAVE. And I belonged to it!

MRS. ROGERS. And we've done with you!

DAVE. (*After pause.*) Esmeralda—you aint nothing to do with this?

ESMERALDA. There's no need to ask it, Dave.

DAVE. Very well then. (*Goes quickly to her.*)

MRS. ROGERS. What do you mean?

DAVE. Do I look like a fellow that means

nothing—like a chap that means to give up what's been trusted to him, or like a man that'll stand by what he loves and lives for?

OLD MAN. He's a-standin' up ag'in' mother!

MRS. ROGERS. You mean what you say. So do I. She aint but eighteen—what has she seen of the world and other men? And are you so foolish as to think that if she'd seen other men, handsomer, and better educated, and richer, that she'd have chosen you?

ESMERALDA. Dave, don't listen to her.

MRS. ROGERS. Are you the man to stand in her way—to rob her of what she might have?

DAVE. Rob her! You don't mean that!

MRS. ROGERS. If you keep her from what she might have, don't you rob her? If you compel her to stay here when she might see the world and live in gay places, don't you rob her? She can be a lady. What would you do with a lady in the little house you've built?

DAVE. What shall I do?

MRS. ROGERS. Leave her, unless you're the man to ruin her life for her as mine's been ruined for me.

DAVE. Oh, this is hard—hard!

OLD MAN. (*Aside in despair.*) I knowed it—I knowed he couldn't stand up ag'in' mother.

MRS. ROGERS. If you act like a man now, she'll always remember it of you. If you stand in her way—look that the time doesn't come when she'll remember that.

DAVE. Old man, is she right?

MRS. ROGERS. He knows I'm right! If you love her, go, Dave Hardy—don't stay here and torture her!

DAVE. Yes—I'll go! But I can wait, and so will she. And—if the end's what it might be—I shall know I've done her no wrong—and acted a man's part. Esmeralda! It's not the end. I don't believe it. True hearts can't be parted by things like this—but for a little while. Good-bye! Good-bye! (*Exit.*)

OLD MAN. (*With sudden impulse, starting toward door.*) Mother, let me call him back.

ESMERALDA. (*Runs toward door, calling.*) Dave! Dave!

Stops before Mrs. Rogers, and turns in despair to her father.

OLD MAN. (*Holding out his arms.*) Esmeraldy, come yere!

ACT II.

A studio in Paris. Nora and Kate discovered in quaint costumes. Kate decorating large punch-bowl. Nora painting panel.

NORA. And when I called, Mrs. Rogers

showed me a new photograph of Esmeralda. Just think of it. Another.

KATE. And I suppose in another dress—that is eighteen times since we've known her, and we've known her only two months.

NORA. Poor Esmeralda! Well, I must say if all mothers are like Mrs. Rogers I am not so awfully sorry we are orphans, and Jack had to bring us up among the paint-brushes in his studio. At all events, we are not obliged to have our photographs taken every twenty-four hours, and we're not dragged around after marquises.

KATE. Marquises, indeed! Nora, if ever there was a reptile —

NORA. Yes, if ever there was a reptile, it is that man.

KATE. And to think of that sweet, innocent little Esmeralda being made miserable by him.

NORA. (*Indignantly.*) And to think of that utterly stupid Mrs. Rogers being deceived by a title which doesn't even mean that he is respectable.

KATE. Gracious, Nora! Somebody's coming up, and here we are covered with paint.

NORA. Never mind; we can be busy and keep our backs to him.

MAID. (*Entering.*) Monsieur will be in presently. Will you be seated?

Enter Estabrook. Sees Nora, who keeps her back toward him and pretends to be occupied.

ESTABROOK. (*Aside.*) Æsthetic female artist with rather satisfactory back. Wonder if face is as satisfactory. (*Sits; picks up book. Nora looks furtively, but only sees his back. He moves, and she turns quickly. He looks at her again.*) Rather tantalizing, upon the whole. I wonder if the pursuit of art necessitates such extreme devotion to one's subject.

Turns and looks at punch-bowl. While he does so, Nora looks again and seems struck by some new thought; makes a half-step.

ESTABROOK. (*Aside.*) What delightfully diabolical decorations! I wonder if she did them. I'll look again and see if it's possible.

Looks again. Nora is looking, too, and starts forward with exclamation.

NORA. Mr. Estabrook!

KATE. (*From back of stage.*) What!

NORA. Only imagine it being you!

ESTABROOK. I can't. If a man is going to imagine a thing, he had better begin with something less complicated.

KATE. It is.

NORA. Of course it is.

ESTABROOK. I will not deny it, though I

feel it to be greatly against me. (*Aside.*) The front view is entirely satisfactory. (*Aloud.*) It was very charming in you to recognize me. I was rather afraid you had forgotten.

NORA. Of course not, though it is ten years since we saw you.

ESTABROOK. It seems much longer—to me.

NORA. Then it is entirely unnecessary for me to mention that I am Nora Desmond.

ESTABROOK. What! Nora! Jack's sister! Little Nora!

NORA. Oh, it takes the form of a sudden revelation, does it? Then you did not know me.

ESTABROOK. Really—oh, of course I knew you, but (*looks at her again*) don't impose on a too confiding nature. It is impossible. Excuse me. You must be mistaken. Little Nora!

NORA. Excuse me. I have grown since then. I have had time in ten years, and I have given a good deal of attention to it.

ESTABROOK. But it's out of the question. I used to kiss little Nora—I distinctly remember it.

KATE. Perhaps you remember —

ESTABROOK. (*Takes Kate's hand.*) And this?

KATE. Guess.

ESTABROOK. Is Kate.

KATE. I won't insist on it. You know I was always more accommodating than Nora.

ESTABROOK. And this is Nora. Allow me to congratulate you—you must find it extremely satisfactory?

KATE. She does, extremely.

ESTABROOK. The last time I saw you, you were little girls, wore long hair and short dresses, and paint on your aprons.

NORA. We wear paint on them now. *Regardez!*

KATE. But it is because she is a daughter of toil, and paints little panels very badly and sells them very well to unsuspecting people.

ESTABROOK. (*To Kate.*) And you?

KATE. I decorate tea-cups and punch-bowls, as *par exemple*.

ESTABROOK. And Jack?

NORA. He paints just as well, and wears his coat just as shabby as ever. He is painting just now a portrait of an American girl, a Miss Rogers.

ESTABROOK. Miss Rogers, an American—not—not from North Carolina?

NORA AND KATE. Yes!

ESTABROOK. And her name is —

NORA AND KATE. Esmeralda.

ESTABROOK. Then I have actually found them!

NORA. Were you looking for them?

ESTABROOK. Looking for them? I never was so given over, body and soul, to the pursuit of people in my life. I wouldn't miss being on the ground with Mrs. Rogers for the next few months for a —

NORA. You might say ducal coronet.

ESTABROOK. I will! Ducal coronet does seem to meet the exigencies of the situation.

NORA. And it is Mrs. Rogers you want to see?

KATE. She's worth seeing.

ESTABROOK. It is all of them, but Mrs. Rogers beyond all else on earth. I have a letter in my pocket which — But tell me what they are doing.

NORA. Doing? If you mean Mrs. Rogers, she is making a vicious old spectacle of herself; but if you mean poor Esmeralda and her father, they are breaking their hearts. They are dragged out, night after night, to parties where they know nobody —

KATE. Oh, if you could only once see Mr. Rogers at a party, sitting against a wall, wondering at his gloves. He can't speak a word of French.

NORA. He can't even speak English, dear, gentle old man; and people laugh and stare at him, but he dares not go home until Mrs. Rogers gives him permission.

ESTABROOK. And the poor girl?

NORA. That is the worst of all. Her mother has set her mind upon marrying Esmeralda to a certain marquis, and makes her life a torture to her. Ah! I wish I could change places with her for an hour—just one hour.

ESTABROOK. I don't think it would take an hour.

KATE. Here's Jack.

DESMOND. (*Entering.*) I say.

ESTABROOK. So do I.

DESMOND. Look here. How are you? Is it you, old fellow?

ESTABROOK. Certainly not.

DESMOND. Well, how are you, and that sort of thing? You're the very man I was thinking of a moment ago.

ESTABROOK. Delighted to hear it, but why?

DESMOND. Because I've run across something new in simplicity and situation—and material.

ESTABROOK. Where?

DESMOND. I'll tell you—you'd like it, old fellow. There's an atmosphere about it and all that sort of thing. It's our guileless countryman. I've seen him again.

KATE. Oh, where? What was he doing?

DESMOND. Well, I saw him on the Champs Élysées again, and I went and sat by him, and suddenly—guess what happened?

NORA AND KATE. What?

DESMOND. The Rogerses passed with the Marquis in their carriage, and —

ESTABROOK. And he turned and asked you something about them?

DESMOND. (*Amazed.*) Yes. How did you know?

ESTABROOK. I knew it. Thank you. Now I've found him.

NORA, KATE, AND DESMOND. You've found him?

ESTABROOK. Yes. I've a letter in my pocket which —

NORA AND KATE. Oh, yes! The letter which — Oh! do tell us.

ESTABROOK. I will, but (*to Jack*) tell me what he said, and what you found out.

DESMOND. He said, "Sir, those people—do you know anything of them?" I answered, "Yes, I do." "And the gentleman with them," he continued, "is he—is he—going to marry the—young lady?" And I answered —

NORA. No! no! no! Didn't you say No! Jack, didn't you?

DESMOND. No—I—I said I'd heard he was.

NORA. Oh, you stupid! Why didn't you say wasn't?

KATE. And shouldn't.

NORA. And you'd kill him before he should.

ESTABROOK. Miss Desmond, Miss Kate, my climax has arrived. I have a letter in my pocket which will floor this marquis so completely that he will forget where his marquisate is, and wonder why he was born. (*Takes out letter.*)

NORA. Mr. Estabrook, if you don't read it —

ESTABROOK. (*Reads.*)

"MY DEAR ESTABROOK:

"You remember the Rogers's farm, on which I thought I had made such a find when you were with me. It turns out to be a dead failure. The vein of ore has given out, the people are penniless, and I am defrauded. You remember the lover the old woman treated so badly—she took her daughter away from him without giving him even a chance to say good-bye; and it is on this lover's farm the ore appears now in apparently limitless quantities; and not only on his farm, but on one adjoining, which has just been left him by a relative. The man will be a millionaire."

NORA. And this poor fellow of mine is the lover. I know it—I know it!

ESTABROOK. Miss Desmond, control your emotions. (*Reads.*) "Naturally the next move is to see the man, and the man is not to be

found. The story goes that he scraped together every cent he could and followed the girl to Paris, and is probably starving there in a garret. There is no time to be lost. If you can find him and cable to me, you will do me a tremendous service. Find him for her sake, for his sake, and for the sake of that demoniac old spit-fire who is paid in her own coin." (*Folds letter.*) The rest is only business. "George Drew."

NORA. Let me go and find him this minute.

KATE. This instant, Nora. Put on your bonnet.

ESTABROOK. Do you know where he is?

DESMOND. Yes. Hurrah! I hadn't finished my story. He is coming here, and may be in at any moment.

NORA AND KATE. Why?

DESMOND. Because it struck me he was hungry, and I thought a good way of giving him money would be to pretend I wanted him for a model, and then ask him to dinner when he came.

NORA. (*Kissing him.*) Jack, I love you!

KATE. Suppose he should come when the Rogerses are here. You know Esmeralda is coming for her sitting.

ESTABROOK. If they come before he does, I swear you to secrecy. Let him be the one to tell them what has happened.

NORA. Certainly—and some one is coming now.

SERVANT. Monsieur Rogare.

Enter Old Man meekly—Nora runs to meet him.

NORA. Mr. Rogers, I'm so glad to see you.

OLD MAN. Thank ye, honey—thank ye—bong—bong—What is it I have to say, Miss Nory?

NORA. *Bon jour.*

OLD MAN. That's it. Bong jore—I'm a-tryin' to git it, but it goes sorter hard with me. Bong jore. I come to tell yez Esmeraldy can't come because she's a-gone out with the Markis and I haven't got a minit to stay.

Turns to speak to Desmond and sees Estabrook.

OLD MAN. Lor'! Lor'! I seed ye last in North Ca'lliny—I seed ye last in North Ca'lliny.

ESTABROOK. So you did, Mr. Rogers, so you did, and I left them all well there. Sit down and let me tell you all about it. (*Leads him to seat.*)

OLD MAN. I haven't got hardly a minit to stay. Mother, she'd just rear if I didn't take her to the Boys.

ESTABROOK. The Boys?

OLD MAN. The Boys de Bolony. (*Breaks*

off nervously.) Lor'! Lor'! how glad I am to see ye. (*To the rest.*) Ye mustn't mind if I kinder let everything else go fur a moment to talk to him.

KATE AND NORA. No, no. Go on.

OLD MAN. Seems like it was old times and all this yere trouble—(*Checks himself.*) Ahem! I rekin ye've heerd how we've been enj'yin' ourselves.

ESTABROOK. I've heard something of it. What have you been doing principally?

OLD MAN. Lor'! Ah! we've been doin' a sight. Lor'! we've been gay (*groans*)—we've been gay.

ESTABROOK. In what way, for instance?

OLD MAN. We've been a-goin' round to dress-makers—an' dry goods stores, an' tradin' kinder wild, an' a-goin' to ball-dances, an' theaters, and operays, an' gallerys full o' ile-paintin's, an' a-goin' to 'em day and night. Lor'! how gay we've been! (*Wipes forehead and groans.*) I guess I'd better go. Mother, she'd just rear—ef I didn't take her to the Boys.

ESTABROOK. Oh, you mustn't go yet—just tell me. I'm afraid you haven't really liked all this.

OLD MAN. I'd orter, I reckon. Mother, she's enjoyed it enough to go 'round the family. Her a-bein' born in 'Liz'bethville is what gives her a advantage over me and Esmeraldy. Ye haint seen Esmeraldy yet?

ESTABROOK. No.

OLD MAN. Ye'd sca'cely know her. She's got so much style to her dressin'. There's a heap o' style to it, an' style is what folks wants, I reckon, but seems like it don't egg-sackly reach the spot allers.

ESTABROOK. You mean she doesn't enjoy it?

OLD MAN. Lor'! no! Though I'd orter be a-goin'—mother, she'll just rear ef I don't take her to the Boys; but Esmeraldy, she's kinder in my mind—an' she aint a-thinkin' of style—she (*in a burst of confidence*)—she's a-thinkin' o' suthin' else—she's a-thinkin' o' the little house standin' empty, an' Dave, a-waitin' and wearin' himself out.

ESTABROOK. Poor little girl! Poor little girl!

OLD MAN. Yes—yes—them's young folk's ways—an' I haint got nothin' ag'in' 'em—an' seems like sometimes Esmeraldy couldn't hold out no longer. Ef it could be fixed now so as things'd be easier for her, mother might take it out of me an' welcome.

NORA. Kate, I'm convinced that I shall tell him.

KATE. I wish you would.

OLD MAN. I haint got a single minit to stay. But just tell me, is the old

house a-standin' yet, or did they tear it down?

ESTABROOK. It's there yet. I got my friend to leave it.

OLD MAN. Lor' bless you! (*Grasping his hand.*) I kinder felt it weren't gone.

ESTABROOK. (*Shaking his hand affectionately.*) Thank you—thank you. But look here. As to Mrs. Rogers and your daughter, can't something be done? Couldn't you make a stand? If a man was going to make a stand, I should think this was as good a time as any. Make a stand!

OLD MAN. (*Amazed.*) Eh! What! Ag'in' mother?

ESTABROOK. Oh, yes! With the highest deference for her—confound her! Tell her to go to—the Catacombs. What right has she to be making everybody miserable?

OLD MAN. Lor'! you don't know nothin'—ye're young an' onexperienced.

NORA. If I don't put my hands over my ears, I must tell him. (*Puts hands over her ears.*)

KATE. Nothing else will save me. (*Does the same.*)

OLD MAN. But I'll see ye ag'in—I've got to go—I've jest got to. Ef I don't take her to the Boys—mother, she'll jest let down on me—I can't stay a minit.

ESTABROOK. Oh, mother be roasted—not to put a too fine point on it. Don't go yet.

OLD MAN. (*Picking up his hat and shaking hands as he walks to the door.*) I must—I've got to—you don't know what it is to be—kinder married—to folks as is high-sperreted. Come an' see us—it's Kattery vank dux Boolyvard Horseman. Good-bye all. Lor'! I wish I hed longer to stay.

ESTABROOK. Good-bye.

OLD MAN. (*Gets outside door, steps back wistfully.*) Ef it warn't fer mother—but I've got to go. (*Exit.*)

NORA. If he had staid another minute, I should have told him.

KATE. If you hadn't I should.

DESMOND. I don't mind saying that I came rather near it myself.

ESTABROOK. And how about Dave?

DESMOND. He will certainly come soon.

KATE. I'll stand at the window and watch for him.

NORA. How shall you tell him, Mr. Estabrook?

ESTABROOK. How? By Jove! I hadn't reflected. I might break it to him gently by saying, Look here, you've come into no end of money and luck.

NORA. (*Indignantly.*) The moment he comes in, of course! That would be breaking it to him gently. You ought to prepare his

mind. It isn't money he wants—it's Esmeralda, don't you know.

ESTABROOK. (*Reflectively.*) Is Esmeralda at all like you?

NORA. Why?

ESTABROOK. Ah! you said he wanted Esmeralda—and the idea struck me as entirely plausible.

NORA. It is Esmeralda he wants. What does he care for money? If he thinks she doesn't love him, and you tell him he is rich, money will only make it worse.

ESTABROOK. (*Regarding her with reflective admiration.*) Of course—money is mere dross.

NORA. You must let him know—in one word that she loves him with all her heart and soul and life—and detests the Marquis, and loathes him, and abhors him, and wouldn't marry him for fifty million worlds, and no one could make her, and her mother is a wretched fiend—and —

ESTABROOK. (*Retreating.*) All that in one word?

NORA. Yes, and you must tell him —

KATE. He's coming—he's coming. He's crossing the street.

DESMOND. He is! Look here; let's give him a glass of wine first.

NORA. Oh, I'll attend to that. Mind, we're just taking some ourselves. (*Goes to little cupboard and gets wine and cake, which she sets on table, while Estabrook looks amazed.*) Mr. Estabrook and Jack, sit down this minute and begin to eat as if you were hungry. (*Pushes them into chairs, talking all the time.*) It will make him feel easier. Mr. Estabrook, take a cake. (*Forces one into his hand. He begins to eat.*)

SERVANT. (*Announces.*) Mr. Hardy.

Enter Dave.

NORA. Jack, here is Mr. Hardy, and he has caught us at our lunch, but I daresay he'll excuse us.

DAVE. Yes, miss, certainly.

DESMOND. So glad you've come. I was afraid I was going to lose my sitting. If you haven't lunched, wont you sit down in a kind of a happy-go-lucky with us?

NORA. Please do, Mr. Hardy; we've been out and you haven't an idea how hungry we are, and what awful appetites we have. Mr. Estabrook's is terrible.

DAVE. Thank you. Did—did you say—Estabrook?

NORA. Yes.

Nora leads Dave to table. Dave stops and looks at Estabrook, who rises and extends his hand.

ESTABROOK. Yes, we've met before—in North Carolina.

DAVE. Ye-s—it was there. If you don't mind—I'll sit down. I aint as strong as I was—and it's kind o' startled me. (*Drops into chair and leans head on hand a moment.*)

NORA. You want a glass of wine, Mr. Hardy. (*Pours out glass and gives it to him.*) Drink that, and we'll have some lunch, and you can tell us about North Carolina, and we'll tell you about your friends.

DAVE. About my friends?

NORA. Yes, as Jack said we would. We know them very well. Kate and I are great friends of Esmeralda's. Drink your wine, and we'll tell you all about her.

DAVE. All about her—about Esmeralda? Perhaps I'll need the wine before I hear it. (*Drinks.*) Now tell me. Is she well? Has her money made her happy? Has it made her forget—her home and those that loved her?

NORA. Was she that kind of girl when you loved her in North Carolina?

DAVE. No! God bless her—no.

NORA. And she isn't now. Women don't change so soon as that—women like her.

KATE. She's the dearest, sweetest, and most loving little thing that ever lived—and if it wasn't for Mrs. Rogers—

ESTABROOK. Never mind Mrs. Rogers. If I'm not mistaken, I have a letter in my pocket which—

NORA. (*Casting a glance of indignation at Estabrook, and speaking hurriedly.*) Take another cake. Yes, of course, but that is only business. Mr. Hardy wants to know, first of all, about Esmeralda.

DAVE. Yes, I don't care about the rest of it. I want to hear about Esmeralda. She's mine and I'm hers just as much as if we were man and wife. My God, man—I—I love her!

NORA. And she loves you.

DAVE. And yet they tell me she's going to marry another man, and last night, when I went and stood outside the house, there was light and music, and she came to the window with him, and he took some flowers out of her hand and—and kissed them—and me outside there in the dark and cold! It seemed—somehow it seemed as if I hardly knew her, and the woman I loved was nowhere in the wide world.

ESTABROOK. Oh, look here—I can't stand this while I've a letter in my pocket. (*Hands letter to Nora.*) Miss Desmond, if you will be so kind as to take in hand this letter, which—

NORA. Which contains good news.

ESTABROOK. Exactly! That's it. And, in one word, you must prepare yourself for it, and all that sort of thing—and of course it's not half so much consequence as—Miss

Rogers—and—and in one word—money is dross—and nobody cares for it, and all that; but it's useful when—when your mother-in-law makes a point of it—and—

NORA. Oh, let me tell him. See, I'll tell it like a story. Once upon a time there was a girl who was gentle, timid, and loving—

DAVE. Esmeralda!

NORA. And there was a brave, kind heart that had always been true to her, and it was her comfort and her refuge—

DAVE. She—she—used to say so.

NORA. And there was a wicked old mother and some land that seemed to turn out valuable—but through that wicked woman and the land, the sweet little loving soul was torn away from all she loved, and taken to a foreign country and surrounded by luxury and wealth and flattery she didn't care for; she only wanted the brave, kind heart she used to nestle against.

DAVE. My little girl! my little girl!

NORA. And the wicked old woman grew wickeder every day, and tried to make her marry a man she hated, and who only wanted her money.

DAVE. The bitter villain!

NORA. (*Rising and approaching him.*) And it was as if there was a fate in it. It turned out that the money he wanted was not there—she had none.

DAVE. She had none?

NORA. No—nothing—nothing; but the love she had to give and the love that was given to her! The letter tells it all, and Mr. Estabrook can explain it. I don't know anything about ore, and I don't care; but the land that was of value was the lover's land and the wealth was his—and you're a rich man—and Esmeralda loves you—you're worth thousands and thousands and thousands—perhaps millions—and Esmeralda loves you!

DAVE. I—I'm a rich man?

ESTABROOK. (*Coming forward.*) In one word, the letter will tell you—you are a rich man indeed.

NORA. And Esmeralda loves you.

DAVE. That's true—true!

NORA. Yes!

DAVE. Then (*as Estabrook hands him letter*) let the letter go. I am indeed a rich man if—if—Esmeralda loves me.

ACT III.

A room in Rogers's house in Paris during a ball. Kate and Desmond discovered.

DESMOND. Well, I must say, I shall be rather glad when it's all over. A fellow

don't seem to get so much good out of his friends and relations when there's a mystery on hand. Now there are Estabrook and Nora —

KATE. You don't mean to say you have any complaint to make about Mr. Estabrook and Nora?

DESMOND. Oh, no complaint. Only this affair of the Rogerses gives them so much to talk about you never seem to be able to lay your hand on them. They've got into a way of rambling off together —

KATE. Yes, I've observed it.

DESMOND. And getting absorbed in conversation and all that. It's natural, of course, as they are the prime movers in the affair, but it interferes with general sociability. Besides, I'm fond of Estabrook. He's the kind of fellow it's natural to be fond of. And he seems to get along specially well with Nora. Here, I say, what are you laughing at? Something wrong with my neck-tie? Got a daub of paint on my nose? (*Looks in glass.*)

KATE. Do go on talking about Nora and Mr. Estabrook. It's so observing in you to have noticed them so, and the interest they take in the Rogerses.

DESMOND. (*Whistles.*) The dickens! You don't mean to tell me!

KATE. Certainly not. I shouldn't think of such a thing. I am giving all my attention to decorating that punch-bowl for Mrs. Craig, and I neither see nor hear anything. When Mr. Estabrook is talking to Nora about Mr. Rogers, and Nora is talking to Mr. Estabrook about Mrs. Rogers, I turn my back and paint the punch-bowl.

DESMOND. Well, I must say, I didn't think it of Estabrook.

KATE. And I must say, I wouldn't have believed it of Nora.

DESMOND. And you really think —

KATE. No, I don't. I think nothing—except that I hope the punch-bowl will be as satisfactory to Mrs. Craig as it is to Nora and Mr. Estabrook. Think! Do you suppose I am no better sister than that? Nora hasn't quite made up her mind what she thinks yet, and if I thought before she did, she'd be ready to—to bite me.

DESMOND. Well, I suppose it's natural; but Nora—oh, confound it! after a fellow's bringing her up by hand, as it were, and filling her stocking at Christmas, and being a parent to her,—it's rather tough to discover that she's beginning to take an interest —

KATE. In Mr. and Mrs. Rogers? So it is. (*Looks through open door.*) There, they are coming! I'm going. (*Exit.*)

DESMOND. Who? Mr. and Mrs. Rogers? No; it's Nora and Estabrook. What did she

shoot off in that way for? A fellow never seems to know what girls are up to—even after he has brought up two of them by hand.

Enter Estabrook and Nora, expecting to find room empty.

DESMOND. Come in to have a rest, have you? Same myself. It's cool here.

NORA. (*Buttoning her gloves rather abstractedly.*) Ye-es, so it is.

ESTABROOK. Cooler than I expected to find it. All by yourself?

DESMOND. Yes; Kate's just left me. Good chance for us to have a chat. (*Seats himself on the sofa.*) It's better fun than dancing like mad in there.

NORA. Certainly it is for a while. It wouldn't be a bad idea to have some ices. Suppose you go and get some, Jack?

DESMOND. Send Estabrook. He knows all about supper-room struggles. He's sophisticated. I'm not. I couldn't find the way.

ESTABROOK. I'll go. He would be stopped by female brigadiers, who would take them from him on his way back. (*Exit.*)

NORA. Been having a pleasant evening, Jack?

DESMOND. Yes, all right.

NORA. Have you been dancing much?

DESMOND. No; haven't danced much.

NORA. Then, why don't you go and dance? It's lovely. The music is perfect. You—you don't know what you are missing. I never had such delightful dances in my life. You ought to go and dance, Jack. You'd enjoy it.

DESMOND. I will—later on.

NORA. But the waltz they are playing now is enchanting, and that pretty Miss Berris you are so fond of was not dancing when we left.

DESMOND. Miss Berris! Who's Miss Berris? I'm not fond of Miss Berris.

NORA. Why, you are, Jack—you know you are fond of her. You said last winter you never enjoyed waltzing with any one so much in your life.

DESMOND. I say! I wish you'd tell me—do you want me to go?

NORA. Want you to go! Of course not! Gracious, no! I should think not! Why should I want you to go? What perfect nonsense!

DESMOND. It's pretty certain you want me to do something, and if you want to have a chance at Estabrook alone, and all that sort of thing —

NORA. Jack, what do you mean? I'll never forgive you!

DESMOND. Nora, I haven't an objection on earth. He's a splendid fellow, and it's all

right; and after I've settled down to giving up my share of you, nothing would please me better.

NORA. (*Retreating in wildest confusion.*) Jack, if you say another word, I shall detest you, and I shall detest him. I shall detest everybody.

DESMOND. Oh, come now! That's just like a girl. I tell you, I'm not going to stand in the way. I'm going to ask Miss Berris

NORA. Stay where you are this instant! I wouldn't let you go now for—for millions! Want to be left alone with—with a person! Nothing would induce me to be left alone with him! (*Backs up against mantel and stands there.*) Jack, I—I—wonder how you can be so—so fiendish.

DESMOND. Nora, do you mean to say —

NORA. No, I don't. Nobody said anything—nobody thinks of saying anything—as if people couldn't be—be friends without saying things. We are interested —

DESMOND. In the Rogerses?

NORA. Yes, sir, in the Rogerses. We— we sympathize with them, and it brings us together, and—and—and we talk—and things — Oh, do go away this instant! He's coming.

DESMOND. I thought you didn't want me to go?

NORA. I don't. Stay where you are. No—go! I don't know what I want you to do.

DESMOND. Well, I do—and I'm going to do it. (*Goes toward door.*)

NORA. At any rate, it is not because I want to be alone.

DESMOND. By no means. It's because you don't want to be alone. (*Runs against Estabrook at door.*)

ESTABROOK. Where are you going, my friend?

DESMOND. I'm going to dance with Miss Berris. (*Exit.*)

ESTABROOK. (*To Nora.*) Rather sudden, isn't it?

NORA. Rather, but that's just like Jack—and he's tremendously partial to Miss Berris.

ESTABROOK. You look cool. Have an ice? I mean, you don't look cool, and you're a trifle out of breath. Are you tired?

NORA. Tired? Of dancing? I should think not—only one does reach a point sometimes when one likes to lean against something. But go on. You were saying in the ball-room —

ESTABROOK. Only that a mysterious change is taking place in my character.

NORA. How so? When did you first begin to notice it?

ESTABROOK. The day I met you at the studio. Curious, isn't it?

NORA. Is it a very interesting change?

ESTABROOK. Oh, very, I assure you. I am watching its development with a great deal of pleasure.

NORA. How absorbing! What form does it seem to take, for instance?

ESTABROOK. Several. In the first place, the form of an increased affection for—Jack. I was always fond of Jack, but I had no idea my affection was so deep—and violent.

NORA. Really, I must tell him.

ESTABROOK. Do. He'll be gratified.

NORA. Wouldn't you like to go and talk to Jack now? He's in the ball-room, you know.

ESTABROOK. Thanks! That's quite a happy thought, isn't it?

NORA. It struck me in that way. (*Pause.*) Well, why don't you go?

ESTABROOK. (*Serenely.*) Oh, I wasn't thinking of going.

NORA. Suppose you tell me about old Mr. Rogers. What is it he is going to do?

ESTABROOK. He is going to appeal to the Marquis.

NORA. You mean, to ask him to give up Esmeralda?

ESTABROOK. Yes.

NORA. The dear old fellow! Being a sordid creature, I've always liked him since he bought that panel from me. (*Points to panel on wall.*)

ESTABROOK. Oh, it's an amazing panel—perfectly amazing. The humming-bird flying in such a spirited manner at the flamingo is vigor itself.

NORA. It isn't a humming-bird, and it isn't a flamingo. It's a grasshopper gazing at a conventionalized Colorado beetle.

ESTABROOK. Miss Desmond, you are endeavoring to deceive me. It is a butterfly and a stork, and this is the butterfly and this is the stork. Look me in the eye and deny it if you can.

NORA. I am not going to deny it.

ESTABROOK. Then would you have any objection to looking me in the eye without denying it?

NORA. (*Nonchalantly.*) Not the least. (*Turns face over shoulder and looks at him.*)

Old Man enters. Catches sight of them, and stops.

OLD MAN. Them's young folk's ways, an', Lor', I aint nothin' ag'in' 'em. Don't let me disturb ye. (*Nora and Estabrook start.*)

NORA. Oh, you don't disturb us. We—we're very glad to see you for a moment. Dear Mr. Rogers, you look so tired. Sit down for a second.

OLD MAN. Honey, I—I caynt—I am tired—I'm all worn out. I caynt stand it no longer. I'm a-goin' to see the Markis and tell him how it is.

ESTABROOK. You're going to make an appeal to him?

OLD MAN. I'm going to tell him just how it is. Lor', he must hev feelings somewhars—he's bound to hev 'em. Folks is better than ye give 'em credit for bein' in general.

NORA. Have you asked him to come in here?

OLD MAN. Yes, I thought he'd hev been here by this. I'll go back and look for him. *(Starts to go.)*

NORA. But don't you want to stay with us until he comes; then we'll leave you together.

OLD MAN. No, honey—no. I'm old folks, an' you're young folks, an' young folks—it's kinder more feeliner to leave 'em alone—now an' ag'in. Young folks' ways—Lor'! I haint nothin' ag'in 'em. They're nateral an' they're right. I'm a-goin' to leave you together. *(Exit.)*

NORA. It's a shame! Oh, how I wish that old woman was in Africa!

ESTABROOK. She will be in a much warmer place when Hardy returns, and she learns the truth.

NORA. But when will he return?

ESTABROOK. As soon as his business in North Carolina is settled. No doubt he's on his way over now.

NORA. And then—oh, there is one thing I do wish.

ESTABROOK. What is it?

NORA. That Esmeralda would gather up courage before he comes, and fly at Mrs. Rogers and the Marquis and defy them both. I should delight in doing it.

ESTABROOK. I haven't a doubt of it.

NORA. Well, I hope you haven't. If I loved a person—

ESTABROOK. If you loved a person—

NORA. Oh, well, I don't love a person.

ESTABROOK. Of course not; but if you loved a person—

NORA. Oh, I—I don't think I should like it at all.

ESTABROOK. *(Taking Nora's hand.)* But do you know, it strikes me that the person might like it?

Enter Marquis and Mr. Rogers. Estabrook turns and sees them.

ESTABROOK. Confound the Marquis! *(To Nora.)* Miss Desmond, I'm afraid we shall have to return to the ball-room.

NORA. Yes. I'm sure we ought to—and they are beginning to play a lovely waltz—

and, don't you know, you can see Jack. Mr. Rogers, as you wont dance with me, I am obliged to dance with somebody else.

OLD MAN. I wish I could dance with ye, honey. I'd like to, mightily.

Nora and Estabrook go.

OLD MAN. They're having a pow'rful good time, they air—an' I don't blame 'em, either. Them's young folks' ways. *(Takes Marquis by lapel and pushes him toward chair.)* Sit down, Markis—sit down, and let's be sosh'erble. Seems like we haint been sosh'erble together fer a right smart spell.

MARQUIS. Monsieur has something to say to me, perhaps.

OLD MAN. *(Sits down.)* That's so—that's so. I've a heap to say to ye—an' Lor'! let's be sosh'erble.

MARQUIS. It is possible that monsieur wishes to speak to me of mademoiselle.

OLD MAN. *(Starts eagerly.)* That's it. Lor'! how quick ye've hit it! Esmeraldy *(Draws chair near and seizes lapel of his coat)*—it's about Esmeraldy—Esmeraldy—she—she's a little down-sperreted—an' so am I. *(Lets lapel go and leans back to look at him.)*

MARQUIS. I regret to hear this, monsieur. Permit me to offer you the assurance of my profoundest sympathy.

OLD MAN. *(Regarding him doubtfully.)* Y-yes; I thort ye would—I kinder felt sure ye would. I—I thort ye was that way.

MARQUIS. It is to be *triste*—this low-sperreted—unhappy, is it not? Mademoiselle Rogare is unhappy—melancholy?

OLD MAN. Yes, that's so—that's so. How quick ye've hit it again! Onhappy! That's it—she's onhappy.

MARQUIS. That is a great misfortune.

Old Man regards him uneasily a moment, and takes out handkerchief and wipes his forehead.

OLD MAN. *(Aside.)* Seems sorter es ef he is—an' sorter es ef he aint. He—he haint got North Ca'lliny ways. *(Suddenly draws chair closer and seizes lapel of Marquis's coat in outburst of confidence.)* Yes—Lor'! let's be sosh'erble. Ye see, it's this way. We're home folks—me an' Esmeraldy—home folks. We caynt get used to city ways, an' we're allers a-thinkin' o' North Ca'lliny. Mother, she was raised in 'Liz'bethville.

MARQUIS. And this 'Liz'bethville?

OLD MAN. Thar—thar was a court-house thar—an' a jail, an' mother kinder hed the advantage of 'em; but me an' Esmeraldy, we don't seem to git no userder to things than we was at the fust. Dressin', it aint no comfort to us—Lor', no! Esmeraldy now—only yisterday she was all dressed out,

an' she bust right out a-cryin', an' fell into my arms, an' sez she—she ses, "They wouldn't know me in North Ca'lliny, father—they wouldn't none of 'em know me—Dave, he wouldn't know me." (*Voice breaks. Wipes eyes with handkerchief.*)

MARQUIS. And this Monsieur Dave?

OLD MAN. (*Laying hand on Marquis's knee confidingly.*) Markis, it's him es she's breakin' her heart fer.

MARQUIS. *Ma foi!* but this is pleasant news to hear of one's betrothed.

OLD MAN. I knowed ye'd feel that way—I knowed ye would. An' it aint nothin' but nateral. Ye don't want to marry a woman with no heart to give ye. Ye wouldn't be a man ef ye did. Lor'! I've said it a thousand times—folks hes feelin's ef ye git at 'em, an' ye'd orter trust 'em an' believe in 'em. And yere's Esmeraldy breakin' her heart for Dave, an' Dave a-breakin' his'n for her, an' the sea between 'em, an' mother sot on her a-marryin' you. An', sez I to myself, I'll speak to him an' trust to his feelin's, and ask him to make a stand.

MARQUIS. You would ask me to make a stand?

OLD MAN. Yes. Sez I, I'll ask him to give her up, an' that'll settle mother's mind when nothin' else would.

MARQUIS. (*Rising from seat and pacing floor.*) Ah, I think I comprehend. I am to decline the hand of mademoiselle—I myself—and upon what grounds?

OLD MAN. (*Rising also.*) I've been a-thinkin' o' that too. 'Twont do to say it's Esmeraldy; it'd kinder make it harder fer her. Don't ye say it's Esmeraldy as ye're objectin' to—say it's me. Me! I aint nothin', ye know—Lor', no! I'm old folks, and mother, she kin take it out o' me an' welcome. Tell her I aint showy enough—tell her I haint no manners—tell her ye couldn't stand me in the family—Lor'! tell her anything. It don't matter fer me. What I'm a-thinkin' on is Dave an' Esmeraldy, that's young, an' loves each other, an' hes life afore 'em.

MARQUIS. And we must consider Monsieur Dave and Mademoiselle Esmeralda, it is true.

OLD MAN. Yes, we must consider 'em—an' stand by 'em, fer they haint got no one else.

MARQUIS. (*Takes two or three steps across room and returns.*) And you desire my reply to this proposition?

OLD MAN. Yes, Markis, an' I aint afear'd to hear it.

MARQUIS. (*Approaching him.*) It is this, then—this, monsieur. Mademoiselle, your daughter, is young and not too strong of the

will. Madame Rogare is the stronger of the two. With the assistance of Madame Rogare, I shall make mademoiselle my wife—and after that let her lovers look to themselves.

OLD MAN. Markis!

MARQUIS. I do not give way readily, monsieur, when I have a thing at stake.

OLD MAN. An'—an' ye wont give her up?

MARQUIS. No, monsieur; not yet.

OLD MAN. I—I caynt believe it. (*Marquis shrugs shoulders in reply.*) Markis, look yere. Aint ye givin' up nothin' yerself ef ye take her? Ye're a man—an' what ye want's a home an' a wife—a young creeter that comes ter ye willin' an' gentle, an' thinks thar aint nothin' in the whole world like ye. What a man wants is a woman's heart—ef ye haint got it, what d'ye want o' her? Ye can call her by yer name an' keep her about yer; but ye haint got her. Lor', no! she aint thar—she aint nowhars nigh.

MARQUIS. She will be near enough, monsieur.

OLD MAN. And ye're willin' ter give up all the rest on it.

MARQUIS. All, monsieur.

OLD MAN. Then ye're willin' ter give up more then I 'lowed a man would.

MARQUIS. If our interview is at an end, monsieur, I will retire.

OLD MAN. I haint got nothin' more to say. (*Marquis bows and goes, Old Man sinks into chair and covers face with hands.*) 'Twar-n't no use—no use. These aint North Ca'lliny ways.

Enter Mrs. Rogers, excited.

MRS. ROGERS. What are you doing here? Who went out just now?

OLD MAN. The Markis. He went out.

MRS. ROGERS. Why did he go? What have you been saying to him?

OLD MAN. I've been sayin' a sight o' things; but it warn't no good—it warn't no good.

MRS. ROGERS. (*Sinks into chair.*) If ever there was a woman who was badgered and run to death, and paid for all she's done with ingratitude from a couple of fools, I'm that woman.

OLD MAN. Who's the fools, mother?

MRS. ROGERS. Who? You're one of them, and Esmeralda's the other. Here I have placed every luxury around you, and every advantage, and you go moping about, and Esmeralda wears herself out and gets thin and pale, and the Marquis at his wit's end to please her—and on the top of that comes a new piece of news.

OLD MAN. News! From North Ca'lliny, mother?

MRS. ROGERS. Yes, from North Ca'lliny. What do I find out! That sentimental idiot followed us before we'd been here six months, and has been hanging around and watching Esmeralda, and living on a crust in a garret.

OLD MAN. Mother! Not Dave! Lor', no—not Dave! Dave—he's in North Ca'lliny.

MRS. ROGERS. Not Dave? Yes, Dave! Who else would be big enough simpleton but Dave? And he's been about the house night after night, and Esmeralda has heard of it, and if I can keep her quiet until the party's over, it's all I can do.

OLD MAN. (*Looking at door.*) Mother, she's coming now, an' if I ever knowed what her pretty face meant, ye've kept her quiet fer the last time.

Enter Esmeralda. The Marquis follows her, talking and holding bouquet.

MARQUIS. I am most unfortunate that my poor flowers do not please mademoiselle.

ESMERALDA. No, they do not please me. Nor do you. Take them and go, and leave me alone! (*Turns on him fiercely.*) I hate them because you have held them in your hand; that would be reason enough for my hating anything. And you know it, and have known it all the time. Only you were not man enough to spare me. And I was too great a coward to dare to speak. But you have gone too far. It has all gone too far.

MRS. ROGERS. (*Seizing her.*) What are you saying? Are you mad?

ESMERALDA. (*Frees herself.*) Don't touch me! I'm not afraid of you now—nor of him. Let him see to it that he doesn't come near me again. I've found out what has made me what I ought to have been long ago—a woman—a woman worthy a good man's love; and I'm not afraid of anything. I've found out who has followed me over thousands of miles of dreary land and sea, and who has watched me in the cold and dark of the night outside when I was there in the brightness and warmth. If he forgives me for it, do you think I shall ever forgive myself—do you think I shall ever forgive you?

OLD MAN. (*Comes up behind her and touches her tremblingly.*) Esmeraldy, honey, I—don't hardly know ye.

ESMERALDA. (*Embraces him.*) Father—father—you'll stand by me. I hardly know myself—I feel so fierce, and bitter, and strong. It's all true. He has been in Paris—cold, and tired, and hungry, while we were rich and warm. Dave—Dave we loved

—Dave, who loved us and was true to us even when we seemed false.

OLD MAN. (*Wiping his eyes.*) He—he was always that away, Dave was. Thar never couldn't hev been nothin' truer than his true heart.

MRS. ROGERS. Oh, you soft fools! (*Going to Marquis.*) And haven't you a word to say for yourself? Do something to stop this.

MARQUIS. (*Bowing sardonically.*) Madame, it occurs to me that in a scene so truly domestic I am in the way and should retire.

MRS. ROGERS. No, you shall not. Do you think I'm going to have my plans over-turned this way? (*To Esmeralda.*) You say he saw you through the windows. Then he saw you with the Marquis. How are you going to make him believe that you weren't with him of your own free will?

ESMERALDA. Make him believe! I'm going to tell him. He'll know it's true because he'll see it in my face. I'm going to follow him until I find him. I'm going to follow him if it's on foot and I go a thousand miles—you can't hold me back now. I'm your own daughter for the first time in my life, and I'm no more to be stopped than you are. Stop me if you can!

MARQUIS. (*Regards her with some admiration.*) Mademoiselle becomes more interesting. My regret at parting with her will be greater than I thought.

OLD MAN. Esmeraldy, honey, ye almost skeer me—ye're sorter like yer mother. I hope it wont last.

MRS. ROGERS. (*To Esmeralda.*) I'll stop you—if I have to do it by force.

ESMERALDA. I tell you the time for that is past. I'm not afraid any longer—I'm only ashamed that I've been a coward so long. Look here! (*Tears off necklace and bracelets.*) There are the things you made me wear and he saw me in when he stood outside in the bitter cold. (*Throws them to the floor with fierce gesture.*) Pick them up if you think they're worth it. As long as I live I'll never wear them again.

MRS. ROGERS. Oh, you'll come out of this—you'll come out of this! You'll be meek enough to-morrow and frightened enough—you're as pale as death now with fright.

OLD MAN. So she is—so ye air, honey—ye look faint. Kinder try to stand up ag'in' it.

He draws her to sofa. As he reaches it she falls upon her knees before him.

ESMERALDA. Yes, I'm faint and tired; but we'll find Dave, wont we, father? and go back to the mountains and the blue sky—and no one will be cruel to us any more—

and I'll kneel down before Dave and tell him that I was true and loved him—and the little house—wont be empty—any more. (*Sinks upon the floor at his feet.*)

Mrs. Rogers and the Marquis spring forward.

MRS. ROGERS. What ails her? She looks like death.

OLD MAN. (*Waves her off with solemn dignity.*) Stand back, Lyddy Ann. 'Taint fer you to tech her. Seems like she's gone back to North Ca'lliny in spite of ye.

ACT IV.

Studio. Desmond, Kate, Nora, Dave discovered. Nora dashing off note at table.

NORA. There, I've finished it. (*Reads.*) "DEAR MR. ROGERS: Mr. Hardy is here, and I think it would be better if you brought Esmeralda at once. Make some excuse to leave her in the carriage below until you have seen him first, then you can bring her up and we will break the news to her gently. With much love to you both, NORA DESMOND."

DESMOND. You haven't given him a hint about the money.

NORA. The money isn't of the slightest consequence. It doesn't matter to him whether Mr. Hardy is rich or poor—and as for Esmeralda she would rather have him poor. Who cares about money?

DAVE. He doesn't, nor she either.

KATE. Of course not. Give me the note, Nora. I will send it while you talk to Mr. Hardy.

Nora gives note to Kate, who goes out.

NORA. Now, Mr. Hardy, I shall send you into the next room to lunch and rest a little, because you are tired, and if you look ill you will frighten Esmeralda.

DAVE. Tell me first about Esmeralda.

NORA. Well, she has been ill; but not very ill, though it seemed so at first. She was only ill because she wanted you.

DAVE. What did they do to her? What had he to do with it—that Marquis fellow?

NORA. Oh, not very much, really—and he has never been near her since, which has made Mrs. Rogers awfully angry with Esmeralda; but you mustn't think of that—you must think that she will be with you in a short time, and that you can care for her yourself. You will spend your honeymoon in your little house—only you two together—together. Isn't that a nice word—together?

DAVE. It means—a great deal—to me.

DESMOND. I say, Nora, that's all very well, you know, but I don't believe Hardy has

lived on anything but Miss Rogers for the last fortnight, and I'm going to take him off into the next room and make him eat something.

DAVE. (*Going with Desmond into inner room.*) You'll call me the minute they come?

NORA. Yes.

Nora, left to herself, goes to the mantle and looks at the clock.

NORA. Nearly three. What nonsense! The idea of my noticing when he comes and when he goes. If it was Jack, now, there would be some reason in it, but to be noticing the incomings and outgoings of a man who isn't the least relation to you is—well, it's a thing you're not going to stand. (*Professes to paint furiously. Drops brush, picks it up.*) He was evidently going to tell me something; I wonder what it will be? Perhaps he's going to leave Paris. Well, if he is—Jack will miss him—very much. I shall be rather sorry—for Jack. (*Bell rings.*)

Estabrook enters. She does not turn.

ESTABROOK. Good afternoon. Ah, another panel, Miss Desmond.

NORA. Yes, another; and you mustn't disturb me, because I've just reached a critical point.

ESTABROOK. (*Aside.*) So have I. (*Aloud.*) Oh no, I won't disturb you. Tortures shouldn't compel me. May I sit down?

NORA. Certainly. Jack will be in directly—after he has taken care of Mr. Hardy.

ESTABROOK. Will he? Then on second thought I won't sit down. I'll take a look at the panel. (*Goes to her.*) That is going to be a great deal worse than the other, isn't it?

NORA. Do you know, no one in the world says such disrespectful things to me as you do? And besides, you are disturbing me.

ESTABROOK. That relieves me.

NORA. Relieves you?

ESTABROOK. Yes. I thought I couldn't disturb you, and I wanted to—I rather came to try. You've disturbed me a good deal lately, and I wanted to balance the thing a little.

NORA. You came to try to disturb me? I thought you came to see Jack. Oh, there—there's Jack talking to Mr. Hardy. Don't you want to see him?

ESTABROOK. No, I don't; and if he presents himself I shall warn him by all the sacred ties of friendship not to cross the threshold.

NORA. But—but what—what nonsense!

ESTABROOK. No, it isn't. I mean to say what I came to say in spite of Jack.

NORA. But you are disturbing me, and I haven't done anything for days and days.

ESTABROOK. (*Taking her brush.*) Suppose you leave the panel for a short time.

Leads her to a chair. Stands behind her, and looking down, puts a pair of gloves into her hands.

ESTABROOK. I'm very much interested in these just now.

NORA. My lost gloves! Where did you find them?

ESTABROOK. In my vest-pocket—by a curious coincidence. I have a fancy for seeing you put one on—the left one, for instance.

NORA. (*Beginning to put it on.*) I have no objection—I've had them on before. (*Pauses.*) There's something in the fourth finger. It's a ring.

ESTABROOK. (*Taking glove again.*) So it is.

NORA. I can't put on a glove with a ring in it. (*Ring drops out.*)

ESTABROOK. Perhaps you can put on a ring without a glove on it. Suppose you try.

NORA. Oh—no.

ESTABROOK. (*Taking her hand and ring.*) Suppose you let me try—Nora.

NORA. But—there's no reason why I should.

ESTABROOK. There's the best reason. The affection I felt for Jack seems to have transferred itself to you, Nora. We wont jest any longer. I came here to-day to say I love you. I don't find the words difficult to say. They are very simple words. I wish you could say them to me as easily.

NORA. I cannot say them as easily. Suppose—I was—to think them.

ESTABROOK. Then I should put on the ring. (*Slips it on, bends and kisses her.*)

Enter Old Man. Sees what is going on.

OLD MAN. They're all right, Lor' bless 'em! Nothin' caynt hurt them. They're fixed now. Don't ye mind me, chil'n. 'Taint nothin' ter be ashamed on. It's somethin' ter be proud on. (*Goes to Nora, who has risen, and gives her to Estabrook. To Nora.*) Thar, he'll take care o' ye, honey. (*To Estabrook.*) If she had a father, I reckon he'd say what I do. Stand by her.

ESTABROOK. I think you may trust me.

OLD MAN. Lor', yes; you're the right kind. An' now 'bout Dave and Esmeraldy. Esmeraldy, she's down-stairs.

NORA. And Dave is in there.

OLD MAN. He is? Lor', how glad I'll be ter see him! Thar aint but one thing to be done. I'm agwine to stand out fer seein' things set right. It's a kinder narvous thing to do, but I'm gwine to do it.

Enter Mrs. Rogers, trembling with rage.

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MRS. ROGERS. I'm just in time, am I, and not a minute too soon! I've heard the whole story and I'll put a stop to this.

OLD MAN. Mother, kinder quieten down.

MRS. ROGERS. A nice time to quiet down! It's the old story. Setting my child against me and upholding her, while I'm trying to do the best I can to make a lady of her.

NORA. Mrs. Rogers, let me say a few words to you.

MRS. ROGERS. The quieter you keep the better. You've always stood by her in your still, impudent way. You're sharp enough to know it's a good thing to be friends with a rich girl. You ought to be on the good side of her mother.

ESTABROOK. If a—you are going in for remarks of that kind—suppose—a—you generalize—it would be better.

MRS. ROGERS. (*To Estabrook.*) I've nothing to do with you or her either. I've come here to 'tend to my own business. (*To Old Man.*) You thought I wouldn't find you out, did you? He hasn't gone back to North Carolina, has he? And you've picked him up out of the gutter and made up your mind to stand up against me. Where is he?

OLD MAN. In there! (*Points to inner room.*)

MRS. ROGERS. In there? And Esmeralda down-stairs waiting to be brought up, and you—you—you! Let me see him—that's all I want.

Mrs. Rogers goes toward door. Old Man gets there before her, and waves her back.

OLD MAN. Mother, kinder quieten down.

MRS. ROGERS. Wh—what do you mean? What's taken you? How dare you stand there and brave it out?

OLD MAN. Mother—seems like we've hed enough. Seems like we've got to a place whar things hed to sorter be settled down—an' it's me as hes got ter do it.

MRS. ROGERS. You—you're a fool! You always was a fool.

OLD MAN. Mebbe I was. Mebbe we might both hev been wiser.

MRS. ROGERS. Let me get into that room.

OLD MAN. No; we've tried it your way awhile. We've hed money, and foren languidges—an' ile paintin's—an'—an' mar-kisses—we've tried a elevatin' ourselves to a higher spear—an' what's come of it?

MRS. ROGERS. Plenty's come of it, if you had the sense to see it. You've seen the world, and you've traveled.

OLD MAN. Yes, we've seed the world. We've been gay, and we've left home behind, an' neighbors an' friends we growed up with

—an' Esmeraldy's heart nigh broke—an' Dave is brought to death's door—an' the little house they was to have lived in an' loved each other in is a standin' empty in North Ca'lliny.

MRS. ROGERS. You'll bring them together and send them back! You mean that you'll defy me out an' out?

OLD MAN. I aint a-defyin' ye, mother. That aint my kind. But I'll bring them two young hearts together, an' let 'em beat side by side.

MRS. ROGERS. You're all in the plot—I always knew you were—he'd never have had the strength to stand out alone—you're all backing him. (*To Nora.*) I always saw it in you, you sly minx! Esmeralda was always harder to manage after she'd been with you.

NORA. I've no doubt of it—and I hope she was. And let me tell you if I had been Esmeralda, I should like to have seen you take me away from—any one I loved.

ESTABROOK. So should I.

MRS. ROGERS. Oh, you're all in it—and you (*turning fiercely to Old Man*)—you think you can hold out?

OLD MAN. I mean to try, mother. I've hed—a kinder delercacy about sayin' anything about the money sorter belongin' ter me; but it does—in a way—sorter. An' I've been to a lawyer, an' I'm goin' ter hev papers drawed up as'll provide for 'em; an' when we're gone thar's no one but them to hev what's left—an' they kin live whar they like, an' how.

MRS. ROGERS. And you'll give up all I've done, and all I've worked for—what's to make up to the girl for it—what's she going back to, anyhow? Answer me that.

OLD MAN. Mebbe it aint much, mother—and mebbe it's a good deal. She's a-goin' back to home an' love.

MRS. ROGERS. Then I tell you she sha'n't. Do you think I'll give up that easy?

Enter Esmeralda, alarmed. Goes to her father.

ESMERALDA. Father—mother—what is it? Tell me. Oh, how angry you look! I knew something had gone wrong and I couldn't keep away.

OLD MAN. Don't tremble so, honey. 'Taint nothin' gone wrong—it's suthin' thet's a-goin' right.

MRS. ROGERS. You knew well enough, I reckon, with your tricks and plots, deceiving your own mother. You knew he was here, and the only wonder is you weren't up before.

ESMERALDA. I knew he was here? I knew who was here? Father—Nora—who is here?

NORA. No one you need be afraid to see, Esmeralda.

OLD MAN. Don't ye tremble so, honey—nor get so pale. It's only some one ye thought was fur away.

ESMERALDA. No, no, it isn't true. Don't tell me so and break my heart. There's half the world between us.

OLD MAN. Thar aint nothin' between ye, honey—nary thing.

Dave appears in the door. Esmeralda utters a cry and starts toward him. Mrs. Rogers catches her arm.

ESMERALDA. Let me go! I'm not afraid now. Not all the world should keep me from him!

Esmeralda rushes into Dave's arms.

DAVE. I thought you'd gone back on me, Esmeraldy, but you was true—you was true.

OLD MAN. (*Goes to Mrs. Rogers and lays his hand on her shoulder pleadingly.*) Mother, don't grudge it to 'em—don't ye—don't ye.

MRS. ROGERS. Me grudge it to them? No, I wont. Let them have what they've got, and welcome. He came over here to marry a rich girl, did he—and he's got her—thanks to you—with all she's worth. You—you are going to set them up for life and give them all they want. Do it if you can—that's all I've got to say.

OLD MAN. Mother, what d'ye mean?

MRS. ROGERS. What do I mean? (*Triumphantly.*) Just this—I've got a letter—

NORA. In my pocket, which—

MRS. ROGERS. What do you know about it? What does that piece of impudence mean?

NORA. I heard of a letter like it once before.

MRS. ROGERS. You did?

ESTABROOK. Yes, and it was from North Carolina—name of man who wrote it, George Drew.

NORA. And it was about some land that didn't turn out so well as was expected. Is yours anything like it?

MRS. ROGERS. You—you've known it all along.

DAVE. Mrs. Rogers, I've known it myself, and if you'll let me speak—

MRS. ROGERS. Oh, of course you knew you were going to marry a beggar instead of an heiress! You have traveled half the world over for pure love, haven't you—

OLD MAN. Mother! Mother!

MRS. ROGERS. You're—you're to blame for it all. But for you I'd have sold the place out and out—but for you that girl would have been married to a marquis by this, and settled for life—but for you we shouldn't have been disgraced, and mocked, and laughed at.

ESTABROOK. And but for him, of course, the vein of ore would have been carefully

arranged by Nature to meet all demands, and wouldn't have worked out and infamously turned up in another man's farm, and made a millionaire of him.

MRS. ROGERS. Another man's farm? Who's the man? Who is he?

DAVE. Mrs. Rogers, I'm the man.

MRS. ROGERS. You! you! you!

DAVE. Yes, and what's mine is Esmeralda's and her father's and her mother's; and so you see the thing stands just about where it did—an' you're no poorer than before—only that Esmeralda belongs to me.

MRS. ROGERS. Is this true? Is it—is it?

ESTABROOK. Yes, madam. He (*indicating Dave*) has a letter in his pocket which —

NORA. And but for Mr. Hardy you would have known it two months ago. He sent you money when you had spent your own—and he would have sent it until the end of time and said nothing, only that he wanted Esmeralda and found out that she wanted him. Everybody isn't selfish and cruel. There are such things as love and truth, and they are worth all the money the world could hold. There! (*Goes to Estabrook.*)

ESTABROOK. Are there? How do you know?

NORA. I found it out, and so has Esmeralda.

MRS. ROGERS. (*Sinks into chair. To Dave.*) Don't speak to me. You've won and I've lost. Leave me alone awhile. Go and tell him.

She points to Old Man, who has sat down and is mopping his forehead in a wild, bewildered way.

DAVE. Old Man, don't you understand?

OLD MAN. Seems like things was kinder mixed—and mother, she wasn't a-gettin' the best of it.

DAVE. It's easy enough told. You stood by me when you thought I was a poor man and you a rich one.

OLD MAN. An' now —

DAVE. What's mine is yours, and we'll stand by each other.

OLD MAN. (*Seizing his hand.*) Ye don't mean ter tell me we aint rich folks no more?

DAVE. The money has changed hands; that's all, old man.

OLD MAN. And the hands it's in now is the right ones. Mebbe now it's over, mother'll kinder be easy on us.

Goes to Mrs. Rogers. Dave and Esmeralda follow.

OLD MAN. Mother!

ESMERALDA. Mother!

DAVE. Mrs. Rogers!

MRS. ROGERS. (*Turns sharply.*) I don't see what you've got to say to me!

OLD MAN. We thought mebbe you'd got something to say to us, mother. Seems like Dave now—ye might want ter say a word or so to Dave—an' he's ready ter hear it.

MRS. ROGERS. (*Savagely.*) Does he want me to say I forgive him?

OLD MAN. No, mother. It don't seem like thar war eny needcessity on that. He aint done nothin' but act like a man, an' a brave an' honest one as was too much a man to bear a grudge ag'in' them that's injured him.

MRS. ROGERS. Does he want me to ask him to forgive me?

DAVE. No, I don't, Mrs. Rogers. I only want you to shake hands, and let's begin again in a fair and square way. You shall have your rights, and the old man shall have his—and I'll see that Esmeralda has hers.

OLD MAN. And we shall be apt to come out more kinder evenner.

Enter Kate and Desmond, Kate with letter.

KATE. Here's a lovely piece of news.

NORA. What is it?

KATE. I've just found this letter in my room. It is from Mrs. Delaplayne.

NORA. And what in the world is in it that you bring it here?

KATE. The Marquis is in it. Listen. (*Reads.*) "You know that man who was reported to be about to marry Miss Rogers, the Marquis de Montessin; he has just eloped with that awfully stupid Miss Meadows, whose father struck oil a few years ago. They say he heard that Miss Rogers was not as rich as he had imagined, and so he took the other, with much discretion."

MRS. ROGERS. I knew something was wrong when he gave up his claims so suddenly.

ESMERALDA. Oh, he is gone, and I shall never see him again. (*Clasps Dave's arm.*) Oh, Dave, it frightens me to think of him!

DAVE. There is no need of that, honey. The sun shines again as it used in the old days. It shines upon the little house, and the door waiting to be opened. And we are together.

[CURTAIN.]